

JESUS!

NO. 1434

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 15 1878,
BY C.H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS:
for He shall save His people from their sins.”
Matthew 1:21.***

BERNARD has delightfully said that the name of Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear and joy in the heart. I rejoice in that expression on my own account, for it gives me my share of the delight and leads me to hope that while I am speaking, the sweetness of the precious name of Jesus may fill my own mouth. Here, also, is a portion for you who are listening—it is melody in the ears! If my voice should be harsh and my words discordant, you will yet have music of the choicest order, for the name itself is essential melody and my whole sermon will ring with its silver note! May both speaker and hearer join in the third word of Bernard's sentence and may we all find it to be joy in our hearts, a jubilee within our souls! Jesus is the Way to God, therefore will we preach Him! He is the Truth, therefore will we hear of Him! He is the Life, therefore shall our hearts rejoice in Him! So inexpressibly fragrant is the name of Jesus that it imparts a delicious perfume to everything which comes in connection with it.

Our thoughts will turn, this morning, to the first use of the name in connection with our Lord, when the Child who was yet to be born was named Jesus. Here we find everything suggestive of comfort. The person to whom that name was first revealed was Joseph, a carpenter, a humble man, a working man, unknown and undistinguished except by the justice of his character. To the artisan of Nazareth was this name first imparted! It is not, therefore, a title to be monopolized by the ears of princes, sages, priests, warriors or men of wealth—it is a name to be made a household word among common people! He is the people's Christ, for of old it was said of Him, “I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” Let every carpenter and every worker of every sort rejoice with all other sorts of men in the name of Jesus!

There is consolation in the messenger who made known that name to Joseph, for it was the angel of the Lord who, in the visions of the night, whispered that charming name into his ear and, henceforth, angels are in league with men and gather to one standard, moved by the same watchword as ourselves—the name of Jesus! Did God send the name by an angel and did the angel delight to come with it? Then is there a bond of sympathy between us and angelic spirits and we are come, this day, not only “to the general assembly and church of the firstborn,” but “to an in-

numerable company of angels,” by whom that name is regarded with reverent love!

Nor is the condition of Joseph, when he heard this name, altogether without instruction. The angel spoke to him in a dream—that name is so soft and sweet that it breaks no man’s rest but rather yields an unrivalled peace—the peace of God! With such a dream, Joseph’s sleep was more blessed than his waking. The name has evermore this power, for, to those who know it, it unveils a glory brighter than dreams have ever imaged! Under its power young men see visions and old men dream dreams—and these do not mock them, but are prophecies faithful and true! The name of Jesus brings before our minds a vision of Glory in the latter days when Jesus shall reign from pole to pole—and yet another vision of Glory unutterable when His people shall be with Him where He is!

The name of Jesus was sweet at the first because of the words with which it was accompanied—for they were meant to remove perplexity from Joseph’s mind and some of them ran thus—“Fear not.” Truly, no name can banish fear like the name of Jesus! It is the beginning of hope and the end of despair! Let but the sinner hear of “the Savior” and he forgets to die! He hopes to live! He rises out of the deadly lethargy of his hopelessness and, looking upward, he sees a reconciled God and no longer fears. Especially, Brothers and Sisters, this name is full of rare delights when we meditate upon the infinite preciousness of the Person to whom it was assigned. Ah, here is a Jonathan’s wood dripping with honey from every bough and he that tastes it shall have his eyes enlightened! We have no common Savior, for neither earth nor Heaven could produce His equal!

At the time when the name was given, His full Person had not been seen by mortal eyes, for He lay as yet concealed. But soon He came forth, having been born of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit! A matchless Man, He bears our nature, but not our corruption! He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, but yet in *His* flesh there is no sin! This Holy One is the Son of God and yet He is the Son of man! This surpassing excellence of Nature makes His name most precious! I shall ask the exercise of your patience while I consider seven things in reference to this transporting name. It is as ointment poured forth and its scent is varied so as to contain the essence of all fragrances. These seven things will be seen very plainly by you if you continue to look at the text and its connection.

I. First, we shall remark that THE NAME OF JESUS IS A NAME DIVINELY ORDERED AND EXPOUNDED. According to the text, the angel brought a message from the Lord and said, “You shall call His name Jesus.” It is a name which, like He who bears it, has come down from Heaven. Our Lord has other names of office and relationship, but this is specially and peculiarly His own personal name and it is the Father who has thus named Him. Rest assured, therefore, that it is the best name that He could bear!

God would not have given Him a name of secondary value, or about which there would be a trace of dishonor. The name is the highest, brightest and noblest of names—it is the glory of our Lord to be a Savior. To the

best that was ever born of woman, God has given the best name that any son of man could bear. JESUS is the most appropriate name that our Lord could receive. Of this we are quite certain, for the Father knew all about Him and could name Him well. He knows much more about the Lord Christ than all saints and angels put together, for, "No man knows the Son but the Father."

To perfection the Father knew Him and He names Him Jesus. We may be sure, then, that our Lord is, most of all, a Savior and is best described by that term. God, the Father, who knows Him best, sees this to be His grand characteristic, that He is a Savior and is best represented by the name, "Jesus." Since infinite wisdom has selected it, we may be sure that it is a name which must be true and must be verified by facts of no mean order. God, who cannot be mistaken, calls Him Jesus, a Savior and, therefore, Jesus, a Savior He must be upon a grand scale—continually, abundantly and in a most apparent manner! Neither will God refuse to accept the work which He has done, since by the gift of that name He has commissioned Him to save sinners. When we plead the name of Jesus before God, we bring Him back His own Word and appeal to Him by His own act and deed.

Is not the name of Jesus to be viewed with reverential delight by each one of us when we remember from where it came? He is not a Savior of our own setting up, but God the everlasting Father has set Him forth for our Deliverer and Savior, saying, "You shall call His name Jesus." It is a name which the Holy Spirit explains, for He tells us the reason for the name of Jesus—"For He shall save His people from their sins." "Savior" is the meaning of the name, but it has a fuller sense hidden within, for in its Hebrew form it means, "the salvation of the Lord," or, "the Lord of salvation," or "the Savior." The angel interprets it, "He shall save," and the word for, "He," is very emphatic.

According to many scholars, the Divine name, the incommunicable title of the Most High is contained in "Joshua," the Hebrew form of Jesus, so that in full the word means, "Jehovah Savior," and in brief it signifies, "Savior." It is given to our Lord because "He saves"—not according to any temporary and common salvation, from enemies and troubles—but He saves from spiritual enemies and specially from sins. Joshua of old was a savior, Gideon was a savior, David was a savior—but the title is given to our Lord above all others because He is a Savior in a sense in which no one else is or can be—He saves His people from their sins!

The Jews were looking for a Savior—they expected one who would break the Roman yoke and save them from being under bondage to a foreign power! But our Divine Lord came not for such a purpose. He came to be a Savior of a more spiritual sort and to break quite another yoke by saving His people from their *sins*. The word, "save," is very rich in meaning—its full and exact force can hardly be given in English words. Jesus is salvation in the sense of deliverance and also in that of preservation. He gives health. He is all that is salutary to His people. In the fullest and broadest sense He saves His people.

The original word means to preserve, to keep, to protect from danger and to secure. The grandest meanings generally dwell in the shortest words and in this case the word, "save," is a well where the plummet is long in finding a bottom! Jesus brings a *great* salvation, or as Paul says, "so great salvation," as if he felt that he could never estimate its greatness (Heb. 2:3). He also speaks of it as, "eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9), even as Isaiah said, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." Glorious beyond measure is the name, "Jesus," as it is Divinely expounded to us, for by that very exposition the eternal God guarantees the success of the Savior!

He declares that He shall save His people and save His people He must. God Himself sets Him forth to us as—

***"Jesus, Savior, Son of God,
Bearer of the sinner's load."***

Thus we have a name, dear Friends, which we have not to explain for ourselves. As we did not choose it, so we are not left to expound it—God who gave the text has preached us the sermon! He who appointed the name has given us the reason for it, so that we are not left in ignorance or uncertainty. We might have said, "Yes, His name is Jesus, but it refers to a salvation which was worked in the olden ages." But no, the Word of the Lord tells us, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins"—and this is for *all time* since He always has a people and these people always need to be saved from their sins! Let us be glad that we have such a Savior and that the name of Jesus retains all the sweetness and power it ever had and shall retain it till all the chosen people are saved—and then forever and ever.

Moreover, in addition to expounding this name, the Holy Spirit, by the Evangelist Matthew, has been pleased to refer us to the synonym of it and so to give us its meaning by comparison. Let me read you the next verses. "Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with Child and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." If, when our Lord was born and named, "Jesus," the old prophecy which said that He should be called Emmanuel was fulfilled, it follows that the name, "Jesus," bears a signification tantamount to that of "Emmanuel" and that its virtual meaning is "God with us."

Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, He is Jesus, the Savior, because He is Emmanuel, God with us! And as soon as He was born and so became Emmanuel, the Incarnate God, He became by that very fact, Jesus, the Savior! By coming down from Heaven into this earth and taking upon Himself our Nature, He bridged the otherwise bridgeless gulf between God and man! By suffering in that human Nature and imparting, through His Divine Nature, an infinite efficacy to those sufferings, He removed that which would have destroyed us and brought us everlasting life and salvation! O Jesus, dearest of all names in earth or in Heaven, I love Your music all the better because it is in such sweet harmony with another which rings melodiously in my ears, the name Emmanuel, God with us! Our

Savior is God and therefore able! He is God with us and therefore pitiful! He is Divine and therefore infinitely wise! But He is *human* and therefore full of compassion!

This, then, is our first head—this charming name of Jesus is a jewel from the casket of Heaven. It comes to us as an apple of gold and it is attended by an exposition which places it in a basket of silver! The name is precious as the golden Mercy Seat and over it burns the light of the Divine Glory, so that we may not stumble at it, but may rejoice in the great light! It lets us know the very heart of God in reference to His Son—why He sent Him; what He meant Him to be and to do—and in what manner He would glorify Him. Salvation is the joyful sound which rings from the bells of our High Priest's garment as He comes forth to bless us! God, who spoke to our fathers by His Prophets, now speaks to us by His Son whose name is Salvation! Is there not a mint of joy in this?

II. Secondly, although this name was thus chosen by God, OUR LORD WAS ACTUALLY CALLED BY THE NAME OF JESUS BY MAN. To this I call your special notice. "She (Mary) shall bring forth a son and you (Joseph) shall call His name Jesus." The God of Heaven by His angel appoints the child's name, but His reputed father must announce it! Both Joseph and Mary, according to the Divine command, united in calling the child by the appointed name. See, then, that the name which is chosen of God is fully accepted by instructed men. Those who are taught of God joyfully recognize that Christ is salvation and without a question give Him the well-beloved name of Jesus, the Savior.

Here note that the name Jesus, Savior, was given to our Lord by two simple hearts as soon as ever He was revealed to them. They only needed to be told who He was and why He came, how He was born and what was the object of His Incarnation and they at once accepted the Divine message and named the Baby by the name of Jesus. And, Brethren, all of us to whom Christ is revealed at all, call Him Jesus the Savior! Many there are who think they know our Lord, but since they only speak of Him as a Prophet, a Teacher, or a Leader and care not for Him as a *Savior*, we are clear that they are in ignorance as to His chief Character.

His *first* name, His *personal* name they know not. The Holy Spirit cannot have revealed Christ to any man if that man remains ignorant of His saving power! He who does not know Him as Jesus, the Savior, does not know Him at all! Certain anti-Christian Christians are craftily extolling Christ that they may smite Jesus—I mean that they cry up Jesus as Messiah, sent of God, to exhibit a grand example and supply a pure code of morals, but they cannot endure Jesus as a Savior, redeeming us by His blood and by His death delivering us from sin! I am not sure that they follow His example of holy living, but they are very loud in extolling it and all with the purpose of drawing off men's thoughts from the chief Character and main object of our Lord's sojourn among us, namely, the deliverance of His people from sin! If men knew our Lord they would call Him Jesus, the Savior, and regard Him not merely as a good Man, a great Teacher, a noble Exemplar, but as the Savior of sinners!

Now, Joseph and Mary not only believed, so as to give the young Child the name in their own minds, but in due time they took Him up to the Temple and presented Him according to the Law and there publicly His name was called Jesus. All hearts to whom God commits His Christ should publicly acknowledge Him in the most solemn manner according to His ordinance and should desire in all proper places to confess Him as the Savior. The Infant Christ was committed to the care of Joseph and Mary to nurse and protect. Wonder of wonders, that HE should need a guardian, who is the Preserver of men and the Shepherd of His saints! In His feebleness as a Baby He needed parental care and in caring for Him, Joseph and Mary did not hesitate to avow their faith by giving Him a name which indicated His destiny! Nor did they refuse to declare His name in the Temple before the priests and the congregation.

Now, in a certain sense Christ is committed to the keeping of all His people. This day we have a charge to keep—we are to preserve His Gospel in the world, to maintain His Truth and to publish His salvation and, therefore, we are bound to bear this testimony, that He is Jesus, the Savior of sinners! This we must make very prominent. Others shall say what they please about Him and if they speak well of His Character in any respect we will be glad that they shall do it, however little they may know. But this is our peculiar testimony, that our Lord saves from sin! Nothing is more prominent about a man than his name—we can hardly mention him without pronouncing his name—and so we feel that we cannot mention our Lord without speaking of salvation! If He is anything, He is Jesus, the Savior!

We know Him best by that name! We preach unto men Jesus! We insist upon it first and foremost that He is the sinner's Savior! He is righteous and loves righteousness, but He is first known to men as the Friend of sinners. He is the faithful and true Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth—but His first work is to save! After that He teaches and rules His saved ones. Sunken in sin, men need to be redeemed from that tremendous evil and the consequent wrath—and this awful need is met by Jesus, the Savior! So, Beloved, you see that the name chosen of God is given to Him by all those who know Him and to whom His Gospel is entrusted. And it is given heartily, zealously and boldly! Yes, all of us call Him Jesus if we know Him and we are resolved to publish His name abroad as long as we live!

If He was Jesus in the cradle, what is He now that He is exalted in the heavens? As Emmanuel, God with us, His very Incarnation made Him Jesus, the Savior of men! But what shall I say of Him, now that beyond His Incarnation we have His Atonement? And above His Atonement His Resurrection? And beyond that His Ascension and, to crown all, His perpetual intercession? How grandly does the title befit Him, now that He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them!

If in the arms of the Virgin He is the Savior, what is He on the Throne of God? If wrapped in swaddling bands He is Jesus, what is He now that the

heavens have received Him? If in the workshop of Nazareth and sitting in the Temple among the doctors, He was the Child Jesus, the Savior, what is He now that His Infancy and Childhood are over and He is exalted far above all principalities and powers? If He was Jesus when on the Cross, presenting Himself as an offering for His people, what is He now that He has, by one Sacrifice, perfected forever them that are set apart? What is He now that He sits at the right hand of God, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool?

Let us all unite in calling our Lord by this tender human name of Jesus! Are we not His mother and sister and brother? Did He not call all Believers by these endearing titles? Then we, too, will call Him Jesus—“Jesus, name all names above! Jesus best and nearest! Jesus, fount of perfect love, holiest, most tender, dearest! Jesus, source of Divine Grace completed! Jesus holiest, sweetest! Jesus, Savior all Divine, Yours the name, and only Yours!

III. THE NAME HAD BEEN TYPICALLY WORN BY ANOTHER, BUT IS NOW RESERVED FOR HIM ALONE. There had been a Jesus before our Jesus. I allude to Joshua and you know that in our version the name Jesus is twice used where Joshua is really meant. The first is Acts 7:4, 5, where we read of the fathers who entered in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, evidently meaning Joshua. And the second in Hebrews 4:8, “If Jesus had given them rest.” Joshua is the Hebrew form and Jesus the Greek form, but Jesus and Joshua are the same word.

There was one, then, of old, who bore this famous name of Jesus, or Joshua, and was a type of our Jesus. What did Joshua do? When Moses could not lead the people into Canaan, Joshua did it. And so our Jesus accomplishes what the Law never could have done! Joshua overcame the enemies of God’s people. Though they were very many and very strong and had cities walled to Heaven and chariots of iron, yet in the name of Jehovah, as captain of the Lord’s host, Joshua smote them! Even so does our glorious Joshua smite our sins and all the powers of darkness! And He utterly destroys our spiritual enemies. Before Joshua, Amalek is smitten, Jericho falls and Canaanites are put to rout—while Jesus gives us triumphs in every place!

Moreover, Joshua conquered an inheritance for Israel, took them across the Jordan, settled them in a land that flowed with milk and honey and gave to each tribe and to each man to stand in his lot which God had ordained for him. Precisely this is what our Jesus does, only our inheritance is more Divine and on each one of us it is more surely entailed. Though Joshua could not give to the people the heavenly Sabbatismos, or rest of the highest kind, yet he gave them rest most pleasant to them, so that every man sat under his own vine and fig tree, none making him afraid. But *our* glorious Joshua has given us infinite, eternal rest, for He is our peace and they that know Him have entered into rest!

Joshua, the son of Nun, caused the people to serve the Lord all his days, but he could not save the nation from their sins, for after his death they grievously went astray. *Our* Joshua reserves to Himself a people zeal-

ous for good works, for He always lives and is able to keep them from falling. No more does Joshua lift sword or spear on behalf of Israel, but Jesus still rides forth, conquering and to conquer—and all His people have victory through His blood! Well is His name called Jesus! We read of another Jesus in the books of Ezra and Zechariah. The form which the word there takes is Jeshua or Joshua. He was the high priest who came at the head of the people on their return from Babylon. He is spoken of by the Prophet Zechariah in terms which make him a fit representative of each of us. But, behold, Jesus of Nazareth is now the *only* High Priest—and having presented His one Sacrifice forever, He remains a Priest according to the power of an endless life! He heads the march from Babylon and He leads His people back to Jerusalem!

The name of Jesus was not at all uncommon among the Jews. Josephus mentions no less than 12 persons of the name of Jesus. Salvation of a certain kind was so longed for by the Jews that their eagerness was seen in their children's names. Their little ones were by their hopes named as saviors, but saviors they were not! How common are nominal saviors! "Lo here," they say, "here is a savior!" "Lo, there," they cry, "another savior!" These have the name but not the power and now, according to the text, Jesus Christ has engrossed the title for Himself! His name shall be called Jesus, for He, alone, is a Prince and a Savior and truly saves His people from their sins!

Other saviors do but mock the hopes of mankind—they promise fairly, but they utterly deceive! This holy Child, this blessed, glorious God With Us, has truly brought us salvation and He says, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside Me there is none else." This Jesus of Nazareth, the King of kings, is the one and only Savior! He, and none but He, shall save His people! He shall save by His own act and deed—He and not another! Singly and alone He shall save His people! Personally, and not by another! In His name and on His behalf He shall, by Himself, purge away sin!

He shall do all the work and leave none undone—He shall begin it, carry it on and complete it—and therefore is His name called Jesus because He shall completely and perfectly save His people from their sins! The name has been, in a minor sense, applied to others, but now none else may wear it since there is no other Savior and none other name given under Heaven among men whereby we must be saved.

IV. The fourth point grows out of the wording of the text. THIS NAME JESUS IDENTIFIES OUR LORD WITH HIS PEOPLE. "You shall call His name Jesus," for that name declares His relation to His people. It is to them that He is a Savior. He would not be Jesus if He had not a people! He could not be, for there could be no Savior if there were none to save! And there could be no Savior from sin if there were no sinners. Notice, dear Friends, the all-important connection here revealed between our Lord and His people since His very name hangs on it—His proper, personal name has no meaning apart from His people. "He shall save His people."

It does not say *God's* people, for then it would have been understood as meaning only the Jews, or it would have been supposed to refer to some good and holy persons who belonged to God, apart from the Mediator. No, but, "He shall save His people"—those who are His own and personally belong to Him! These are evidently a very peculiar people, a people set apart as Christ's own treasure. They are a people that belong to God Incarnate—Emmanuel's people. These He saves. Who are they but His elect, whom His Father gave Him before the earth was? Who are they but those whose names are engraved on the palms of His hands and written on His heart? Who are they but those for whom He counted down the price of redemption? Who are they but those for whom He became a Surety, whose smart He has borne? Who are they but the numbered sheep that will be required at His hands by the great Father, that He should render them back by count and number, saying, "I have kept those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours"?

Yes, the Lord knows them that are His and He preserves them unto His eternal kingdom and Glory. "He shall save His people." Do you not see that this name of Jesus is an election name, after all? It is a wide, far-reaching name to sinners dear, to sinners given—but still in the depths of its meaning it has a special bearing upon a chosen people—it has a ring of sovereignty about it and is all the sweeter because of this to those who see in their own salvation an exhibition of distinguishing Grace.

Now the question arises, who are His people? We are eager to know who they are and we are glad to find that His people, be they who they may, need to be saved and shall be saved, for it is written, "He shall save His people." It is not said, "He shall reward His people for their righteousness." Nor is it promised that He shall, "save them from becoming sinners," but, "He shall save His people from their sins." Do you need saving, Brothers and Sisters? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you need salvation? Let your hearts be encouraged! This is the character of all His people—He never had a chosen one who could do without washing in the Savior's blood! If you are righteous in yourself, you are not one of His people! If you were never sick in soul, you are none of the folk that the Great Physician has come to heal!

If you were never guilty of sin, you are none of those whom He has come to deliver from sin. Jesus comes on no needless errand and undertakes no unnecessary work—if you feel yourselves to need saving, then cast yourselves upon Him—for such as you are He came to save! Notice, yet again, the very gracious but startling fact that our Lord's connection with His people lies in the direction of their sins. This is amazing condescension! He is called Savior in connection with His people, but it is in reference to their *sins*, because it is from their *sins* that they need to be saved! If they had never sinned they would never have required a Savior—and there would have been no name of Jesus known on earth! That is a wonderful text—did you ever meditate upon it?—"Who gave Himself for our sins according to the Scriptures."

As Martin Luther says, He never gave Himself for our righteousness, but He did give Himself for our sins! Sin is a horrible evil, a deadly poison, yet it is *this* which gives Jesus His title when He overcomes it. What a wonder to think upon! The first link between my soul and Christ is not my goodness, but my badness! It is not my merit, but my misery! It is not my standing, but my falling! It is not my riches, but my need. He comes to visit His people, yet not to admire their beauties, but to remove their deformities! He comes not to reward their virtues, but to forgive their sins!

O you sinners! I mean *real* sinners—not you that call yourselves so because you are told you are such—but you who feel yourselves to be guilty before God, here is good news for you! O you self-condemned sinners who feel that if you ever get salvation, Jesus must bring it to you and be the beginning and the end of it, I pray you rejoice in this dear, this precious, this blessed name, for Jesus has come to save you, even YOU! Go to Him as sinners! Call Him, “Jesus,” and cry, “O Lord Jesus, be Jesus to me, for I need Your salvation!” Doubt not that He will fulfill His own name and exhibit His power in you! Only confess to Him your sin and He will save you from it! Only believe in Him and He will be your salvation!

V. The fifth point is very clear and well worthy of note. THE NAME OF “JESUS” IS ONE WHICH INDICATES HIS MAIN WORK. “You shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save.” He shall save from sin. Why do men write lives of Christ who know nothing about His main business and objective? Why do some preach about Christ who do not know the very essence and heart of Him? Think of knowing Milton, but not as a poet, and Bacon, but not as a philosopher! There is no knowing our Lord, if He is not known as a Savior, for He is that or nothing! Those who fall short of His salvation do not even know His name! How, then, should they know *Him*?

His name is not called Jesus because He is our Exemplar though, indeed, He is Perfection, itself, and we long to walk in His footsteps. But His name is called Jesus because He has come to save that which is lost! He is Christ, too, or The Anointed, but then He is Christ Jesus, that is to say, it is as a Savior that He is anointed! He is nothing if He is not a Savior! He is anointed to this very end. His very name is a sham if He does not save His people from their sins! Now, Jesus does save His people from sin for, first, He does it by taking all the sins of His people upon Himself. Do you think that is a strong expression? It is warranted by the Scriptures. “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Christ’s shoulders bore the guilt of His people and because He took their load, His people are free and have henceforth no burden of sin to weigh them down.

He saves His people through His personal Substitution—by standing in their stead and suffering in their place. There is no other way of salvation but by His vicarious sufferings and death! Then He saves them by bearing the penalty due to their sin. Where the sin lies, the penalty falls. “The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.” “He was made a curse for us.” “Christ also has suffered for us.” He died, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.” He bore the wrath of God which was due to us. He has taken the sin and paid the penalty—and

now liars come in and falsely say that we teach that a man is to believe the dogma of Atonement and then he is saved and may live as he likes!

They know better! They know that they misrepresent us, for we always teach that this great work of Substitution and penalty-bearing by Christ works in the person who partakes in its benefits, love to God, gratitude to Christ and consequent hatred of all sin! And this change of heart is the very core and essence of salvation! This is how Christ saves His people from their sin—by rescuing them, by the force of His love—out of the power, tyranny and dominion of sins which before then had the mastery over them. I knew what it was to strive against sin as a moral person, seeking to overcome it. But I found myself mastered by sin, like Samson when his hair was lost, and the Philistines bound him. But since I have believed in Jesus, I find motives for being holy which are more influential with me than any I knew before! I find weapons with which to fight my sin that I never knew how to handle before and a new strength has been given me by the Holy Spirit.

“This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” This is the power which drives out the vipers of sin from the soul—the precious blood of Jesus! He that has believed in Jesus as his expiation and atonement becomes, thereby, through the power of the Holy Spirit, renewed in heart! He has fresh objects set before him; fresh motives sway him—and thus Jesus saves His people from their sins! Beloved, if we had space at this time, I should like to speak about how completely Christ saves His people from their sins—how when He comes in He turns out the strong man armed with mighty force! How that strong armed man seeks to come back again and does, as far as he can, gain a partial entrance, but Jesus drives him out again! How all the damage and foulness that were left within the house by the old tenant are gradually cleared away by Jesus, till at last His people are fully sanctified as temples of the living God.

His saints shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—and no sign that the devil ever dwelt within them shall remain upon them! Viewing each one of their risen bodies as a temple of God, you shall search those bodies through and not find a trace of the dominion of sin! You shall look into the heart, into the mind, into the understanding—but when Jesus has done His purging work there shall be no scar or speck to show that sin was ever there! So completely shall He save His people from their sins that they shall be fit to dwell with angels! Better—they shall be fit to dwell with God! May I say better than that? They shall be *one* with Jesus, one with Him throughout eternity! The fullness of Him that fills all in all. How glorious, how transcendent is the salvation which Jehovah Jesus has brought to us!

VI. This NAME OF JESUS IS ONE WHICH IS COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED BY FACTS. It was given Him before He had done anything. While yet He was a Baby, or before His trembling feet had learned to tread the cottage floor at Nazareth, He was Jesus the Savior! But is the name well deserved? Many a child has had a grand name and his life has contradicted it. I remember a grave on which there is the name of a child, “Sacred to

the memory of Methuselah Coney, who died aged six months.” His parents were mightily mistaken when they called him Methuselah!

Many other names are equally inappropriate and are proved to be so in the course of years. But this Jesus is a Savior, a true Jesus! He bears a name which He well deserves. Come to the Christ and see, there, the many that once rioted in sin and rolled in the mire—they are washed! They are sanctified and now they rejoice in holiness! Who purified them? Who but Jesus? He that saves His people from their sins has saved them! Go to deathbeds and hear saints telling of His love and speaking of the Heaven which is already dawning in their souls! Some of these once could sit on the ale-bench and use the swearer’s oath, but Jesus has cleansed them!

Climb up to Heaven and behold the snow-white host, glittering like the sun in spotless purity. I ask them from where they came? The reply is that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! It is most true that Jesus saves His people from their sins—the earth knows it, Hell howls at it and Heaven chants it! Time has seen it and eternity shall reveal it! There is none like Jesus in saving power! All glory be to Him! He shall come from Heaven with a shout and all His hosts shall be with Him. The day of the supper of the Lamb shall come and the bride has made herself ready. And she that is the queen all glorious within, wearing her raiment of worked gold shall sit down at the table of God with her glorious Husband—then shall it be seen that He has saved His Church, His people, from their sins!

VII. Last of all, THIS NAME IS CHRIST’S PERSONAL NAME FOREVER. It is a home name. It is the name His Father gave Him! It is the name His mother gave Him—Jesus, the Child Jesus. We also belong to His family for he that believes in Him is His father, mother, sister and brother—and that most dear and familiar name by which He was known at home is always in our mouths! He is the Lord and we worship Him! But He is Jesus and we love Him! Jesus is also the heart name and is full of the music of love. They who loved Him best gave Him the name, especially His mother, who pondered everything about Him in her heart. It is the name which moves our affections and fires our souls—

***“Jesus, the very thought of you
With sweetness fills my breast.”***

Let your hearts go out towards Him in tender union. Jesus is His death name—“Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” was written on His Cross. That is His resurrection name. That is His Gospel name which we preach. It is the name which Peter preached to the Gentiles when he said, “This is Jesus of Nazareth by whom is preached to you the remission of sins.” And this, Beloved, is His Heaven name! They sing to Him there as Jesus! See how it concludes the Bible. Read Revelation! Read its songs and see how they worship Jesus, the Lamb of God! Let us go and tell of this name! Let us continually meditate upon it! Let us love it from this day and forever! Amen.

“GOD WITH US”

NO. 1270

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 26, 1875,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“They shall call His name Emmanuel, which
being interpreted is, God with us.”
Matthew 1:23.*

THOSE words, “being interpreted,” salute my ear with much sweetness. Why should the word, “Emmanuel,” in the Hebrew, be interpreted at all? Was it not to show that it has reference to us Gentiles and, therefore, it must be interpreted into one of the chief languages of the then existing Gentile world, namely, the Greek? This, “being interpreted,” at Christ’s birth and the three languages employed in the inscription upon the Cross at His death, show that He is not the Savior of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

As I walked along the wharf at Marseilles and marked the ships of all nations gathered in the port, I was very much interested by the inscriptions upon the shops and stores. The announcements of refreshments or of goods to be had within were not only printed in the French language, but in English, in Italian, in German, in Greek and sometimes in Russian and Swedish. Upon the shops of the sail makers, the boat builders, the ironmongers, or the dealers in ship supplies, you read a mixture of announcements setting forth the information to men of many lands. This was a clear indication that persons of all nations were invited to come and purchase, that they were *expected* to come and that provision was made for their peculiar needs.

“Being interpreted” must mean that different nations are addressed. We have the text put first in the Hebrew, “Emmanuel,” and afterwards it is translated into the Gentile tongue, “God with us,” “being interpreted,” “that we may know that we are invited, that we are welcome, that God has seen our needs and has provided for us, and that now we may freely come, even we who were sinners of the Gentiles and far off from God! Let us preserve with reverent love both forms of the precious name and wait the happy day when our Hebrew Brethren shall unite their, “Emmanuel,” with our, “God with us.”

Our text speaks of a *name* of our Lord Jesus. It is said, “They shall call His *name* Emmanuel.” In these days we call children by names which have no particular meaning. They are the names, perhaps, of father or mother, or some respected relative, but there is no special meaning, as a general rule, in our children’s names. It was not so in the olden times. Then names meant something. Scriptural names, as a general rule, contain teaching and especially is this the case in every name ascribed to the Lord Jesus. With Him names indicate *things*. “His name shall be called

Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” because He really is all these.

His name is called Jesus, but not without a reason. By any other name Jesus would not be so sweet, because no other name could fairly describe His great work of saving His people from their sins. When He is said to be called this or that, it means that He really is so. I am not aware that anywhere in the New Testament our Lord is afterwards called Emmanuel. I do not find His Apostles, or any of His disciples, calling Him by that name literally. But we find them all doing so in effect, for they speak of Him as, “God manifest in the flesh.” And they say, “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.”

They do not use the actual word, but they again interpret and give us free and instructive renderings while they proclaim the sense of the august title and inform us in many ways what is meant by God being with us in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a glorious fact, of the highest importance, that since Christ was born into the world, God is with us! You may divide the text, if you please, into two portions—“GOD,” and then, “GOD WITH US.” We must dwell with equal emphasis upon each word.

Never let us, for a moment, hesitate as to the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, for His Deity is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. It may be we shall never fully understand how God and Man could unite in one Person, for who can, by searching, find out God? These great mysteries of godliness, these “deep things of God,” are beyond our measurement. Our little skiff might be lost if we ventured so far out upon this vast, this infinite ocean, as to lose sight of the shore of plainly revealed Truth.

But let it remain as a matter of faith that Jesus Christ, even He who lay in Bethlehem’s manger and was carried in a woman’s arms, and lived a suffering life and died on a malefactor’s cross, was, nevertheless, “God over all, blessed forever,” “upholding all things by the word of His power.” He was not an angel—that the Apostle has abundantly disproved in the first and second chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews—He could not have been an angel, for honors are ascribed to Him which were never bestowed on angels. He was no subordinate Deity or was elevated to the Godhead, as some have absurdly said—all these things are dreams and falsehoods.

He was as surely God as God can be, One with the Father and the ever-blessed Spirit. If it were not so, not only would the great strength of our hope be gone, but as to this text the sweetness would be evaporated altogether. The very essence and glory of the Incarnation is that He was God who was veiled in human flesh. If it were any other being who thus came to us in human flesh, I see nothing very remarkable in it, certainly nothing comforting. That an angel should become a man is a matter of no great consequence to me. That some other superior being should assume the nature of man brings no joy to my heart and opens no well of consolation to me.

But, “God with us,” is exquisite delight! “GOD with us”—all that, “GOD,” means—the Deity, the Infinite Jehovah with us! This, this is worthy of the burst of midnight song when angels startled the shepherds with their carols, singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men.” This was worthy of the foresight of seers and Prophets, worthy of a new star in the heavens, worthy of the care which Inspiration has manifested to preserve the record. This, too, was worthy of the martyr deaths of Apostles and confessors who counted not their lives dear unto them for the sake of the Incarnate God.

And this, my Brothers and Sisters, is worthy, at this day, of your most earnest endeavors to spread the glad tidings! It is worthy of a holy life to illustrate its blessed influences and worthy of a joyful death to prove its consoling power. Here is the first Truth of our holy faith—“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.” He who was born at Bethlehem is God, and, “God with us.” God—*there* lies the majesty! “God with us”—*there* lies the mercy. God—*there* is glory! “God *with us*”—there is Grace! God alone might well strike us with terror, but, “God with us,” inspires us with hope and confidence!

Take my text as a whole and carry it in your bosoms as a bundle of sweet spices to perfume your hearts with peace and joy. May the Holy Spirit open to you the Truth of God and the Truth of God to you. I would joyfully say to you in the words of one of our poets—

**“Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the Incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to appear,
Jesus our Immanuel here.”**

First, *let us admire this Truth of God.* Then *let us consider it more at length.* And after that *let us endeavor personally to appropriate it.*

I. LET US ADMIRE THIS TRUTH OF GOD. “God with us.” Let us stand at a reverent distance from it as Moses when he saw God in the bush stood a little back and took his shoes off, feeling that the place where he stood was holy ground. This is a wonderful fact! God the Infinite once dwelt in the frail body of a child and tabernacled in the suffering form of a lowly man. “God was in Christ.” “He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

Observe first, the wonder of *condescension* contained in this fact, that God, who made all things, should assume the nature of one of His own creatures! That the Self-Existent should be united with the dependent and deprived, and the Almighty linked with the feeble and mortal! In the case before us the Lord descended to the very depth of humiliation and entered into alliance with a nature which did not occupy the chief place in the scale of existence! It would have been great condescension for the Infinite and Incomprehensible Jehovah to have taken upon Himself the nature of some noble spiritual being, such as a seraph or a cherub. The union of the Divine with a created *spirit* would have been an immeasurable stoop—but for God to be one with *man* is far more.

Remember that in the Person of Christ, Manhood was not merely a quickening spirit, but also suffering, hungering, dying flesh and blood.

There was taken to Himself by our Lord all that materialism which makes up a body and a body is, after all, but the dust of the earth—a structure fashioned from the materials around us. There is nothing in our bodily frame but what is to be found in the substance of the earth on which we live. We feed upon that which grows out of the earth and when we die, we go back to the dust from which we were taken. Is not this a strange thing that this grosser part of creation, this meaner part, this *dust* of it, should, nevertheless, be taken into *union* with that pure, marvelous, incomprehensible, Divine Being of whom we know so little, and can comprehend nothing at all?

Oh, the condescension of it! I leave it to the meditations of your quiet moments. Dwell on it with care. I am persuaded that no man has any idea how wonderful a stoop it was for God thus to dwell in human flesh and to be, “God with us.” Yet, to make it appear still more remarkable, remember that the creature whose nature Christ took was a being that had *sinned*. I can more readily conceive the Lord’s taking upon Himself the nature of a race which had never fallen. But, lo, the race of man stood in rebellion against God and yet Christ became a Man, that He might deliver us from the consequences of our rebellion and lift us up to something higher than our pristine purity. “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, has condemned sin in the flesh.” “Oh, the depths,” is all that we can say as we look on and marvel at this stoop of Divine Love.

Note, next, as you view this marvel at a distance, what a *miracle of power* is before us. Have you ever thought of the power displayed in the Lord’s fashioning a body capable of union with Godhead? Our Lord was Incarnate in a body, which was truly a human body, but yet in some wondrous way was prepared to sustain the indwelling of Deity! Contact with God is terrible—“He looks on the earth and it trembles. He touches the hills and they smoke.” He puts His feet on Paran and it melts, and Sinai dissolves in flames of fire. So strongly was this Truth inwrought into the minds of the early saints that they said, “No man can see God’s face and live!” And yet here was a Manhood which did not merely *see* the face of God, but which was *inhabited* by Deity.

What human frame was this which could abide the Presence of Jehovah! “A body have You prepared Me.” This was, indeed, a body curiously worked, a holy thing, a special product of the Holy Spirit’s power. It was a body like our own, with nerves as sensitive and muscles as readily strained. It was a body with every organization as delicately fashioned as our own and yet *God* was in it! It was a frail boat to bear such freight. Oh, Man Christ, how could You bear the Deity within You! We know not how it was, but God knows. Let us adore this hiding of the Almighty in human weakness, this comprehending of the Incomprehensible, this revealing of the Invisible, this localization of the Omnipresent!

Alas, I do but babble! What are words when we deal with such an unutterable Truth of God? Suffice it to say that the Divine power was wonderfully seen in the continued existence of the materialism of Christ’s body—which otherwise had been consumed for such a wondrous contact with Divinity! Admire the power which dwelt in, “God with us.” Again, as you

gaze upon the mystery, consider what *an ensign of good will* this must be to the sons of men. When the Lord takes Manhood into union with Himself in this matchless way, it must mean good to man. God cannot mean to destroy that race which He thus weds onto Himself!

Such a marriage as this, between man and God, must mean peace. War and destruction are never thus predicted. God Incarnate in Bethlehem, to be adored by shepherds, foretells nothing but “peace on earth and mercy mild.” O you sinners who tremble at the thought of the Divine Wrath, as well you may, lift up your heads with joyful hope of mercy and favor, for God must be full of Grace and mercy to that race which He so distinguishes above all others by taking it into union with Himself! Be of good cheer, O men born of women, and expect untold blessings for, “unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.”

If you look at rivers you can often tell from where they come and the soil over which they have flowed by their color. Those which flood from melting glaciers are known at once. There is a text concerning a heavenly river which you will understand if you look at it in this light—“He showed me a pure river of the Water of Life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and *of the Lamb*.” Where the Throne is occupied by Godhead and the appointed Mediator, the Incarnate God, the once bleeding Lamb, then the river must be pure as crystal and be a river, not of molten lava of devouring wrath, but a river of the Water of Life! Look to “God with us” and you will see that the consequences of Incarnation must be pleasant, profitable, saving and ennobling to the sons of men.

I pray you to continue your admiring glance and look upon God with us once more *as a pledge of our deliverance*. We are a fallen race. We are sunk in the mire. We are sold under sin, in bondage and in slavery to Satan. But if God comes to our race and espouses its *nature*, why, then, we must retrieve our Fall—it cannot be possible for the gates of Hell to keep those down who have God with them! Slaves under sin and bondsmen beneath the Law, hearken to the trumpet of jubilee, for One has come among you, born of a woman, made under the Law, who is also Mighty God, pledged to set you free! He is a Savior, and a great one! He is able to save, for He is Almighty, and pledged to do it, for He has entered the fight and put on the harness for the battle.

The champion of his people is one who will not fail nor be discouraged till the battle is fully fought and won. Jesus, coming down from Heaven, is the pledge that He will take His people *up to Heaven*! His taking our nature is the seal of our being lifted up to His Throne! Were it an angel that had interposed, we might have some fears. Were it a mere man, we might go beyond fear and sit down in despair. But if it is “God with us,” and God has actually taken Manhood into union with Himself, then let us “ring the bells of Heaven” and be glad!

There must be brighter and happier days! There must be salvation for man! There must be Glory to God. Let us bask in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness who now has risen upon us—a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of His people Israel! Thus we have admired at a distance.

II. And, now, in the second place, let us come nearer and CONSIDER THE SUBJECT MORE CLOSELY. What is this? What does this mean, “God with us”? I do not expect, this morning, to be able to set forth all the meaning of this short text, “God with us,” for indeed, it seems to me to contain the whole history of redemption! It hints at man’s being without God and God’s having removed from man on account of sin. It seems to tell me of man’s spiritual life, by Christ’s coming to him and being formed in him the hope of Glory.

God communes with man and man returns to God and receives, again, the Divine image as at the first. Yes, Heaven itself is, “God with us.” This text might serve for a hundred sermons without any more drawing. Yes, one might continue to expatiate upon its manifold meanings forever! I can only, at this time, give mere hints of lines of thought which you can pursue at your leisure, the Holy Spirit enabling you. This glorious word, Emmanuel, means, first, that God in Christ is *with us in very near association*.

The Greek particle here used is very forcible and expresses the strongest form of “*with*.” It is not merely, “in company with us,” as another Greek word would signify, but “with,” “together with” and, “sharing with.” This preposition is a close rivet, a firm bond, implying, if not declaring, close *fellowship*. God is peculiarly and closely “with us.” Now, think for a while, and you will see that God has, in very deed, come near to us in very close association. He must have done so, for He has taken upon Himself our *nature*, literally our nature—flesh, blood, bone, everything that made a body—mind, heart, soul, memory, imagination, judgement, everything that makes a rational man.

Christ Jesus was the Man of men, the Second Adam, the model representative Man! Think not of Him as a Deified man any more than you would dare to regard Him as a humanized God, or demigod! Do not confuse the *natures* nor divide the Person—He is but one Person, yet very Man as He is also very God. Think of this Truth, then, and say, “He who sits on the Throne is such as I am, sin, alone, excepted.” No, ‘tis too much for speech, I will not speak of it! It is a theme which masters me, and I fear to utter rash expressions. Turn this Truth over and over, and see if it is not sweeter than honey and the honey-comb—

**“Oh joy! There sits in our flesh,
Upon a throne of light,
One of a human mother born,
In perfect Godhead bright!”**

Being with us in our nature, God was with us in *all our life’s pilgrimage*. Scarcely can you find a halting place in the march of life at which Jesus has not paused, or a weary league which He has not traversed. From the gate of entrance even to the door which closes life’s way, the footprints of Jesus may be traced. Were you in the cradle? He was there. Were you a child under parental authority? Christ was, also, a Boy in the home at Nazareth. Have you entered upon life’s battle? Your Lord and Master did the same. And though He lived not to old age, yet through incessant toil and suffering He bore the marred visage which attends a battered old age.

Are you alone? So was He, in the wilderness and on the mountain's side, and in the garden's gloom. Do you mix in public society? So did He labor in the thickest crowds. Where can you find yourself, on the hilltop, or in the valley, on the land or on the sea, in the daylight or in darkness—where, I say, can you be, without discovering that Jesus has been there before you? What the world has said of her great poet we might with far more truth say of our Redeemer—

**“A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome.”**

One harmonious Man He was, and yet all saintly lives seem to be condensed in His.

Two Believers may be very unlike each other, and yet both will find that Christ's life has in it points of likeness to their own. One shall be rich and another shall be poor. One actively laborious and another patiently suffering, and yet each man, in studying the history of the Savior, shall be able to say—His pathway ran hard by my own. He was made in all points like unto His brethren. How charming is the fact that our Lord is “God with us,” not here and there, and now and then, but forever! Especially does this come out with sweetness in His being “God with us” *in our sorrows*. There is no pang that rends the heart—I might almost say not one which disturbs the body—but what Jesus Christ has been with us in it all.

Do you feel the sorrows of poverty? He “had not where to lay His head.” Do you endure the griefs of bereavement? Jesus “wept” at the tomb of Lazarus. Have you been slandered for righteousness' sake and has it vexed your spirit? He said, “Reproach has broken My heart.” Have you been betrayed? Do not forget that He, too, had His familiar friend who sold Him for the price of a slave. On what stormy seas have you been tossed which have not also roared around His boat? Never a glen of adversity so dark, so deep, apparently so pathless, but what in stooping down you may discover the footprints of the Crucified One. In the fires and in the rivers, in the cold night and under the burning sun, He cries, “I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am both your Companion and your God.”

Mysteriously true is it that when you and I shall come to *the last, the closing scene*, we shall find that Emmanuel has been there! He felt the pangs and throes of *death*. He endured the bloody sweat of agony and the parching thirst of fever. He knew the separation of the tortured spirit from the poor fainting flesh and cried, as we shall, “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” Yes, and the grave He knew, for there He slept and left the sepulcher perfumed and furnished to be a couch of rest and not a morgue of corruption. That new tomb in the garden makes Him God with us till the Resurrection shall call us from our beds of clay to find Him God with us in newness of life!

We shall be raised up in His likeness and the first sight our opening eyes shall see shall be the Incarnate God! “I know that my Redeemer lives, and though after my skin worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” “God with us.” I in my *flesh* shall see Him as the Man, the God. *And so to all eternity* He will maintain the most intimate association with us. As long as ages roll He shall be “God with us.” Has He not said, “Be-

cause I live you shall live, also”? Both His Human and Divine life will last on forever, and so shall our life endure. He shall dwell among and lead us to living fountains of waters and so shall we be forever with the Lord. Now, my Brothers and Sisters, if you will review these thoughts, you shall find a good store of food. In fact, a *feast*, even, under that one head. God, in Christ, is with us in the nearest possible association.

But, secondly, *God in Christ is with us in the fullest reconciliation*. This, of course, is true, if the former is true. There was a time when we were parted from God. We were without God, being alienated from Him by wicked works. And God was also removed from us by reason of the natural rectitude of character which thrusts iniquity far from Him. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, neither can evil dwell with Him. That strict Justice with which He rules the world requires that He should hide His face from a sinful generation. A god who looks with complacency upon guilty men is not the God of the Bible, who is in multitudes of places set forth as burning with indignation against the wicked. “The wicked and him that loves violence His soul hates.”

But now the sin which separated us from God has been put away by the blessed Sacrifice of Christ upon the tree. And the Righteousness, the absence of which causes a gulf between unrighteous man and righteous God, that Righteousness, I say, has been found, for Jesus has brought in Everlasting Righteousness! So that now, in Jesus, God is with us, reconciled to us—the sin which caused His wrath is forever put away from His people.

There are some who object to this view of the case, and I, for one, will not yield one jot to their objections. I do not wonder that they quibble at certain unwise statements which I like no better than they do. But, nevertheless, if they oppose the Atonement as making a recompense to injured Justice, their objections shall have no force with me. It is most true that God is always Love, but His stern Justice is not opposed thereto. It is also most certainly true that towards His people He always was, in the highest sense, Love, and the Atonement is the *result* and not the *cause* of Divine love. Yet, still viewed in His rectorial Character, as a Judge and Lawgiver, God is “angry with the wicked every day,” and apart from the reconciling Sacrifice of Christ, His own people were “heirs of wrath even as others.”

There was anger in the heart of God, as a righteous Judge, against those who broke His holy Law, and the reconciliation has a bearing upon the position of the Judge of all the earth as well as upon man. I, for one, shall never cease to say, “O Lord, I will praise You, for though You were angry with me, Your anger is tamed away and You comfort me.” God can now be with man and embrace sinners as His children, as He could not have righteously done had not Jesus died. In this sense, and in this sense, only, did Dr. Watts write some of his hymns which have been so fiercely condemned.

I take leave to quote two verses, and to commend them as setting forth a great Truth of God if the Lord is viewed as a Judge and represented as the awakened conscience of man rightly perceives Him. Our poet says of the Throne of God—

**“Once ‘twas the seat of dreadful wrath,
And shot devouring flames.
Our God appeared, consuming fire,
And Vengeance was His name.
Rich were the drops of Jesus’ blood,
Which earned His frowning face,
Which sprinkled o’er the burning Throne,
And turned the wrath to Grace.”**

So that now Jehovah is not God against us, but “God with us.” He has “reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son.”

A third meaning of the text, “God with us,” is this, *God in Christ is with us in blessed communication*. That is to say, now He has come so near to us as to enter into commerce with us and this He does, in part, by hallowed conversation. Now He speaks *to* us and *in* us. He has, in these last days, spoken to us by His Son and by the Divine Spirit with the still small voice of warning, consolation, instruction and direction. Are you not conscious of this? Since your souls have come to know Christ, have you not, also, enjoyed communion with the Most High? Now, like Enoch, you “walk with God,” and, like Abraham, you talk with Him as a man talks with his friend.

What are those prayers and praises of yours but the speech which you are permitted to have with the Most High? And He replies to you when His Spirit seals home the promise or applies the precept, when, with fresh light He leads you into the doctrine or bestows brighter confidence as to good things to come. Oh yes, God is with us now, so that when He cries, “Seek you My face” our heart says to Him, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” These Sabbath gatherings—what do they mean to many of us but, “God with us”? That Communion Table—what does it mean but, “God with us”?

O, how often, in the breaking of bread and the pouring forth of the wine in the memory of His atoning death have we enjoyed His real Presence, not in a superstitious, but in a *spiritual* sense, and found the Lord Jesus to be “God with us”? Yes, in every holy ordinance, in every sacred act of worship, we now find that there is a door opened in Heaven and a new and living way by which we may come to the Throne of Grace. Is not this a joy better than all the riches of earth could buy? And it is not merely in speech that the Lord is with us, but God is with us, now, by powerful *acts* as well as words! “God with us,” why it is the inscription upon our royal standard which strikes terror to the heart of the foe and cheers the sacramental host of God’s elect.

Is not this our war cry, “The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge”? As to our foes within, God is with us to overcome our corruptions and frailties. And as to the adversaries of the Truth of God without, God is with His Church and Christ has promised that He always will be with her, “even to the end of the world.” We have not merely God’s Word and promises, but we have seen His acts of Grace on our behalf, both in Providence and in the working of His blessed Spirit. “The Lord has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people.” “In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem, also, is His tabernacle, and

His dwelling place in Zion. There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.”

“God with us”—O, my Brothers and Sisters, it makes our hearts leap for joy! It fills us with dauntless courage! How can we be dismayed when the Lord of Hosts is on our side? Nor is it merely that God is with us in acts of power on our behalf, but in emanations of His own life into our nature by which we are at first, new born, and afterwards sustained in spiritual life. This is more wonderful, still! By the Holy Spirit the Divine Seed which, “lives and abides forever,” is sown in our souls and from day to day we are strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.

Nor is this all, for as the masterpiece of Grace, the Lord, by His Spirit, even *dwells* in His people. God is not Incarnate in us as in Christ Jesus, but only second in wonder to the Incarnation is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Believers. Now is it, “God with us,” indeed, for God dwells in us! “Know you not,” says the Apostle, “that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?” “As it is written, I will dwell in them, and I will walk in them.” Oh, the heights and depths that are comprehended in those few words, “God with us”!

I had many more things to say, but time compels me to sum them up in brief. The Lord becomes “God with us” *by the restoration of His image in us*. “God with us” was seen in Adam when he was perfectly pure, but Adam died when he sinned—and God is not the God of the dead but of the living! Now we, in receiving back the new life and being reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, receive, also, the restored image of God and are renewed in knowledge and true holiness. “God with us” means sanctification—the image of Jesus Christ imprinted upon all His Brothers and Sisters.

God is with us, too, let us remember, and leave the point, *in deepest sympathy*. Brethren, are you in sorrow? God is, in Christ, sympathetic to your grief. Brothers and Sisters, have you a grand objective? I know what it is, it is God’s Glory—therein, also you are sympathetic with God and God with you. What, let me inquire, is your greatest joy? Have you not learned to rejoice in the Lord? Do you not joy in God by Jesus Christ? Then God also joys in you! He rests in His love and rejoices over you with singing, so that there is God with us in a very wonderful respect, inasmuch as through Christ our aims and desires are like those of God.

We desire the same thing, press forward with the same aim and rejoice in the same objects of delight. When the Lord says, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” our heart answers, “Yes, and in Him we are well pleased, too.” The pleasure of the Father is the pleasure of His own chosen children, for we also joy in Christ—our very soul exults at the sound of His name!

III. I must leave this delightful theme when I have said two or three things about OUR PERSONAL APPROPRIATION of the Truth of God before us. “God with us.” Then, if Jesus Christ is “God with us,” let us come to God without any question or hesitancy! Whoever you may be, you need no priest or intercessor to introduce you to God, for God has introduced Himself to you! Are you children? Then come to God in the Child Jesus who slept in Bethlehem’s manger. Oh, you gray heads, you need not keep

back, but like Simeon come and take Him in your arms, and say, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.”

God sends an Ambassador who inspires no fear—not with helmet and coat of mail, bearing lance, does Heaven’s Herald approach us—but the white flag is held in the hand of a Child, in the hand of One chosen out of the people—in the hand of One who died, in the hand of One who, though He sits in Glory, still wears the nail-prints. O Man, God comes to you as One like yourself! Do not be afraid to come to the gentle Jesus! Do not imagine that you need to be prepared for an audience with Him, or that you need the intercession of a saint, or the intervention of priest or minister!

Anyone could have come to the Babe in Bethlehem. The horned oxen, I think, ate of the hay on which He slept and feared not. Jesus is the Friend of each one of us, sinful and unworthy though we are. You, poor ones, you need not fear to come, for, look, He is born in a *stable*, and in a manger He is cradled! You have not worse accommodation than His! You are not poorer than He! Come and welcome to the poor man’s Prince, to the peasants’ Savior! Stay not back through fear of your unfitness—the shepherds came to Him in all their rags. I read not that they tarried to put on their best garments, but in the clothes in which they wrapped themselves that cold midnight they hastened, just as they were, to the young Child’s Presence. God looks not at garments, but at *hearts*, and accepts men when they come to Him with willing spirits, whether they are rich or poor. Come, then! Come, and welcome, for God is, indeed, “God with us.”

But, O, let there be no delay about it. It did seem to me, as I turned this subject over yesterday, that for any man to say, “I will not come to God,” after God has come to man in such a form as this, were an unpardonable act of treason! Perhaps you knew not God’s love when you sinned as you did. Perhaps, though you persecuted His saints, you did it ignorantly in unbelief. But, behold your God extends the olive branch of peace to you. He extends it in a wondrous way, for He, Himself, comes here to be born of a woman that He may meet with you who were born of women, too, and save you from your sin!

Will you not listen, now that He speaks by His Son? I can understand that you ask to hear no more of His Words when He speaks with the sound of a trumpet, waxing exceedingly loud and long, from amidst the flaming crags of Sinai. I do not wonder that you are afraid to draw near when the earth rocks and reels before His awful Presence! But now He restrains Himself and veils the splendor of His face, and comes to you as a Child of humble bearing, a carpenter’s son. O, if He comes so, will you turn your backs upon Him? Can you spurn Him? What better Ambassador could you desire? This Ambassador of peace is so tenderly, so gently, so kindly, so touchingly put, that surely you cannot have the heart to resist Him?

No, do not turn away, let not your ears refuse the language of His Grace, but say, “If God is with us, we will be with Him.” Say it, Sinner! Say, “I will arise and go to my Father and will say unto Him, Father, I

have sinned.” And as for you who have given up all hope. You who think yourselves so degraded and fallen that there can be no future for you—there is hope for you yet, for you are a *man*—and the next being to God is a man! He that is God is also Man, and there is something about that fact which ought to make you say, “Yes, I may yet discover, perhaps, brotherhood to the Son of Man who is the Son of God. I, even I, may yet be lifted up to be set among princes, even the princes of His people, by virtue of my regenerated manhood which brings me into relation with the Manhood of Christ and so into relation with the Godhead.” Fling not yourself away, O Man, you are something too hopeful, after all, to be meat for the worm that never dies and fuel for the fire that never can be quenched. Turn to your God with full purpose of heart and you shall find a grand destiny in store for you!

And now, my Brothers and Sisters, the last word to you is, let us be with God since God is with us. I give you for a watchword through the year to come, “Emmanuel, God with us.” You, the saints redeemed by blood, have a right to all this in its fullest sense. Drink it in and be filled with courage! Do not say, “We can do nothing.” Who are you that can do nothing? God is with you! Do not say, “The Church is feeble and fallen upon evil times”—no, “God is with us.” We need the courage of those ancient soldiers who were desirous to regard difficulties only as whetstones upon which to sharpen their swords!

I like Alexander’s talk—when they said there were so many thousands, so many millions, perhaps, of Persians. “Very well,” says he, “it is good reaping where the corn is thick. One butcher is not afraid of a thousand sheep.” I like even the talk of the old Gascon, who said when they asked him, “Can you and your troops get into that fortress? It is impregnable.” “Can the sun enter it?” he asked. “Yes.” “Well, where the sun can go, we can enter.” Whatever is possible or whatever is impossible, Christians can do at God’s command, for God is with us! Do you not see that the word, “God with us,” puts impossibility out of all existence? Hearts that could never be broken will be broken if God is with us!

Errors which never could be confuted can be overthrown by, “God with us.” Things impossible with men are possible with God! John Wesley died with that upon his tongue, and let us live with it upon our hearts—“The best of all is God with us.” Blessed Son of God, we thank You that You have brought us that Word. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Hebrews 1.*
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—249, 256 (VERS. 3, 4), 260.**

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END OF VOLUME 21

THE STAR AND THE WISE MEN

NO. 1698

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Now Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.’...When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”
Matthew 2:1, 2, 9, 10.

SEE, dear Friends, the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ even in His state of humiliation! He is born of lowly parents, laid in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes, but, lo, the principalities and powers in the heavenly places are in commotion! First, one angel descends to proclaim the advent of the new-born King and suddenly there is with him a multitude of the heavenly host singing glory unto God! Nor was the commotion confined to the spirits above, for in the heavens which overhang this Earth, there is a stir. A star is deputed on behalf of all the stars, as if he were the envoy and plenipotentiary of all worlds to represent them before their King! This star is put in commission to wait upon the Lord, to be His herald to men afar off, His usher to conduct them to His Presence and His bodyguard to sentinel His cradle!

Earth, too, is stirred! Shepherds have come to pay the homage of simple-minded ones—with all love and joy they bow before the mysterious Child—and after them from afar come the choice and flower of their generation, the most studious minds of the age! Making a long and difficult journey, they, too, at last arrive, the representatives of the Gentiles. Lo, the kings of Seba and Sheba offer gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh! Wise men, the leaders of their peoples, bow down before Him and pay homage to the Son of God! Wherever Christ is, He is honorable. “Unto you that believe He is honor.” In the day of small things, when the cause of God is denied entertainment and is hidden away with things which are despised, it is still most glorious! Christ, though a Child, is still King of kings! Though among the oxen, He is still distinguished by His star!

Beloved Friends, if wise men of old came to Jesus and worshipped, should not we come, also? My intense desire this morning is that we all may pay homage to Him of whom we sing, “Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given.” Let those of us who have long worshipped, worship anew with yet lowlier reverence and more tender love! And may God grant—oh, that He would grant it!—that some who are far off from Him, *spiritually*, as the Magi were far off, *locally*, may come, today, and ask, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have come to worship Him.” May feet that have been accustomed to broad roads, but unaccustomed to the narrow path, this day, pursue that way till they see Jesus and bow before Him with all their hearts, finding salvation in Him!

These wise men came naturally, traversing the desert—let us come spiritually, leaving our sins! These were guided by the sight of a star—let us be guided by faith in the Divine Spirit, by the teaching of His Word and all those blessed lights which the Lord uses to conduct men to Himself. Only let us come to Jesus! It was well to come unto the babe Jesus, led by the feeble beams of a star. You shall find it still more blessed to come to Him, now that He is exalted in the highest heavens—and by His own light reveals His own perfect Glory! Delay not, for this day He cries, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

This morning let us try to do three things. First, let us gather light from this star. Secondly, let us gather wisdom from those wise men. And thirdly, let us act as wise men helped by our own particular star.

I. First, then, LET US GATHER LIGHT FROM THIS STAR. May the Spirit of the Lord enable us to do so. I suppose each one of you has his own idea as to what this star was. It would seem to have been altogether supernatural and not a star, or a comet of the ordinary kind. It was not a constellation, nor a singular conjunction of planets—there is nothing in the Scriptures to support such a conjecture. In all probability it was not a star in the sense in which we now speak of stars, for we find that it moved before the wise men, then it suddenly disappeared, but again shone forth to move before them. It could not have been a star in the upper spheres like others, for such movements would not have been possible.

Some have supposed that the wise men went in the direction in which the star shone forth in the heavens and followed the changes of its position, but it could not, in that case, have been said that it stood over the place where the young Child was. If the star was at its zenith over Bethlehem, it would have been in its zenith over Jerusalem, too, for the distance is so small that it would not have been possible to observe any difference in the position of the star in the two places. It must have been a star occupying quite another sphere from that in which the planets revolve. We believe it to have been a luminous appearance in mid-air—probably akin to that which led the children of Israel through the wilderness—which was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Whether it was seen in the daylight or not we cannot tell. Chrysostom and the early fathers are wonderfully positive about many things which Scripture leaves in doubt, but as these eminent divines drew upon their imagination for their facts, we are not under bonds to follow them. They declared that this star was so bright as to be visible all day long. If so, we can imagine the wise men traveling day and night. But if it could be seen only by night, the picture before us grows far more singular and weird—like as we see these Easterners quietly pursuing their star-lit way, resting, perhaps, when the sun was up, but noiselessly hurrying at night through slumbering lands.

These questions are not of much importance to us and, therefore, we will not dwell long upon them. But here is a first lesson—if it should ever be that men should fail to preach the Gospel, God can conduct souls to His Son by a star! Ah, say not only by a star, but by a *stone*, a *bird*, a blade of grass, a drop of dew—

**“Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere.”**

Therefore, despond not when you hear that one minister has ceased to preach the Gospel, or that another is fighting against the viral Truth of

God! Their apostasy shall be to their own loss rather than to the hurt of Jesus and His Church! And, sad though it is to see the lamps of the sanctuary put out, yet God is not dependent upon *human* lights—He is the Shekinah light of His own holy place!

Mortal tongues, if they refuse to preach His Word, shall have their places supplied by books in the running brooks and sermons in stones! The beam shall cry out of the wall and the timber shall answer it! When chief priests and scribes have all gone out of the way, the Lord puts stars into commission and, once more in very deed, the heavens are telling the Glory of God and the firmament is showing His handiwork! Sooner than lack speakers for the Incarnate God, mountains and hills shall learn eloquence and break forth into testimony! Jehovah's message shall be made known to the utmost ends of the earth! God shall save His elect—He shall give to Christ to see of the travail of His soul and to be satisfied! His counsel shall stand and He will do all His pleasure. Hallelujah!

Now, when the Lord does use a star to be His minister, what is the order of His ministry? We may learn by this enquiry what kind of ministry God would have ours to be if we are stars in His right hand. We also shine as lights in the world—let us see how to do it. We notice, first, that star-preaching is all about *Christ*. We do not know what the color of the star was, nor the shape of the star, nor to what magnitude it had attained. These items are not recorded, but what *is* recorded is of much more importance. The wise men said—"We have seen His star." Then the star which the Lord will use to lead men to Jesus must be Christ's own star! The faithful minister, like this star, belongs to Christ—he is Christ's own man in the most emphatic sense.

Before we can expect to be made a blessing, dear Friends, we must, ourselves, be blessed of the Lord. If we would cause others to belong to Jesus, we must, ourselves, belong wholly to Jesus! Every beam in that star shone forth for Jesus. It was His star, always, only and altogether! It shone not for itself, but only as His star. As such it was known and spoken of—"we have seen *His* star." As I have already said, there is no note taken of any peculiarity that it had except one—that it was the star of the King! I wish that you and I, whatever our eccentricities or personalities may be, may never make so much of them as to attract men's attention to *us*. May people never dwell upon *our* attainments or *our* deficiencies, but may they always observe this one thing—that we are men of God, that we are ambassadors of Christ, that we are Christ's *servants*.

And may they plainly perceive that we do not attempt to shine for ourselves, or to make ourselves conspicuous, but that we labor to shine for Him—that His way may be known upon earth—His saving health among all people. Brothers, it is well for us to forget ourselves in our message and to sink ourselves in our Master! We know the names of several of the stars, yet they may, each one, envy that star which remains anonymous, but can never be forgotten because men who sought the King of Israel knew it as "His star"! Though you are but a very little star, twinkling for Jesus—however feeble your light may be—may it be plain that you are His star! And if men wonder *what* you are, may they never wonder *Whose* you are, for your very *life* it shall be written, "Whose I am and Whom I serve." God will not lead men to Christ by us unless we are Christ's heartily, wholly, unreservedly!

In His Temple, our Lord uses no borrowed vessels. Every bowl before the altar must be His own. It is not consistent with the Glory of God for Him to use borrowed vessels. He is not so poor as that comes to. This lesson is worthy of all acceptance. Are you in a hurry to preach, young man? Are you sure you are Christ's? Do you think it must be a fine thing to hold a company of people listening to your words? Have you looked at it in another light? Have you weighed the responsibility of having to speak as Christ would have you speak—of yielding yourself in your entire personality to the utterance of the mind of God? You must be consecrated and concentrated if you hope to be used of the Lord! If you have one ray, or 10,000 rays, all must shine with the one design of guiding men to Jesus! You have nothing to do, now, with any objective, subject, design, or endeavor, but Jesus only—in Him, for Him and to Him you must live from now on, or you will never be chosen of the Lord to conduct either wise men or babes to Jesus! See you well to it that perfect consecration is yours.

Note next that true star-preaching leads to Christ. The star was Christ's star, itself, but it also led others to Christ. It did this very much because it moved in that direction. It is a sad thing when a preacher is like a sign-post pointing the way but never following it on his own account! Such were those chief priests at Jerusalem—they could tell where Christ was born, but they never went to worship Him! They were indifferent altogether to Him and to His birth. The star that leads to Christ must always be *going* to Christ. Men are far better drawn by *example* than driven by exhortation. Only personal piety can be acknowledged by God to the production of piety in others. "Go," you say—but they will not go. Say, "Come," and *lead the way*—then they will come! Do not the sheep follow the shepherd? He who would lead others to Christ should go before them, himself, having his face towards his Master; his eyes towards his Master; his steps toward his Master; his heart towards his Master. We are so to live that we may, without boasting, exhort those around us to have us for an example! Oh, that all who think themselves to be stars would, themselves, diligently move towards the Lord Jesus!

The star in the East led wise men to Christ because it went that way itself. There is a wisdom in example which truly wise men are quick to perceive. This star had such an influence upon the chosen men that they could not but follow it—it charmed them across the desert! Such a charm may reside in you and in me—and we may exercise a powerful ministry over many hearts, being to them as loadstones, drawing them to the Lord Jesus. Happy privilege! We would not merely *show* the road, but induce our neighbors to enter upon it! We read of one of old, not that they told him of Jesus, but that "they brought him to Jesus." We are not only to tell the story of the Cross, but we are to persuade men to fly to the Crucified One for salvation! Did not the king, in the parable, say to his servants, "Compel them to come in"? Assuredly Jesus girds His own messengers with such a compelling power that men cannot hold out any longer, but must follow their lead and bow at His feet!

The star did not draw, "as it were with a cart rope," nor by any force, material or physical, yet it drew these wise men from the remote East right to the manger of the new-born Child. And so, though we have no arm of the law to help us, nor patronage, nor pomp of eloquence, nor pa-

rade of learning—yet we have a *spiritual* power by which we draw to Jesus thousands who are our joy and crown! The man sent of God comes forth from the Divine Presence permeated with a power which makes men turn to the Savior and live. Oh, that such power might go forth from all God's ministers! Yes, from all God's servants engaged in street preaching, in Sunday schools, in tract visitation and in every form of holy service! God uses those whose aim and intent it is to draw men to Christ. He puts His Spirit into them, by which Spirit they are helped to set forth the Lord Jesus as so lovely and desirable that men run to Him and accept His glorious salvation!

It is a small thing to shine, but it is a great thing to draw! Any castaway may be brilliant, but only the real saint will be attractive for Jesus. I would not pray to be an orator, but I do pray to be a soul-winner! Do not aim, beloved Brothers, at anything short of leading men to Jesus! Do not be satisfied to lead them to orthodox doctrine, or merely to bring them to a belief in those views which you hold to be Scriptural, valuable as that may be. It is to the Person of the Incarnate God that we must bring them! To His feet we must conduct them that they may worship Him! Our mission is not accomplished—it is a total failure—unless we conduct our hearers to the house where Jesus dwells and then stand over them, keeping watch over their souls for Jesus' sake.

Once more, the star which God used in this case was a star that stopped at Jesus. It went before the wise men till it brought them to Jesus and then it stood still over the place where the young Child was. I admire the manner of this star. There are remarkable stars in the theological sky at the present time—they have led men to Jesus, so they say—and now they lead them into regions beyond of yet undeveloped thought! The Gospel of the Puritans is “old-fashioned”—these men have discovered that it is unsuitable for the enlarged intellects of the times! And so these stars would guide us further, still. To this order of wandering stars I do not belong, myself, and I trust I never shall! Progress beyond the Gospel I have no desire for! “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When the star had come to the place where the young Child was, it stood still. And so should the gracious mind become settled, fixed, immovable. The wise men knew where to find that star and where to find the young Child by it—so be it with us! Oh, you that have, up to now, been diligent in leading souls to Christ, never indulge for a single moment the notion that you need a broader philosophy or a deeper spirituality than are to be found in Jesus! Abide in Him. Cry, “Oh God, my heart is fixed! My heart is fixed!” There is nothing beyond Christ which is worth a moment's thought. Do not lose your Paradise in Christ for another taste of that tree of knowledge of good and evil which ruined our first parents! Stick to the old points—your one subject, Christ; your one objective to bring men to Christ; your one glory the Glory of Christ! Standing by your Lord, and there, alone, from this day to the last day, you will secure a happy, honored and holy life.

They said of Greece, after her fall, that it had become so ruined that you might search for Greece in Greece and fail to find it! I fear I must say that some professed preachers of the Gospel have roamed so far away from it that you cannot find the Gospel in their Gospel, nor Christ, Him-

self, in the Christ they preach! So far have some diverged from the grand essential soul-saving Truth of God beyond which no man ought to dare to think of going, that they retain nothing of Christianity but the name! All that is beyond the Truth of God is a lie! Anything beyond Revelation is, at best, a minor matter—and, most probably, is an old wives' fable—even though he may be of the masculine gender who invented it!

Stand to your colors, you who hope to be used of the Lord! Live so that men shall find you, in 20 years' time, shining for Jesus and pointing to the place where the Savior is to be found, even as you are doing now. Let Jesus Christ be your ultimatum! Your work is done when you bring souls to Jesus and help to keep them there, by being, yourself, "steadfast, unmovable." Be not carried away from the hope of your calling, but hold fast, even, the form of sound words, for it may be that in letting go the form, you may lose the substance, also!

II. Now that we have somewhat rejoiced in the light of the star, let us see if we can GATHER WISDOM FROM THE WISE MEN. Perhaps you have heard the "much speaking" of tradition as to who they were, from where they came and how they traveled. In the Greek Church, I believe, they know their number, their names, the character of their retinue and what kind of ornaments were on their camel's necks—details which are not found in the Word of God you may believe or not, at your pleasure—and you will be wise if your pleasure is not to believe too much! We only know that they were Magi, wise men from the East, possibly of the old Parsee religion—watchers, if not worshippers, of the stars. We will not speculate about them, but learn from them.

They did not content themselves with admiring the star and comparing it with other stars, taking notes as to the exact date of its appearance, how many times it twinkled, when it moved, and all that. No, they used the teaching of the star *practically*. Many are hearers and admirers of God's servants, but they are not wise enough to make fit and proper use of the preaching. They notice the peculiarity of the preacher's language; how much he is like one divine; how much he is *unlike* another. They notice whether he coughs too often, or speaks too much in his throat—whether he is too loud or too low; whether he has not a provincial tone, whether there may not be about him a commonness of speech approaching to vulgarity—or, on the other hand, whether he may not be too ornate in his diction.

Such fooleries as these are the constant observations of men for whose souls we labor! They are perishing and yet toying with such small matters! With many it is all they go to the House of God for—to criticize in this paltry fashion. I have even seen them come to this place with opera glasses, as if they came here to inspect an actor who lived and labored to entertain their leisure hours! Such is the sport of fools! But these were wise men and, therefore, practical men, did not become star-gazers and stop at the point of admiring the remarkable star! No, they said, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him." They set out at once to find the new-born King, of whose coming the star was the signal!

Oh, my dear Hearers, how I wish that you were all wise in this same manner! I would sooner preach the dullest sermon that was ever preached than preach the most brilliant that was ever spoken if I could, by that

poor sermon, lead you quite away from myself to seek the Lord Jesus Christ! That is the one thing I care about! Will you never gratify me by enquiring after my Lord and Master? I long to hear you say, "What is the man talking about? He speaks about a Savior—we will have that Savior for ourselves! He talks about pardon through the blood of Christ. He speaks about God coming down among men to save them—we will find out if there is any reality in this pardon, any truth in this salvation. We will seek Jesus and find, for ourselves, the blessings which are reported to be laid up in Him."

If I heard you all saying this I should be ready to die of joy! Is not this a good day in which to set out to find your Savior? Some of you that have postponed it so long—would it not be well to set out at once, before this expiring year has seen its last day? These wise men appear to have set out as soon as they discovered the star. They were not among those who have time to waste in needless delays. "There is the star," they said, "away we go beneath its guidance. We are not satisfied with a star! We go to find the King whose star it is!" And so they immediately and resolutely set out to find Christ.

Being wise men, they persevered in their search after Him. We cannot tell how far they journeyed. Traveling was extremely difficult in those times. There were hostile tribes to avoid; the broad rivers of the Tigris and the Euphrates to cross; trackless deserts to penetrate—but they made nothing of difficulty or danger. They set out for Jerusalem and to Jerusalem they came, seeking the King of the Jews! If it is true that God has taken upon Himself our nature—we ought to resolve to find Him, let it cost what it may! If we must circumnavigate the globe to find a Savior, the distance and the expense ought to be nothing, so long as we may but reach Him! Were the Christ in the center of the earth, or in the heights of Heaven, we ought not to rest till we came to Him!

Everything that was necessary for their expedition, the wise men soon gathered together, regardless of expense—and off they went, following the star that they might discover the Prince of the kings of the earth! At length they came to Jerusalem and here new trials awaited them. It must have been a great trouble to them when they asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" and the people shook their heads as if they thought the question an idle one. Neither rich nor poor in the metropolitan city knew anything of Israel's King! The ribald multitude replied, "Herod is king of the Jews. Mind how you speak of another king, or your head may have to answer for it. The tyrant brooks no rival."

The wise men must have been more astonished, still, when they found that Herod was troubled. They were glad to think that He was born who was to usher in the age of gold, but Herod's face grew blacker than ever at the bare mention of a king of the Jews! His eyes flashed and a thundercloud was upon his brow! A dark deed of murder will come of it, though for the moment he conceals his malice. There is tumult all through the streets of Jerusalem, for no man knows what grim Herod may do, now that he has been agitated by the question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Thus there was a ferment in Jerusalem, beginning at the palace—but this did not deter the wise men from their search for the promised Prince.

They did not pack up their camels and go back and say, "It is useless to try to discover this questionable Person who is unknown, even, in the country of which He is King and who appears to be terribly unwelcome to those who are to be His subjects. We must leave to another day the solution of the question—'Where is He that is born King of the Jews?'" These earnest-minded seekers were not dispirited by the clergy and the learned men when they came together. To the chief priests and scribes the question was put—and they answered the enquiry as to where Christ would be born—but not a mother's son among them would go with the wise men to find this new-born King!

Strange apathy! Alas, how common! Those who should have been leaders were not leaders—they would not even be followers of that which is good, for they had no heart towards Christ. The wise men rose superior to this serious discouragement! If the clergy would not help them, they would go to Jesus by themselves. Oh, dear Friend, if you are wise, you will say, "I will find Christ, alone, if none will join me. If I have to dig to the center of the earth, I will find Him! If I have to fly to the sun, I will find Him! If all men put me off, I will find Him! If the ministers of the Gospel appear indifferent to me, I will find Him! The Kingdom of Heaven of old suffered violence and the violent took it by force, and so will I!"

The first Christians had to leave all the authorized teachers of the day behind and to come out by themselves—it will be no strange thing if you should have to do the same. Happy will it be if you are determined to go through floods and flames to find Christ, for He *will* be found of you! Thus these men were wise, because, having started on the search, they persevered in it till they found the Lord and worshipped Him.

Notice that they were wise because when they saw the star, again, "they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." While enquiring among the priests at Jerusalem, they were perplexed. But when the star shone out, again, they were at ease and full of joy—this joy they expressed—so that the Evangelist recorded it. In these days, very wise people think it necessary to repress all emotion and appear like men of stone or ice. No matter what happens, they are stoical and raised far above the enthusiasm of the vulgar. It is wonderful how fashions change and folly stands for philosophy! But these wise men were children enough to be glad when their perplexity was over and the clear light shone forth.

It is a good sign when a man is not ashamed to be happy because he hears a plain, unmistakable testimony for the Lord Jesus. It is good to see the great man come down from his pedestal and, like a little child, rejoice to hear the simple story of the Cross. Give me the hearer who looks not for fineries, but cries out, "Lead me to Jesus. I want a guide to Jesus and nothing else will suit me!" Why, truly, if men did but know the value of things, they would rejoice more to see a preacher of the Gospel than a king! If the *feet* of the heralds of salvation are blessed, how much more their tongues when they tell out the tidings of a Savior!

These wise men, with all their mystic learning, were not ashamed to rejoice because a little star lent them its beams to conduct them to Jesus! We unite with them in rejoicing over a clear Gospel ministry! For us, all else is darkness, sorrow and vexation of spirit. But that which leads us to our own glorious Lord is spirit, light and life! Better the sun should not shine than that a clear Gospel should not be preached! We reckon that a

country flourishes or decays according as Gospel light is revealed or withdrawn.

Now follow these wise men a little further. They have come to the house where the young Child is. What will they do? Will they stand looking at the star? No! They enter the house. The star stands still, but they are not afraid to lose its radiance and behold the Sun of Righteousness! They did not cry, "We see the star and that is enough for us! We have followed the star and it is all we need to do." Not at all! They lift the latch and enter the lowly residence of the Babe. They see the star no longer and they have no need to see it, for *there* is He that is born King of the Jews! Now the true Light has shone upon them from the face of the Child! They behold the Incarnate God!

Oh, Friends! How wise you will be if, when you have been led to Christ by any man, you do not rest in *his* leadership, but must see Christ for yourselves. How much I long that you may enter into the fellowship of the mystery, pass through the door and come and behold the young Child and bow before Him! Our woe is that so many are so unwise. We are only their guides, but they are apt to make us their end. We point the way, but they do not follow the road! They stand gazing upon *us*! The star is gone—it did its work and passed away—Jesus remains and the wise men live in Him. Will any of you be so foolish as to think only of the dying preacher and forget the ever-living Savior? Come, be wise and hasten to your Lord at once!

These men were wise, last of all—and I commend their example to you because when they saw the Child, they worshipped. Theirs was not curiosity gratified, but devotion exercised. We, too, must worship the Savior, or we shall never be saved by Him. He has not come to put away our sins and yet to leave us ungodly and self-willed. Oh, you that have never worshipped the Christ of God, may you be led to do so at once! He is God over all, blessed forever—adore Him! Was God ever seen in such a worshipful form? Behold He bows the heavens! He rides upon the wings of the wind! He scatters flames of fire! He speaks and His dread artillery shakes the hills—you worship in terror! Who would not adore the great and terrible Jehovah?

But is it not much better to behold Him here, allied to your nature, wrapped like other children in swaddling clothes—tender, feeble, next akin to yourself? Will you not worship God when He thus comes down to you and becomes your Brother, born for your salvation? Here, Nature itself suggests worship—O may Divine Grace produce it! Let us hasten to worship where shepherds and wise men and angels have led the way. Here let my sermon come to a pause even as the star did. Enter the house and worship! Forget the preacher! Let the starlight shine for other eyes. Jesus was born that you might be born again! He lived that you might live! He died that you might die to sin! He is risen and today He makes intercession for transgressors that they may be reconciled to God through Him.

Come, then! Believe, trust, rejoice, adore! If you have neither gold, frankincense, nor myrrh, bring your faith, your love, your repentance—and falling down before the Son of God, pay Him the reverence of your hearts!

III. And now I turn to my third and last point, which is this—LET US ACT AS WISE MEN UNDER THE LIGHT OF OUR STAR. We, too, have received light to lead us to the Savior. I might say that, for us, *many* stars have shone to that blessed end. I will, however, on this point content myself with asking questions. Do you not think that there is some light for you in your particular vocation, some call from God in your calling? Listen to me and then listen to God. These men were watchers of the stars—therefore a *star* was used to call them.

Certain other men, soon after, were fishermen—and by means of an amazing take of fish, the Lord Jesus made them aware of His superior power—and *then* He called them to become fishers of men! For a stargazer, a star; for a fisherman a fish! The Master-Fisher has a bait for each one of His elect and, often, He selects a point in their own calling to be the barb of the hook. Were you busy yesterday at your counter? Did you hear no voice saying, “Buy the Truth and sell it not”? When you closed the shop, last night, did you not think that soon you must close it for the last time? Do you make bread? Do you never ask yourself, “Has my soul eaten the Bread of Heaven?” Are you a farmer? Do you till the soil? Has God never spoken to you by those furrowed fields and these changing seasons—and made you wish that your heart might be tilled and sown?

Listen! God is speaking! Hear, you deaf, for there are voices everywhere calling you to Heaven! You need not go miles about to find a link between you and everlasting mercy—the telegraph wires are on either side of the road—God and human souls are near each other! How I wish that your common vocation would be viewed by you as concealing within itself the door to your high vocation! Oh that the Holy Spirit would turn your favorite pursuits into opportunities for His gracious work upon you! If not among the stars, yet among the flowers of the garden, or the cattle of the hills, or the waves of the sea may He find a net in which to enclose you for Christ! I wish that those of you who conclude that your calling could *never* draw you to Christ would make a point of seeing whether it might not be so. We are to learn from ants, swallows, cranes and conies—surely we need never be short of tutors!

It did seem that a star was an unlikely thing to head a procession of Eastern sages and yet it was the best guide that could be found! And so it may seem that your trade is an unlikely thing to bring you to Jesus and yet the Lord may so use it. There may be a message from the Lord to you in many a left-handed Providence. A voice for wisdom may come to you from the mouth of a donkey! A call to a holy life may startle you from a bush; a warning may flash upon you from a wall; or a vision may impress you in the silence of night when deep sleep falls upon men! Only be ready to hear, and God will find a way of speaking to you! Answer the question as the wise men would have answered it, and say, “Yes, in our calling there is a call to Christ.”

Then, again, what should you and I do better in this life than seek after Christ! The wise men thought all other pursuits of small account compared with this. “Who is going to attend to that observatory and watch the rest of the stars?” They shake their heads and say they do not know. These things must wait—they have seen His star and they are going to worship Him! But who will attend to their wives and families, and all besides, while they make this long journey? They reply that every lesser

thing must be subordinate to the highest thing. Matters must be taken in proportion and the search after the King of the Jews, who is the desire of all nations, is so out of all proportion *great* that all the rest must go!

Are not you, also, wise enough to judge in this sensible fashion? Do you not think, dear Friends, it would be well to use all tomorrow in seeking Jesus? It will be a leisure day—could you spend it better than in seeking your Redeemer? If you were to take a week and give it wholly to your own soul and to seeking Christ, would it not be well spent? How can you live with your *soul* in jeopardy? Oh that you would say, “I must get this matter right! It is an all-important business and I must see it is settled!” This would be no more than common sense. If you are driving and a trace is broken, do you not stop the horse and get the harness right? How, then, can you go on with the chariot of life when all its harness is out of order and a fall means eternal ruin? If you will stop driving to arrange a buckle for fear of accident, I would beg of you to stop *anything* and *everything* to see to the safety of your soul!

See how the engineer looks to the safety valve—are you content to run more desperate risks? If your house were not insured and you carried on a hazardous trade, the probability is you would feel extremely anxious until you had arranged that matter! But your soul is uninsured and it may burn forever—will you not give heed to it? I beseech you be just to yourself—kind to yourself. Oh, see to your eternal well-being! You are not certain that you will get home to dinner today. Life is frail as a cobweb. You may be in Hell before yon clock strikes one! Remember that! There is not a step between you and everlasting destruction from the Presence of God if you are as yet unregenerate—and your only hope is to find the Savior, trust the Savior, obey the Savior!

Therefore, like these wise men, put everything on one side and set out, now, upon an earnest, resolute, persevering endeavor to find Jesus! I was about to say—resolve to find Jesus, or to die. But I will change the words and say—resolve to find Him and live! When we do come near to Jesus, let us ask ourselves this question, “Do we see more in Jesus than other people do?” For if we do, we are God’s elect taught of God, illuminated by His Spirit! We read in the Scriptures that when these wise men saw the young Child, they fell down and worshipped Him. Other people might have come in, seen the Child and said, “Many children are as interesting as this poor woman’s Babe.” Yes, but as these men looked, they *saw*—all eyes are not so blessed!

Eyes that see are gifts from the All-Seeing One. Carnal eyes are blind. But these men saw the Infinite in the Infant. They saw the Godhead gleaming through the Manhood—the Glory hiding beneath the swaddling clothes! Undoubtedly there was a spiritual splendor about this matchless Child! We read that Moses’ father and mother saw that he was a “goodly child.” They saw he was “fair unto God,” says the original. But when these elect men saw that Holy Thing, which is called the Son of the Highest, they discovered in Him a Glory all unknown before! Then was His star in the ascendant to them—He became their All in All—and they worshipped with all their hearts!

Have you discovered such glory in Christ? “Oh!” one says, “you are always harping upon Christ and His Glory! You are a man of one idea!” Precisely so! My one idea is that He is “altogether lovely” and that there is

nothing out of Heaven nor in Heaven that can be compared with Him even in His lowest and weakest estate! Have you ever seen as much as that in Jesus? If so, you are the Lord's—go and rejoice in Him! If not, pray God to open your eyes until, like the wise men, you see and worship!

Lastly, learn from these wise men that when they worshipped, they did not permit it to be a mere empty-handed adoration. Ask yourself, "What shall I render unto the Lord?" Bowing before the young Child, they offered "gold, frankincense and myrrh," the best of metals and the best of spices—an offering to the King of gold! An offering to the Priest of frankincense! An offering to the Child of myrrh! Wise men are generous men. Consecration is the best education. Today it is thought to be wise to be always *receiving*—but the Savior said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." God judges our hearts by that which spontaneously comes from them—therefore, the sweet cane bought with money is acceptable to Him when given freely.

He does not tax His saints or weary them with incense, but He delights to see in them that true love which cannot express itself in mere words, but must use gold and myrrh, works of love and deeds of self-denial to be the emblems of its gratitude! Brothers and Sisters, you will never get into the heart of happiness till you become unselfish and generous! You have but chewed the husks of religion which are often bitter—you have never eaten of the sweet kernel until you have felt the love of God constraining you to make sacrifices! There is nothing in the true Believer's power which he would not do for his Lord—nothing of our substance which we would not give to Him—nothing in ourselves which we would not devote to His service!

God give you all Grace to come to Jesus, even though it is by the starlight of this sermon, for His love's sake! Amen.

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

THE FAR-OFF, NEAR—THE NEAR, FAR OFF NO. 2325

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1893.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 11, 1889.

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.”

Matthew 2:1-4.

I AM not going to expound the whole passage that I have read as a text, but I desire to help you to gather some lessons from this familiar narrative.

“When Jesus was born.” A stir begins as soon as Christ is born. He has not spoken a word. He has not worked a miracle. He has not proclaimed a single doctrine, but, “when Jesus was born,” at the very first, while as yet you hear nothing but infant cries and can see nothing but infant weakness, still His influence upon the world is manifest. “When Jesus was born, there came wise men from the East,” and so on. There is Infinite Power even in an Infant Savior! When Jesus is born in the heart and there are only the feeblest impulses towards righteousness and repentance with regard to sin, He makes a stir in our whole nature. The most distant faculty feels that something wonderful has happened. When Christ is formed in us, the hope of Glory, a sacred revolution commences within us! When Christ is born in a village, a town, a city—the first sinner converted, the first open-air sermon preached—the first giving away of sacred literature makes a stir! It is wonderful how soon it begins to manifest itself. Somebody or other is affected by the fact that Christ has come! He cannot be hid! The first match struck makes a great blaze. Jesus of Nazareth is so potent a factor in the world of mind that, no sooner is He there in His utmost weakness, a new-born King, than He begins to reign!

Before He mounts the Throne, friends bring Him presents and His enemies plan His death. Oh, that the Lord Jesus might be here, tonight, if it is but as new born, in some few hearts! There *will* be a result from Christ's coming, even though I preach Him very feebly—though you may say that I can only bring to you an Infant Christ—though my power of speech may fail me and I may but set Him forth in His littleness rather than in His greatness. When Christ is born, when Christ is only feebly

preached, when Christ is but stammered out, a great result comes of it and His name is made glorious! [AMEN!]

There were two results from Christ's coming, as there always will be, for this Child is not only a Savior to some, but also a stumbling block to others. His Gospel is either, "a savor of life unto life," or else, "a savor of death unto death." I want you, first, to notice the note of exclamation that we have in the first verse. "When Jesus was born, *behold.*" *Ecce!* Behold! There is something to look at, something good that is worth gazing upon. Behold it! *Here are far-off persons who come very near.* Wise men from the East come and *worship* the Infant Christ! But there is something to which there is no "behold" put, yet it is sorrowfully worth considering. *Here are near ones who are far-off*—Herod, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the chief priests and the scribes. They are as far from Christ as if He had been born in the distant East, while they who lived in the far country came as near to Him as if they, themselves, had dwelt at Bethlehem! So I have these two things to talk about, tonight—first, the extraordinary fact that many far-off ones are brought near, and the sad but almost equally extraordinary fact that many who are apparently very near never really come near to Jesus.

I. To begin, then, at the beginning. THERE ARE FAR-OFF ONES BROUGHT NEAR. God saves whom He wills to save. His Grace is most sovereign. You cannot see, as I do, so many persons brought to Christ without often wondering why they were brought. I have often seen the last first and the first last—people of whose conversion I would hardly have dreamed become converted, while other persons, for whom I have hoped and over whom I have prayed, remain unconverted! It is very delightful, as well as very amazing, to notice the strange way in which the Grace of God singles out men, and the marvelous measures which the God of Grace uses to bring these men to the feet of Jesus.

Well now, first, these people were *wise men*, magi, students of astronomy, learned in the lore of the ancients. Their philosophy was not a very true one—it was about as true as modern philosophy—which is not saying much. They believed very absurd things, these magi, almost as absurd as the scientists of the present day, perhaps not quite as ridiculous, for science has grown in absurdity, especially of late—but these men were professors of the philosophy of the period. They were the wise men. If they came from Media, they were probably fire-worshippers, or worshippers of the elements of nature. Theirs was a refined form of idolatry which is not to be excused, but still, if there can be any choice where all is bad, it is perhaps a little better than some others. They were very great students so far as their light went—they sought after knowledge and wisdom.

Well now, truth to tell, it is not many of this sort of people who come to Christ! His Doctrine is too simple for them. He lays the axe too near the root of the tree. His teaching is too plain. They are so wise that His wisdom baffles them! They know so much, as they think, yet His better and higher knowledge overshadows theirs and they cannot stand it and will not yield to Him. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." But here the Infinite Sovereignty of God calls these wise men first! No, I must not say *first*, for the *shepherds came*

first—but next to the shepherds, the Lord calls these wise men from the distant East. It has been truly remarked that the shepherds did not miss their way—they came to Christ at once, while the wise men, even with a star to guide them, yet missed their way and went to Jerusalem instead of to Bethlehem—and enquired at the palace of Herod instead of at the stable where the Christ was born. However, they did come to Christ, even if they did come in a roundabout way and make a blunder or two!

Here was the wonder, that they did come, and if I address myself, tonight, as I would do most respectfully, to any here who excel in human wisdom, how I wish they would join Divinity to their humanities! And if they know much, yet I long that with all their knowledge they would know Christ—and with all their getting that they would get understanding, for the science of Christ Crucified is the most excellent of all the sciences! It is the central one round which every true science will revolve in its proper place. And happy is the man whose solar system of knowledge has Christ in the very center of it. Still, if it is so, I shall not cease to wonder and bless God that He has, again, brought wise men, like Saul of Tarsus, and like these wise men from the East, to worship this new-born Savior!

Notice, also, that these men were not only wise men, which is one cause of our wonder that they sought Christ, but *they lived far away in the East*. We do not know the distance they had traveled, but it does not matter—it was a long way and probably a very difficult journey—in those days, at any rate. It did not seem likely, when this Child was born at Bethlehem, that worshippers should come outside of Judea, or that they should come from distant regions unknown to the Jews, themselves, yet God, in His mercy, called these men from the farthest East. Oh, that His love would light on some, tonight, who are strangers and foreigners, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, perhaps without God and without hope in the world! May His Grace call such! What a mass of people we are, and what odd people there must be here, whom none of us could describe!

After this morning's sermon, [Sermon #2099, Volume 35—*Concerning the Consolations of God—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] somebody told me that, had I known the story of one of my hearers, I would not have dared to describe him as correctly as I did. Happily I did not know that hearer—I am glad that I did not—my message should come all the more distinctly as a voice from God to him because it did so accurately describe him! But I will breathe this prayer, that somebody here, who is a stranger, even, to the very *form* of religion, someone who has never been in this house before, or in any other place of Christian worship, may be called by the mighty voice of God, attracted by the irresistible charms of Christ and may come and believe in the Incarnate God who took our flesh at Bethlehem, that He might bear our sin and bear us up to the Throne of God with Himself! Here was the double wonder, then, about the magi coming to Christ—they were unlikely men from an unlikely place. As we think of them, we are constrained to say, as we have often sung—*

***“How sweet and awful is the place,
With Christ within the doors,
While everlasting love displays***

***The choicest of her stores.
Pity the nations, O our God!
Constrain the earth to come!
Send Your victorious Word abroad,
And bring the strangers home.”***

And *they were singularly guided*, were they not? They were watching the midnight skies and they spied a strange star. According to astronomers, there was probably a conjunction of two planets about that date. When two planets were in conjunction in 1640, or about that date, it was said that such a conjunction must have taken place at about the time when Christ was born and that the wise men may have thought it was a new star. I do not, however, think that that can have been the case. It was probably not simply a star, but a marked appearance which moved through the heavens. Well now, it was a strange thing that they should see this star and more strange, still, that seeing it, they should put this and that together, and by their astrology, for, perhaps, it was nothing better, infer that some wondrous personage was born away there in Judea and they must needs go forth to find Him. They may have heard of the famous prophecy of Balaam; there might have been traditions in their country that the Coming Man was to be born in Judea. All that may have been, I do not know, but this I know—*God miraculously sent this star*. If men are not to be reached in any ordinary way, God's elect shall be brought to Him in an extraordinary way! If they are given to the study of the stars, God will write in that illuminated book which they are accustomed to read and they shall there see a new letter and learn something fresh concerning His will!

I have known the Lord meet with men in the midst of evil, in the very act of sin. We have known men struck down by the most amazing accidents and the most extraordinary chain of circumstances, men whom it seemed impossible to reach. Beloved, no man is beyond the reach of God! He has ways and means of enlightening the understanding, awakening the conscience and renewing the heart, of which we know but little. “Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere”—in the Heaven above and in the earth beneath—and in the waters under the earth! He has means of getting at the hearts of men and He will do it. If it cannot be done anyway else, He will make new stars. I was about to say, He will make new heavens and a new earth, but He will call His own. When Christ is born, the wise men from the East *must* come, and a star shall be sent to guide them. Perhaps, by some remarkable circumstances, you, my Friend, are here tonight. It was very unlikely that you should be here, but you have come into the Tabernacle that the Grace of God may arrest you, that the hand of Eternal Love may be laid upon your shoulder and that you may be taken prisoner for Christ, henceforth to be His servant and His, alone!

It is worth noticing, again, that these men *earnestly enquired*. Having once seen the star, they hurried off, no matter how long the journey, to find the new-born King, and they asked everybody to tell them the way to Him. They even went to the court of Herod to ask the way to find Christ! A man must have a deal of curiosity when he puts his head between the jaws of such a lion as Herod in order to find what he wants to know! I

wish that God would stir up that kind of curiosity and enquiry in many men's minds. The general way, now, is to put off the Truth of God with a huff, to suppose that it is not worth looking into. But the claims of the eternal Son of God, the claims of His Grace and of His Throne ought not to be treated so. May God give back to the people a spirit of enquiry into the things of God, so that they may not be as indifferent as the masses of our fellow citizens now are! May they begin to question and say, "Which is the way to Heaven? Who is this Christ? What is the plan of salvation?" If it is so, we shall soon have cause enough for joy and we shall praise the Sovereign Grace of God!

Being enquirers, these men were *singularly unprejudiced*. They said, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" "Jews?" Who cared for Jews? Even in those days, Jews were the subject of contempt, for they had aforetime been carried captive into the East. Although they are the very aristocracy of God, His chosen people, yet the nations looked down upon the Jews. Judah was a little paltry territory, insignificant and small, and many asked with Sanballat, "What are these feeble Jews?" But here are men from a great empire, like Persia or Media, asking about the King of the Jews! Surely there are still some candid men about, some who will enquire after Christ, even though they have to ask of Methodists, and Baptists, and the like! Oh, that men could break through the foolish shell of prejudice to enquire if these things are, indeed, so! The time was when the very word, "Evangelical," had a kind of contempt affixed to it. I am not sure that that time has quite yet passed. Yet, whatever others may say or do, let none of us be swayed by prejudice or disdain, but let us search and see whether these things are so.

And note again, that these men, being candid enquirers, were *wonderfully prompt*—"When Jesus was born, there came wise men from the East." Well now, I think that it would naturally strike you that if a man were born a king, there would be time enough to pay him homage when he grew up! To bring gold and frankincense, and myrrh, to a *baby*, does not always commend itself to wise men! Let us see the child become a youth and the youth become a man—then we may take this long journey to find His Royal Highness. But, no, when the King was *born*, the wise men came to Him! They must have started to find Him long before. I would that the Lord might put into the hearts of men, today, something like this energy and promptness about Divine things! If God was really Incarnate. If He did come here in human form, oh, come, let us go and find Him! Let us bow at His shrine and worship at His feet! Did He really die and die for guilty men? Did He, in their place, bear the penalty of their sin? Come, let us seek this "Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," and let us seek Him before another sun has risen!

And then see, dear Friends, how *supremely obedient* they were, how entirely surrendered to the Divine impulse that moved them, for they hastened to do what they were told to do and rejoiced as they bowed low before the new-born Child, worshipping and adoring Him. They were also abundantly generous with their offerings. They brought the best that they could find—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh—and they spread the royal gifts before the royal Child. Lord, send us converts like these wise men!

Send us men and women, in great multitudes, who will cheerfully obey, who will find a delight in worshipping Christ, in paying Him homage, giving to His service and in giving themselves to Him!

Thus I have tried to show you what the Sovereign Grace of God did when Christ was born. May the Lord, in His mercy, do the same to many here! Oh, how often has it happened that when I least know it, I was preaching to one who would become, afterwards, one of our best helpers, one of our most earnest Brothers, one of our most fervent Sisters! I hope that I am speaking to some such tonight—utter strangers as yet, who will be brought into this Church, or into some other Church of Jesus Christ—and become not a whit behind the very chief of the Apostles, though as yet they are not numbered with the household of faith!

II. But now, in the second place, I have a sad task. The other was a glad task, but now I have the sad task of noticing THE NEAR ONES FAR OFF.

Here, first, we read that *many were troubled about Christ*. He was but newly born and yet He troubled them. Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem was troubled with him. It is an unusual thing to hear of a king troubled by a baby! Proud Herod, the fire-eater, troubled by a Babe in swaddling bands, lying in a manger? Ah me! How little is the real greatness of wickedness—and how small a power of goodness may bring it grief! Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with Him. So, when some people hear the Gospel, and find that it has power in it, they are troubled. Herod was troubled because he feared that he should lose his throne. He thought that the house of David, in the Person of the newborn Child, would take possession of his throne, so he trembled and was troubled. How many there are who think that if religion is true, they will lose by it! Business will suffer. There are some businesses that *ought* to suffer and as true godliness spreads, they *will* suffer. I need not indicate them, but those who are engaged in them usually feel that they had better cry out, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” for they get their living by making and selling her shrines—and if their shrines are in danger and their craft is in danger—then they are troubled. There are such. I have known men who have been leaders in sin, ringleaders in sin, and they have thought that they would lose some of their followers through Christ’s coming, so they have been troubled.

But all Jerusalem was troubled with Herod. Why was that? It was most probably because they thought there would be contention. If there was a new King born, there would be a fight between Him and Herod, and there would be trouble for Jerusalem. So there are some men who say, “Do not bring that religion here! It makes such contention. One believes this, and one believes that, and another believes nothing at all. We shall have trouble in the family if we get religion into it.” Yes, you will—that is acknowledged in the Scriptures—for our Lord came to bring fire on the earth. He has come with a sword in His hand, on purpose, to fight against everything that is evil—and *there will be contention*. I do not wonder that the great lovers of ease are troubled!

But the fact is that many are troubled because the Gospel interferes with their sin. “If I become a Christian, I cannot live as I have been accus-

tomed to live,” says one, “so I will not believe the Gospel.” The great argument against the Bible is an ungodly life. If you probe to the bottom of the matter, some sinful pleasure is the reason of many a man’s infidelity. There is a practical reason against his repenting—he cannot give up his darling sin—he will not give it up, so he is troubled when Christ comes near. It is a terrible thing to cling to sin. That Spartan boy who caught a young fox and carried it in his bosom and then, lest the schoolmaster should see it, and chastise him, allowed the fox to go on eating into his flesh till it ate into his heart, is like you. You are hugging this fox, this wolf, this asp to your bosom all the while we are preaching to you! What comfort can we give you? Quit your sin, or quit all hope! Will you have your sin and go to Hell, or will you leave your sin and go to Heaven? You cannot have Christ and sin—the two are diametrically opposed. I will not mention what your sin may be. Let your own conscience tell you that. You cannot continue in the practice of any known sin, willfully and deliberately, and yet find any comfort from the Word of God, or from the Gospel! There must be, in your heart’s intent and resolve, the quitting of sin, or there cannot be the finding of the Savior!

I have told you, before, of the two Highlanders who wanted to row across a certain inlet on one occasion. They had been largely helping themselves to whisky before they got into the boat, but they began to row and they kept on rowing, but they made no progress. They could not understand how it was that, with all their rowing, they stayed in the same position till one said, “Sandy, did you pull the anchor up?” No, he had never pulled the anchor up, so there they were, with the anchor down and pulling away to no purpose! You must have that anchor up, young man, whether it is drink, or lust, or gambling, or pilfering. You are a fool if you pretend to row when you know that the anchor is still sticking in the mud!

Oftentimes, when a man is troubled about religion, he says, “If I become a Christian, I shall have to give up my pleasure.” Not that true religion requires us to give up *anything* which is real pleasure or, if it makes us give up what affords us pleasure, now, it changes our tastes so that it would *no longer* be a pleasure we could indulge. True religion gives us *new* pleasures—it takes away our halfpence and it gives us golden coin instead! It does better than that, but I cannot employ a figure good enough to describe the change! True religion never was designed to make our pleasures less and it does not make them less. But still some think that it will do so and, hence their trouble. You would be astonished if you knew why some men oppose true religion. The wife will not go to a place of worship. There shall not be a Bible in the house. They will not have their boy attending a Chapel where there is a Prayer Meeting, or they will not allow the master where he is apprenticed, to take the boy with him to the House of God. Men say and do all sorts of strange things when they are troubled by Christ—and it is not because they have any real ground for their perplexity. They are troubled about Christ very much for the same reason that Herod and Jerusalem were troubled about Him, certainly for no better reason.

Well now, this is very sad, that the Gospel, which is meant to be good news to men, should trouble them! That the heavenly offer of Free Grace

should trouble them. That to have Heaven's gate widely open before them should trouble them. That to be asked to wash themselves or to be washed in the blood of Christ should trouble them. Troubled by Infinite Mercy! Troubled by Almighty Love! Yet such is the depravity of human nature that to many who hear the Gospel every day, it is still nothing but a trouble to them.

Now there is another case here. It is the same man in another character. *There is one who plays the hypocrite.* "Yes," he says, "there is one who is born King of the Jews. Will you wise men kindly tell me all about it? You say you saw a star? When did the star appear? Be very particular. Did you take note of its movements? You say you saw it, and you saw it, and you saw it? What time in the evening was it first visible? What day of the month did it appear?" Herod is very particular in getting all the information that he can about that star. And now he sends for the doctors of divinity, and the scribes, and the priests, and he says, "When ought this Messiah that you talk about to be born, and where ought He to be born? Tell me." Herod, you see, is a wonderful disciple, is he not? He is sitting at the feet of the doctors. He is willing to be instructed by the magi and then he finishes up by saying to the wise men, "Go now. You go and worship the newborn King. You are quite right to have come all this distance to worship this Child. Be particular, too, to take notes as to where you find Him and then come and tell me about Him, that I, also, may go and worship Him."

So we always find that where Christ is, there is a Judas somewhere about. If the Gospel comes to any place, there is a certain number of persons who say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, we shall attend that place!" I know a certain town where there is one true preacher of the Gospel, who has won many to Christ—but there are a great many who go there who know nothing at all about Christ. Of course they go to what is called, "The Tabernacle," in that place, because it is the right place to attend! I know a town where there is one Church in which Evangelical Doctrine is preached, and the good people all used to go to, "St. Peter's." It was a kind of patent of respectability to have a pew at St. Peter's because good Evangelical Doctrine was preached there! Well now, that is just how it is with some persons nowadays. A certain number of people would think that all was wrong with them if they did not hear sound Doctrine, but all the while they have made up their minds that sound Doctrine shall never change their lives and shall never affect their inward character! They are hypocrites—just as this man, Herod, was! They will not have Christ to reign over them! They do not mind hearing about Him. They do not mind acknowledging, to a certain extent, His rights, but they will not yield allegiance to Him—they will not practically submit to His rule and become believers in Him. Am I not speaking to some such, tonight? I know that I am! Dear Friends, do not stay in that state, I pray you! You do not wish to be called a hypocrite—well then, if you cannot bear to be called by that name, do not be such a character. Be true! Come to Christ, bow at His feet, accept Him as your Lord, trust Him to save you and then rejoice in Him as your Savior and King!

But there were other characters beside the hypocrite who were troubled and they wore *the men who displayed their learning*. These were the scribes and the chief priests who looked in their Bibles and turned up that passage of the Prophet which said where Jesus was to be born. Now, I like these people for looking up their Bibles and studying the Scriptures—but what I do not like in them is that while they told Herod that Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, none of them said that they would go to Bethlehem and worship Him! Not a living soul of them, not a scribe or a chief priest said, “If this is the Messiah, who was to be born at Bethlehem—and this remarkable star makes us believe that it is even so—we will go with the wise men and worship Him.” No, not they! They were quite content to have the Sacred Roll and read it and know all about the Truth of God, and yet to leave it there!

I used to know, in my youth, certain very sound Calvinistic Brothers. I fancy that they were a little too sound, certainly sixteen ounces to the pound with an ounce or two of bone thrown in and, after they had had a glass or two of beer, they could talk over Scripture better than they could before. I think that the most of those people sleep in the dust. I hope that the whole tribe will—I mean those who live only upon *talking* sound Doctrine without feeling the power of it. But nowadays I meet people “mighty in the Scriptures,” yes, and very keen, too, upon Doctrine, who—

**“Could a hair divide
Betwixt the west and northwest side,”**

as regards points of Divinity, but as to charity to the poor, as to visiting the needy, as to caring for the souls of men, as to holy living and as to prevalence in prayer with God, they are nowhere at all! I pray you to dread a religion which is all in the Book! You must have it in the *heart*—you must have it in the *life*—or else this Child that was born at Bethlehem will only affect you so far that you turn over the Books of Scripture, and that is an end of the matter so far as you are concerned. Yes, yes, yes, know your Bible, that is good! But *practice* what your Bible tells you, for that is better! Yes, yes, yes, understand the Doctrines of Grace, be clear upon them—but love them, live them—for that is far better. Yes, yes, yes, be a sound Divine, but let us see a holy *humanity* about you as well. God grant that it may be so! Otherwise, I tell you, your book-learning will still leave you an enemy of Christ!

The saddest point is that *none of these people sought Christ*—not Herod with his hypocrisy, nor Jerusalem with its troubles, nor the scribes and priests with their ancient knowledge—none of them sought Christ! May God grant that no hearer of mine may be on that black list! Oh, may we all seek Jesus! May we all find Him! May we find Him tonight! We shall seek and find Him if we really felt in our hearts that hymn that we sang just before the sermon—

**“I need You, precious Jesus!
For I am full of sin.
My soul is dark and guilty,
My heart is dead within.
I need the cleansing fountain,
Where I can always flee,
The blood of Christ most precious,**

The sinner's perfect plea.

There are two prayers with which I wish to close my discourse. One is, "Lord, bring the far-off ones near tonight!" May I beg the thousands of Israel present, tonight, to pray that prayer? You cannot tell for whom you are praying, but you need not know. There may be persons here who are as far from God as they can be. To them I give this text, the word of our exalted Savior and Lord, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Look, look, look, look! Sinner, look unto Him and be saved!—

***"There is life for a look at the crucified One,
There is life at this moment for you."***

"For you." "For you." Then look! Look now and find it to be so!—

"There is life at this moment for you."

The other prayer, and I ask my Brothers and Sisters here who have power in prayer to pray it, is, "Lord, bring the near ones really near—these many who are always in this House and yet not in Christ!" No, I must not say these "many"—I mean these few—for there are now few who are in that condition. Lord, bring them in! One came the other Monday and said, "I am one of the few. I have been attending the Tabernacle for many years and yet I have never told you that I have found the Savior." And he came to confess his Master. There are still some few of that sort. Lord, bring them all in! You who are always hearers only, remember that text, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom"—that is, you people who have heard the Gospel ever since you were children—"the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out." Pushed aside—"cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Pray that it may not be so with one single hearer of mine tonight, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
MATTHEW 2:1-12.**

Verses 1, 2. *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him.* Observe here that when the Son of God was born into the world, it was in a very lowly village, the village of Bethlehem. Very naturally, the wise men supposed that "the King of the Jews" would be born in the palace, in the metropolis of the country, at Jerusalem. But it pleased the Lord that everything about Christ's birth should have the stamp of lowliness, that the poorest and humblest of men might understand that Christ took not upon Him the nature of princes, but the nature of men—not of the great ones of the earth, but of our common humanity. Hence Jesus was born of a lowly virgin and was but roughly cradled in a manger, and the village chosen as the place of His birth was Bethlehem, well-named the, "house of bread," for it is there that the Bread of our souls is found.

The Holy Child Jesus was born “in the days of Herod the king.” The last spark of sovereignty was just dying out. Herod, an alien, held the kingdom under the Roman Empire. Did not old Jacob’s prophecy say, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes”? Therefore is it expressly mentioned that Jesus was born “in the days of Herod the king.” We must also remember that although our Lord’s birth is full of every circumstance of humiliation, it has a wondrous glory about it. The Magi, probably from Persia—“wise men,” philosophers and theologians—heard in far-off lands of His fame and a star led them to His feet. “There came wise men from the East.” They supposed that the birth of Christ would be well known among the Jews and be a common theme of conversation. So, when they reached Jerusalem, they enquired, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” Ah, when the heart is awakened to the love of Christ, it often dreams that everybody else feels an equal interest in Him, but it is not so! The world is dead and cold to Christ and men look astonished when we ask the question, “Where is He? We have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” These wise men were not Unitarians who disbelieved the Deity of Christ. It has been said by some that they only meant that they came to pay Him the homage of a king. Then why did they not worship Herod, and why did Herod say that he wished to worship Him? It will not do, the thought is not to be endured for a single moment! The magi believed that He who was born King of the Jews was more than a human being—and they had come to worship him.

3. *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.* The wise men brought the best news that ever was told and yet it troubled people! Does the Gospel trouble you, my Friend? Then I am afraid you must be of Herod’s kith and kin. It is an ill sign of a man’s heart when that which is for the good of all men becomes a trouble to him! It is an ill stomach that turns good meat to poison. I suppose “all Jerusalem” was troubled with Herod because they knew that whenever this gloomy tyrant had a fit upon him, he was sure to draw blood somewhere—therefore they were troubled with him.

4. *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where Christ was to be born.* Think of this vile wretch taking to studying his Bible! Yet there are some who still do the same. Reckoning that gain is godliness and, therefore, turning godliness into gain for sinister motives, they would be religious and wish to be instructed in the Truths of the Bible. Such was Herod—so he gathered all the chief priests and scribes together and inquired of them where Christ was to be born.

5, 6. *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the Prophet, And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of you shall come a Governor that shall rule My people Israel.* Now, you see, what Herod did with an ill design was overruled for good, for thus we know on the highest authority that Christ was born at Bethlehem! The chief priests and scribes, great students of the Law of God, when they were assembled in the presence of

Herod, declared that, according to prophecy, Christ was to be born in Bethlehem.

7, 8. *Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when you have found Him, bring me word, again, that I may come and worship Him also.* Covering his bloody design with the pretense of reverence. There is never a worse sin in the world than that which a man covers over with the cloak of religion! Let us always beware of falling into this evil.

9, 10. *When they had heard the king, they departed and, lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.* You see, the light of the star was taken from them for a time, just as sometimes the delightful Presence of God is withdrawn from His people. Then, Beloved, you walk by faith, alone, and not by sight, as these men did. But oh, when the Light of God comes back, again—when, after hearing all the chattering of false priests and scribes, and all the talk of Herod the great one, they see the star again—how glad they are! When God sends to His people clear shinings after rain—the brightness of His Presence, after a time of gloom—then is it with them its it was with the wise men, “they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”

11. *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him.* The old Reformers used to say, “Here is a bone that sticks in the throat of the Romanists and they can neither get it up nor down, for it does not say, ‘They saw Mary and the young Child.’ The young Child is put *first*—they came to see *Him*—and it does not say that ‘they fell down and worshipped *them*.’ If ever there was an opportunity for Mariolatry, surely this was the one—when the Child was, as yet, newly-born and depended so much upon His mother. Why did not the magi say, ‘Ave Maria!’ and commence at once their Mariolatry?” Yes, but these were *wise men*—they were not priests from Rome, otherwise they might have done it.

11. *And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts of gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.* The best they had! Presents fit for a King—offered as the tribute of the country from which they came—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh being found in the East. It is well to bring to Christ the best we have, and the best of the best—“gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”

12. *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed to their own country another way.*

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THE SAGES, THE STAR AND THE SAVIOR

NO. 967

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 25, 1870
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen
His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.”
Matthew 2:2.*

THE Incarnation of the Son of God was one of the greatest events in the history of the universe. Its actual occurrence was not, however, known to all mankind, but was specially revealed to the shepherds of Bethlehem and to certain Wise Men of the East. To shepherds—the illiterate, men little versed in human learning—the angels in choral song made known the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord. And they hastened to Bethlehem to see the great sight, while the Scribes, the writers of the Law and expounders of it, knew nothing concerning the long-promised birth of the Messiah. No angelic bands entered the assembly of the Sanhedrim and proclaimed that the Christ was born.

And when the chief priests and Pharisees were met together, though they gathered around copies of the Law to consider where Christ should be born, yet it was not known to them that He was actually come, nor do they seem to have taken more than a passing interest in the matter, though they might have known that then was the time spoken of by the Prophets when the great Messiah should come. How mysterious are the dispensations of Divine Grace. The base things are chosen and the eminent are passed by! The advent of the Redeemer is revealed to the shepherds who kept their flocks of sheep by night, but not to the shepherds whose benighted sheep were left to stray. Admire, then, the Sovereignty of God.

The glad tidings were made known also to Wise Men, magi, students of the stars and of old Prophetic books from the far-off East. It would not be possible to tell how far off their native country lay. It may have been so distant that the journey occupied nearly the whole of the two years of which they spoke concerning the appearance of the star. Traveling was slow in those days, surrounded with difficulties and many dangers. They may have come from Persia, or India, or Tartary, or even from the mysterious land of Sinim, now known to us as China. If so, strange and uncouth must have been the speech of those who worshipped around the young Child at Bethlehem, yet needed He no interpreter to understand and accept their adoration.

Why was the birth of the King of the Jews made known to these foreigners, and not to those nearer home? Why did the Lord select those who were so many hundreds of miles away, while the children of the kingdom, in whose very midst the Savior was brought forth, were yet strangely ignorant of His Presence? See here again another instance of the Sovereignty of God. Both in shepherds and in Eastern magi gathering around the young Child, I see God dispensing His favors as He wills and, as I see it, I exclaim, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father. For so it seemed good in Your sight."

Herein we see again another instance of God's sovereign will—for as of old there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah the Prophet, but unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto the woman of Sarepta. So many there were who were called wise men among the Jews, but unto none of them did the star appear. But it shone on Gentile eyes, and led a chosen company from the ends of the earth to bow at Emmanuel's feet.

Sovereignty in these cases clothed itself in the robes of mercy. It was great mercy that regarded the low estate of the shepherds, and it was far-reaching mercy which gathered from lands which lay in darkness a company of men made wise unto salvation. Mercy wearing her resplendent jewels was present with Divine Sovereignty in the lowly abode of Bethlehem. Is it not a delightful thought, that around the cradle of the Savior, as well as around His Throne in the highest Heaven, these two attributes meet? He makes known Himself—and here is mercy. But it is to those whom He has chosen—and here He shows that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.

We will now endeavor to learn a practical lesson from the story of the Wise Men who came from the East to worship Christ. We may, if God the Holy Spirit shall teach us, gather such instruction as may lead us also to become worshippers of the Savior, and joyful believers in Him. Notice, first, their enquiry—may many of us become enquirers upon the same matter—"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" Notice, secondly, their encouragement—"We have seen His star." Because they had seen His star they felt bold to ask, "Where is He?" And then, thirdly, their example—"We have come to worship Him."

I. THEIR ENQUIRY—"Where is He?" Many things are evident in this question. It is clear that when the Wise Men thus enquired, there was in their minds awakened interest. The King of the Jews was born, but Herod did not ask, "Where is He?" until his jealousy was excited, and then he asked the question in a malicious spirit. Christ was born at Bethlehem, near Jerusalem. Yet throughout all the streets of the holy city there were no enquirers, "Where is He?" He was to be the Glory of Israel, and yet in

Israel there were few, indeed, who, like these Wise Men, asked the question, "Where is He?"

My dear Hearers, I will believe that there are some here this morning whom God intends to bless, and it will be a very hopeful sign that He intends to do so, if there is an interest awakened in your mind concerning the work and Person of the Incarnate God. Those who anxiously desire to know of Him are but a slender company. Alas, when we preach most earnestly of Him, and tell of His sorrows as the Atonement for human sin, we are compelled to lament most bitterly the carelessness of mankind, and enquire mournfully—

***"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by;
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"***

He is despised and rejected of men. Men see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. But there are a chosen number who enquire diligently, and who come to receive Him. To these He gives power to become the sons of God. A happy circumstance it is, therefore, when there is interest evinced. Interest is not always evinced in the things of Christ, even by our regular hearers. It gets to be a mere mechanical habit to attend public worship. You become accustomed to sit through such a part of the service, to stand and sing at such another time, and to listen to the preacher with an apparent attention during the discourse.

But to be really interested, to long to know what it is all about—to know especially whether you have a part in it—whether Jesus came from Heaven to save *you*. Whether for *you* He was born of the virgin—to make such personal enquiries with deep anxiety is far from being a general practice—would God that all who have ears to hear would hear in Truth. Wherever the Word is heard with solemn interest, it is a very encouraging sign. It was said of old, "They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward."

When a man listens with deep attention to the Word of God, searches God's Book, and engages in thoughtful meditation with the view of understanding the Gospel, we have much hope of him! When he feels that there is something weighty and important, something worth the knowing in the Gospel of Jesus, then are we encouraged to hope good things of him.

But in the case of the Wise Men we see not only interest evinced, but belief avowed. They said, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" They were, therefore, fully convinced that He was the King of the Jews, and had lately been born. As a preacher I feel it to be a great mercy that I have to deal generally with persons who have some degree of belief concerning the things of God. Would to God we had more missions to those who have no sort of faith and no knowledge of Christ. And may the day come when everywhere Jesus Christ shall be known. But here at home with the most of you we have something to begin with.

You do believe somewhat concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was born King of the Jews. Set much store by that which you have already believed. I count it no small advantage to a young man to believe his Bible is true. There are some who have a hard fight to reach so far as that, for infidel training has warped their minds. It is not, of course, an advantage which will save you—for many go down to Hell believing the Scriptures to be true—and thus they accumulate guilt upon themselves from that very fact.

But it is a fine vantage ground to occupy, to be assured that you have God's Word before you, and not to be troubled with questions about its Inspiration and authenticity. O that you may go from that point of faith to another, and become a hearty believer in Jesus! These Wise Men were so far advanced that they had some leverage for a further lift of faith, for they believed that Christ was born, and born a King. Many who are not saved, yet know that Jesus is the Son of God. We have not to argue with you this morning to bring you out of Socinianism—no, you believe Jesus to be the Divine Savior.

Nor have we to reason against doubts and skepticisms concerning the Atonement, for these do not perplex you. This is a great mercy. You certainly stand in the position of highly favored persons. I only trust you may have Divine Grace given you to avail yourselves of the favorable position in which God has placed you. Value what you have already received. When a man's eyes have long been closed in darkness, if the oculist gives him but a little light he is very thankful for it—he is hopeful that the eye is not destroyed, that perhaps by another operation further scales may be removed—and the full light may yet stream in upon the darkened eyeballs.

So, dear Friend, be thankful for any light. O Soul, so soon to pass into another world, so sure to be lost except you have the Divine Light, so certain to be cast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—be thankful for a spark of heavenly light! Prize it, treasure it, be anxious about it that it may come to something more, and who knows but yet the Lord will bless you with the fullness of His Truth?

When the great bridge across the Niagara was made, the difficulty was to pass the first rope across the broad stream. I have read that it was accomplished by flying a kite, and allowing it to fall on the opposite bank. The kite carried across a piece of string, then to the string was tied a line, and to the line a rope, and to the rope a stronger rope, and by-and-by Niagara was spanned, and the bridge was finished.

Even thus, by degrees, God works. It is a fair sight to see in human hearts a little interest concerning Divine things, a little desire after Christ, a feeble wish to know who He is and what He is, and whether He is available to the sinner's case. This hunger will lead to a craving after more, and that craving will be followed by another, till at last the soul shall find

her Lord and be satisfied in Him. In the Wise Men's case, therefore, we have, as I trust we have in some here, interest evinced, and a measure of belief avowed.

Furthermore, in the case of the Wise Men, we see ignorance admitted. Wise men are never above asking questions, because they are wise men—so the Magi asked, “Where is He?” Persons who have taken the name and degree of wise men, and are so esteemed, sometimes think it beneath them to confess any degree of ignorance, but the really wise think not so. They are too well instructed to be ignorant of their own ignorance. Many men might have been wise if they had but been aware that they were fools. The knowledge of our ignorance is the doorstep of the temple of knowledge.

Some think they know, and therefore never know. Had they known that they were blind, they would soon have been made to see, but because they say, “We see,” therefore their blindness remains upon them. Beloved Hearer, do you want to find a Savior? Would you gladly have all your sins blotted out? Would you be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ? Then blush not to enquire—admit that you do not know. How should you know if Heaven teach you not? How should any man attain the knowledge of Divine things, unless it be given him from Above?

We must all be taught of the Spirit of God, or be fools forever. To know that we need to be taught of the Holy Spirit is one of the first lessons that the Holy Spirit Himself teaches us. Admit that you need a Guide, and diligently enquire for one. Cry to God to lead you, and He will be your Instructor. Be not high-minded and self-sufficient. Ask for heavenly light, and you shall receive it. Is it not better to ask God to teach you, than to trust to your own unaided reason? Bow, then, the knee—confess your aptness to err, and say, “What I know not, teach me.”

Notice, however, that the Wise Men were not content with admitting their ignorance, but in their case there was information entreated. I cannot tell where they began to ask. They thought it likeliest that Jesus would be known at the metropolitan city. Was He not the King of the Jews? Where would He be so certain to be known as at the Capital? They went, therefore, to Jerusalem. Perhaps they asked the guards at the gate, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” and the guards laughed them to scorn, and replied, “We know no king but Herod.”

Then they met a loiterer in the streets, and to him they said, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” and he answered, “What care I for such crazy questions? I am looking for a drinking companion.” They asked a trader, but he sneered, and said, “Never mind kings, what will you buy, or what have you to sell?” “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” said they to a Sadducee, and he replied, “Be not such fools as to talk in that fashion, or if you do, pray call on my religious friend the Pharisee.”

They passed a woman in the streets, and asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" but she said, "My child is sick at home, I have enough to do to think of my poor babe. I care not who is born, or who may die beside." When they went to the very highest quarters, they obtained but poor information, but they were not content till they had learned all that could be known. They did not know, at first, where the new-born King was, but they used every means to find Him and asked information on all hands.

It is delightful to see the holy eagerness of a soul which God has quickened. It cries, "I must be saved. I know something of the way of salvation, I am grateful for that, but I do not know all I want to know, and I cannot rest satisfied till I do. If beneath the canopy of Heaven a Savior is to be found, I will have Him. If that Book can teach me how to be saved, I will turn its pages day and night. If any book within my reach may help me, I will spare no midnight oil if I may but in the reading find out Christ my Savior.

"If there is one whose preaching has been blessed to the souls of others, I will hang on his lips, if perhaps the Lord may be blessed to me, for Christ I must have—it is not I *may* or I *may not* have Him, but I *must* have Him! My hunger is great for this Bread of Heaven, my thirst insatiable for this Water of Life. Tell me, Christians, tell me, wise men, tell me, good men, tell me any of you who can tell—where is He that is born King of the Jews?—for Christ I must have, and I long to have Him now."

Notice further, that in reference to these Wise Men from the East, there was for their search after Christ a motive declared. "Where is He," said they, "that we may go and worship Him?" Ah, Soul, and if you would find Christ, let it be your motive that you may be saved by Him, and that from now on and forever you may live to His Glory. When it comes to this, that you do not hear the Gospel merely as a habit, but because you long to obtain its salvation, it will not be long before you will find Him. When a man can say, "I am going up to the House of God this morning, and O may God meet with me there," he will not long go there in vain.

When a hearer can declare, "As soon as I take my seat in the congregation, my one thought is, 'Lord, bless my soul this day.'" He cannot for long be disappointed. Usually in going up to God's House we get what we go for. Some come because it is the custom, some to meet a friend, some scarcely know why. But when you know what you come for, the Lord who gave you the desire will gratify it. I was pleased with the word of a dear sister this morning when I came in at the back gate. She said to me, "My dear Sir, my soul is very hungry this morning. May the Lord give you bread for me."

I believe that food convenient will be given. When a sinner is very hungry after Christ, Christ is very near to him. The worst of it is, many of you do not come to find Jesus. It is not He you are seeking. If you were seek-

ing Him, He would soon appear to you. A young woman was asked during a revival, "How is it you have not found Christ?" "Sir," she said, "I think it is because I have not sought Him." It is so.

None shall be able to say at the last, "I sought Him, but I found Him not." In all cases at the last, if Jesus Christ is not found, it must be because He has not been devoutly, earnestly, importunately sought. For His promise is, "Seek, and you shall find." These Wise Men are to us a model in many things, and in this among the rest—that their motive was clear to themselves, and they avowed it to others. May all of us seek Jesus that we may worship Him! There was about the Wise Men an intense earnestness which we would delight to see in any who as yet have not believed in Jesus.

They were evidently not triflers. They came a long way. They underwent many fatigues, they spoke about finding the new-born King in a practical, common-sense way. They were not put off with this rebuff or that. They desired to find Him, and find Him they would. It is most blessed to see the work of the Spirit in men's hearts impelling them to long for the Savior to be their Lord and King. And so to long for Him that they mean to have Him, and will leave no stone untamed, by the Holy Spirit's help, but what they will be able to say, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write, and He is become our salvation."

Am I, at this moment, speaking to anybody in particular? I trust I am. Some years ago there was a young man, who, upon such a morning as this—cold, snowy, dark—entered a House of Prayer, as you have done today. I thought, as I came here, this morning, of that young man. I said to myself, "This morning is so very forbidding that I shall have a very small congregation, but perhaps among them there will be one like that young man."

To be plain with you, it comforted me to think that the morning when God blessed *my soul*, the preacher had a very small congregation, and it was cold and bitter, and therefore I said to myself this morning, "Why should not I go up merrily to my task—and preach if there should only be a dozen there?" For Jesus may intend to reveal Himself to some one as He did to me! And that someone may be a soul-winner, and the means of the salvation of tens of thousands in years to come. I wonder if that will occur to that young man yonder, for I trust he has the enquiry of the Wise Men upon his lips?

I trust he will not quench those desires which now burn within him, but rather may the spark be fanned to a flame, and may this day witness his decision for Jesus. Oh, has the Lord looked on that young woman, or on that dear child, or on yonder aged man? I know not who it may be, but I shall indeed bless God this morning if the cry may be heard from many a lip, "Sir, what must I do to be saved? Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

II. Having spoken of their enquiry, I shall now notice THEIR ENCOURAGEMENT. Something encouraged these Wise Men to seek Jesus. It was this, “We have seen His star.” Now, the most of you seekers after Christ have a great encouragement in the fact that you have heard His Gospel. You live in a land where you have the Scriptures, where the ordinances of God’s house are freely dispensed. These are, as it were, Jesus Christ’s star. They are meant to lead you to Himself. Here, observe, that to see His star was a great favor. It was not given to all the dwellers in the East or West to see His star.

These men, therefore, were highly privileged. It is not given to all mankind to hear the Gospel, Jesus is not preached, even, in all our *streets*. His Cross is not lifted high even in every place that is dedicated to His worship. You are highly favored, O my Friend, if you have seen the star, the Gospel, which points to Jesus! To see the star involved these Wise Men in great responsibility. For, suppose they had seen His star and had not set out to worship Him? They would have been far more guilty than others, who, not having received such an indication from Heaven, would not have been able to set it at nothing. Oh, think of the responsibility of some of you, who in your childhood heard of a Savior, for whom a mother has wept many tears—you know the Truth—in the theory of it at any rate. You have the responsibility of having seen His star.

The Wise Men did not regard the favor of seeing the star as a matter to be rested in. They did not say, “We have seen His star, and that is enough.” Many say, “Well, we attend a place of worship regularly, is not that enough?” There are those who say, “We were baptized, Baptism brought regeneration with it. We come to the sacrament, and do we not get Grace through it?” Poor Souls! The star which leads to Christ they mistake for Christ Himself, and worship the *star* instead of the Lord. O may none of you ever be so foolish as to rest in outward ordinances! God will say to you, if you depend upon sacraments or upon public worship, “Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto Me. Who has required this at your hands, to tread My courts?”

What cares God for outward forms and ceremonies? When I see men putting on white gowns, and scarves and bands, and singing their prayers, and bowing and scraping, I wonder what sort of god it is they worship! Surely he must have more affinity with the gods of the heathen than with the great Jehovah who has made the heavens and the earth! Mark you well the exceeding glory of Jehovah’s works on sea and land! Behold the heavens and their countless hosts of stars! Listen to the howling of the winds and the rush of the hurricane—think of Him who makes the clouds His chariot, and rides on the wings of the wind—and then consider whether this Infinite God is like unto that being to whom it is a matter of grave consequence whether a cup of wine is lifted in worship as high as a man’s hair or only as high as his nose!

O foolish generation, to think that Jehovah is contained in your temples made with hands, and that He cares for your vestments, your processions, your postures, and your genuflections! You fight over your ritual—even to its jots and tittles do you consider it. Surely you know not the glorious Jehovah if you conceive that these things yield any pleasure to Him. No, Beloved, we desire to worship the Most High in all simplicity and earnestness of spirit, and never to stop in the outward form, lest we be foolish enough to think that to see the star is sufficient, and therefore fail to find the incarnate God.

Note well, that these Wise Men did not find satisfaction in what they had themselves done to reach the Child. As we have observed, they may have come hundreds of miles, but they did not mention it. They did not sit down and say, “Well, we have journeyed across deserts, over hills, and across rivers, it is enough.” No, they must find the new-born King, nothing else would satisfy them. Do not say, dear Hearer, “I have been praying now for months, I have been searching the Scriptures for weeks, to find the Savior.” I am glad you have done so, but do not rest in it. You must get Christ, or else you will perish, after all your exertion and your trouble. Jesus you want, nothing more than Jesus, but nothing less than Jesus.

Nor must you be satisfied with traveling in the way the star would lead you, you must reach HIM. Do not stop short of eternal life. Lay hold on it, not merely seek it and long for it, but lay hold on eternal life, and do not be content until it is an ascertained fact with you that Jesus Christ is yours. I should like you to notice how these Wise Men were not satisfied with merely getting to Jerusalem. They might have said, “Ah, now we are in the land where the Child is born, we will be thankful and sit down.”

No, but “Where is He?” He is born at Bethlehem. Well, they get to Bethlehem, but we do not find that when they reached that village they said, “This is a favored spot, we will sit down here.” Not at all, they wanted to know where the *house* was. They reached the house, and the star got over it. It was a fair sight to see the cottage with the star above it, and to think that the new-born King was there—but that did not satisfy them. No, they went right into the house. They rested not till they saw the Child Himself, and had worshipped Him! I pray that you and I may always be so led by the Spirit of God that we may never put up with anything short of a real grasping of Christ, a believing sight of Christ as a Savior, as OUR Savior, as our Savior even now.

If there is one danger above another that the young seeker should strive against, it is the danger of stopping short of a hearty faith in Jesus Christ. While your heart is tender like wax, take care that no seal but the seal of Christ is set on you. Now that you are uneasy and out of comfort, make this your vow, “I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me.” It would be better for you never to be awakened than to be lulled to sleep by Satan—for a sleep that follows upon a partial conviction is generally a

deeper slumber than any other that falls upon the sons of men. My Soul, I charge you get to the blood of Christ, and be washed in it!

Get to the life of Christ, and let that life be in you, that you are, indeed, God's child. Put not up with suppositions, be not satisfied with appearances and perhaps! Rest nowhere till you have said—God having given you the faith to say it—"He loved me and gave Himself for me, He is all my salvation and all my desire." See, then, how these Wise Men were not made by the sight of the star to keep away from Christ, but they were encouraged by it to come to Christ. And may you be encouraged, dear Seeker, this morning, to come to Jesus by the fact that you are blessed with the Gospel. You have an invitation given you to come to Jesus. You have the motions of God's Spirit upon your conscience, awakening you. O come, come and welcome! And let this strange winter's day be a day of brightness and of gladness to a many a seeking soul.

I have turned my thoughts on this last head into verse, and I will repeat the lines—

***O where is Christ my King?
I languish for the sight,
Gladly would I fall to worshipping,
For He's my soul's delight.
Himself, Himself alone,
I seek no less, no more,
Or on His Cross, or on His Throne,
I'd equally adore.
The Sages saw His star,
But rested not content,
The way was rough, the distance far,
Yet on that way they went.
And now my thoughts discern
The sign that Christ is near,
With love unquenchable I burn,
To enjoy His company.
No star nor heavenly sign
My soul's desire can fill,
For Him, my Lord, my King Divine,
My soul is thirsting still.***

III. And now we shall conclude, by considering THE EXAMPLE of these Wise Men. They came to Jesus, and in so doing, they did three things—they saw, they worshipped, they gave. Those are three things which every Believer here may do this morning again, and which every Seeker should do for the first time.

First, they saw the young Child. I do not think they merely said, "There He is," and so ended the matter, but they stood still and looked. Perhaps for some minutes they did not speak. About His very face I do not doubt there was a supernatural beauty. Whether there was a beauty to everyone's eye I know not, but to *theirs* there was assuredly a superhuman attraction. The Incarnate God! They gazed with all their eyes. They looked,

and looked, and looked again. They glanced at His mother, but they fixed their eyes on Him.

“They saw the young Child.” So, too, this morning let us think of Jesus with fixed and continuous thought. He is God, He is Man, He is the Substitute for sinners. He is willing to receive all who trust Him. He will save, and save this morning, every one of us who will rely upon Him. Think of Him. If you are at home this afternoon, spend the time in thinking upon Him. Bring Him before your mind’s eye, consider and admire Him. Is it not a wonder that God should enter into union with man and come to this world as an Infant? He who made Heaven and earth hangs on a woman’s breast for us!

For our redemption the Word was made flesh! This Truth will breed the brightest hope within your soul. If you follow that Babe’s wondrous life till it ends at the Cross, I trust you may there be able to give such a look at Him that, like when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and they that looked were healed, so you, looking, may be healed of all your spiritual diseases! Though it is many a year since I first looked to Him, I desire to look to Jesus again. The incarnate God! My eyes swim with tears to think that He who might have crushed me into Hell forever, becomes a young Child for my sake!

See Him, all of you, and seeing, worship. What did the Wise Men do next? They worshipped Him. We cannot properly worship a Christ whom we do not know. “To the unknown God” is poor worship. But, oh, when you think of Jesus Christ, whose goings forth were of old from everlasting! The eternally-begotten Son of the Father! And then when you see Him coming here to be a Man of the substance of His mother, and know and understand why He came and what He did when He came—then you must fall down and worship Him—

**“Son of God, to You we bow,
You are Lord, and only You.
You the woman’s promised Seed;
You who did for sinners bleed.”**

We worship Jesus! Our faith sees Him go from the manger to the Cross, and from the Cross right up to the Throne, and there where Jehovah dwells, amidst the insufferable Glory of the Divine Presence stands the Man, the very Man who slept at Bethlehem in the manger! There He reigns as Lord of lords. Our souls worship Him again. You are our Prophet, every word You say, Jesus, we believe and desire to follow—You are our Priest, Your sacrifice has made us clean—we are washed in Your blood. You are our King! Command, we will obey. Lead on, and we will follow. We worship You. We should spend much time in worshipping the Christ, and He should ever have the highest place in our reverence.

After worshipping, the Wise Men presented their gifts. One broke open his casket of gold, and laid it at the feet of the new-born King. Another

presented frankincense—one of the precious products of the country from which they came. And the other laid myrrh at the Redeemer's feet. All these they gave to prove the truth of their worship. They gave substantial offerings with no stingy hand.

And now, after you have worshipped Christ in your soul, and seen Him with the eye of faith, it will not need that I should say to you, give Him yourself, give Him your heart, give Him your substance. Why, you will not be able to help doing it! He who really loves the Savior in his heart cannot help devoting to Him his life, his strength, his *all*. With some people, when they give Christ anything, or do anything for Him, it is dreadfully forced work.

They say, "The love of Christ ought to constrain us." I do not know that there is any such text as that in the Bible, however. I do remember one text that runs thus—"The love of Christ constrains us." If it does not constrain us, it is because it is not in us. It is not merely a thing which ought to be, it *must* be. If any man loves Christ, he will very soon be finding out ways and means of proving his love by his sacrifices. Go home, Mary, and fetch the alabaster box, and pour the ointment on His head, and if any say, "Why this waste?" you will have a good reply, you have had much forgiven you, and therefore you love much.

If you have gold, give it. If you have frankincense, give it. If you have myrrh, give it to Jesus. And if you have none of these things, give Him your love—all your love, and that will be gold and spices all in one! Give Him your tongue, speak of Him. Give Him your hands, work for Him. Give Him your whole self. I know you will, for He loved you, and gave Himself for you. The Lord bless you, and may this Christmas Lord's-Day morning be a very memorable day to many out of the crowd assembled here. I am surprised to see so vast a number present, and I can only hope the blessing will be in proportion, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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END VOLUME 16

OUT OF EGYPT

NO. 1675

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 20, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”
Matthew 2:14, 15.*

*“When Israel was a Child, then I loved Him, and called My Son out of Egypt.”
Hosea 11:1.*

EGYPT occupies a very singular position towards Israel. It was often the shelter of the seed of Abraham. Abraham, himself, went there when there was a famine in the land of his sojourn. To Egypt, Joseph was taken that he might escape from the death intended for him by his envious brothers and become the stepfather of the house of Israel. Into Egypt, as we all right well know, went the whole family of Jacob—and there they sojourned in a strange land. There Moses acquired the learning which was so useful to him. It was out of the spoils of Egypt that the furniture of the Tabernacle was made—as if to show that God intended to take out of heathen hands an offering to His own Glory—just as, afterwards, the timber of the Temple was hewn by Hiram, the Phoenician, that the Gentiles might have a share in building the Temple in token that they would, one day, be made fellow heirs with Israel.

But while Egypt was, for a while, the shelter of the house of Israel, it became, later, the house of bondage and a country fraught with danger to the very existence of the elect nation! There was a very useful purpose to be served by their going down into Egypt—that they might be consolidated into a nation and might acquire many useful arts which they could not have learned while they were wandering about in Palestine. The lesson was valuable, but it was learned in much misery. They had to smart beneath the lash and faint beneath their labor—the iron bondage entered into Israel's soul so that an exceedingly great and bitter cry went up to Heaven. Yet, when the heaviest burdens were laid on their shoulders, the day of liberty was dawning! When the tale of bricks was doubled, Moses was born! When man had come to his extremity of persecution, then God took His opportunity of salvation and led His Israel out of Egypt in the teeth of their tyrant master!

It had been at first a Goshen to them, a place of great abundance in the Delta of the Nile, but afterwards it became a Mizraim to them, for that is the Hebrew word for Egypt, and it means a place of straits and tribulations. The point that is meant to be brought forward by the Prophet is that

they were called out of Egypt, for it was not possible for them to mingle with the sons of Ham and lose their separate existence. They were on the banks of the Nile and, at first, dwelt there in much comfort, but this seductive ease was not allowed to hold them—full soon they were heavily oppressed and their existence was threatened. Yet both from the comfort of Egypt and from the captivity of Egypt they were called and, at the call of God, they came forth.

The living seed may go into strange places, but it can never be destroyed! The host of God may walk through fire, but it shall not be burned! God has made the living seed immortal and it cannot die, for it is born of God. Out of deadly lands, where every breath is disease, they shall be called by the eternal Voice. Those whom God has chosen may be cast *far* away, but they shall never be cast away! They may dwell among a people like the Egyptians—most superstitious and debased. A nation of whom even the heathen Juvenal made sport when he said, “Oh, happy people who grow their gods in their kitchen gardens!” They worshipped leeks, onions, all kinds of beasts and fowls and creeping things, but the children of the Lord cannot be suffered to remain among such a people, for the Lord desires to make of Israel and of all Believers, a people separated unto Himself.

Out of the midst of guilty Egypt the Lord called His people, whom He had formed for Himself, to show forth His praise. The abundance of superstition, though it was like the sea, shall not quench the spark of the Divine life in the living family of God! It shall burn on amidst the waves until the God who first enkindled it shall, by His own right hand, pluck it from among the billows and set it as a light upon a candlestick that it may give light to all that are in the house! Neither Egypt of old, nor Babylon, nor Rome can destroy the royal seed—out of all dangers, the Church must emerge the better for her affliction.

“Out of Egypt have I called My Son,” is a text worthy to be made a proverb, for it is true all through the history of the chosen seed. They are called out from among the surrounding race of rebels and, when the call comes, none can hold them back. It were easier to restrain the sun from rising than to hold the redeemed of the Lord in perpetual servitude! “The Breaker has gone up before them, and their King at the head of them”—who shall block up their road? God is still calling them out and until the very last of His elect shall be gathered in, it shall still stand true, “Out of Egypt”—and out of anywhere else that is like Egypt; out of the worst and vilest places; out of the places where they are held fast in bitter bondage, out of these—“have I called My Son.”

At this time I shall, first, call your attention to the text in Hosea according to the sense in which the Prophet first uttered it. He speaks of the natural seed called out from the sheltering world, for Egypt was a sheltering world to Israel, the natural seed, and they were called out of it by the Omnipotent power of God. Secondly, we shall notice the Divine Seed called out, literally, from a sheltering Egypt and brought up from it into the land of Judea, that He might be the Glory of His people Israel. Thirdly, we shall spend a little time in considering the chosen seed, those who are

given unto Christ of the Father—these, also, must come out from the world, whether it is friendly or hostile. The Lord has said to them, “This is not your rest, for it is polluted.” He is saying the same today. It is still true of the spiritual seed as of our Lord Jesus and of the natural seed, “Out of Egypt have I called My Son.”

May the Holy Spirit be our Teacher while we handle this great subject.

I. Let us think of THE NATURAL SEED of Israel as called out of Egypt, for with them this wonderful text began to be expounded. It is well worth considering, for this constituted one of the loftiest lyrics of Hebrew poetry. The deliverance of the people of God out of Egypt, “with a high hand and with an outstretched arm,” is a song which the nation never wearied of singing—and which we ought never to weary of singing, either—for at the close of all things, we and all the redeemed spirits shall sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and of the Lamb!

The great redemption of the Exodus shall always be so eminent a type of the greater redemption upon the Cross that the two may be blended together and words that were sung concerning the first deliverance may be readily enough used as expressions of our joy in our salvation from death and Hell—

***“From Egypt lately come,
Where death and darkness reign,
Seek our new, our better Home,
Where we our rest shall gain.
Hallelujah! We are on our way to God.”***

While speaking upon this natural seed I want you to notice, first, that if they are to be called out of Egypt, they must first go down into Egypt. They cannot come out of it if they have not first gone into it. I do not know of anything that could have tempted them down into Egypt, for it had nothing to offer which was better than Canaan, but the fathers of the tribes were driven there by a famine which troubled the whole world. The Lord sent a man before them, even Joseph, who laid up, in store, food for the seven years of famine, and Israel went down into Egypt that they might not die, but might be cherished by Joseph, who had become lord of the land.

The Lord may, in order to prevent His people falling into a worse evil, permit them to go into that which seems hopeful, but ultimately turns out to be a great trial to them. Suffering is infinitely preferable to sinning. The Lord may, therefore, send us sorrow to keep us from iniquity. Dear Friend, the Lord who reads your heart may know that it is absolutely necessary for you to be tried—and so, spiritually, to go down into Egypt. He may send a famine to drive you there. He may place you under great tribulations and so He may bring you down both mentally and spiritually into a sad condition where you shall sigh and cry by reason of bondage.

Do not look upon this as a strange thing, for all God’s gold must pass through the fire! It is one of the marks of God’s elect that they are afflicted! The Lord Jesus says, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” Depend upon it that if you are one of the true seed you must go down into Egypt! The Lord said to Abraham, “Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs.” The shield of the chosen bears

the emblem of a smoking furnace and a burning lamp. Even if the world shelters you, it will sooner or later become to you the house of bondage—yet into that house of bondage you must go, for there is a great educational process going on in affliction to prepare us for the land which flows with milk and honey!

Egypt is one of the early lessons. It is strangely early with some—their religious life begins with a cloudy morning and threat of storm. This will work them lasting good. “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.” Therefore we have, “When Israel was a child, then I loved Him and called My Son out of Egypt.” The earliest days of Israel were in Egypt; the nation, in its infancy, was called from there. While the Divine life has not yet attained to maturity, we meet with straits and troubles and have to go down into Egypt and feel the weight of the yoke upon our shoulders. This is one of God’s ways of preparing us for freedom, for he that has never tasted of the bitterness of bondage will never be able to appreciate the sweets of the liberty with which Christ makes men free. So Israel must first go down into Egypt. He descends that he may rise to greater heights!

Note, next, that it was while in Egypt and at the worst time of their bondage in Egypt, that they received the first notification that the nation was to be called the son of God. Israel is not called a son until Moses comes to Pharaoh and says, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born: and I say unto you, Let My Son go, that He may serve Me.” God had been with Abraham and called him His friend, but I do not perceive that He called him His son, or that Abraham addressed the Lord as, “Our Father which are in Heaven.” Neither do I find similar sweet words flowing from the lips of Isaac or of Jacob—but when Israel was in bondage—*then* it was that the Lord revealed Israel’s adoption and openly declared, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born.”

He scourges every son whom He receives and He receives them even while the scourge is sorely bruising them! They were a poor down-trod nation—a nation of slaves begrimed with brick-earth and bleeding beneath the lash of their taskmasters! The Egyptians must have utterly despised a people who yielded so readily to all their exactions. They looked upon them as a herd of slaves who had not the spirit to rebel, whatever cruelties they might endure. But now it is, while they are lying among the pots and their faces are stained with tears, that the Lord openly, before proud Pharaoh, owns the nation as His Son, saying, “Israel is My Son, even My first-born.” I think I see Pharaoh’s grim, sardonic smile as he seems to say, “Those slaves, those wretched brick-makers whom the lowest of my people despise—if these are Jehovah’s first-born, what care I for Him or them?”

Learn therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters, that God is not ashamed of His children when they are in their worst estate. We are told, concerning our Lord Jesus, “For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Yes, and not when they put on their beautiful array; when the jewels are in their ears; when they are led forth with music and dancing and when they shout over Egyptian chivalry drowned in the Red Sea will they be more the Lord’s children than they are in the house of bondage! The

Lord God speaks of their adoption for the first time when they are still under the oppressor and when it seems impossible that they can be rescued! The Lord speaks very plainly to the haughty Pharaoh, "Let My Son go that He may serve Me; and if you refuse to let Him go, behold I will slay your son, even your first-born."

Oh, but is it not a blessed thing to go down into the Egypt of tribulation if there, for the first time, we learn our adoption of the Lord? Is it not a sweet thing, even, to be under the heaviest bondage if you are, by such means, made to understand better than you ever did before what it is to be a son and a heir, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ? The first-born of every creature is He and we are the Church of the First-Born whose names are written in Heaven! The heritage of the first-born belongs to Jesus and to us in Him—and we often know this best when our heart is broken because of sin and when our troubles are overwhelming our spirit.

"Fear not," says He, "I will help you." "Fear not, you worm, Jacob, and you men of Israel; I will help you, says the Lord and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Yes, it was in Egyptian bondage that they received the first witness of the Spirit, that they were, as a people, the sons of God! When it became clear that they were really the sons of God, then they suffered persecution for it. A place which, as I have said, was, at first, their shelter, now became the iron furnace of oppression. Their hard labors are doubled; their male children were ordered to be cast into the river and edicts of the most intolerable kind were fulminated against them.

Now, Brethren, Satan soon knows the man that God has acknowledged to be His son and he seeks to slay him even as Herod sought to kill Jesus. When the Man-Child was born, the Dragon knew who that Man-Child was and sought to destroy Him. He vomited forth floods to sweep Him away, until we read that the earth helped the woman and there were given to her wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished from the face of the serpent. No sooner is the child of God really acknowledged to be such, than at once the seed of the serpent will hiss about him—and if they can, will cast their venom upon him. At any rate, they will bite at his heel till God has taught him, in the name of Jesus, to break the serpent's head.

Rest assured that this is another mark of the election of Grace. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. In Ishmael's case, it was seen that he that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit, and so it is now. You cannot expect to pass through this Vanity Fair without exciting the jeers and sneers of the ungodly, for the Lord's inheritance is unto him as a speckled bird—the birds round about her are against her. Every David has his Saul; every Nehemiah his Sanballat and every Mordecai his Haman.

But now comes the crown of the text, that is, "I have called My Son out of Egypt," and out of Egypt, Israel must come! Egypt was not Israel's portion—it was "a land that was not theirs." My Brothers and Sisters, we are not citizens of "the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where, also, our Lord was crucified." The best thing in this present evil world is not your portion nor mine. Friendly Egypt, sheltering Egypt, was

not Israel's inheritance. He gave them no portion, even, in the land of Goshen by a covenant of salt. They might tarry there for a while, but out of it they must come, as it is written, "You have brought a vine out of Egypt." The best side of the world, when it seems warmest and most tender to us, is not the place where we may lie down with comfort.

The bosom of our God—that is the true shelter of His people—and there we must find rest. If we are dwelling in the world and are tempted to be of the world—and to take up with the riches of Egypt—we must, by Grace, be taught to cast all this behind our back, for we have not our portion in this life, neither can we have our inheritance until we enter upon the life that is to come. Jacob said on his death-bed, "Bury me not, I pray you, in Egypt." And Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones that they should not remain in Pharaoh's land. Even so, the saints of God are weary of the world's dominions; they tremble like a bird out of Egypt. Not in Egypt would God reveal Himself to His people. What says He? "Come you out from among them: be you separate and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters."

When He called Israel His son, it is in connection with this coming out. "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." And you and I must be fetched out from the world and all its associations—and truly severed from it—if we are ever to come to know the Lord our God. In Egypt, God was not known, but "in Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel." His people must not permanently reside in a strange country. The land of tombs was no fit home for a living people whose God was the living God! Therefore it is written, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son" and the heathen knew it, for they said, one to another, "Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt."

There were many difficulties in connection with this calling of Israel out of Egypt. Perhaps one of the chief obstacles was their own wish to stay there, for, strange as it may seem, though it was a house of bondage to them, they did not wish to stir from it at first! Their spirit was broken by their sore bondage so that they did not receive Moses and Aaron as they ought to have done, but they even chided them. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, the chief work of God with us is to make us willing to go out, willing, by faith, to follow Jesus—willing to count the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! He did make them willing and they went out, at last, right joyfully, marching in rank like a trained army! They did not need to be driven, but hurried to escape out of the enemy's country.

Moreover, the Lord made them *able* to go, as well as willing, for it is very beautiful to think that there were no sick people in the whole nation of Israel at that time of the going out! We read—"There was not one feeble person in all their tribes." What a splendid thing for a whole nation to have no weaklings! There was no need to carry any in the ambulance—they all went marching forth with steady foot out of the dominions of Pharaoh! O child of God, has God given you the will to get out of the bondage of the sin and the corruption of this crooked generation? He that gives you the will, will give you the power! Perhaps you are crying, "Who

shall deliver me? To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would, I find not."

Rest assured that God, the Holy Spirit, who has given you the will, will also give you the strength—and you shall come marching out of Egypt, having eaten of the Paschal Lamb! The Lord stunned their enemies, so that they begged them to be gone and bribed them to make haste! With blow upon blow, He smote the Egyptians, till on that dreadful night, when shrieks of pain went up from every house in Egypt, the Egyptians hastened them to go. "We are all dead men," they said, "unless you go!" Even their taskmasters urged them to immediate flight. Our God knows how to make even the wicked men of the world cast out the Christian—they cannot endure him when once his adoption is made known! They grow tired of his melancholy presence; tired of his convictions of sin and of that gloomy face which he carries about with him, and they say, "Get out, get out, we cannot endure you!" They perceive something in him which is foreign to themselves and so they thrust him out. Egypt was glad when they departed and so the world, itself, seems glad to be rid of the Lord's elect when God's time is come to set a difference between Israel and Egypt!

The spiritual meaning of all this is that from under the power of sin of Satan and of the world, God will certainly call His own redeemed. They shall not abide in the land of Egypt! Sin shall not be pleasant to them! They shall not continue under Satan's power, but they shall break his yoke from off their neck! The Lord will help them and strengthen them, so that they shall clean escape from their former slavery. With a high hand and an outstretched arm He brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt—and with that same high hand and outstretched arm He will save His own elect whom He has loved from before the foundations of the world and whom He has purchased with His most precious blood! They, too, shall sing as Israel did, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," in the day when God shall deliver them!

So far we have spoken of the natural seed.

II. Now we turn with pleasure to THE DIVINE SEED, the Man Christ Jesus. He had to be called out by an angel from the sheltering Egypt into which Joseph and His mother had fled with Him. I dare say when you have read that passage in Hosea, you have said, "I cannot see that it has anything to do with Christ." The passage in Hosea is evidently about Israel, for God is speaking of Israel both before and after the verse. But look—the natural seed of Israel is the shell of the egg of which the Divine Seed is the life! God calls Israel His Son. Why? Because within that nation lay that Seed which, afterwards, was known as the Well-Beloved, the Son of the Highest. They were the shell and, therefore, to be preserved for the sake of the Blessed One who, according to the flesh, lay within the race!

I do not think the Lord would have cared about the Jews more than any other nation if it had not been that in due time He was to be born of them, even He in whom is His delight, that choice One of the Father, the Son whom He loves. So when He brought His Son out of Egypt, it means, first, that He rescued the external, nominal, outward sonship. But the core, the living core within, is this Son, this true Son of whom the Lord said, put-

ting all others aside, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And the passage, if I had time to show you, could not be limited to Israel, for if it had been, it would lose much of its accuracy.

Why, do you think, the passage was made so obscure? It is confessedly obscure and anyone reading it without the spiritual teaching which Matthew received would never have perceived that Christ was going down into Egypt to fulfill that Word. I take it the reason of the obscurity was this—that its fulfillment might be of the Lord, alone. Suppose His father and mother had known these prophecies and had purposely set themselves to fulfill them? There would have existed a kind of collusion which would have beclouded the wonderful wisdom of God in bearing testimony to His Son. Mary and Joseph may have known of this prophecy, but I greatly question whether they perceived that it referred to their son, at all, or to the Son of the Highest—but now they must do the very thing that God says shall be done—without knowing that they are fulfilling Scripture!

One of the worst things you and I can ever attempt, is to try and fulfill a prophecy. Good mistress Rebecca wanted to fulfill a prophecy and what a mess she made of it! She endeavored to make her second son the heir and, in the attempt, she brought upon him and herself a world of sorrow! Had she not better have let the prophecy alone? Surely, if a prophecy is made of God, God will see that it comes to pass. If it is a Chaldaic prophecy, a prophecy of soothsayers and magi, no doubt they will try to make their own oracle true—but the Lord, who sees the end from the beginning and ordains all things—can speak positively of the future. If any of you set up for prophets, beware of prophesying till you know that you can make it good! God does not need such petty provision—He needs no help from us—His word will surely be established! Mary and Joseph did not try to fulfill the prophecy, for they could not have understood it to mean what it meant. It was purposely put in a dark and cloudy form, but still the Lord knew what He was doing—"That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

Remember one thing, that all the Words of God in the Old Testament and the New refer to Christ! And what is more, all the works of God have an opened window towards Christ. Yes, I say that in the creation of the world the central thought of God was His Son, Jesus, and He made the world with a view to His death, Resurrection and glorious reign! From every gnat that dances in the summer sunbeam up to the great leviathan in the sea, the whole design of the world works toward the Seed in whom the earth is blessed! In Providence it is just the same—every event, from the fall of a leaf to the rise of a monarchy—is linked with the kingdom of Jesus! I have not time to show this, but it is so, and if you choose to think it over, you will clearly perceive it.

God set the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel—and everything that has happened, or ever shall happen in the outside world—all has a look towards the Christ and that which comes of the Christ! I love to find Jesus everywhere—not by twisting the Psalms and other Scriptures to make them speak of Christ when they do nothing of the kind, but by seeing Him where He truly is. I would

not err as Cocceius did, of whom they said his greatest fault was that he found Christ everywhere, but I would far rather err in his direction than have it said of me, as of another divine of the same period, that I found Christ nowhere!

Would it not be better to see Him where He is not than to miss Him where He is? The Pattern of the things on earth is in Heaven—is, in fact, in Jesus, the Son of God! He is the Pattern according to which the Tabernacle and the Temple were built. Yes, and the Pattern according to which this brave world was made—and worlds which are yet to be revealed. All the treasures of the wisdom of God are hidden in Christ—and in Christ they are made manifest. I do not wonder, therefore, that this passage in Hosea should point to Him! It is certain that our blessed Lord is, in the highest sense, the Son of God. “Out of Egypt have I called My Son,”

Write the word, SON, in capitals—and it must mean Him—it cannot, with emphasis, mean anyone else! I would rather give up the idea that Hosea even *thought* of Israel, than think that the Holy Spirit did not intend that we should see Jesus in those memorable words, “My Son.” It came to pass that our Lord must find no room in Israel and so must go down into Egypt. There was no room for the young Child in the inn and, now, the Edomite, the child-devouring Herod, has risen and there is no room for the new-born King anywhere in Palestine! Alas, how sad a picture of the visible Church where Christ, at times, can find no room!

What with contending sects, Pharisees and Sadducees, there would seem to be no more room for Christ in the Church, today, than there used to be. By fear of Herod, His parents are made anxious, and by angelic direction they must go down into Egypt, where Herod’s warrant would not run. Heathen Egypt will shield, while hypocritical Judea will slay! Jesus, like another Joseph, must be carried down into Egypt, that the young Child’s life may be preserved. Here He has a foretaste of His life trials and early begins His life of affliction. The King of the Jews flees from His own dominions! The Lord of All must know the heart of a stranger in the land of Egypt! The poet represents His mother as saying—

***“Through the desert wild and dreary,
Following tracts explored by few,
Sad at heart, and worn, and weary,
We, our toilsome march, pursue.
Israel’s homes lie far behind us,
Yet we pause not to look back,
Lest the keen pursuer find us,
Lest grim murder scent our track.
Eagles o’er our heads are whirling,
Each careering towards her nest;
Even the wolf and fox are stealing
To the covert of their rest.
Every fowl and noxious creature
Finds on earth its lair and bed
But the infant Lord of Nature
Has not where to lay His head.
Yes, my Babe, sweet sleep enfolds You
On Your fainting mother’s arm;
God in His great love beholds You,***

***Angels guard Your rest from harm.
Earth and Hell in vain beset You,
Kings against Your life conspire!
But our God can ne'er forget You,
Nor His arm that shields You, tire."***

Mark well, that if the Lord Jesus Christ had willed it, even though but a Babe, He might have blasted Herod as He did another Herod in later days. And He might have made him to be eaten of worms. The glorious Jehovah could have sent a legion of angels and have driven the Idumaeen dynasty from off the throne, if so it had pleased Him. But no violence was used—a gentler course was chosen. When Jesus stands up to fight, He wars by nonresistance. He says, "My Kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight." He conquers by flight rather than by fight. He taught His people, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another. And He never bid them form bands and battle with their persecutors. That is not according to Christ's Law or example! A fighting church is the devil's church, but a bearing and enduring Church—that is Christ's Church.

His parents fled with Him by night and took Him down into Egypt, that He might be sheltered there. Traditions tell us wonderful stories about what happened when Jesus went into Egypt, but as none of them are Inspired, I need not waste your time with them. The only one that might look like fact is that His parents sheltered themselves in a temple wherein idol gods were and when the Child entered, all the images fell down. Certainly, if not actually true, it is a poetical description of that which happens wherever the Holy Child puts in an appearance! Every idol god falls before Him! Down he must go, whether it is Dagon, or Baal, or Ashtaroth, or whatever the god may be called! Yes, and he that wears the triple tiara on the seven hills and calls himself the vicar of God on earth—he, too, must come down—and all his empire must sink like a millstone in the flood!

We do not know how the young Child and Joseph and Mary lived in Egypt except that they had received gold from the Magi and that, being a carpenter, not a hedge carpenter, but one skilled in joinery and repairing wheels, Joseph could find plenty of work in Egypt where vast multitudes of Jews were already settled. Whether our Lord was carried to Alexandria or not, we cannot tell. The probability is that He was housed there, for it was the great rendezvous of the nation and the center of their learning—there the Bible had been translated into the Greek tongue—and there flourished schools of Jews much more liberal than those in Judea. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the Prince of Peace went to that region where we have most unhappily illustrated Christianity with cuts—not all of wood, nor all innocent of blood.

But Jesus could not stay in Egypt. "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." His parents, by a brave act of faith, went back at the command of the angel, to the Holy Land—Your land, O Immanuel! Jesus could not stay in Egypt, for He was no Egyptian! He did not come to exercise a ministry among the Egyptians. He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel in His public working. Being called out of Egypt, the heavenly vision was not disobeyed. His foster-parent, Joseph, took Him back and they set-

bled in Nazareth. Yet remember, He had been in Egypt and this was a prophecy of blessing to that land—for wherever Jesus goes, the air is sweetened!

Every plot of land that His foot has ever trod on shall be His forever. What said God to Jacob? “The land whereon you lie will I give you.” And the same is true to Jacob’s great descendant! Jesus has slept in Egypt and Egypt is His own. God has given it to Him and His it shall be! Glory be to His blessed name!

III. Let us turn to think of THE CHOSEN SEED that shall be brought out of Egypt. Here I would remark that this passage may be taken and should be taken, literally. God has a chosen people who shall assuredly come out of the very Egypt which now exists. It is remarkable that early in the Gospel day the Truth of God was gladly received in Egypt. Egypt became the land of saints and divines and, as it had once been the source and home of civilization, so it became an active camp for the soldiers of the Cross. Under the successors of Mohammed, all this was swept away and now the Crescent’s baneful beam falls where once the heavenly sun shed out its infinite Glory and scattered health among the sons of men.

Egypt did turn to God and it will turn again. Let me read you this passage (Isaiah 19)—“In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan and swear to the Lord of Hosts; one shall be called the city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of Hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Savior, and a great one, and He shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yes, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt: He shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance.”

So that we feel clear that our God has yet a son to call out of Egypt and He will call him. There shall be a seed to serve Him even in the midst of the down-trod people who live by the Nile floods, for God has said it. There is one passage to which I should like to refer you, because it is so full of comfort. (Jeremiah 43:12)—“And He shall array Himself with the land of Egypt”—think of that—putting it on as Joseph put on his coat of many colors! “As a shepherd puts on his garment; and He shall go forth from thence in peace.” Yet shall Christ wear, as a robe of honor, this land of Egypt! And again shall it be true, “Out of Egypt have I called My son” Let us learn from this, that out of the strangest and oddest places God will call His son. Certain Brethren among us go the lodging houses in Mint

Street, Kent Street and other places. Can any good thing come out of them? Assuredly, it can, for, "Out of Egypt have I called My son."

Out of Thieves' Acre and Ketch's Warren, saints shall come! Some of you, perhaps, know of holes and corners in London where a decent person scarcely dares to be seen—do not pass by these abominable haunts, for out of such Egypts will the Lord call His sons! The worst field is often the most hopeful. Here is virgin soil, unplowed, untilled. What harvests may be won by willing workers! Oh you brave hands, thrust in the plowshare and break up this neglected soil, for thus says the Lord, "Out of Egypt have I called My son." Many of you who live in the midst of Israel and hear the Gospel every day remain disobedient—but some from the lowest and vilest parts of the earth shall yet be called with an effectual calling—and they shall obey, for it is written—"Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

But we will take the text and conclude with it in a *spiritual* sense. All men are in Egypt, spiritually, but God calls out His own sons. Sin is like Pharaoh, a tyrant that will not yield. He will not let men go, but he shall let them go, for God says, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." We are in a world which is the destroyer of Grace as Pharaoh was the destroyer of Israel's little ones. You do not think a good thought but what it is laughed out of you! You scarcely catch a word of Scripture, but as soon as you get home you are compelled to forget it. Nevertheless, out of that—"Out of Egypt have I called My Son." You shall yet be delivered! Put you your trust in Jesus Christ, for, "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." And He will call every son of His out of Egypt.

Perhaps you are in the dark, as the Egyptians were during the plague, or as when God turned the dark side of the pillar to Egypt. Ah, but if you are one of His—if you will but trust Jesus, which is the mark of being God's elect—out of darkness will God call you! Out of thick Egyptian night will He fetch you and your eyes shall be made glad with the light of the Gospel of Christ! Perhaps you dwell in the midst of superstition, for the Egyptians were horribly given to superstition—but yet out of that will God call His people! I look to see priests converted! I hope to see leaders of the Gospel found among men that were once steeped to the throat in superstition! Why not? "Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

Where did Luther come from but from the monastery? And he preached the Word of God with thunder and lightning from Heaven—and God blessed it to the emancipation of nations! He will bring others of that kind—out of all sorts of ignorance and superstition He will fetch them to the praise of the Glory of His Grace! I feel encouraged to pray for those who appear to be hopeless! I feel as if I must cry to God, "Bring them out of Egypt, Lord, the worst, the vilest." You, here, that know what Egypt is and are in it, and *know* you are in it, oh, believe that the Emancipator has come! The Redeemer has appeared! With an offering of blood He has stood before God and given Egypt for a ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you! Oh, that He might win those with power whom He has bought with price! And to Him be Glory, world without end. Amen.

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THE NAZARENE AND THE SECT OF THE NAZARENES NO. 1632

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 9, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might
be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, He shall
be called a Nazarene.”
Matthew 2:23.*

WE find the Jews speaking of Paul, and they say, “We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”—Acts 24:5. Thus it appears that our Lord and Master is called a Nazarene and His disciples are styled “the sect of the Nazarenes,” while Christian doctrine was called, by the Jews, the heresy of the Nazarenes. Our Savior, though actually born at Bethlehem, was commonly known as Jesus of Nazareth, because Nazareth was the place where He was brought up. There He remained with His reputed father in the carpenter’s shop until the time of His showing unto the people.

This Nazareth was a place very much despised. It was a small country town and the people were rough and rustic. They were some three days distance from Jerusalem, where I suppose the Jews thought that everything that was learned and polite could be found, as we are apt to think of our own city, or of Oxford, Cambridge and other seats of learning. The people of Nazareth were the boors of Galilee, the clowns of the country. More than that, you will generally find in every nation—I was about to say in every county of our own country—some town made the butt of ridicule. I do not know that “silly Suffolk,” is any sillier than any other part of the world, but I do know that I, myself, happen to have been born in the next parish to the town of Coggeshall, in Essex, concerning which all sorts of jokes are made—so that when any stupid thing is done they call it “a Coggeshall job.”

I merely mention this because it is an illustration of what used to be said concerning Nazareth. It was a primitive place. It was situated in Galilee, which was thought to be quite boorish enough, and Nazareth was the most rustic of all. The name signifies, in rough words, “sprouts,” and the Jews, who were great at puns upon names, threw it as a jest at the people who came from that town. We Anglicize it in a more refined way by the word, “branch,” for, “Netzar,” or, “Nazareth,” signifies a branch. You will begin to understand why the Savior is said to be called by the Prophet, a Netzar, or a Nazarene, and you will guess that Matthew refers to the passage in Isaiah, in the 11th chapter at the first verse, where it is said that a

rod shall come out of the stem of Jesse, and “a Netzar, a Nazarene, a *Branch* shall grow out of his roots.”

There is another passage in Jeremiah where we read of the man, the Branch—the Netzar—the Nazarene. And again in Isaiah, “And His name shall be called a Branch,” or Nazarene. Those are the passages, I think, to which Matthew referred when he said, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, He shall be called a Netzar, a Branch, a Nazarene.” The Hebrews made a great deal out of names—a great deal more than you and I generally do with names of places in England—and they had reason for so doing, for there was generally a meaning in the names of places. Perhaps Nazareth was called, “Branch” because trees flourished there and not much else. Or because they thought that the people were rather verdant and they, therefore, called them, “sprouts” and, “greens,” making the same use of language as the vulgar do at this day when they wish to express contempt.

That may have been the origin of the term, “Nazareth.” Certain it is that the place was the subject of the jests of the Jews of our Lord’s time, for even Nathanael, in whom was no guile—one who spoke in a simple-hearted, honest way and had no prejudices, but wished well to everybody, said—“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” As if he felt that Prophets and saints were by no means likely to spring from a town so low down in the scale of progress and education. How could He of whom Moses spoke be found way down there among the country folk of Nazareth? As Nazarene was a term of contempt in the olden times, so it has continued to be. The apostate emperor, Julian, was known always to call our Lord, the Galilean. And when he died, in his agony of death, he cried, “O Galilean, You have vanquished me!” He was obliged to confess our Lord’s supremacy, though he still showed his contempt by calling Him the Galilean.

The Jews, to this day, when they feel wroth against our Christ, are known to call Him the Nazarene. Nazarene is not at all the same word as Nazarite. It is a different word in the Hebrew and you must not confuse the two. Never suppose that when you say, “He shall be called a Nazarene,” that it signifies that He was called a *Nazarite*. Nazarite, among the Jews, would have been a title of *honor*, but Nazarene is simply a name of contempt. A late traveler tells us that he had a Muslim guide through Palestine and whenever they came to a village that was very dirty, poor and inhabited by professed Christians, he always said, “These are not Muslims, they are Netza,” or, “Nazarenes,” throwing all the spite he possibly could into the word, as if he could not have uttered a more contemptuous term.

To this day, then, our Lord has the name of the Nazarene affixed to Him by those who reject Him. And to this day Christians are called, among Muslims, Nazarenes. Our Lord Jesus Christ was never ashamed of this name. In fact, He called Himself, “Jesus of Nazareth,” after He had risen from the dead. He told Paul, when He smote him to the earth, “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you persecute.” His disciples were not ashamed to call Him by that name, for as they walked to Emmaus and He joined them,

and asked them what they were speaking of, they said they were talking of Jesus of Nazareth.

This is a name at which devils tremble, for they besought Him, even Jesus of Nazareth, that they should not be sent into the deep when He cast them out! It was the name which, in contempt, was nailed above His head upon the Cross—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Oh, but it is a glorious name, as I shall have to show before I have done! But still, this is the meaning of it—the meaning of Matthew when he says that the Prophets declared that He should be called a Nazarene. He meant that the Prophets have described the Messiah as one that would be despised and rejected of men! They spoke of Him as a great Prince and Conqueror when *they* described His second coming, but they set forth His first coming when they spoke of Him as a root out of a dry ground without form or comeliness, who, when He should be seen, would have no beauty that men should desire Him. The Prophets said that He would be called by a despicable title and it was so, for His countrymen called Him a Nazarene.

I want you to notice our Divine Redeemer's condescension, before I plunge further into this matter. It was a marvel that Jesus should live on this world at all! He who inhabits all things, whom space is not wide enough to contain, dwells on this poor, dusky planet! If He must dwell in this world, why is He born in Judea? For though I am grieved it should be so, yet the Jews are a people greatly despised—shame on Christians when they ever join in such despising! But still, if Jesus must be a Man in this world, why is He not born in Rome, in the capital of the nations? Why must it be in a little miserable country like Judea? And if He shall be born in Judea, why must He live in Galilee—that Boeotia of Israel—that most despicable part of Judea?

If He must live in Galilee, why not at Capernaum? Why does He choose Nazareth? Why must He go to the lowest of the low—that most despised place of a despised country? And if He must come to Nazareth—follow Him a step lower—why must He be a *carpenter's* son? Why, if He lives there, can He not be the son of the minister of the synagogue, or some respectable scribe? No—He must be reputed to be a poor man's son. And then if He must be a carpenter's son, why can He not so constrain men's hearts that they shall receive Him? For the deepest depth of all is that even as a carpenter's son His fellow citizens will not endure Him—they take Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him down headlong from the cliff whereon the city stood! Was there ever such condescension as that of the Savior? If, in the lowest depth, there is a lower depth, He plunges into it for our sakes!

He emptied Himself. Our old version says, "He made Himself of no reputation," but the new one is, in this case much better—"He *emptied* Himself." Nothing was left Him of honor or respect. He gave up all. "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor"—poor to the last degree, poor in reputation! He was born a Man, a Jew, a Galilean, a Nazarene. You have gone down as far as language can descend and I invite you, now, to think of the way in which Jesus, the Nazarene, is still despised. That shall be our first head. When we have thought upon that, we

will say a little upon His disciples—the sect of the Nazarenes must expect to be despised till brighter days shall dawn. When we have talked about that we shall have to say, in conclusion, that there is nothing despicable either in the Master or in the servants, though they are called Nazarenes by a contemptuous world.

I. First, then, OUR MASTER, THE NAZARENE, WAS DESPISED AND IS DESPISED EVEN TO THIS DAY. He was despised, first, because in His Person, His parentage, His state, His apparel, His language, His habits there was nothing of grandeur, nothing of parade, nothing but what was simple, gentle, lowly. He did ride, once, but it was on a colt, the foal of an ass. It was said, “Behold your King comes,” but His coming was meek and lowly. He might have been a king—He was very near being taken by force to be pushed up into a throne—but He withdrew Himself, for He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He was no popularity-hunter, or flatterer of the great.

He was no man of confusion and strife, who sought to push Himself forward and tread down others. Those that opposed Him were weak like bruised reeds, but He would not break them though He could have done it. They offended Him with their weak arguments, for they were like a smoking flax to Him, but He would not quench them. He left them for another day when He shall bring forth judgment unto victory. I suppose, if we had seen the Savior, we should not have thought Him “altogether lovely,” for His heavenly beauty was not of the kind that strikes the natural eye. Hence the impossibility of any painter ever being able to paint Him, for though He must have been superlatively lovely, it must have been a beauty with which nobody would be charmed unless their eyes were opened to perceive the beauty of holiness.

His was the loveliness of *virtue*, the charm of *purity* and not that sensuous beauty which excites desire and kindles the passions of mankind. He was loveliness itself, but only to those who know what loveliness is. About His dress there was nothing remarkable. He wore the ordinary smock-frock of the country, a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout—a very serviceable, useful piece of workday apparel—but possessing nothing in it of official dignity, or princely richness to distinguish Him from an ordinary person. As for the place where He lived, it was no bishop’s palace, nor even an ordinary manse, for He had not where to lay His head.

He sought no dignity and no honor. As for His companionships, they were of the lowest, for it is said of Him, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” “Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.” The off casts of society delighted in His discourses and they gathered round Him to receive blessings at His hand. He lifted them up from the dunghill, renewed them and set them among princes. He was the last person in the world to be hampered by pride. There was nothing of the kind about Him! He was the personification of love. He condescended, but He did not seem to condescend, for graciousness was natural to Him. He did it so really that one almost forgot the condescension in the altogether naturalness of the way in which He sympathized with all

grief and helped all who came for succor. And, therefore, the proud despised Him.

Those who looked for dress and garb, as so many do in our day—those who looked for a show of learning, quotations from great writers, continual perplexities to human minds—could not see much in Jesus. Those who needed a display of power, a leader bold and brave to drive out the Romans and play Judas Maccabaeus for the people, turned away and said, “He is nothing but an ordinary Nazarene.” His followers, too, were another cause of the contempt poured upon Him, for His chosen friends were, to those who knew them, nothing but common fishermen. Indeed, that is all they were! Unlearned and ignorant men they are said to have been, though they baffled the pretended wisdom of the age in which they lived. How could He have selected such followers? There were scribes and there were Pharisees—there were Rabbis and Rabboni—He might *surely* have called some of those to follow Him!

But, you see, the Savior was not a preacher that at all attracted the elite of society. Those highly cultured minds, as a rule, went to hear Rabbi Simeon, the Pharisee, who expounded points of no earthly importance. But Jesus was one of whom it is written, “The common people heard Him gladly.” And so the wise ones ran Him down as “a Nazarene.” “Look,” they said, “look and see who they are that He has chosen to be His chief helpers! See how the lower orders flock around Him. They are no judges—what notion have they of profound learning and research? They like a man who is ignorant, for He is like themselves. They have no taste, they have no education and so they gather to one of themselves.” “Ah!” said one of these wiseacres, “I am ashamed of Him—quite ashamed. Indeed, I shall speak to Him, for He ought not to be so lost to all sense of propriety.”

And so he goes to the Master and says, “Do You hear the boys crying, ‘Hosanna!’ in the Temple? Do You hear what these say?” He thought that the Lord would be ashamed of having such admirers as mere street boys. But the Savior answered, “Have you never read”—as if He were going to question this great man’s reading—“Have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He has perfected praise”? He was not ashamed, even, of chits of children that strewed the pathway for Him, nor ashamed of the sick and sinful people that gathered around Him, nor ashamed of the poor fishermen that were the lieutenants of His salvation army! But rather did He rejoice therein and say, “Father, I thank You that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

But the higher classes, the refined and the cultivated, said, “Tush! He is nothing but a Nazarene!” Well, then, when they came to listen to His doctrine, they were not a bit more pleased, nor did they hold Him any higher in esteem. What do you think He taught them? Among other things it is reported that He said, “Except a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God”—and, would you believe it, He said this not to one of the lower order at all, but to a learned gentleman who was a ruler in Israel? Why, it has come to a pretty pass, this, to tell educated people, refined, aesthetic people, that they must be born again or else they cannot see the

kingdom of God—to insist upon *regeneration* as a thing as necessary to a philosopher as to a prostitute—as necessary to a senator as to a jailbird! As necessary to the purest as to the most defiled. Oh no, we cannot bear such leveling doctrine! It is shocking! So they turned their backs on Him and called Him a Nazarene! When a man tells you unpalatable truth, it is very easy and natural to call him bad names. If you cannot answer him anyway else, you can always answer him by reviling him.

And, then, what do you think He said besides that? On one occasion He had the audacity to say—and I am sure the Pharisees thought it was audacity, indeed—“Except you eat My flesh, and drink My blood, there is no life in you.” What could the Man mean—that they, even they, the sons of Abraham who were born free—the priests who had partaken of the sacrifices, must actually *eat* Him? Did they think that they would accept His teaching as food for their souls? I wonder if they went as far as that in understanding Him? But if they did, they liked it no better. They were indignant that He should say that the only food for their souls must be Himself—that unless He became their life and the nourishment of that life—unless He became part and parcel of their very *being*, they could not be saved! Even those who did think a little of Him, said that after this they must give Him up. They could not stand that and so they walked no more with Him.

He went even further. Why, He actually dared to tell the scribes and Pharisees who had fasted so many times in the week and never ate bread without washing their hands, and tithed the mint and the cummin, that there was *nothing* in all this! He said—“You blind guides, you hypocrites, you strain at a gnat and you swallow a camel!” He went on to tell them that all their outside religion was a lie and a falsehood unless the inner part of the soul were cleansed. He said that it was not that which a man ate or drank, but that which came out of the man that really defiled him. People said, “Did you ever hear such talk as that? Why, He is putting us all down, we that are the best people around! If *we* are not good—we that are the leaders of society, the pink of perfection—who *can* be?”

“We swallow a widow’s house *sometimes*, but we always do that behind the door. It is true that we are not as clean inside as we should be, but then we always make clean the outside of the cup and platter. Nobody can say but what we do and He has been talking against us—and at the same time He is inviting the fallen to Himself and saying—‘Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ Well, well,” they said, “we cannot bear it! He is nothing but a Nazarene!” And so they turned their backs upon Him. Dear Friends, today Jesus Christ is as much despised as ever by those ungodly and vain-glorious men who understand what His Gospel is! How frequently you will find, in the public newspapers, and in the magazines of those who think themselves the cultivated class, remarks against the doctrine of justification by faith.

You and I are simpletons enough to believe that we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus, because God has told us so, and we sing—

**“Nothing in my hands I bring
Simply to the Cross I cling”**

and they tell us that this is inconsistent with public morality! That the masses ought to be told that unless they behave themselves they cannot possibly go to Heaven, and so on—which thing they have been told times without number—and they have grown worse, the more they have been told it! When we talk about Free Grace which pardons the vilest through faith in Christ, men are changed and made moral and holy! But our unbelieving critics choose to ignore all that and go and talk against what is the very essence of the Gospel of Christ, as though it were a poor, miserable thing, only fit for a set of fanatics to preach! “Only believe and you shall be saved?” they say, “that is their absurd doctrine!” In other words, they repeat the old abuse and call us Nazarenes.

But if you want to see the ungodly world foam at its mouth—oh, if you want to see rage get at its worst—and wish to see pretended learned men upon their mettle, preach the doctrine of Atonement by blood! Tell them that remission of sin is by Substitution—that Christ stood in the sinner’s place and took the sinner’s sin—and that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. See how they writhe and rage! They cannot bear this horrible doctrine of Atonement by Sacrifice and yet, most learned Sirs, it is upon that horrible Atonement that our hope depends! It is upon that horrible doctrine that we hang our destiny for time and for eternity! And we are not ashamed to bring it out with all plainness of speech, for the precious blood of Christ, God’s dear Son, and that *alone*, cleans us from all sin!

“Ah, well,” they say, “that is just the old story which your Puritan fathers used to tell. That is the old Methodist doctrine. That is your Presbyterianism and, as James the First said, Presbyterianism is no religion for a gentleman.” These learned men admire the broad-Church school where everything is taken to be true except the Truth of God! Still, Jesus is, to the mass of mankind, the despised Nazarene! I will not dwell longer upon it, however, because you that know the Lord need not be told that He is, to this day, despised and rejected of men. Call yourself a Christian and forget what Christianity is—and you will have easy times of it. Instead of preaching the simple Gospel of Christ, get fine music and fix up fine shows. Turn the place of worship into a conservatory, or a theater, and there will be no persecution for you!

Of course not, that is not Jesus Christ! But preach Jesus Christ and see if all the dogs will not howl at you, directly. You shall have ill names and wicked stories and all sorts of jests poured upon you! Go through the world as a respectable professor of religion and never let fall a single distinctive Truth of God from your lips. Never perform one single distinctive action of Christianity—but just do as others do and live as others do—and I will guarantee you, you shall be in a whole skin from the first of January to the end of December!

But be a *Christian* and *live* your Christianity and *speak* it out—and see how long it will be before they of your own house are at war with you! If we are true to the Master, we shall find that we have not enlisted in a service which is all fine feathers and music—stern fighting is to be done!

There is war to be borne and hardness to be endured by every good soldier of the Cross, for Jesus is still called the Nazarene!

II. But now, secondly, our other text informs us that CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN KNOWN AS THE SECT OF THE NAZARENES—that is to say, they must expect to bear a measure of the indignities poured upon their Leader. Dear young Friends, I need to press some matters home upon you who have lately joined the Church and also upon you who love the Lord but have never yet confessed it. If you follow Christ fully, you will be sure to be called by some ill name or other. For, first, they will say how singular you are. "My inheritance," says God, "is unto Me as a speckled bird. The birds round about her are against her."

If you become a true Christian, you will soon be a marked man. They will say, "How odd he is!" "How singular she is!" They will think that we try to make ourselves remarkable, when, in fact, we are only conscientious and are endeavoring to obey what we think to be the Word of God. Oftentimes that is the form of contempt—practical Christians are set down as intentionally eccentric and willfully odd. Mothers have brought that charge against daughters who have been faithful to Christ because they would not go into gaiety, or indulge in vain apparel. And many a working man has said it to his fellow man by way of accusation, "You must be different from everybody else." This difference, which God has made a necessity, men treat as a mere whim of our own. If we do not come out from among them and be separate, we cannot expect to be housed beneath the wings of the Eternal! But if we do, we may reckon upon being regarded by those around us as strange, unfriendly creatures.

Then, again, they will say to the genuine Christian, "Why, you are so old-fashioned! Look at you! You believe the same old things that they used to believe in Oliver Cromwell's day—those old Puritan doctrines! Do you not know that the world has made a great progress since those times and we have entered upon the 19th Century—a wonderful century—there never was century like it! There was only one Solomon, centuries ago, but we are *all* Solomons now! The very least of us! While the greater ones far excel a *thousand* Solomons rolled into one! The 19th Century! And here are you, you still stick to an old book that was written half of it ages ago, and the other half is at least 1,800 years old! Will you never move with the times? Will you get as far as Moses, Jesus and John and stick there?"

Yes, exactly there! We go not an inch beyond Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever! We try to hold fast the faith that was once delivered to the saints. In ordinances we hold to the olden Baptism and the ancient Supper! In doctrine we abide by the Truths of God which Paul taught among the Gentiles, for we feel that we cannot improve upon them! We would wish to exhibit the same spirit as Jesus Christ our Lord, for we know we shall never improve upon *His* perfections! Therefore they say, "You are so old-fashioned!" And we answer that for this we give no apology. When that form of criticism does not take effect, they laugh at our faith. They say, "You simple-minded people have great capacity for believing! Look at us, we are far too sensible to believe anything. We do not feel

sure about *anything*. What we think we know today we are not certain of. We are so receptive that we may learn the reverse tomorrow!

“We get our faith out of our own moral consciousness and compel, even, the Scriptures to plead at the bar of our inward conceptions. We do not need to have things *revealed* to us and to have a Bible and bind ourselves down to a Book of Revelation. We are our own teachers, judges and infallible guides—and the very idea of absolutely certain truth is abhorred by us! As to this Spirit of God that you trust in, it is sheer enthusiasm! There is nothing in it and we wonder that you should be so credulous! Instead of that, you ought to be rational and believe in Huxley and Tyndall. Do not be credulous and believe in God, but be rational and believe in Bradlaugh, Voltaire and Tom Paine!”

This is another sting for the Nazarenes, but happily it has small power to vex us, since our reverence for the authorities of modern wisdom is not sufficient to make us fear their scoffs. Time was when Christianity was opposed by men of *real* ability, masters in learning—but in the present age its antagonists are men of much smaller caliber whose lack of argument is scantily concealed by the outrageous absurdities which they invent! Instead of attempting to overwhelm us by the weight of their learning, they endeavor to surprise us with unexpected hypotheses which we are more inclined to ridicule than to refute! And then, with mock sobriety, they assert that our bewilderment is defeat. The spears of the phalanx of reason are seen no more, but the shafts of folly stand thick upon our shields. In this, also, we shall conquer through the blood of the Lamb! Meanwhile we leave sneers of contempt to those who are such masters of them. It is for Nazarenes to receive, but not to return arrogance.

Another arrow of contempt is the assertion that Christian people have not their liberty. “Look at you, you dare not go to the theater! You dare not drink! Why,” says one man, “I like a jolly drink sometimes and if I were a Christian, I could not enjoy that great privilege.” No, Friend, you certainly would lose that booze of yours. As far as we are concerned, we have no ambition in that direction. Some of us know a little of what the amusements of the ungodly are and we are astonished that you should be able to find content in them, for they do not suit our taste at all! We never envy hogs their wash. Let them have their trough well-filled as often as they please! We have no taste in that direction. But you need not say that we have no liberty because we do not feed out of the swine trough, for such liberty we never desired!

We have liberty to serve God and do good—and this is the freedom which we covet. We have liberty to do as we like, for we like to do what God would have us do—and we pray that our likes may, every day, be more and more conformed to the liking of God. There is not much, after all, in the taunt, “You God-fearing people are cowardly! You dare not enjoy yourselves.” We live daily so as to give this taunt the lie, for we are a happy people, a free people, even we who are of the sect of the Nazarenes!

Again, some turn round upon true Christians for their not being very choice in their company. If we associated only with the rich and great, whose society, as far as I know of it, is about the poorest thing out, we

should then be acting properly. Keep to “society,” and society will smile upon you. But if you attend meetings where you call a coal miner your Brother in Christ, where the washerwoman is your Sister, where so long as people love Christ you count them the best of company, then you are low and vulgar, a Philistine, or a Nazarene! If you are willing to be a true Brother to a black man, or to one who is an outcast in condition—who was actually seen with a broom, sweeping a crossing—then, of course, you cannot expect to be recognized by anybody who is anybody! Listen to the world’s ridicule of true Christian Churches where there is real brotherly love and true fraternity! They cannot endure it!

Well, they may do without it, then, but this shall be my glory—that God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth and that where there is a touch of Grace in any man—his dress and his rank are nothing to me! Real Believers in Jesus are truly our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, however poor or however illiterate they may be. This is the very genius of Christianity! To the *poor*, the Gospel is preached! As soon as men enter into the Church of Christ, all outward distinctions are forgotten and they are one in the gracious family of God their Father! This, however, is the subject of contempt even among those who profess and call themselves Christians! Many of your fine ladies and gentlemen would not acknowledge Jesus, Himself, if He were now upon earth! And as for His disciples, I am sure *they* would get the cold shoulder on all sides! I, for one, never expect to see saints fashionable, nor holiness popular—let us be content to be low and vulgar in men’s esteem for the Lord’s sake!

And then, if God’s servants will preach the Truth of God outright, or if not being preachers they will hold it and dare to *live* it, I guarantee you they will soon meet with some contemptuous title or other. Pare down the Gospel; cut away its angles; draw out the lion’s teeth and then, at once, you shall be friends with the world! But hold the Doctrines of Grace; bring forth the Atonement; speak out plainly; have your convictions and state them—and soon the hounds will be after you full cry! Say that the Bible and the Bible, alone, is the religion of true Christians, and that we are not bound by prayer-books, synods, conferences, or anything of the kind—but only by the Word of God, and you shall see what you shall see, for here and there and everywhere all sorts of people will be against you!

Live a godly, gracious life and you will not escape persecution! You may be happily circumstanced so as to live among earnest Christians and so escape persecution—but take the average Christian man in this city and he will have a hard time of it if he is faithful! He will be pointed at by some opprobrious name or other, something like Paul was when they said he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

III. Now, listen to me as I close. THERE IS, AFTER ALL, NOTHING DESPICABLE IN EITHER CHRIST OR HIS PEOPLE. I feel half ashamed to say such a thing, or that it should ever be necessary to be said that there is nothing to despise in Jesus! What is there to be ashamed of in Him? He is the Son of the Highest! He is “God over all, blessed forever” and if He stooped—and stoop He did—and became lower than the lowest by His sufferings or death, even the death of the Cross, He did it out of such glori-

ous disinterestedness of kindness to fallen men that He is thereby revealed as the most grand of all characters! His is the most sublime of all lives! Angels have never ceased to wonder and adore! Even the enemies of Christ have often been struck dumb as they have seen the splendor of the love that moved Him to stoop so low.

And what if He has revealed a plain Gospel? Would you have the illiterate left out in the cold? What if He preached the Gospel to sinners? Who needed the Gospel *but* sinners? What if He did not flatter the pride of those who thought themselves good? Is it not true that “the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick”? For my part, I bless my Master that He has given us a commonplace Gospel. It is sublime beyond sublimity! But it is plain so that a little child may understand it. A man with slender wit may find his way to Heaven guided by the Light of the Holy Spirit and this is one of the most grand proofs of the profound wisdom of God! Glory be to Jesus Christ that He did not come here to tantalize the multitude by a Gospel only suitable to the elite! That He did not come here to proclaim doctrines that could only be learned in the universities and could never be understood except by such men as Isaac Newton or Robert Boyle!

I bless the name of Jesus that He came to give a Gospel to the poor and needy, to the simple and the childlike! And while I do it, I feel that I hear Him saying again, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and of earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.” The practical point is this—there is nothing to be ashamed of in being a Christian! I am afraid that there are some Christians that we have need to be ashamed of and that we, ourselves, do many unworthy things. Christians ought to be reflections of Christ, but I fear they often cast reflections *upon* Christ. Oh you that despise Christ, when you find out our faults and speak against us for them, you treat us justly and we cannot complain!

But why lay our crimes at our Savior’s door? If you find us false to our profession. If we are not like our Master. If we are not true to Him, you may well ridicule us and we cannot answer you. We must be beaten as with whips of scorpions when we are untrue to our Leader—but why blame Him? The fact is that the ungodly revile those who are true to the Lord Jesus. Well, when they do, there is nothing in that to be ashamed of. What if I believe the Truth of God? Shall I be ashamed of it? What if I fear God? Shall I be ashamed of it? Let those be ashamed who do *not* fear Him. What if I believe in prayer? What if I receive *answers* to prayer? Shall I blush about that? Let those blush scarlet who never pray, or have no God to hear their prayers! Shall I be ashamed because I try to do what is right and have a conscience before God—and cannot enjoy loose pleasures—or listen to lascivious song? Shall I be ashamed of chastity and truth?

Why, then, let angels be ashamed of purity! Let the stars be ashamed of light! Let the sun be ashamed of day! There is nothing to be ashamed of in things honorable and of good repute. Why is it that some of you—you who are, I trust, Christians—never come out and acknowledge your religion? What will your Master say to you in the day of His appearing? What honor

can you expect to share with Him if you will not share His shame? If any man wants to spit on Christ, let him do *me* the honor to spit on me! If any man will rail on Christ, let him do me the pleasure to rail on me, for if I may stand between him and my Master, I shall be promoted by the deed!

Napoleon's Mamaluke flung himself in the way of the bullet to save the emperor's life. Shall not Christ be served after that fashion? Shall we not be willing to be Nazarenes for the Nazarene? Shall we not glory to be despised and rejected of men for His sake, if by any means we may bring honor to Him? I trust it shall be so and yet some of you have not even been baptized into His name, though you know that it is His command! You have never joined with His people in Church fellowship and yet wish to share their joys! You let them fight the battle alone! You think, I suppose, to slink into Heaven by the back door and not to be found among the soldiers of Christ till the crowns are distributed? Ah, Sirs, you miss a great honor in not standing shoulder to shoulder with the rank and file of Christ's chosen! Angels would leave Heaven, if they could, to come and fight for Christ!

They would be glad to leave their rest to bear the hardness which a follower of Christ must endure for His dear Captain's sake. Jesus is coming! He is on His way! He may come tonight! He may come before another Sabbath's bells shall ring—and oh, if I have never confessed Him, if I have been ashamed of Him—how shall I face Him? Hear this, you cowards! What will you say when He appears? Be wise and confess Him tonight! Come you out from among the ungodly! Be you separate! Confess your Lord and Master!

“He that with His heart believes, and with His mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” God save us from being ashamed of the Nazarene! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON. Mentone, November 24, 1881. DEAR FRIENDS—Since the issue of last week's sermon I have been attacked according to the fashion of former years, but through the goodness of God, in answer to the prayers of many, I hope to escape a protracted illness. A gentle voice by these light afflictions whispers to us, gratitude, and reminds us that, “we are but dust.” Even in this winterless land the leaves must wither and, in every condition trial and sickness may come. Our joy is that over against the peril we can place a security—we may be sorrowful, but we must be safe. All things may work together for grief, but all things must work together for good! Let the Father's will be the children's delight. Hoping soon to return to my beloved work and daily ministry, I am, yours heartily, **C. H. Spurgeon.**

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“FLEE FROM THE WRATH TO COME”

NO. 2704

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 9, 1900.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 23, 1881.**

*“Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”
Matthew 3:7.*

*“Who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”
Hebrews 6:18.*

WE will first consider the question of John the Baptist. “When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” I have no doubt that the Pharisees and Sadducees were very much surprised to hear John addressing them in that way, for men who wish to win disciples ordinarily adopt milder language than that—and choose more attractive themes—for they fear that they will drive their hearers from them if they are too personal and speak too sharply. There is not much danger of that, nowadays, for the current notion now abroad is that Gospel ministers can sew with silk without using a sharp needle and that, instead of piercing men with the sword of the Spirit, they should show them only the hilt of it—let them see the bright diamonds on the scabbard, but never let them feel the sharpness of the two-edged blade! They should always comfort, console and cheer, but never allude to the terror of the Lord.

That appears to be the common interpretation of our commission. But John the Baptist was of quite another mind. There came to a him a Pharisee, a very religious man, one who observed all the details of external worship and was very careful even about trifles. He was a firm Believer in the resurrection, and in angels and spirits, and in all that was written in the Book of the Law, and also in all the traditions of his fathers. He was a man who was overdone with external religiousness, a Ritualist of the first order who felt that if there was a righteous man in the world, he certainly was that one! He must have been greatly taken aback when John talked to him about the wrath of God and plainly told him that that wrath was as much for him as for other people! Those phylacteries and the broad borders of his garment, of which he was so proud, would not screen him from the anger of God against injustice and transgression, but, just like any common sinner, he would need to “flee from the wrath to come.”

I daresay that the Sadducee was equally taken aback by John’s stern language. He, too, was a religious man, but he combined with his religion greater thoughtfulness than the Pharisee did—at least, so he said. He did not believe in traditions and he was too large-minded to care about the little details and externals of religion. He observed the Law of Moses, but he clung rather to the letter of it than to its spirit, and he did not accept all that was revealed, for he denied that there was such a thing as an angel or a spirit. He was a Broad Churchman—a man of liberal ideas, fully abreast of the age! He professed to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews, yet, at the same time, the yoke of religion rested very lightly upon his shoulders. Still, he was not irreligious!

Yet here is John the Baptist talking to him, as well as to the Pharisee, about “the wrath to come”! They would both have liked to have a little argument with him, but he talked to them about *fleeing* from the wrath to come. They would both have been pleased to discuss with him some theological questions and to bring up the differences between their two sects, just to hear how John would handle them, and to let them see which way he would lean. But he did not waste a moment over the matters in dispute between Pharisees and Sadducees—the one point he had to deal with was the one of which he would have spoken to a congregation of publicans and harlots—and he spoke of it in just the same way to these nominally religious people! They must “flee from the wrath to come,” or else, as surely as they were living men, that wrath would come upon them and they would perish under it!

So John just kept to that one topic—he laid the axe to the root of the trees as he warned these hypocritical professors to escape for their lives, otherwise they would perish in the common destruction which will overwhelm *all* ungodly men. This was not the style of preaching that John’s hearers liked, but John did not think of that. He did not come to say what men wished him to say, but to discharge the burden of the Lord, and to speak out plainly what was best for men’s eternal and immortal interests! He spoke, therefore, first, concerning the wrath of God and, next, he spoke concerning the way of escape from that wrath.

Those shall also be our two topics. First, *the tremendous peril*—“the wrath to come.” And, secondly, *the means of escape*—“Flee from the wrath to come.”

I. First, dear Friends, let us think of THE TREMENDOUS PERIL which overtakes all men who do not escape from it.

That tremendous peril is *the wrath of God*. There is a wrath of God which abides on every ungodly man. Whether men like that Truth of God or not, it is written, “God is angry with the wicked every day.” And, also, “he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” And yet again, “he that believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.”

But *this wrath is in abeyance for a time* and, consequently, men do not think much either of the wrath that now is, or of “the wrath to come.” It will not, however, always be in abeyance. The sluices of the great deep will be pulled up and the awful torrents will come leaping forth and will

utterly overwhelm all who are exposed to their fury. This “wrath to come” will, in part, fall upon men at death, but more fully at the Day of Judgment, and it will continue to flow over them forever and ever! This “wrath to come” is that of which John spoke, and of which we will now think for a while.

I remark, first, that this “*wrath to come*” is *absolutely just and necessary*. If there is a God, He cannot let sin go unpunished. If He is really God and the Judge of all the earth, He must have an utter abhorrence of all evil. It cannot be possible that He should think the same of the honest and the dishonest, of the chaste and the unchaste, of the sober and the drunk, of the truthful and the lying, of the gracious and the dissolute. Such a god as that would be one whom men might rightly despise! But the true God, if we understand aright what He is, must hold all sin in detestation. All evil must be utterly abhorrent to His pure and holy soul. And it is not only because He can do it, but because He *must* do it, that He will, one of these days, let loose the fury of His wrath against sin!

As it is necessary, in the very nature of things, that there should be certain laws to govern His creation, so is it equally necessary, in the very nature of things, that sin should be punished and that every transgression and disobedience should receive a just recompense of reward. This is the inevitable consequence of sin—there is nothing arbitrary about such a result. It is fixed in the very nature of things that, “for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the Day of Judgment.” And for every sinful action, they must appear before the bar of God. Do not think, when we speak about the wrath of God, that we picture God to you as a tyrant. We do but tell you that this is only the nature of things—that just as if you take poison, it will kill you, or if you indulge in drunkenness, or if you take almost any form of disease, it will bring pain and mischief to you—so sin must bring upon you the wrath of God—it cannot be otherwise. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of God’s Law can pass away till all is fulfilled—and one part of that Law requires that He should punish all transgression, iniquity and sin.

And if now, for a time, the full manifestation of that anger is delayed, I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, do not therefore trifle with it! The longer God’s arm is uplifted, the more terrible will be the blow when at last He strikes. To sin against the patience and long-suffering of Almighty God is to sin with a vengeance! You do, as it were, defiantly put your finger into the very eye of God when you know that He sees you sin and yet you go on sinning because He does not immediately take vengeance upon you for all your evil works! It is in great love that He restrains His wrath, for He is “slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” But as a torrent that is dammed up for a while, gathers force and strength, and every hour in which it is kept back it gets to be more irresistible, so must it be with “the wrath to come” when, at last it does come upon you! If it has waited for some of you for seventy, or sixty, or fifty, or even for 20 years, it will come as an overwhelming flood when, at last, it bursts the barriers

which, at present, hold it back. Trifle not, therefore, with that long-suffering of God which may be blest to your salvation!

Nor is “the wrath to come” any the less sure because it is delayed. Because sentence is not at once given against an evil work, therefore men say, “We need not trouble ourselves. ‘How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?’ Behold, He winks at our iniquities! He counts them as mere trifles. No harm will come to us because of them.” Sirs, if you are prepared to cast away the Bible, I can understand a little that you should talk like that. But if you really believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God, you know what the consequences of your sin must be. Concerning the wicked, it is written, “If he turns not, He will whet His sword. He has bent His bow and made it ready. He has also prepared for him the instruments of death.” Even if you are so foolish as to cast away your Bibles, yet, unless you think yourselves to be mere dogs and cattle that shall rot back into the ground from where you came, and be done with forever, you must expect that there will be another state of existence in which right shall be vindicated and wrong shall be punished! It seems to lie upon the very conscience of man, in the unwritten code of intuitive knowledge, or of knowledge handed down from father to son, that there must come a time in which God will surely bring every secret thing to light, and visit with judgment the proud and the high-handed oppressor—and vindicate the rights of men and the rights of His own Throne. It must be so! And if the wrath tarries for a while, it is none the less sure.

I feel quite staggered as I try to speak of this “wrath to come” because *when it does come it can be something very terrible because Divinity enters into the essence of it.* The wrath of man is sometimes very terrible, but what must the wrath of God be? O Sirs, I have tried, these many years, humbly, yet earnestly, to preach the love of God, and I have never yet reached the height of that great argument, for His love is boundless! But so are *all* His attributes and, if you consider any *one* of them, you must say, “It is high, I cannot attain unto it.” But the just indignation of God against sin must be commensurate with His absolute purity. That man who trifles with right and wrong, and thinks that these are mere arbitrary terms, has no indignation when he sees wrong done. But God, who is infinitely pure and holy, cannot—it is not possible that He should look upon sin without an awful abhorrence. “Oh,” He says, by the mouth of His servant Jeremiah, “do not this abominable thing that I hate.” He is not indifferent to sin—He hates it—and He pleads with men not to do it because it is so abominable and so hateful in His sight!

What will “the wrath to come,” be? If God but touches a man, as it were, with only His little finger, the strongest must at once fail and fall, the mightiest can scarcely open his eyes, and the seal of death is speedily imprinted on his brow. But what will it be when the hand of God shall begin to plague the ungodly, when He shall pour out all the vials of His wrath upon them and crush them with the bosses of His buckler? What will be their portion when He says, “Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries, and avenge Me of My enemies?” Think, too, what must be the meaning of

that terrible passage—let me repeat it to you slowly and solemnly—“Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

Thus have I faithfully tried to set before you “the wrath to come.” Now listen to me for a few minutes, and let me have your impartial judgments while I still further speak upon this important theme. Who, do you think, are the more honest men—those who tell you plainly what the Scriptures say concerning this wrath of God, or those who smooth it over, or deny it altogether? I will not judge them—before the Judge of the quick and the dead let those appear who dare to be apologists for sin, and to diminish the dread thought of God’s anger against it! But I might, without any breach of Christian charity, be permitted to suspect the honesty of those who use flattering words to please and deceive their hearers! But I could not suspect the honesty of those who preach an unpalatable Truth of God which grieves themselves as much as it is distasteful to those who hear it!

Let me also ask you which style of preaching has the greater moral effect upon yourself? Will you be likely to go and sin after you have heard of God’s anger against it, or will you more readily commit iniquity when you have it salved over and you are told that it is but a little thing of which God takes no account? I was in the cabin of a vessel, one day, with a brother minister who was disputing with me upon the non-eternity of future punishment. And the captain of the ship came in and said, “What are you discussing down here? The scenery is beautiful, come up on deck and admire it.” So I said to him, “This is the question in dispute, whether the punishment of sin is eternal, or not.” “Well,” he said, “we cannot have any theological discussion just now,” but, turning to my opponent, he said, “Don’t you go on deck and talk to my sailors any of your rubbish! They are bad enough as they are. But if you tell them what I heard you say just now, they will swear and drink worse than ever.” Then, turning to me, he said, “You may talk to the men as much as you like—you will do them good and not harm by telling them that God will certainly punish their sins.” Now, there is common sense in that argument of my friend—you know that there is! That which is most likely to do good, and to repress sin, is most likely to be right. But that which gives me latitude to offend my conscience, leads me to suspect whether it could ever have come from God at all, and makes me seriously doubt whether it can be true.

And what, Sirs, will be the consequence if it should turn out that we are mistaken when we preach to you concerning the wrath of God? What losers will those of us be who have fled to Christ for refuge? But suppose it should turn out that we are right? Where will you be who have despised the wrath of God? We have two strings to our bow, but, to my mind, *you* have none at all! I would not like to lie down upon my deathbed in the hope that death would be an eternal *sleep*—that would be a miserable hope even if it could ever be fulfilled! I would not like to risk my destiny in the world to come upon the prospect of being annihilated because I did not believe in God! It would be a wretched thing to

hope for, but what if even that poor hope should fail me? Where should I be then?

But I can go with confidence before my God and say to Him, “Be Your wrath what it may—I know that it must be terrible to the last degree—but be it what it may, I will not dare it. And even if it would not hurt me, yet I would not make You angry, O God, by sinning against You. And if there were no punishment for sin but the loss of Your love—if there were nothing but the loss of Heaven, the loss of having failed to please You, my God—I would count that loss to be tremendous and terrible. Let me be reconciled to You, my Maker. Tell me how You can be just and yet forgive the guilty. To You I fly! Oh, save me from the wrath to come!”

Thus have I set before you, as best I can, the tremendous peril.

II. Now, in the second place, I want, for a few minutes, to tell you about THE MEANS OF ESCAPE. John said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, “Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

By this question, he seemed to imply that there is no way of *deliverance from “the wrath to come” but by flight*. Sinner, you cannot endure the wrath of God! If your ribs were granite and your nerves were brass, you could not endure the wrath of the Almighty! No, not even for a moment! If a man had a toothache, how dreadful it would seem to him to have to bear that pain for twelve months, even if he knew that there would be an end to it then. But what must the anger of God be when He comes to deal with our entire manhood and to punish our sins forever and ever? We cannot bear it—we must flee from it. What does this mean?

It means, first, *immediate action*. You must escape, Man! If you remain where you now are, you will certainly perish. You are in the City of Destruction which is to be overwhelmed with the fiery flood of “the wrath to come.” You must be in earnest to escape from it before judgment is executed upon the place and all who are in it! You must “flee from the wrath to come.”

Fleeing means not only immediate action, but *swift action*. He that flees for his life does not creep and crawl—he runs at his utmost speed and he wishes that he could ride on the wings of the wind. No pace that he can reach is fast enough for him. Oh, if God the Holy Spirit will make you, whom I am now addressing, feel your imminent danger, you will want to fly to Christ with the swiftness of a flash of lightning! You will not be satisfied to linger as you are even for another hour. What if that gallery should fall about your ears? What if God should smite the house while you are still in your sins? What if, in walking home, you should walk into your graves? What if your beds should become your tombs? It may be so with any one of you, so there is no time to linger or delay. Haste is the word for you—God sends it to you and says, “Today if you will hear My voice, harden not your hearts; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

To flee also means *to go straight away at your objective*. A man who flees for his life does not want any circuitous, round-about roads. He takes short cuts, he goes over hedge and ditch that he may get where he wants to be in the shortest possible space of time! So straight away to

Jesus is the only direction for you just now. Some people will recommend you to read books which I am certain you cannot understand, for no living soul can. Or perhaps you may meet with persons who want to explain to you some wondrous mystery. Listen to them, if you like, at the Day of Judgment, when the great business of your salvation is over—but just now you have not any time for mysteries, you have no time for puzzles, you have no time to be confused and confounded—the one thing you have to do is to go straight away to Jesus, straight away to Jesus!

You are a sinner and He is the only Savior for sinners—so trust Him—God help you to trust Him and thus to find immediate salvation! It is a straight road to Christ. The plan of salvation is not a thing that is hard to be understood. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” And he shall never come into condemnation, for he as passed from death unto life! There is the Gospel in a nutshell—lay hold of it and live by it. You have not time for anything else and you have no need of anything else, so flee, “flee from the wrath to come.”

Notice how John the Baptist explained to those Pharisees and Sadducees the way in which they had to flee. He told them, first, that *they must repent*. There is no going to Heaven by following the road to Hell! There is no finding pardon while continuing in sin. Depend upon it, Mr. Drunkard, you will not be forgiven for your drunkenness if you still go on with your drinking! Let not the man who is unchaste imagine that he can go on with his sin and yet be forgiven. Let not the thief dream that there is any pardon for him unless he quits his evil course and tries to make such restitution as he can to those whom he has wronged.

There must be repentance, then, and *that repentance* must be practical. Note how John put it—“Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance”—*evidences* of true amendment of life. It is no use whining and crying, and going into the enquiry rooms with a lie in your right hand, and then going home to swear and drink, or to break the Sabbath, and to live as you like—and all the while hoping to enter Heaven. No, sin and you must part, or else Christ and you can never keep company. You remember that message that John Bunyan thought he heard when he was playing at tip-cat on a Sunday on the village green? He suddenly stood still with the stick in his hand, for he thought he heard a voice saying to him, “Will you leave your sins and go to Heaven, or have your sins, and go to Hell?” That is the alternative which both the Law and the Gospel put before men. “Flee from the wrath to come.” But there is no fleeing from wrath except by repentance of sin—and by fruits meet for repentance—*evidences* of a real change of heart and life.

Then John went on to say to the Pharisees and Sadducees that they must *give up all the false hopes which they had cherished*. “Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father.” Those Pharisees said, in deed, if not in word, “It really does not matter though we act the hypocrite, for Abraham is our father.” And the Sadducees said, in effect, “Though we are unbelievers, it is of small consequence, for Abraham is our father.” “No,” answered John, “you must abandon all such false hopes as that.” And if any of you, dear Friends, have said, “We shall be

all right because we are regular church people.” Or if you have said, “We are all right, for we are Baptists, we are Methodists, we are Presbyterians—our father and mother, and our grandfather and grandmother were good Christian people.” Ah, yes, and so may your great grandfather and great grandmother have been, but your pedigree will avail you nothing unless you personally quit your sin and lay hold on Christ as your Savior!

Nor is there anything else upon which you can depend for salvation. Your Baptism, your church or your chapel attendance, your eating of the Lord’s Supper, your saying of collects, your family prayers, your giving of your guineas—everything of your own put together will all be less than nothing and vanity if you trust to it! You must flee away from all such false hopes as that and get a better hope, even that of which my second text speaks—“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

John the Baptist did not tell his hearers all this, for he did not come to preach the Gospel to them. He came to preach the Law, but he did sufficiently indicate where they must go, for he said to them, “There stands One among you, whom you know not. He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” It is to Him, even to Jesus, that you must flee. If you would be saved, you must be among those who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before you. That is the real refuge for sinners—the laying hold of Christ, the getting a faith-grip on Jesus as the one atoning Sacrifice, the looking to Him with tearful but believing eyes, and saying, “Jesus, Son of God, I trust in You. I put myself into Your hands, and leave myself there, that You may deliver me from the wrath to come.”

I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, wherever you are, you who think you are so good, be anxious to get rid of all that fancied goodness of yours! I beseech you, if you have any self-righteousness about you, to ask God to strip it off you at once! I should like you to feel as that man did who had a forged bank note and some counterfeit coin in his possession. When the policeman came to his house, he was anxious not to have any of it near him—so, shake off your self-righteousness! You will be as surely damned by your righteousness, if you trust in it, as you will by your unrighteousness! Christ, alone, the Gift of the free Grace of God—this is the gate of Heaven—but all self-satisfaction, all boasting, all exaltation of yourself above your fellow men is mischievous and ruinous, and will surely be deadly to your spirit forever.

How does Christ deliver us from “the wrath to come?” Why, *by putting Himself into our place, and putting us into His place*. Oh, this blessed plan of salvation by *substitution*—that Christ should take a poor, guilty sinner, and set him up there in the place of acceptance and joy at the right hand of God and that, in order to be able to do so, Christ should say, “Here comes the great flood of almighty wrath—I will stand just where it is coming and let it flow over Me” And you know that it did flow over Him till He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, and more, till He cried

aloud, “My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?” And still more, till He cried, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up the ghost—
**“He bore, that you might never bear,
 His Father’s righteous ire”—**

and so, suffering in your place, and putting you into the place of acceptance which He, Himself, so well deserves to occupy, He saved you from “the wrath to come.”

I used to think that if I once told this wondrous story of “Free Grace and dying love,” everybody would believe it. But I have long since learned that so hard is the heart of man that he will sooner be damned than be saved by Christ! Well, you must make your choice, Sirs. You must make your choice for yourselves—only do me this one favor when you have made your choice—do not blame me for having tried to persuade you to act more wisely than I fear your choice will be. I sometimes tremble as I think of the account I have to give in concerning the many thousands who crowd this place to listen to my voice. What if my Master should say to me, at the last, “You flattered them. You tried to run with the times. You did not dare to preach to them the old-fashioned Gospel and to tell them of Hell and of judgment, and of atonement by blood?”

No, my Master, by Your Grace, You will never be able to say that to me! With all my faults, infirmities and imperfections, I have sought to declare Your Truth, as far as I knew it, to the sons of men. Therefore, my Hearers, I shake my skirts free of your blood! If any of you shall reject Christ, I will have nothing to do with your damnation! Be spiritual suicides if you will, but I will not be your soul-murderer, nor act like Saul wished his armor-bearer to do when he bade him thrust him through with the sword. I implore you to “flee from the wrath to come!” Escape by quitting your sins and laying hold on Jesus! Do it this very moment, for you may never have another opportunity to do it! May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, grant you Grace to trust in Jesus! Amen and Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
 MATTHEW 3; 11:20-30; REVELATION 7:9-17.**

Matthew 3:1, 2. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* His was a preparatory ministry. His work was to prepare men’s minds for Christ and never is the heart of man so ready to receive Christ as when it is in a state of repentance. When it is weary of sin, then is it that Christ comes in and is welcomed by the soul conscious of its guilt, tired of it, and longing to be rid of it.

3, 4. *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His path straight. And the same John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.* Everything about him was impressive and everything was suitable to the message he had to deliver. He was so dressed as to be noticed, at once, as a man of ascetic habits. He was not the chaplain of a prince, otherwise he would have been clothed in soft raiment. He was not one

who had a gentle message to deliver, or he would not have gone into the wilderness and summoned the people to come away from their avocations to listen to him. He was the rough pioneer to prepare the way for the King.

5, 6. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.* That was his baptism—a baptism of repentance and of confession—preparatory to the coming of the Master. See what power there was in John because God was with him! I do not know that he had any remarkable eloquence. Certainly, some things about him were rather repulsive than attractive. But when God is with a man, the people must listen to him! Jerusalem must pour her thousands out of her gates and the rural districts must yield their hundreds—for if God speaks, no matter *by whom*—He will have human ears listen to His voice.

7, 8. *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet of repentance.* Answerable to your repentance, congruous therewith, arising out of it and truly *proving* its reality!

9, 10. *And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees.* No mere pruning and trimming work did John come to do! He was the handler of a sharp axe that was to fell every worthless tree.

10. *Therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.* It is not enough to hew it down—into the fire it must go! And John minces not his words about the matter—he speaks the message of his Master straight out and plain.

11, 12. *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.* See the humility of the true servant of Christ! He is not even willing to exercise the office of a slave and to carry his Master’s shoes, or to unloose the laces of them. And who among us is worthy to occupy even the lowest office for Christ? There is an honor about it that far transcends any worthiness of ours. To serve Him at all, is honor, indeed! But, Brothers and Sisters, fix your eyes upon Christ and recollect what a Baptism it is into which He baptizes us—not with water, but into the Holy Spirit and into fire! Can we bear it? Can we endure the fire? It will only burn up that which ought to be burned—and happy is he to whom God has imparted that eternal life which can never be consumed!

13, 14. *Then Jesus came from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of You, and You come to me?* This is one of the most striking proofs that the ordinance of Baptism is not to be neglected by any of Christ’s followers, for even He who, in Himself, could have had no need for it—who is, Him-

self, the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit and with fire, yet comes to the baptizer in water, and asks to be immersed!

15. *And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it become us to fulfill all righteousness.* Nothing that appertains to righteousness must be neglected—the little as well as the great must be observed!

15-17. *Then he allowed Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up immediately out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a Voice from Heaven saying, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* This doctrine of repentance was preached by the Master as well as by the servant. Turn to the 11th Chapter of Matthew’s Gospel and let us read a few verses, beginning at the 20th .

Matthew 11:20. *Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not.* They listened. Sometimes, they applauded. But they repented not and there is nothing really accomplished until men have repented. In vain have we preached until men are brought to repent! So the Master said—

21, 22. *Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you.* Listen to that, you Gospel-hardened sinners, you who have heard and heard, and heard, but have not repented! See how great is your sin, for you have rejected what others would have received if it had been presented to them? See how your guilt accumulates—and its also punishment!

23, 24. *And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you.* Sodom—that is the blackest place of all! Ah, me, will that verse ever fall, like a millstone, upon any one of my hearers, to grind him to powder, because you heard the Gospel and rejected it—always intending to receive it—but never receiving it at all? From such a doom, may God in mercy deliver you!

25-30. *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.* Just by way of contrast to what I am going to say in my sermon, let us read a few verses in Revelation 7. [Sermons were always preached after the expositions—EOD.]

Revelation 7:9. *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb.* Our numbering can go a very long way—what, therefore, must be the countless hosts of the redeemed who are to be “a great multitude, which no man could number”? And what an infinite variety there will be among them, seeing that they shall not only be “of all nations,” but out of those nations they shall be “of all kindreds, and people, and tongues”—that is, all sorts and conditions of men, of every race, and of every age from the first century down to the last. Christ’s immeasurable redemption price must bring to Him a great reward! Isaiah long ago foretold that “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” And it is no little result that will satisfy Him for such travail of soul as He endured! This great multitude “stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb.”

9. *Clothed with white robes.* To set forth their purity, their victory and their entrance into the marriage state, for such was the color usually worn on such occasions. “Clothed with white robes,” to show that they had entered into their rest, so that their garments were no longer soiled through their toil. They have reached their everlasting Sabbath, their weekday service is over forever!

9-11. *And palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the Throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the Throne on their faces, and worshipped God.* The angels form the outer ring. The elders, who represent the Church of the redeemed, are nearer to the Throne of God than even the holy angels are! Nearest to God in Heaven are those who have been *redeemed* from among men. How high a dignity—how noble an estate—awaits us, by-and-by! But, all alike, both saved men and unfallen angels, “fell before the Throne on their faces, and worshipped God.”

12-17. *Saying Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, Who are these who are arrayed in white robes? And from where have they come? And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, these are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He who sits on the Throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst, anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb who is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*

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

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

LESSONS FROM CHRIST'S BAPTISM

NO. 3298

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up immediately out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a Voice from Heaven, saying, This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”
Matthew 3:16, 17.***

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon verse 17 is #2409, Volume 41—
A GREAT SERMON BY THE GREATEST PREACHER—
read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .]

I WANT to teach two lessons tonight. The first will be a most necessary one for the unconverted. The second will be more suitable to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Without any preface, let us at once try to learn the first lesson from the text which relates to THE CO-WORKING OF THE TRINITY IN THE MATTER OF OUR SALVATION.

There are some who seem to suppose that Jesus Christ is our Savior to the exclusion of God the Father and of God the Holy Spirit, but this is a most erroneous idea. It is true that we are saved by the precious blood of Christ, but it is equally true that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit have had their share in the great work of our salvation. In order that we might not fall into the error in which some have been entangled, it pleased God to give us, at the very beginning of Christ's public ministry, a very distinct intimation that He did not come alone and that He did not undertake the work of our redemption apart from the other adorable Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity.

Try to picture to yourselves the scene that our text describes. There is Jesus Christ who has just been baptized in Jordan by John. And John bears witness that He is the Son of God because the sign from Heaven for which he had been told to look for had been given. As Jesus comes up out of the water, the Spirit of God descends upon Him in a visible shape—in appearance like a dove—and rests upon Him. John says that “it abode upon Him,” as though the Spirit was thenceforth to be His continual Companion and, truly, it was so. At the same time that the dove descended and lighted upon Christ, there was heard a Voice from Heaven, saying, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.” This was the voice of God the Father—He did not reveal Himself in a bodily

shape, but uttered wondrous words such as mortal ears had never before heard! The Father revealed Himself not to the eyes as the Spirit did, but to the ears—and the words He spoke clearly indicated that it was God the Father bearing witness to His beloved Son. So that the entrance of Christ upon His public ministry on earth was the chosen opportunity for the public manifestation of the intimate union between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

Now, Sinner, from this day forward, if you have never done so before, think humbly, reverently and lovingly of all the three Persons of the most blessed Trinity in Unity! Bless the Son of God for becoming Man in order that He might redeem us from destruction. He left His Glory in Heaven and was made in the likeness of men that He might suffer in our place as the Lamb of God's Passover and that we might shelter beneath His sprinkled blood—and so escape the sword of vengeance. Do you know that when Christ was baptized, He gave, as it were, a picture of His great work of Redemption? He said to John, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness," by which I understand not that He fulfilled all righteousness by being baptized, but that His Baptism was a picture or emblem of the fulfillment of all righteousness. What was done with Christ when He was baptized? Why, first, He was regarded as one who was dead and, therefore, He was buried beneath the waters of Jordan. He thus set forth, by a most significant symbol, the fact that He had come to earth to be obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross—and that in due time He would actually die and be really buried—as now He was submerged beneath the yielding wave in a metaphorical burial. But baptism does not consist of merely plunging the person into the water—he must be lifted out again—otherwise he would be drowned, not baptized. So the Savior, when He rose up out of the water, set forth His own Resurrection. By His Baptism, He figuratively said, "I shall die for sinners, I shall rise again for sinners and I shall go back to Heaven to plead for sinners. My death will put away their offenses and my Resurrection will complete their justification." Go, you who long for salvation, and by faith look to the Savior dying on the Cross at Calvary! See Him buried in Joseph's tomb. See Him rise the third day and after forty days, see Him ascend to Heaven leading captivity captive! His dying, His burial, His rising, His ascension—these are the fulfillment of all righteousness—and it is by these that you must be saved—it is not your being baptized that can save you! It is Christ's being baptized for you with that Baptism of blood when He poured out His soul unto death that you might live forever! It is not your suffering, but His suffering that avails for your salvation! It is not your being or your doing that is the secret of blessing, but it is His being and His doing on which you must depend for everything! Trust in Jesus Christ and you shall find salvation in Him!

Now I want you to look with humbly grateful eyes to God the Holy Spirit. You remember how Jesus Christ applied to Himself the words He read in the synagogue at Nazareth—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,

because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." It was the Spirit of God who gave success to Jesus Christ's ministry—and if you, dear Friend, would be saved—it is only the Holy Spirit who can take away from you the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh! I pray you to think with holy reverence of that mighty, mysterious Being who works in human hearts and molds them according to the will of God. By nature you are spiritually dead—and only the Spirit of God can give you spiritual life. By nature you are spiritually blind—and only the Spirit of God can give you spiritual sight. Even the work of Christ on the Cross does not avail for you until the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to you. You must look to Christ, or He will not save you! You must trust in Christ, or His precious blood will not be applied to you! But you will never look to Him or trust in Him unless the Father who sent Him, shall draw you to do so by His Spirit effectually working in you. When we are thinking and speaking of the Holy Spirit, let us always feel as if we must take off our shoes for the place whereon we stand is peculiarly holy. You remember how solemnly Christ warns us as to the consequences of even speaking against the Holy Spirit? "Whomever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him neither in this world, neither in the world to come." Whenever we mention the name of the Holy Spirit, let us do it with holy awe and reverence, remembering that it is the Spirit that quickens, it is the Spirit that instructs, it is the Spirit that sanctifies, it is the Spirit that preserves, it is the Spirit that makes us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! So unto the ever-blessed Spirit of God as well as unto the well-beloved Son of God be Glory and honor, praise and power, forever and ever!

With equal reverence and with equal awe let us also think of God the Father. What does the Father here say concerning Christ? First, He calls Him His Son. There has been much disputing about how Christ can be equal with the Father, and equally eternal, and yet be the Son of the Father. This is a great deep into which you and I, dear Friends, will do well not to pry. We usually speak of Christ being the Son of the Father by what is called "eternal generation." I confess that there is a mystery here which I can neither understand nor explain, but as the Father calls Him His Son, I unhesitatingly believe that He is what the Scripture constantly calls Him, "the Son of God." In our text we find that the Father not only calls Christ His Son, but He says, "This is My Beloved Son." What wondrous love there must be in the heart of each one of the Divine Persons in the sacred Trinity towards each of the others! How blessedly they must look upon one another with Divine benignity and complacency! There never could be any diversity in their interests, for they are one in

heart, one in purpose, one in every respect, even as Jesus said, "I and My Father are One."

Now, Sinner, the point to which I want to especially direct your thoughts is this—that God not only calls Christ His Son and His beloved Son, but that He says He is well-pleased with Him. And this concerns you in that if you are so united to Christ as to be one with Him, God will also be well-pleased with you for His dear Son's sake! But can a sinner ever be pleasing to God? Not in himself, apart from Christ, but all who are in Christ are "accepted in the Beloved." His Father is so pleased with Him that all whom He represents are pleasing unto God for His sake! "But," asks one, "how can I be in Christ?" My dear Friend, if you are one of the Lord's chosen, you are *already in Christ* in God's eternal purpose. But the way in which you must experimentally get into Christ is by true faith in Him. To trust in Jesus is to be in Jesus. To rely upon the atoning Sacrifice of Christ is to be one with Christ. Faith is the uniting bond which binds together the Christ in whom we believe and those who believe in Him. If you are truly trusting in Christ, God looks upon you as a part of Christ's Mystical Body and He is well-pleased with you for Christ's sake.

Thus you have the Son suffering for you, the Spirit applying to you the merit of His atoning Sacrifice and the Father well-pleased with you because you are trusting in His beloved Son! Or, to put the Truth in another form, the Father gives the great Gospel feast, the Son *is the feast* and the Spirit not only brings the invitations, but He also gathers the guests around the table. Or, to use another metaphor, God the Father is the Fountain of Grace, God the Son is the Channel of Grace and God the Holy Spirit is the Cup from which we drink of the flowing stream. I wish that I could really make you see Jesus Christ standing by Jordan's brink as He came up out of the water after He had been baptized by John—and the Spirit of God descending and lighting upon Him and that I could make you hear the voice of the Father saying—"This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." If I could do this, all I would have to add would be John's message, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." There is eternal life for everyone who truly looks to Him by faith—

***"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for thee!
Then look, Sinner, look unto Him, and be saved
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree!"***

II. In beginning my sermon, I told you that the second lesson I wanted you to learn tonight would be more suitable to believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, though at the same time it may also be useful to the unconverted, just as I hope the first lesson has been helpful to the people of God though especially intended for those who are not yet avowedly on the Lord's side. This second lesson, upon which I have now to speak, relates to THE DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT UPON BELIEVERS, but I would

not have dared to take the text without also calling your attention to the first lesson upon which I have already spoken.

I want you to clearly understand that as the Holy Spirit rested upon Christ, so He rests upon all who are in Christ. Indeed, when the Spirit rested upon Christ, He rested upon the whole Church that was represented by Christ. You remember that David says the unity of brethren is "like the precious ointment upon the head that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments." So the anointing that Christ received from the Holy Spirit ran down to the very lowest, least and last of the members of that Church of which He is the Head!

When the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven like a dove and lighted upon Christ, that descent was intended to teach us several lessons which we will now try to learn. Consider, first, the swiftness of that descent. The heavens were opened—there was no delay, but swiftly as a flash of lightning the Spirit descended and lighted upon Christ. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, do you feel dull and heavy tonight? Are you depressed in spirit? There is no reason why, within the next second, you should not be in quite a heavenly frame of mind, for the Spirit of God can descend upon you like a dove and immediately you shall be lifted up out of your dullness and despondency! The Spirit needs no time in which to work. The motions of matter are necessarily tardy—matter can only move at a certain rate and there are many things that slow it down. But as you know, the motion of mind is far more rapid—your thoughts can fly to America and back again more swiftly than I can describe their flight! In a flash your mind can be soaring away up among the stars millions and millions and millions of miles away! Now, the mind of the Spirit is the highest order of mind, for He is Divine and, therefore, His motions are swift as light—no, they are incomparably swifter than that! He descended like a dove in order to set forth the rapidity of His flight. You remember that expression in the Song of Solomon, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." So is it when the Spirit comes to us—our soul is, as it were, borne along in a swiftly-driven chariot! It does not take the Holy Spirit an hour to convert a soul. The vital spark that regenerates a soul is kindled in an instant! Instantaneous conversion is not the exception, it is the rule—there cannot be any conversion but that which is instantaneous! The growth, the development of the work of Grace in the heart and life is gradual, but there is a moment in which the soul passes from death unto life, from slavery to liberty, from sin to righteousness! And I have already said to you, Christian Friends, that you can, in a moment, be transported out of a dull, languishing state of heart into one of holy peace and joy. Breathe the prayer—

***"Come, Holy Spirit heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers,
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,***

And that shall kindle ours”—

and there is no reason why He should not grant your request even before you have finished your petition!

The figure of a dove also represents softness as well as swiftness. Speed generally causes some measure of sound—we usually associate hurry with noise, but it is not so with the Spirit of God. He descended with silent wings and alighted upon Christ as He came up out of the river where He had been baptized. If it had been recorded that the Spirit descended like an eagle, we would have thought of the whirring of great wings. But the dove's flight is of a far gentler and quieter order. So, Beloved, the Spirit of God may come down upon some of us in this house tonight, yet no one may be aware of His coming except those upon whom He rests as He rested that day upon Christ! Your neighbor may not perceive what has happened to you—there need be no outcry, no shouting, no violent contortions as there have been in certain revivals of which we have heard. No, the blessed Spirit frequently works invisibly, as the wind blows where it wishes—and sometimes blows so softly that we are not conscious of the slightest sound from the gentle zephyrs that fan our cheeks. I pray that in the solemn silence of the mind, many of you may thus experience the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, so swift yet so soft, so gentle yet so strong!

Besides this, wherever the Spirit comes, He works according to His own holy Nature. He comes like a dove and He operates in a dove-like manner. And if He graciously operates upon you, you also will have dove-like qualities given to you. What are they? Well, I think that the first thought we associate with a dove is that of purity. You remember that the spouse in the Song of Solomon says of her Beloved, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves." And the Bridegroom says to His spouse, "You are fair, My love; behold, you are fair; you have doves' eyes"—that is, eyes of purity, bright sparkling eyes that care not to look upon that which is unclean! The dove is no carrion-loving bird and you will recollect that it was the only bird that was offered to God in sacrifice under the old dispensation. Perhaps someone says, "Oh, but it was written in the Law, "A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons!" Yes, it was so written. But then I remind you that a pigeon is only one member of the great dove family and that it was only among the doves, of all feathered creatures, that there was found a bird that was clean enough to be offered unto God as a sacrifice! So the selection of a dove as the emblem of the Holy Spirit is very suggestive, for, wherever He goes, He breeds purity. If a man shall live a life of uncleanness, hatred, malice, and then say that he has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, he lies, for the Spirit first makes us pure and then peaceable. Unless you, my dear Hearer, have shaken off from you the love of all that is evil and have resolved in God's strength to live as becomes the Gospel of Christ, you prove that you have *not* experienced the dove-like influence of the Holy Spirit! In my early days in the country, I was horribly shocked when I heard of a man standing on a public house

table and saying though at the time he was almost drunk, "I can say what none of you fellows can say, that I am one of God's elect." All of us who knew anything of the man used to shudder at the thought of his blasphemy in pretending to be one of the elect. Why, if the Grace of God does not make a man holy, what is it worth? My dear Friend, if you are determined to be damned, leave religion out of it—and do not pretend to be a child of God and yet live in sin. To profess to be an heir of Heaven and then to live as an heir of Hell is such detestable hypocrisy that I pray God that all of you may be preserved from ever falling into it! Where the Spirit of God dwells, there is sure to be purity!

And next to purity comes *peace*. The dove with the olive leaf in its mouth was the token of peace to Noah and those who were with him in the Ark. And the dove has long been used as a symbol of peace. If the Spirit of God, like a dove, shall dwell with you, my dear Friend, you will have peace in your own conscience, peace with your fellow men, peace with God. As Paul puts it in writing to the Philippians, "the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus." Those worrying, distracting thoughts of yours do not come from the Holy Spirit! Those carking cares, those disquieting anxieties are not the Spirit's work! Where the Spirit, like a dove, dwells in a Believer's heart, that ancient assurance is fulfilled, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You: because he trusts in You." May you enjoy this perfect peace through the coming of the Spirit to you!

The dove is, next, the picture of *gentleness*. You do not expect to see doves fighting like vultures or ravens. I suppose doves do quarrel sometimes but, as a rule, their gentle and amiable nature makes them harmless and lovable. So, Christians should be the most gentle of all men. We are to be willing to be struck on one cheek and then to turn the other to the smiter. I know some professing Christians who, as soon as ever a contrary word is spoken to them, boil over with rage. Well, it is not their Christianity that makes such a display as that—and it is a poor excuse to say that it is their infirmity! "Oh," says one, "but if you tread on a worm, it will turn." Yes, the poor little creature turns in its agony, but is a worm to be a model for your conduct? Surely it would be better to ask the Holy Spirit to give you the Grace to take the Lord Jesus Christ as your example! Have you never heard of the Christian who killed his neighbor by kindness? When his oxen got into his neighbor's field, the cross-grained man put them into the pound and said that if they came astray again he would deal with them in the same way. By-and-by, his own oxen wandered into his neighbor's field—and then the Christian man fed them and sent word that if they came there again, he would treat them in the same way. That is the style in which we should endeavor to act towards any who treat us unkindly—by heaping coals of fire upon their heads, we may in time burn love into their hearts!

I am afraid that all professing Christians are not as gentle as they should be, though gentleness is one of the prominent characteristics of true Christians. I am not a Quaker, but I must say that in this particular quality of gentleness, the Society of Friends has set a good example to the whole Christian Church. I wish that the spirit of non-resistance was more generally prevalent among Christians than it often is. It is certainly in accordance with both the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously." These words of the Apostle Peter follow immediately after his declaration that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." Where the dove-like Spirit dwells, there will be a gentleness of spirit in harmony with His own Nature. I am charmed with the change that is often apparent in the converts who come to join this Church. When I hear of a man who before his conversion used to rage and rave in such a way as to be a terror to his family, yet who now, though he is at times greatly provoked, just walks away and says nothing, I feel that the Grace of God is really working in his heart. If what you call Grace does not change your evil tempers, you had better exchange it for the true Grace of God which will do so! For surely it is one of the first evidences that the Spirit of God is dwelling within a man when it makes him "gentle, showing all meekness unto all men."

A dove is also one of the most *harmless* of all God's creatures. And a Christian must never intentionally hurt or harm others. Our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to suffer, but He did not make others suffer—and He would not have us seek to propagate His Truth in a bitter spirit. If you are dealing with an infidel, let him see that, however strongly you disapprove of his principles, you endeavor to win him away from them not by unkindness, but by love. I doubt if anybody is ever bullied into accepting the Gospel. Certainly, more flies are caught with honey than with vinegar—and more sinners are brought to Christ by kindness than by unkindness. Never let anyone be truthfully able to say of you, "There is a professed follower of the Lord Jesus Christ who has done me most serious injury." But rather let it be said concerning you, "There goes a man whom I grossly injured, yet he bore it patiently and said nothing against me because he is a Christian."

You know, too, that in Scripture the dove is spoken of as a type of *love*. When the turtledove has lost its mate, everybody knows how it will sit and moan and mourn. "The voice of the turtle is heard in our land" is the Scriptural description of a spiritual springtime, the season of love and joy. If the dove-like Spirit has come into your heart, my Friend, your soul will be full of love to Jesus. But if you are not conscious of His Presence, you will mourn like the bereaved dove and will dolefully sing—

***"I cannot bear Your absence, Lord.
I cannot live without Your smile."***

If I cannot rejoice in Christ, the next best thing is to weep because I cannot enjoy sweet fellowship with Him. If I cannot rest in Christ, it is a good thing if I cannot rest anywhere else. Ah, Soul, if you have the Spirit of God within you, you will pine and sigh and cry until Christ is very near and very dear to you! And when He is both near and dear to you, then your soul will be like a vessel that is filled to the brim, yet still remaining under the running stream, and you will overflow with love and gratitude to your dear Lord who has done such great things for you!

Time flies, so I must close with just one more thought. You remember that when this world was created, "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Everything was in a state of chaos and confusion—there was neither life nor order! But when the Spirit of God spread His great wings over the face of the deep and brooded, like a bird upon its nest, it was not long before the Voice of God was heard and soon disorder gave place to order, darkness to light, and death to life! The Holy Spirit comes into our heart now to work the same kind of change as that. He finds our soul in a state of chaos—formless, empty, dark—but when He mysteriously spreads His dove-like wings over our soul—life, light and order soon appear. We then begin to see what we never saw before! We put God into His rightful place and we realize how great He is. And we put ourselves into our rightful place and we realize what nothings we are! We put the Law into its rightful place and recognize how terribly stern it is. And we put sin into its rightful place and we tremble before its terrible power! When the Spirit of God broods over us, one of the first signs of the new life appearing in our soul is the penitent cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Those sorrow-filled eyes, those swiftly-falling tears, that brokenhearted sigh—all these are the result of the brooding of the Spirit of God upon our disordered nature! And when at last you can truthfully say—

***"I rest My soul on Jesus,
This weary soul of mine.
His right hand me embraces
I on His breast recline"—***

that also is the result of the brooding of the Spirit! He has quickened you! He has given you life, for only a living soul can truly say, "I do believe in Jesus." That is a sure sign of the new creation! It is a certain proof that Christ has made all things new in you by the effectual working of His ever-blessed Spirit. To any here who have never realized the dove-like energy of the Holy Spirit, I commend the prayer Charles Wesley wrote—

***"Expand your wings, celestial Dove,
Brood over our nature's night!
On our disordered spirits move
And let there now be light."***

Dr. Watts gives us another prayer in which Christians can heartily unite—

***“Descend from Heaven, immortal Dove,
Stoop down and take us on your wings
And mount and bear us far above
The reach of these inferior things!
Beyond, beyond this lower sky
Up where eternal ages roll,
Where solid pleasures never die
And fruits immortal feast the soul!
Oh for a sight, a pleasing sight
Of our Almighty Father’s Throne!
There sits our Savior crowned with light,
Clothed in a body like our own!
When shall the day, dear Lord, appear,
That I shall mount to dwell above,
And stand and bow among them there,
And view Your face, and sing, and love?”***

May the Lord bless everyone of you, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ROMANS 6.

Verse 1. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that Grace may abound?* If the sinfulness of man has really given an opportunity for the display of Divine Mercy, then the devil’s logic would be, “Let us commit more sin, that there may be more room for Grace to work!” But Christians have learned their reasoning in another school—and to such diabolical arguments they answer in the words of the Apostle —

2. *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* The two terms are exactly opposite to one another. If, through Grace, we are dead to sin how can we live in it? If, sinners as we are, we come to Christ to be saved from sin, then it would be a complete misuse of language to talk of being saved from sin, yet still to continue in it! Besides, the Apostle goes on to show that the ordinance, by which believers in Jesus are to be admitted into the visible Christian Church will not allow them to continue in sin.

3, 4. *Know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* [See Sermons #1627, Volume 27—BAPTISM—A BURIAL and #2197, Volume 37—CHRIST’S RESURRECTION AND OUR NEWNESS OF LIFE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] You remember, My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that hallowed hour when you went down into the liquid tomb, when, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, you were immersed upon profession of your faith in Jesus Christ? By that solemn act you set forth your death to sin and when you were raised again out of the opening element, you thereby made a profession of your faith in Christ’s

Resurrection. And moreover, you did then and there, seeing that you had received the Grace of God in truth, profess to rise unto newness of life! How could you, then, go back to sin? That would be to make your Baptism a lie! Indeed, you are, all of you, unbaptized unless you have been baptized into Christ's death.

5, 6. *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* [See Sermon #882, Volume15—THE OLD MAN CRUCIFIED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] God has driven the nails through the active powers of our sin—both hands and feet are fastened to the Cross of Christ. And though the heart and the head may sometimes wander, yet our old man is crucified with Christ that the body of sin may be destroyed—and we are looking forward to that happy day when the old man shall be dead altogether, and we shall be made meet to enter into the inheritance of the saints in light. We believe that our old man will never die until we die, but we thank God that the death of our body will also be the death of the body of sin.

7. *For he that is dead is freed from sin.* He can no longer live in it, for he is dead. And if we are really dead in Christ, we can no longer live in sin as we were known to do.

8-11. *Now if we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.* [See Sermons #503, Volume 9—DEATH AND LIFE IN CHRIST and #2933, Volume 51—DEAD, YET ALIVE—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If Christ could die again, then Believers might lose their spiritual life and there might be such a thing as falling from Grace! But while Jesus lives, no member of His Mystical Body can die. His own promise is, "Because I live, you shall live also." He died unto sin once—we do the same. He lives no more to die—we also do the same. Highly privileged are they who are dead with Christ! And blessed is that ordinance in which we set forth our death and burial with Him.

12, 13. *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.* Your legs used to carry you to the theater—compel them now to carry you to the House of God even though you are weary. Your eyes could look long enough upon wickedness—let not their lids fall when you are sitting to hear a sermon! Let all the members of your body which once served Satan now serve God! Consider that your whole body is a consecrated temple and be not satisfied unless the whole of it is reserved for the great God Himself!

14, 15. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the Law, but under Grace?* [See Sermons #1410, Volume 24—BELIEVERS FREE FROM THE DOMINION OF SIN and #1735, Volume 29—THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE DO NOT LEAD TO SIN—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is another of the Antinomian suggestions that were made in the Apostle's time—and that are still made now! And how does Paul answer it? Why, with this solemn adjuration—

15-18. *God forbid! Know you not that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey: whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of Doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.* [See Sermon #1482, Volume 25—OUR CHANGE OF MASTERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Is not that a glorious sentence, “Being then made free from sin”? Yes, the fetters are all gone! We have put up our feet upon the block and the chains have been knocked off! We have put our hands down and the irons have been broken in pieces. Free from sin! 'Tis true that sin still tempts us, but it cannot prevail against us—it tries to put the bit in our mouth and to ride us as once it did, but we no longer submit to its sway! Sin is now an enemy to fret and worry us, but not a king to trample upon us and rule over us.

19, 20. *I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when you were the servant of sin, you were free from righteousness. You disdained the silken bonds of piety—you said that you would never wear what you called the iron fetters of Grace! You were “Free from righteousness.” So, surely, now that you are the servants of righteousness, you should seek to be free from sin!*

21-23. *What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* [See Sermon #1868, Volume 31—DEATH AND LIFE—THE WAGE AND THE GIFT—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

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

VOICES FROM THE EXCELLENT GLORY

NO. 909

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 9, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased.”
Matthew 3:16, 17.*

*“While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a Voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased; hear Him.”
Matthew 17:5.*

*“Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a Voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”
John 12:28.*

THAT our Lord was the true Messiah of God was proved by His answering to all those prophecies which described the promised Messenger of the Covenant. His miracles also proved that God was with Him, and from their character they marked Him out as the ordained Deliverer. To open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears were works foretold as denoting the Messiah. His teachings were equally clear proofs of His mission—there is about them an authority found nowhere else. The words which He spoke are Spirit and Life. They are self-evidencing in their elevation, purity, perfection. “Never man spoke like this Man.”

His Testimony is unique and bears a majesty of Deity about it which bespeaks itself. His resurrection also was a clear proof that he was sent of God. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.” But in addition to all this and a great deal more, the Divine Father was pleased, also, to speak out of Heaven with an audible voice to declare that Jesus of Nazareth was no other than the Son of God and the promised Christ for whom the faithful were watching. Thrice did the majesty of Heaven break its sublime silence and bear witness to the Incarnate God. The three occasions, as mentioned in our texts, are most instructive, and shall command our attention this morning. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

Without any further preface, let us consider the three Testimonies given to our Lord by the voice of the Most High. If time permits we will then notice one or two instructive circumstances connected with them. And we will close by drawing a great practical lesson from them.

I. In endeavoring to bring before your attentive minds THE THREE OCCASIONS ON WHICH THE FATHER, BY A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, BORE WITNESS TO HIS SON, I would invite you to observe, first, when these voices were heard.

Angels had proclaimed His birth, and wise men had seen His star, but the Divine Voice was not heard during the first thirty years of His sojourn. The three celestial utterances were reserved for the brief period of His public life. The first came at the commencement of His public ministry—at His Baptism. The second some little time after the central point of His ministry. And the last, just before He closed His work, by being offered up. It is a fit thing to pray that all our works may be begun, continued, and ended under the Divine blessing.

Certainly our Lord Jesus Christ, as to His public work, both began it, continued it, and ended it with the publicly declared witness of the Most High. How cheering a thing it is at the beginning of a great enterprise to have from God clear Testimony that He has sent you upon it! Such was the Testimony given to the Master in the waters of Jordan, when He was first announced as “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”

How sweetly encouraging it is to the soul when the labor is heavy, the opposition vehement, and the spirit faint, to receive another affirming word from the excellent Glory! Such was that which came to Jesus on the Holy Mount, when retiring from the multitude He sought the refreshment of prayer and fellowship with God. Then, as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered and His raiment was white and glistening, and a Voice came out of the cloud, “This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased, hear Him.”

And best of all, when our work is almost done, and the shadows of evening are lengthening—when we are about to depart into the land of spirits—what a consolation it is to receive another refreshment from the Divine mouth! Such our Savior had a little while before He was lifted up from the earth. In answer to His fervent cry, “Father, glorify Your name,” there came a Voice from Heaven saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

In our departing hours we are most anxious about that which was our life’s dearest object. The lifework of Christ was to glorify His Father’s name. Concerning that He prayed, and concerning that the Voice gave full assurance. The result of the Lord’s lifework was declared to be ensured, and therefore, wrapping Himself about with that heavenly Testimony, the great Redeemer went bravely to His death. It is to be noted, then, that at the beginning, the middle, and end of our Master’s work, the Divine Voice was heard.

The first celestial witness was uttered after He had lived for thirty years in comparative obscurity. It seemed meet that when He first appeared, there should be some token that He was what He professed to be. That

heavenly declaration, be it also remembered, came just before His memorable temptation. He was to be forty days in the wilderness tempted of the devil, and among the horrible suggestions hissed forth from the serpent's mouth would be the doubt, "if you are the Son of God." What better fore-arming of our great Champion than the witness, "This is My Beloved Son"?

How in the recollection of that paternal Testimony would the Son be made strong to overcome all the temptations of the Fiend, or to endure the hunger which followed the forty days of lonely fast! Thus ever, my Brethren, it is not with the Master, only, but with the servants. Before temptation there comes spiritual sustenance which makes the heart strong in endurance. Like Elijah of old, the Believer falls asleep. Being awakened, he eats bread of Heaven's own providing and in the strength of that meat he journeys forty days through the wilderness without weariness. Expect that when the Lord tries you He will also send you strength to sustain you under it.

The second occasion of the heavenly utterance was when our Lord was about (according to Luke) to send out other seventy disciples to preach the Word. The twelve had healed the sick, cast out devils and done many mighty works. But now the laborers were to be increased and the harvest more rapidly ingathered. The seventy Evangelists were to carry the Divine Crusade through all the Holy Land.

Brethren, it is instructive that Heaven gave to our Savior, before extending His agencies of mercy, a fresh token for good. And we also, when the Lord calls us to wider service, may go up to the mountain to pray. And while we are there we, too, may expect to enjoy the comforting and strengthening witness of the Spirit within. The heavenly Voice shall whisper, "You are Mine," and we shall descend with radiant countenance to fight anew the battles of the Lord.

The third heavenly Testimony came to our Lord just before His sufferings and death. I need not say to you how well-timed was that witness. With such a death before Him, with such circumstances surrounding Him—all tending to make His agony sharper, and His death more terrible than any which had fallen to the lot of man before. With Gethsemane, with Gabbatha, with Golgotha all before Him. With such words as these yet to be uttered, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And these, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—it was meet that the oppressed Sufferer, who must tread the winepress alone—should receive at the outset a Word from the Throne of the Highest, meeting exactly the point about which His soul was most concerned, namely, the glory of the Father's name.

While still enlarging upon the times when the Divine Voice was heard, we may also note that the first came to our Lord when He was in the attitude of *obedience*. Why needed He to be baptized? It is a *sinner's* ordinance—Jesus is no sinner and needs no washing, no death, no burial!

But He takes the sinner's place, and therefore comes to be buried in Jordan, for, "Thus," says He, "it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." It was to Christ an act of *obedience*. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient to every ordinance of God, and hence He yielded Himself to Baptism. Then came the Voice, "This is My Beloved Son."

Brothers and Sisters, learn that when you are in the path of filial obedience you may expect the Spirit to bear witness with your spirit that you are born of God! But if you live in neglect of any known duty—if you are willfully unobservant of any command of Christ—you may expect that there shall be withheld from you the sweet assuring tokens of Divine love. But if you are scrupulously obedient on desiring to know what is the Lord's will, and then promptly do it—not asking the reason why, nor using your own tastes, or indulging your own whims—then in the path of obedience, especially if it costs you much, you may expect to have the witness in yourself that you are a child of God.

The second attestation came to our Master in His devout retirement. He had gone up to the mountain to pray. His desire was to be alone. He had taken with Him His accustomed bodyguard of three—Peter, James, and John—that they might be with Him while His soul communed with God. I doubt not that, as in the garden, they were bid to remain a stone's cast distance off, for surely Jesus poured out His soul before God alone. And then it was that suddenly the Glory of God shone upon Him. Then, in His retirement, Moses and Elijah appeared, coming forth from the spirit-world to commune with Him. Then did the Father utter a second time the Testimony, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased."

Brothers and Sisters, you too, like your Master, may expect to receive Divine Testimonies when you are on the mount of communion alone, when your fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The neglect of retirement will probably rob you of such assurances. If your prayer should be, "Show me a token for good," the answer will be, "Get you to the top of Tabor, get you away to your retirement. There will I give you the token which your heart desires." But to live evermore spending our strength in public, wasting ourselves in the turmoil of this world, and to neglect the soul-refreshing ordinance of private devotion is to deprive the inner man of the richest of spiritual delights.

The third Testimony came to our Lord in His ministry. He was preaching in the temple when the Father responded to His prayer. Now while I have spoken a good word for obedience, and also have sought to magnify retirement, let it never be forgotten that public service is equally acceptable to God. Our Lord had been conversing with certain enquiring Greeks and declaring the living power of His death to all who chose to hear Him. In that same hour the Father gave an audible answer to His prayer. If you, my Brethren, are called to any form of service, I beseech you, under no

pretext neglect it. The neglect of anything for which you have the talent, and to which you have the call, may deprive you of the inward witness.

Bear much fruit—so shall you be His disciples consciously so. Keep His Commandments—so shall you abide in His love and know it. Forget not to be obedient, forget not to be prayerful in retirement, but forget not, also, that you are meant to shine as a light in this world. Forget not that you must work while it is called today. Forget not that you are not sent into this life merely to enjoy spiritual recreation or even celestial refreshment—but to do a work which no other can do—and for which you must give a personal account.

We must now dismiss the question of the times, and briefly consider to whom the attestations were given. The first at Baptism, came to John and to our Lord, and most probably to them, only. We do not think the Voice from the opened Heaven was necessarily heard by anyone but John and our Lord. The token of the descending dove was given to John as the sign by which he should discern the Christ. “And I knew Him not. But He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”

John probably gathered from all that he had heard of Jesus that He was the great Bridegroom to whom he stood as a friend. But he was not to follow his own judgment—he was to receive a token from God Himself—and till that token came he could not act as one fully and indisputably convinced. When he had immersed our Lord he saw the heavens opened, saw the Spirit descending upon Him, and heard the confirming Voice. And then he knew beyond all doubt that Jesus was the Christ. To the Baptist, alone, that Voice was audible. And then through him it was published to all Judea.

The second Testimony had a somewhat wider range—it came not to one, but to three. Peter, James, and John were present. What if I say to *five*? For there were with them Moses and Elijah. They represented the Law and the Prophets. The three Apostles were the representatives of the Christian Church—as if to show that Law and Gospel meet in Jesus—and the things in Heaven and the things on earth are gathered together in one in Him. The Testimony enlarges, you see. At first one opened ear hears it, next five are assured.

The third time the Voice was heard by many. How many I cannot say, but the crowd in the temple heard it. Many heard it who did not understand it, for they said it thundered—perhaps perversely determining not to believe in the Presence of God—but to ascribe that articulate Voice rather to a rumbling thunder than to the Divine mouth. Others who confessed that they heard words, averred that an angel spoke—men will have anything but God! Thunder, or cherubim, or even devils they will welcome—but Divine interpositions are irksome to them.

Many, we say, heard the third Voice. It was a Testimony to hundreds—may we not learn from this that God’s Testimony to Christ is evermore a growing one? If at first He was revealed to one, then to more, then to a numerous band, expect, my Brethren, the fulfillment of that promise, “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” If the glory of Jesus is today seen by thousands, it shall yet be unveiled to tens of thousands, and in the latter days the Voice which spoke once and again to our fathers, shall so speak as to shake not only earth, but also Heaven. And in that day, if not before, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

The heavenly Testimony grows and spreads. Jesus is proclaimed as Lord in many hearts. Look not on the present littleness of His visible kingdom, despise not the day of small things. The witness of Jesus is but a spark of fire. But the conflagration thereof shall yet belt the world with holy flames. The three Testimonies were given in this wise. The first, to the greatest of men—for “among those that are born of women there was not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist.” Yet the voice revealed a greater than he, whose shoelaces he was not worthy to untie.

The second was heard by the best of men—the great Lawgiver, the chief of the Prophets, and the noble of the Apostles—yet the Voice bore witness to a better than they. The third time the Voice echoed in the holiest place in the temple—and there it testified to a holier than the holiest shrine. Jesus is everywhere magnified beyond all others as the only Beloved Son of the Father. I need not however enlarge. There is far more of teaching than either time or ability allow me to open up to you.

We come, in the next place, to notice to what God bore Testimony. God never sets His seal to a blank. What was it, then, which He attested? First, at the Jordan, witness was borne to Christ’s miraculous *origin*. “This is My Beloved Son.” He comes not here as the Pharisees, and soldiers, and others have done, a mere son of man. Son of man He is, but He is also Son of the infinite, eternal God. And now on His introduction to His work He receives a spiritual anointing and a recognition from the Father. The seal was set that day to His Godhead and His relation to the Father was acknowledged.

By the second audible declaration it seems to me that the Father sealed the Son’s *appointment* as the great Prophet, and the anointed Servant of God. For in the second Testimony these memorable words were added, “hear Him.” Here God commands us to accept Him as the great Teacher, to acknowledge Him as the Head of the dispensation, to yield to Him our loyal attention and obedience. When the Lord appears, it is necessary that men should know who He is. When He is actually engaged in His work it may be needful to confirm His authority.

This was done on the Holy Mount, for so Peter understood it, as he writes in his second Epistle, “For we have not followed cunningly devised

fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount.”

The third Testimony bore witness to the success of His work. “I have both glorified My name,” says the Father, “and will glorify it again.” “What,” you say, “what if Jesus should not succeed? He has come into the world to vindicate the justice of God, and reveal His love, and so to glorify God—what if He should miss the mark? What, if after all His life of labor and His death of agony, He should be unsuccessful?”

The Father’s Word declares that the results anticipated shall certainly be produced. “I have glorified it,” says the Father—“all Your past life has glorified My name. Your coming down from Heaven, Your life of thirty years’ obedience, all the works which You have done in Your three years of toil. All these have brought renown to the infinite Majesty.

And “I will glorify it again,” in the most supreme sense. Amidst the glooms of the garden, amidst the terrors of Pilate’s hall, and amidst the sorrows of the Cross, I will glorify My name yet again. Yes, and in Your resurrection, in Your ascension, in Your majesty at My right hand, in Your judgment of the quick and the dead I will glorify My name again.” The three Voices may be viewed as attesting the Son’s Person, work, and success.

Some have thought that the three Voices attested our Lord in His three-fold offices. John came proclaiming the kingdom—Jesus was in His Baptism proclaimed as the Chief of the new kingdom. On the second occasion, the Voice which said, “Hear Him,” ordained Him as the Prophet of His people. And on the third occasion Jesus was owned as a Priest. Standing in the midst of priests—in the Temple where sacrifice was offered—Himself about to offer the true sacrifice. And praying that His sacrifice might glorify God, He receives the witness that God has been glorified in Him, and will be yet again.

My Brethren, in this threefold witness receive into your hearts the Testimony of God who cannot lie. Behold your Savior, well-pleasing to His Father. Let Him be well-pleasing to you. Hear Him proclaimed as God’s Beloved. O let Him be the Beloved of your hearts! Hear the Testimony born to Him that He has glorified God, and remember that His further glorifying God in some measure depends on you—for it is by your godly conversation, by your holy patience, by your zealous exertions for your Master’s praise that God in Christ Jesus is to be glorified until He comes. Let these three Testimonies, as they make up a complete and conclusive code of evidence, have force upon your hearts and minds, and win you to a solemn confidence in your Lord and Master.

I shall now ask your attention to the question, How were the Testimonies given? Observe that when our Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended. What if this proclaims to us that by His obedience our Lord procured the opening of Heaven for us—that our prayers might ascend to God, and all blessings might descend to us, and especially that the Holy Spirit might come down and rest forever upon the Church of God?

The Master's Baptism was the type of His death. Buried beneath the waters of Jordan, He pictured there His being buried in the deeps of agony and in the darkness of the tomb. Rising from the Jordan, He typified His resurrection. Ascending its banks He represented His Ascension into Heaven. God sees in figure all righteousness fulfilled, and answers the type by the relative type of Heaven opened and the dove descending.

Heaven was not beheld as opened when a second time the Voice was heard. In Luke 9 we read that the Voice came out of the cloud. The overshadowing cloud is a beautiful representation of the Mediatorship of Christ. He, like a glorious cloud, veils the excessive brightness of the Godhead. He shields us, so that when God speaks, He may not speak as from the top of Sinai—with a voice of trumpet and sound of thunder—but may speak through an interposing Medium, with that still, small voice of love which we can hear with delight.

Out of the cloud, my Brethren, God speaks to His people. That is to say, He speaks to us in Christ Jesus. That was a strong utterance of Luther, but it was strictly true, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," meaning I will have nothing to do with God out of Christ. If, indeed, we had to do with God out of Christ, what misery were it for us, my Brethren! We should stand in the same terror as Israel did when bounds were set about the Mount. Even Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." It is a great mercy that the heavenly Voice, as it reaches us, comes out of the cloud.

In reading the narrative of the third Divine Testimony, our mind rests neither upon the opening of Heaven nor the cloud, but upon the Voice alone. It is as if the glory of God in the work of Christ put every other thought aside. The opening of Heaven, or the interposition of a Mediator are but means to the great end of glorifying God. O that this one great object may absorb all our souls! But, alas, the Voice, plain as it was, was misunderstood, and the clearest Revelation that God ever gave to mortals has been misunderstood by many. There will always be those who think of thunder and the so-called grandeur of nature—and others who see only angels or second causes.

Once more, consider what was it that was spoken on those three occasions. There was a difference in each case, though in the first two but slight. The first time the heavenly Voice preached the Gospel, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." The old fathers were likely to say, "Go to Jordan if you would see the Trinity," and we may add, go to

Jordan if you would hear the Gospel. “This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased.” Observe the Gospel in this sentence! The Gospel is tidings concerning a blessed Person sent of God. Such tidings the Lord here utters.

This Man rising dripping from the water. This Man is pointed out as the Hope of the world! The Gospel is never preached except where the Person of Jesus Christ is exhibited to men. “I, if I am lifted up”—not truths about Me—but “I Myself, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.” The attraction lies in the Person of Christ, because the real power to save lies there. We have here the Gospel revealing the acceptableness of the chosen Person with God—“My Beloved Son.”

What men needed was a Savior who could stand for them before God. One dear to the heart of God. It is good news to us that the Anointed One is well-beloved of the Father. Why, my Hearers, though I have not yet opened up the fullness of that utterance, does not Gospel light break in upon you already? Here is a Person sent of God to save—a Man of your own race, but yet right well-beloved of God. He is so near to God as to be called His Beloved Son! But note, yet more earnestly, the Gospel of the next words, “In Whom I am well-pleased.” Not, “with Whom,” as hasty readers suppose, but, “*In Whom I am well-pleased.*”

This is the very Gospel—that God, as He looks upon men is well-pleased with all who are *in* Christ. God in Christ is not anger, but good pleasure. If I, a poor sinner, enter by faith *into* Christ, then I may be assured that God is well-pleased with me—that, if I, as His child, come to Him, and by a living faith link my destiny with the life and person of Christ—I need not fear the wrath of Heaven. Sinner, God is not well-pleased with you as you are. Child of God, God is not well-pleased with you as you are—there is enough about either saint or sinner to provoke the Lord to jealousy. But, Sinner, if you are in Christ by faith, God is well-pleased with you. And, O Heir of Heaven, with all your infirmities and imperfections, since you are one with Christ by an eternal and now vital union, God is well-pleased with you! Said I not well that the Gospel sounded from Jordan’s waves?

The second sound of the Voice uttered not only the Gospel itself, but the Gospel command, “Hear Him.” Matthew Henry has some very delightful remarks upon this expression, “Hear Him.” He remarks, in effect, that salvation does not come by seeing, as the Roman church would have it, for the disciples were not directed to behold Christ in His Glory, though the sight deserved all their attention. No, but they were bid to *hear* rather than see. To hear the Gospel is a most important duty, for *faith* comes by *hearing*. Salvation comes not by hearing the doctrines of men but by hearing Jesus Christ.

There stood Moses. And those three Jewish worthies, Peter, James, and John, might have longed for Moses to open his Mouth—and had he spoken to them they would have been very attentive to Him. But the Word

was not, “Hear Moses,” but “Hear Him.” There was Elijah, too. O for a burning word from that master among the Prophets, whose life was flame. But it was not said, “Hear Elijah,” but “Hear Him.” “They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them,” is the word sent to careless sinners, but to sincere seekers the direction is, “Hear Him.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the great salvation of God comes to us through the Testimony of Jesus Christ—not through the moral essays or philosophical treatises or doctrinal discussions of men. “Hear Him,” the Gospel so commands you. Let not your ears be deaf when God communicates tidings of eternal life.

On the third occasion the Testimony given was not the Gospel nor the Gospel precept, but the Gospel’s result—“I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” I call your attention to this that you may be earnest in preaching the Gospel. It is through the Gospel that God is glorified. By the poorest Gospel sermon that was ever preached, God, through His Holy Spirit, gets to Himself a glory which the most pompous ritual cannot yield Him. You never speak well of Jesus but what you glorify God. No Gospel Word falls to the ground and is lost. It must accomplish that for which God has sent it.

He has glorified His name by the Gospel, and He will again. Let this encourage those of you who are afraid that the times are very bad and that we are all going to the pope. Do not be at all afraid. God will glorify His name by the Gospel again as He did before. Martin Luther was not, in himself, a character so lovely that one might be overwhelmed with admiration of him. Where, then, lay his power? His power lay in this—that he grasped the true Gospel—and he was a man who, when he grasped a thing, gave it a “grip so firm that the devil himself could not wrench it away from him.

With the Gospel in his hands he could say, “Heaps upon heaps with the weapon of the Gospel I have slain my thousands. Heaps upon heaps the foes of God are overturned.” He was mighty because he declared the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and with this he shook the world and brought about the Reformation. You need not, therefore, despair.

If the ministers of Christ will only come back to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, plainly, simply, and with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, we shall drive the Ritualists, those cubs of the old Roman monster, back to their dens, as our fathers did their mother of old. Never lose your faith in the Gospel. Always believe that our power is gone when we get away from the Cross—but know also without a doubt—when we come back to the Truth as it is in Jesus, God glorifies His name.

II. LET US NOW OBSERVE ONE OR TWO INSTRUCTIVE CIRCUMSTANCES connected with these three Divine Testimonies. On each occasion Jesus was in *prayer*.

My dear, dear young people, look at the proofs of that in your Bibles. You will find in one or other of the Evangelists that it is distinctly stated

on each occasion that our Lord was in prayer. Learn, then, that if any child of God would have God speak comfortably to him, he must speak to God in prayer. If you would have the witness of the Holy Spirit in your soul, you must be much in supplication. Neglect not the Mercy Seat.

Notice next that each time the sufferings of Christ were prominently before Him. John, at the waters of Jordan had said, "Behold the Lamb of God," plainly speaking of sacrifice. Baptism itself, the fulfilling of all righteousness, we have seen to be the type of His death, and of His immersion in suffering. On Tabor, on the second occasion, Matthew tells us that, "Behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

The subject that the best of men talked about when they met was the death of Jesus. No better topic, then, for us when we meet. If we were the most talented and the wisest men that ever lived, if we met together and wanted the most select topic for an eclectic discussion, we ought to choose the Cross. For Jesus, Moses, and Elijah—three great representative men—talked of the Atoning death of the great Substitute. The third time our Lord had just spoken about the hour being come in which He was to be glorified, as you well remember. Learn then, my Brethren, that if you desire to see the glory of Christ, as attested of the Father, you must dwell much on His death.

Do not talk to me about the life of Christ in all its parity, I know it and rejoice in it. But I tell you that the *death* of Christ, in all His misery, is the grandest point of view. The example of Jesus should be exalted by all means—but His Atonement is far grander. And you, Sirs, who take the Man Christ and offer your pretty, complimentary phrases about Him—but then turn round and deny His expiating Sacrifice—I tell you your tawdry offerings are unacceptable to Him. To be complimented by your lips is almost to be censured, for if you do not believe on Him as an Atoning Sacrifice, you do not understand His life. Thus each attestation came in connection with the Lord's *sufferings*, as if the glory of Christ dwelt mainly there.

Once more—each time that Jesus received this Word from the Father He was honoring the Father. In Baptism He was honoring Him by *obedience*. On the mountain He was honoring Him in devotion. In the Temple the very words He was using were, "Father, glorify Your name." Oh, if you would see God's glory, and hear God's Voice in your own heart, honor Him! Spend and be spent for Him! Keep not back your sacrifices, withhold not your offerings! Lay yourselves upon His altar, and when you say with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me," for any service—whatever it may be—then shall you also feel that the Lord is with you, owning both you and your works, and glorifying Himself in it.

III. Lastly, THE PRACTICAL LESSON may be found in the words, "Hear Him."

Earnestly let me speak to everyone here. God has three times with audible Voice spoken out of Heaven to bear witness to Jesus. These are historical facts. I beseech you, then, receive with assured conviction the Truth to which God bears witness. The Man of Nazareth is the Son of the Highest. The Son of Mary is the Savior appointed to bear human sin. He is the way of salvation, and the only way. Doubt not this Truth of God. Accept the Savior, for God declares that He is well-pleased in Him. Hear Him, then, with profound reverence—accept the teaching and invitations of Jesus as not the mere utterances of fallible men—but as the instructions and the loving expostulations of God.

I pray you have respect to every Word and command of Christ. Listen to Him as spirits listen to the voice of the Most High when they bow before the Truth of God. And if He says to you, as He does this morning, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” hear Him and lovingly obey the command. Hear Him, I pray you, with unconditional obedience. God attests Him as being sent from Heaven. Whatever He says to you, do it. And since He bids you believe Him, be not unbelieving. He has told us to say in His name, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” Despise not that *double* command. Attend, O Sinner, attend, for it is the Son of God who speaks to you! Trust and be baptized, and you shall be saved. There stands the Gospel stamped with the authority of Deity! Obey it now. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so.

Hear Him, lastly, with joyful confidence. If God has sent Jesus, trust Him. If He bears the Glory of God’s Seal upon Him, joyfully receive Him. You who have trusted Him, trust Him better from this day forth. Leave your souls right confidently in the hands of Him of whom Jehovah, thrice speaking out of Heaven, declares that He is the only Savior. Receive Him, Sinner, you that would be saved! May the Lord confirm the Testimony which He spoke out of Heaven, by speaking in your hearts by His Holy Spirit, that you may rejoice in His Beloved Son, and glorify God in Him.

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A GREAT SERMON BY THE GREATEST PREACHER NO. 2409

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 21, 1895.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And lo, a voice came from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3:17.

A CERTAIN divine, who had taken this verse as his text, spoke upon it under these three heads. “First,” he said, “here is a great pulpit—the voice was from Heaven. Secondly, here is a great Preacher—it was the Father who spoke as only God can speak. And, thirdly, here is a great sermon—‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

I do not think that I could arrange my thoughts better than under these three divisions, that is to say, if I intended to preach at any length from the whole passage that I have taken as my text. It is from Heaven that this voice comes. It is the voice of the Father, Himself, that speaks. And what the voice says is worthy to be treasured in the hearts of us all. “This—this Man who has just come up dripping from the River Jordan, upon whom the Spirit, like a dove, descended and rested—this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

But, on this occasion I am going to say, first, that *the Father was well pleased with Christ*. Secondly, I want to ask the question, *are we well pleased with Him?* And then to answer, on behalf of many of you, “Yes, that we are! For we also can say of the Lord Jesus that with Him we are, indeed, well pleased.”

I. The first division is in the text itself—THE FATHER WAS WELL PLEASED WITH HIS BELOVED SON.

I find that the translation would be even more accurate if the passage read, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I *was* well pleased.” Let us begin, then, with that thought—*the Father had been well pleased with His Son*. The past, rather than the present, though not to the exclusion of the present, seems to be intended in the Greek word here used—“This is My beloved Son, in whom I *was* well pleased.” That is to say, “Before He was born here among men, before His first infant cry was heard at Bethlehem, before He was obedient to His parents at Nazareth, before He toiled in the carpenter’s shop, before He had reached the prime of His Manhood and was able to come forth and to be dedicated to His sacred ministry in the waters of Baptism—before that—I was well pleased with Him.”

Yes, and we must go further back than that, for He “was” before He was here! “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,

and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.” In those far-distant ages when the worlds were made, when matter and mind were spoken into existence by the creative Word of God, the Father took counsel with His beloved and equal Son—Jesus Christ as well as the Father was Infinite Wisdom—He balanced the clouds, weighed the hills, appointed the throbs of the tide and kindled the light of the sun! He was the Father’s Well-Beloved before the earth was! Yes, and in those primeval days, when as yet there was nothing but God—if your imagination can get back to the time when our great sun and the moon and stars slept in the mind of God like unborn forests in an acorn cup—in that eternity when there was no time, no day, no space, nor anything but God, the All-in-All, you will realize that even *then* the Only-Begotten was with the Father and in Him the Father was well pleased, for as God is eternal in His being, He is eternal in the trinity of His Person! The Triune Jehovah is the theme of praise both on earth and in Heaven! As we have often sung—

***“Holy, Holy, Holy Thee,
One Jehovah evermore,
Father, Son, and Spirit! We,
Dust and ashes, would adore!
Lightly by the world esteemed,
From that world by You redeemed,
Sing we here, with glad accord,
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord!
Holy, Holy, Holy! All
Heaven’s triumphant choir shall sing
When the ransomed nations fall
At the footstool of their King!
Then shall saints and seraphim,
Harps and voices, swell one hymn,
Round the throne with full accord,
Holy, Holy, Holy Lord.”***

We cannot fully comprehend the great doctrine of the Divine Filiation and the less we pry into it, the better. But certain it is that the Sonship of Christ does not imply any second position in order of time. As the Father was always the Father, so the Son was always the Son. Before all worlds and time, itself, He was with the Father, co-equal and co-eternal with Him. Now, dear Friends, a love which has endured forever—which, even now, is eternal—since it had no beginning and can have no end, this is a mighty love, indeed! And it helps to make us wonder all the more that God should so love the world as to give His only-begotten Son, freighted with such love as this, to come down here and live, and die, that He might save a guilty race that had only just begun—an infant race of a few thousand years. It will forever be a marvel that the Father would have been willing to sacrifice the Eternal and Ever-Blessed for the sake of such worthless creatures as these! Let your minds and hearts adoringly dwell, then, on that first view of the text, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I was well pleased.”

Now read it, “The Father is well pleased with the Lord Jesus Christ always.” The, “I am,” of our version, containing, as it does, within itself the,

“I was,” of the original, implies perpetuity and continuity. *God the Father is always pleased with His beloved Son.* There was never a time when He was otherwise than pleased with Him! Yes, He was pleased with Him even in Gethsemane, when His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground. He was pleased with Him when He gave Him up to be nailed to the Cross of Calvary, for, though it pleased the Father to prove Him, and He did, for a while, hide His face from Him because of the necessary purposes of His atoning Sacrifice, yet He always loved Him. I think that our Lord was never fairer to the eyes of His Father than when He was all ruddy with His bloody sweat. And that He never seemed lovelier to Him than when His obedient hands were given to the nails and His willing feet were fastened to the tree. Then must He have seemed to be God’s rose and lily, first spotless, then all bloodied—the gathering up of all the loveliness of which only the Infinite mind of God could conceive. The Well-Beloved was always dear to the Father—the Father was always well pleased with Him—and He is well pleased with Him now!

How little there is, even, about those of us who are the Lord’s children which can please our heavenly Father, but God is always well pleased with Christ. We get to wandering away from Him. Our garments become defiled by sin. Sometimes the Lord has need to chide us and to chastise us, but as for His beloved Son, He is always well pleased with Him! And, blessed be His name, He is well pleased with us *in* Him! Oh, that we could always remember this glorious Truth of God! Still, whatever we may be, the finger of the great Father always points to His dear Son in Glory, and He says, “This, this is My beloved Son, in whom, notwithstanding all that His people do, I am always well pleased.”

Let me read the text again a little differently and say that *God is perfectly pleased with Christ.* He could not be more pleased with Him than He is and there could not be anything in Christ that would be more pleasing to the Father than what there already is in Christ. I believe that the Father is perfectly well pleased with Christ as God, with Christ as Man, with Christ in the manger, with Christ preaching the Word throughout Judea, with Christ working miracles, with Christ in Pilate’s Hall, with Christ upon the Cross, with Christ in the grave, with Christ risen again, with Christ at His right hand and with Christ soon to come in the glory of His Second Advent. The Father is always perfectly pleased with His beloved Son. What the great Father’s mind is, none of us can know, for the finite cannot measure the Infinite. We have no standard that can apply to Him, but we are sure that it must need an Infinite Objective of delight to satisfy the Infinite mind of the Father—and Christ fully satisfies it.

Sometimes, when I have been very earnestly pleading with the Father in prayer, I have felt as if I could cry, “Hear me, O God, hear me, O my Father, hear me for Your dear Son’s sake!” And then I have changed my plea and said, “Look at Him! Are you not well pleased with Him? Was there ever such beauty as You see in Him? Was there ever such obedience as He rendered to You? Was there ever such truth, such holiness, such absolute perfection as you see in Him?” And I have felt that then I had a good plea with God, for He is infinitely satisfied with His dear Son!

There is nothing to satisfy God in all the worlds He has made—He could make as many more, in a moment, if He pleased. There is nothing to satisfy Him in anything that is merely spoken into existence. But with His other Self, His Only-Begotten, in every condition and in every case, from every point of view, He is well pleased and perfectly satisfied—and well He may be, for Christ is worthy of His Father's satisfaction and delight.

Then further, to change our note, yet still to play much the same tune, *the Father is overflowingly pleased with Christ*. Can you catch my thought? The Father is not only pleased with Christ so much as to love Christ and to dwell in Christ, Himself, but He takes us up and He delights in us when we are in Christ because He has more delight in Christ than even Christ, Himself, can hold—and He wants more empty vessels into which to pour the rich wine of His soul's delight. He loves Jesus so much that He can afford to love poor wretched sinners such as we are for Christ's sake! He does, as it were, say to Himself, "I have filled the ocean bed of my dear Son's Nature with my Divine Love. Now bring here all the dried-up torrent-beds that you can find and I will fill them, also. Yes, bring here the dry Saharas, the wild deserts where never a drop of dew has fallen, and I will make them all to rejoice and blossom as the rose with this superfluity of love which I have to My dear Son! There is enough to make Me love, even the world, for His dear sake." Our Lord Jesus has so won the Infinite heart of the Most High that the Divine Love overflows to us!

Beloved, let us come and get under the drippings of this love! Here is Christ's cup running over—let us draw near and drink from the overflow of the love of God to Jesus Christ. You men, you women, you have committed so much sin that God cannot love you in yourselves—you have so offended His infinite justice that His pure and holy Nature repents that He ever made you! But look, look, I see another Man come in, a Man like ourselves, in every respect a true Man, but such a Man that when the great Father sees Him, He says to Him, "My Son, My Son, I am so delighted with You, the one perfect Man, that for Your sake I am glad that I made men. I am delighted that I made them in Your image. You shall be the Firstborn among many Brothers and Sisters. For Your sake I will not destroy men from off the face of the earth. For Your sake, for the sake of that one Man, My Fellow and yet Man, I will bless the untold multitudes whom I have chosen before the foundation of the world, and whom I give to You to be the reward of Your soul's travail, who shall be accepted in Your righteousness, loved because of My love to You and saved in Your salvation."

O Sirs, if you had Paul or Apollos here to speak on such a theme as this, even *they* might fail to deal with it as it deserves! Only God the Holy Spirit can make us get even the *shadow* of an idea of how much God loves His Son and how ready He is to love us, also, and how truly He *does* love us who are in Him!

That God should *pity* me, I can understand, but that, for the sake of His dear Son, He should actually take a complaisant delight in me and *love* me, this is, indeed, wonderful! And His Son has so loved me that He has espoused me to Himself. Before the earth was, He chose me for His

love—and now He loves me for His choice. Let this thought ravish your hearts—it is enough to do so! Before the daystar shot forth its first beams of light, the heart of Jesus Christ was set on you and He loves you, now, as much as He loved you, then, and He will always love you! When all the things that are shall have gone back into their natural non-existence, He will still love you with all the power of His Infinite mind! No, He is not only espoused to you and bound to love you, but He has taken you into a marriage union of the most mysterious kind—and He will never be content till He shall eat the marriage feast with you and you shall sit down with Him and the chorales of the universe, every sigh and sorrow hushed to rest, and every joy let loose from the secret treasury of bliss! As the Lord Jesus lives in Glory with His Father, so will He have you to be with Him at His right hand, to sit upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon His Throne!

I have also to say yet something more. *The Father is well pleased with His Son actively.* That is to say, His pleasure in His Son shows itself—He does something to honor His Son. When we pray, “Father, glorify Your Son,” that prayer is only a faint echo of God’s resolve and determination that He *will* glorify His Son. Can you picture that wondrous scene when He shall come in His Glory and all the holy angels with Him—He that once was spat upon, crucified, dead and buried—can you imagine the splendors of that august moment when Heaven shall empty out its legions of angels to accompany the returning Prince of the kings of the earth? Then shall sun and moon be ashamed and hide their diminished light, for the Lamb, Himself, shall shine with a brightness before which they shall be black as sackcloth of hair!

Then, with the ten thousand times ten thousand of His Father’s courtiers who will come streaming out of Heaven’s golden gates, He will sit upon the Throne of His Glory. I was going to try to picture the scene, but I could not possibly do it. I will only say, “Thus shall it be done unto the Man whom the King delights to honor,” while ten thousand, thousand trumpets blow to raise the sleeping dead—and quick and dead from sea and land stand before His dread tribunal and every eye shall see Him—and they that hated Him shall call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and hide them from His face! In that day shall it be seen how God has resolved to prove His good pleasure in His Son by giving Him glory, honor, majesty, dominion, power and might forever and ever. Yes, dear Friends, God loves to glorify His Son! Here I must leave this part of my subject, for I want to come to a practical point in the latter portions of my discourse.

II. We have seen that the Father is well pleased with Christ. Now let me ask, in the second place, ARE WE ALSO WELL PLEASSED WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST? Can we look at Him and say, “This is my beloved Savior, in whom I am well pleased”?

If so, listen to this. *Here is the point where God and our souls can meet.* God loves Jesus—so do we. The Lord delights to glorify Jesus—so do we. He will make all things subservient to the honor of Christ—so would we. God’s love is like the sun and we reflect its light just as little drops of dew that hang upon the blades of grass reflect it, but, as the dewdrop is

agreed with the sun, so are we agreed with God. I like to feel that, notwithstanding all my imperfections and sin, I can meet God in Christ! Can you meet Him there, dear Friends? I know that many of you can—what a blessed meeting place it is! Across that marred body of the spotless and lovely Jesus, God and man embrace one another! I am a sinner and the Father takes the sinner's hand, and says, "I have forgiven you for My dear Son's sake." And we stand there and say, "Heavenly Father, we bless You for Jesus. "And He says, "I gave Him to bless you, I intended Him to bless you, and now I delight that you should bless Him and should praise His name." You know that if you take us upon any other ground, there is a point of difference—God and man cannot agree until they come to the God-Man, Christ Jesus—and then, where God and man have met in one Person, and are joined together in an everlasting union, there God meets men and they are bound together in an alliance that shall never be broken! What a blessed thought this is! Our love to Christ enables us to find a meeting place with God in the Person of His dear Son.

Well, next, can we say that we are well pleased with Christ? Then, as the Father says He is well pleased with Christ, *here is a place for cooperation as well as for union*. Now we can be laborers *together* with God, for this is a work in which we delight, and it is a work in which God also delights. See, Brothers and Sisters, you can go and try to show how much you love the Savior. And when you do that, God is also showing how He loves the Savior. If this is the work in which you engage, you are sure to have God with you. Suppose you were to adopt some highly ambitious projects—for instance, the formation of a religious sect, the building up of a confraternity of which *you* would be the head, with the objective of honoring and glorifying *yourself*—well, you would have to look a long while before you would have God with you! But if the one aim of your life is to glorify Christ, you know that God the Father is with you, for it is His ever-present desire to glorify Christ!

If your ministry is full of Christ, it is a ministry that God can bless. "Oh," said a Brother to me, only today, speaking of a certain minister, "I could not hear him, for there is nothing of Christ in his sermons." Where there is nothing of Christ, Brothers and Sisters, there is nothing of unction, nothing of savor—and a man is quite right not to attend such a ministry as that. Leave Christ out of your preaching and you have taken the milk from the children! You have taken the strong meat from the men. But if your objective as a teacher or preacher is to glorify Christ and to lead men to love Him and trust Him, why, that is the very work upon which the heart of God, Himself, is set! The Lord and you are pulling together—and God the Holy Spirit can set His seal to a work like that! Is it not a marvelous thing that we should be workers together with God?

When He made the skies, we could not help Him. When He lit up the stars, we could not help Him. When He rules nations, we cannot help Him. But when He comes to glorify His Son, then we can be workers together with Him! It is by means of men, by the use of instruments, that Christ is to be glorified! And, therefore, here is a sphere for us in which our weakness stands side by side with Omnipotence! Our folly is taught

of Divine Wisdom and made to co-operate with Omniscience! I bless the Lord that He said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," for as we, also, are well pleased with Him, here is a blessed point of co-operation!

Once more, if we can say, "Yes, we are well pleased with Christ," then we have before us *a fountain of pleasure*. Are you pleased with Christ? Then you may *always* be pleased! Are you well pleased with Christ? Then you shall never lose the source and spring of your pleasure! Not long ago you were well pleased with a dear wife, but she is gone, yet the Lord lives. It is but a little while ago that you were well pleased with a sweet child. The lamb has been caught away to the heavenly fold, but the Good Shepherd is with you always—you can still be well pleased with Him! A few years ago we were pleased with our physical strength and with our youthful vigor. It is all gone, now, but Jesus is not gone—we can still be well pleased with Him! By-and-by, we may come into such stress of circumstances that all that pleased us shall be a dissolving view. Our wealth will leave us, or we shall leave it. All that lies below must be renounced, for a film is coming over the eyes and the breath is drawn with pain, and the spirit is about to depart to God who gave it.

Ah, then, Beloved, it will be a blessed thing to be well pleased with Jesus, for He will be with us in death, and with us throughout eternity! If you are well pleased with Christ, you have a fountain which neither frost can freeze nor heat can dry. We may be too well pleased with earthly friends and we may make idols of them, but we can never idolize Christ. We may worship Him, for He is God and He, therefore, deserves our homage and adoration. There is no fear that we can lavish too much affection upon His Divine Person. You may be well pleased with Him and be still more well pleased with Him, and be better pleased and better pleased, still, with Him the older you grow! And in Heaven, itself, you may still continue to be more and more completely taken up with Him, for is He not the river of pleasure which is at the right hand of God forever? Oh, yes! It is a blessed thing to have our good pleasure in Christ since it will endure world without end!

But, once again, if you can say of Christ that you are well pleased with Him, I think it suggests to you *a line of testimony*. People need, sometimes, to say a word to others to do them good. Do you not think that it would be a very easy thing, sometimes, to say, "I wish you would let me tell you of a Friend of mine, and what He did for me"? You could not preach, perhaps, but you could, any one of you, tell the story of what Jesus did for you. "I do not know," says one, "I should break down if I tried." Well, that would not matter—it might be a grand thing to break down, as you might also break down the person to whom you were talking—and the two of you, breaking down, you might, perhaps, take to your knees and get nearer to God that way than in any other! I think that even the most humble Christian woman might find somebody, possibly of her own rank and sex, to whom she could say, "I would like to tell you about my dear Friend." Why, they might think they were going to hear a piece of gossip, you know! Perhaps they would lend their ears at once and then they would be surprised to find what a dear Friend is Jesus.

Possibly they would be wonder struck—at any rate, I am sure they would remember it better than they would a sermon from me, because it would come with a surprise power which would take possession of their thoughts!

“Oh, but,” you say, “I could not speak that way.” I do not believe that you could hold your tongue if you really tried to speak for Jesus. I believe that if you once began, you would be obliged to go on. I have heard of a good woman who said that she could not come before the Church to tell of her love to Christ. And when they said, “Well, then, we think we cannot receive you,” she said, “But I could die for Him.” “Oh!” said the minister, “that is better than anything else that you could say. If you say you could die for Christ, come along with you, you have already said enough.” I do wish that, sometimes, as the Father said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” you would break the silence, and say, “This is my beloved Savior, in whom I am well pleased—

***In the heavenly Lamb thrice happy I am,
And my heart leaps at the sound of His name.’***

“I must tell somebody. I cannot keep such a good thing all to myself.” I suggest it to you as a line of testimony, very simple and very easy to sincere-hearted persons, that you should imitate the Great Father in this respect and publicly or privately, according as you have opportunity, express your love to Christ.

If anybody in this Tabernacle can say, “Yes, I am well pleased with Christ, I delight in Him,” I think that fact may be to you *a very blessed token for good*. Faith in Christ ought to come first and I used to think it always did. But I correct myself as I go on learning. I meet with a great many persons who have a very sincere love to Christ, which love does not bring them any comfort, or bring them salvation, either, because they have not learned to *trust* Christ. The trust in Christ that saves the soul is not admiration of His Person or even love of Him—it is faith in His atoning Sacrifice, reliance upon His finished work. And if you are relying upon Him, you can then say, “I love Him, I delight in Him, I rejoice in everything about Him, He is very dear to me.”

Well now, how came this about? It is the work of Grace in your soul, for by nature we are enemies to God by wicked works, and if there is in your heart a trustful love for Jesus, so that you are well pleased with Him—depend upon it, the Spirit of God has been at work in your soul and you are a new creature in Christ Jesus! The kind of faith that I have seen in some, and which I am sure is good sound faith, is this. One said, “I believe myself to be the most unworthy creature who ever lived and I cannot understand why God should have the slightest love to such a wretch as I am. But I do trust myself on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart and I feel an inward union to Him. I love Him and I long to be with Him and, somehow, I feel certain that He will never cast me into Hell.” No, dear Heart, how could He? How could He cast out one who loved Him? How could He cast out one who trusted Him? What? Shall it be said in Hell, “Here is a sinner who trusted the Savior”? Never! What? Shall they say, “Here is one in the unquenchable fire who was united to God in Christ Jesus”? It is impossible! Such a thing can never

be! Therefore have no fear about it. With this trust in Christ you may live, you may die, you may rise again, you may stand in the Day of Judgement! If you are well pleased with Christ, God is well pleased with you. If you delight in Christ, God delights in you. This is a seal of the Spirit of God upon His work in your heart and you may go away and rejoice.

Only take notice of this one thing. Imitation is the sincerest form of admiration and if you really, *trustfully*, love the Savior, you will endeavor to be like He. It will be your desire at all times to tread in His footsteps. "Well," says one, "I sincerely hope that I may do so. May the Holy Spirit help me! But one thing I know, I rejoice in my dear Savior's name." I can say that, too, yet, when I get home, tonight, it is very likely that I shall feel very, very, very weary and possibly, all of a sudden, a spirit of depression will come over me. It often does when one is very weary. And then I fall back on this fact—I did my best to extol my Master. I have preached nothing else but Christ and—

***"Ever since by faith I saw the stream
His flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die,"***

and He will not cast me away! I have no hope but in Him and He cannot put me away!

O dear Souls, cling to my Lord! If you cannot do that, look to my Lord, trust to my Lord, be well pleased with my Lord and my Lord shall be well pleased with you! I do not ask of you a difficult thing, for, if ever there was One with whom we ought to be well pleased, it is the Son of God, who became the Son of Mary, that He might save us from our sins! Oh, think much of that wondrous love of His! If we do not admire it and love Him for it, surely our hearts are turned to stone! May God break them and give us new ones—and enable us henceforth to love Christ with all our heart, mind, soul and strength! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 2; MATTHEW 3.

Psalm 2:1-3. *Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* The conspiracy was both strong and influential, The kings and the rulers combined against Jehovah and against His Christ. They were very determined. They set themselves with resolute purpose. They took counsel together. They were full of a horrible enthusiasm—they raged—they thought the work as good as done, but they imagined a vain thing. The fight was against Jehovah and against His Anointed, the Christ, the Messiah! What came of it all? Did they break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from them? Listen—

4. *He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.* For what can mortals be as compared with the Eternal? The fire

can readily enough consume the twigs. Shall men set themselves in opposition to Omnipotence and hope to prosper? And when God determines to glorify His anointed Son, shall worms of the dust prevent Him from doing so? What can come of all their opposition? God simply laughs at them—Jehovah has them in derision!

5. *Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure.* He scarcely needs to lift His hand! He has only to speak and when Jehovah speaks in wrath, His words are thunderbolts! Men's hearts are indeed troubled when God's Words come hot with anger into their spirits. This is what God said—

6. *Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.* “You have raged, you have deliberated, you have resolved, but it is all nothing! There is My Son, the crowned King.” And such is the Anointed tonight—the Christ is on the Throne—let His enemies say what they will, He must reign, nothing can prevent it! He must be King of kings and Lord of lords, for thus is it written concerning Him.

7. *I will declare the decree: the LORD has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You.* This is the seal of the Anointed. He is the Son of the Highest, the only-begotten Son of the Father, who says to Him, “You are My Son; this day have I begotten You.”

8. *Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.* Christ is asking of His Father—even He cannot have what He desires without asking for it! Prayer is so essential to the progress of the Kingdom of Christ that even Christ, Himself, must ask! But then God has promised to give to Christ the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth to be His possession. This is the great strength of all missionary enterprise. Dear Friends, we may be quite sure that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord when we read such a text as this—“I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” If men will not yield to the Lord when He is made known to them. If they resist the drawings of Divine Love, what will happen? Listen—

9, 10. *You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces, like a potter's vessel. Be wise now, therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth.* “You rulers, you magistrates, you senators, you governors of the earth, be wise, be instructed.”

11. *Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.* “If you are wise, you will obey the superior King—you will yield obedience to the great Lord of All.”

12. *Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.* The kings and rulers are bid to do this—let each one of us do the same—let us give the kiss of homage to Him whom God has made to be our King and take Him to be our Lord and Ruler forever and ever.

12. *Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.* It is so. Those of us who have tried it can bear our witness that it is so—there is no life like a life of trust in God. The nearest approach to Heaven that we can live in this mortal body is a life of simple confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now let us read concerning our Lord's first coming and appearance among the sons of men. Turn to the Gospel according to Matthew, at the third chapter.

Matthew 3:1, 2. *In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* There is no entering the Kingdom of Heaven without leaving the kingdom of darkness! We must repent of sin, or we cannot receive the blessings of salvation! Of every man, whoever he may be, whether outwardly moral or openly wicked, repentance is required. It is the door of hope—there is no other way into the Kingdom—“Repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

3, 4. *For this is He that was spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a belt about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.* His raiment and his food were like his doctrine—rough and simple. There was no mincing of words, no making of pretty phrases with John the Baptist! His message was simply, “Repent you: repent you: for the Kingdom of Heaven is coming.” We need more of this John the Baptist teaching nowadays, that men may be plainly told their faults and warned to put away those faults that they may receive Christ Jesus as their Savior!

5-7. *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* These were the influential people of the times—the Pharisees were the Ritualists of that age, and the Sadducees were the Rationalists of the period. Why, John, you ought to have smoothed your tongue, a bit, and have said some very pleasant words to these great men, for, by so doing, perhaps you might have won some of these Pharisees, or coaxed some of these Sadducees into the Kingdom! Ah, no, that is not John's method! He is plainspoken and he deals truthfully with his hearers, for he knows that converts made by flattery are but flattering converts that are of no real value!

8, 9. *Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within ourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham!* Pointing to the stones in the River Jordan and all along the banks, he said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, “There is nothing, after all, in your natural descent from Abraham. God has promised that Abraham shall have a seed, but think not that He is dependent upon *you* for that seed—He can fulfill His promise without you! He can turn the very pebbles of the stream into children for Abraham! God is not short of men to save. If some of you will not have Him, do not think that He shall have to come a-begging to you. There are others who will have Him and His rich Sovereign Grace will find them! Beware, you that are proud and think much of yourselves, for God will not humble Himself for you! He has regard to the humble and the lowly, but the proud He knows afar off.”

10-12. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire, whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.* The Christ is the Minister of Mercy, but there is about His Doctrine a searching and a trying power! Only the sincere in heart can endure Christ's winnowing fan. As for the insincere, they are blown away like the chaff on the threshing floor—their end is destruction! God give us to be numbered among the wheat that Christ shall gather into His heavenly garner!

13, 14. *Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbid Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of You, and come You to me?* It seemed very strange that John, the servant, should be required to baptize Jesus, the Master.

15. *And Jesus answering said unto Him, suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him.* That is to say the Teacher must, Himself, obey the laws which He is about to lay down. And, inasmuch as He is going to bid others to be baptized, He will set the example and be, Himself, baptized! I think, also, that the Baptism of Christ was the picture, the type, the symbol of the work which He afterwards accomplished. He was immersed in suffering. He died and was buried in the tomb. He rose again from the grave—and all that is set forth in the outward symbol of His baptism in the River Jordan!

16, 17. *And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* And we are well pleased with Him, too.

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

“TEMPTED OF THE DEVIL”

NO. 2997

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 19 1906.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1864.**

*“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the
wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”
Matthew 4:1.*

WHAT a terrible incident! Well may our hearts be moved with fear and our blood run cold as we read it! Our adversary the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. We are taught by our Lord Jesus to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.” What we are taught to seek or shun in prayer we should equally pursue or avoid in action. Very warily, therefore, should we endeavor to avoid temptation, seeking as to walk in the path of obedience that we may never be guilty of tempting the devil to tempt us! We are not to enter the thicket in search of the lion. Dearly might we pay for such presumption. The lion may cross our path, or come to our houses and doubtless he will, but we have nothing to do with hunting this lion. He that meets with him, even though he wins the day, will find it sharp work and a stern struggle! Let the Christian pray that he may be spared the encounter. Our Savior, who had experience of what temptation meant, thus earnestly admonished His disciples, “Pray that you enter not into temptation.”

But let us do what we will, we shall be tempted! God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without temptation. The natural man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward—and the Christian is born to temptation just as certainly and necessarily. It is our duty to be always on our watch against Satan because we do not know when he will come. He is like a thief—he gives no intimation of his approach. Like the assassin, he will steal upon his victim. If Satan acted always above-board—if he were a bold and open adversary, we might deal with him—it is because he meets us unawares, and besets us in dark and miry places on the way, that we have need to pray against temptation and have need to hear the Savior’s admonition, “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”

Still, wise Believers, those who have had experience of the ways of Satan, will have found that there is a method about his temptations—

that there are certain times and seasons when he will most probably attack the child of God. It often happens that a Christian is put on a double guard when he expects that he is in double danger. The danger may then be averted by his preparation to meet it. Prevention is better than cure—it is better to be so well armed that the devil will not attack you—than to endure the perils of the fight, even though you do come off conqueror.

We have observed—you have all done so who know anything of the spiritual life—that the most likely times for Satan to attack a Christian are those he deems unlikely. In carnal security you are most insecure. In such an hour as you think not, the Prince of this world comes. Just when you would have said, speaking after the manner of men—“I am safe,” then it is that you are in danger! When Mr. Carnal Security has said, “There is no need for us to be in perpetual alarm—evidently the Prince Emmanuel smiles upon us and the Holy Spirit dwells within us—we are the children of God, let us sit at the table and feast. Let us eat, drink and be merry”—it is at that very time that you might hear a sound as of One who says, “Arise, let us go hence, for this heart has become polluted. I will no longer shed abroad the conscious delights of My Presence in it.” Beware, dear Friends, of the devil! Beware of him most when you think you have least need to beware of him!

For a key-note to our meditation tonight, I propose to take the word, “Then,” as it stands in the forefront of our text. I think there will be found something of instruction here, especially to young Believers, as to the times when Satan will most probably beset them and they will, probably, be surprised to find that the very times when Satan will be likely to attack them, according to the judgment of experience and the examples of God’s Word, are the times when they would have thought him least likely to do so! I want you to observe the time of our Savior’s temptation—first, with regard to *the circumstances which preceded it* and then *the circumstances which followed it*. When we have noticed those two things, we will take the whole case and see if we do not derive some instruction from it.

I. First, OBSERVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PRECEDED THE TEMPTATION OF OUR SAVIOR IN THE WILDERNESS.

Jesus had been in an especially devout frame of mind before He was led into the wilderness. It is recorded by Luke that our Savior, when He was baptized, was praying. He was always a Man of prayer. This is, indeed, a Characteristic of the Savior—and if we should be asked what there was in Christ which distinguished Him from other men, besides His outward holiness and His inward consecration, we would say, “The habitual exercise of a spirit of prayer.” It is recorded that Jesus, as He was baptized, was praying and yet, after this prayer was offered, after Jesus had thus worshipped at His Father’s Throne, the temptation came!

So, you may have been in your closet and had a season of special refreshing. The Lord may have manifested Himself to you, as He does not unto the world, in your private devotions—but do not, therefore, conclude that you are rid of Satan’s temptations! You shall no sooner, it may be, have passed out of the closet than you shall be challenged to the conflict. The communion shall cease and the combat shall begin! Satan knows that you have been doing mischief to his cause in your prayers. Have you not been bringing blessings down from on high? Have you not been shaking the walls of the spiritual Jericho—and does he not, therefore, hate you? Satan has the same hatred of you that we find in evil men—and we know that all bad men are always more angry when good men are more busy. So Satan becomes the more Satanic when he knows that you have been unlocking the treasury of God to make those rich whom he would have poor. Why, your prayers, if I may use so daring a speech, have been instrumental in opening blind eyes, quickening dead hearts, unlocking the doors of spiritual prisons and shaking the gates of Hell—and do you not think that Satan will attack you now? Expect that Satan is at the closet doors and if, when you are lax in devotion, you are not tempted, rest assured that whenever you are much in prayer, you may expect Satan to be exceedingly enraged against you. Do you not see, dear Friends, that it is not to his advantage to let you continue in the act of prayer? He knows that when you grow more like your Master, you get more of the Holy Spirit in you and, therefore, it is to his interest to spoil this spirit of prayer! So he meets you, as it were, with his great club in his hand to knock you down. “Pray, will you?” he says. “No, that you shall not, for I will tempt you. Pray, will you?—Grow strong and laugh me to scorn? No, that you shall not,” he says! And he leaves no stone unturned to try, if he can, to lead you away from the heavenly, soul-enriching employment of private prayer! Now, if such a thing should happen to you, do not be surprised, as though some strange thing had occurred. It was so with your Lord. He prayed and temptation came! And when you have been in prayer, you may expect to be tempted by the devil.

So, too, *our Savior had been engaged in an act of public obedience to His Father’s will.* You will not forget that He had been baptized. He went to the Jordan’s brim and gave Himself into the hands of the Baptist, that He might be immersed beneath Jordan’s waves. “Thus it becomes us,” He said, “to fulfill all righteousness.” Some persons after Baptism are favored with great joy, as the eunuch, to wit, “he went on his way rejoicing.” But this is no rule. It will often happen that after the public avowal, after our public confession of faith, there will come a time of unusual struggling and conflict. You are not to say, dear Friend, “I know I have done right because I feel so happy.” You have done right if you

have fulfilled God’s command, whether you feel happy or not! The witness of the Spirit to an ordinance is not your happiness after the ordinance, for it may so happen that instead of happiness following immediately after your obedience, you may have to enter into a terrible conflict with the Prince of Darkness! Little children must have little rewards for every service that they do while they are little children, but those sons and daughters of the family who have had their senses exercised do not expect to have sweetmeats given to them every time they are obedient. No, they can be obedient and take medicine from a father’s hand—and consider even the bitter draught to be as real a proof of acceptance as though it had been some sweet thing such as they had in their younger days. We are not to always be children—not always little babies. It was because the eunuch was but a babe in Grace that he went on his way rejoicing, but stronger Believers will often be tried as Christ was. They will come up dripping from Baptism to go down dripping into the floods of another river of deep temptations and sorrow. You must not always expect even the Lord’s Supper to yield you excessive comfort, or, if it does yield you comfort, you may expect that Satan will meet you very soon after. The more soul-enriching ordinances become to you, the more probability there is that you will be tempted after them. If there is a pirate out at sea, what ship does he attack? An empty one? No, no! That which has been to the mines and is coming home with a rich freight! Then says the pirate, “Up with the black flag! Now is our time for prize money.” And when you have been to Baptism, or the Lord’s Supper, or to prayer and your soul has grown rich through fellowship with the Lord Jesus, “Now,” says Satan, “it is my time! I will attack the heavenly-laden ship and see what spoil I can get!”

Not only had our Savior been devout and obedient, but *He had also been in an exceedingly humble frame of mind*. He was baptized by John. John said, “I have need to be baptized of You,” but the Master puts it, “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness.” Talk of what is becoming! The Son of God speaking, not only of what is right, but of what is becoming and expedient! This shows how holy was His mind as to humbleness before God—and yet He was tempted. When we are proud, we may expect to be tempted or, rather, we are already tempted, for the devil has at least one of the meshes of his net over us! But when we are humble, when God has been pleased to make us lie low at the foot of His Throne, we perhaps think that now no temptation can come. Let us not be quite so sure. Where did Christian meet with Apollyon? Do you remember? It was in the Valley of Humiliation! Not on the mountaintop, but in the valley where the shepherd boy said he who was down need fear no fall. The boy was right in one sense, but there are some of us who, in another sense, need to be watchful and afraid even there! Satan does so hate humility that he will spit all his venom on it—

he does so thoroughly abhor that sweet flower, the perfume whereof God does delight in, the prayer of a humble and contrite heart—that he will pour all his malice upon it! If you have had a broken heart, Satan and you will never be friends, for you fulfill the promise, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed.” God has put an enmity which never was in your heart before—between you and Satan! Your brokenness of heart is an evidence that God put that enmity there—of Grace, alone, comes such experience! Your antagonist, seeing that enmity against him in the fact of your humiliation and contrition before God, will do his utmost to tempt you, if he can, to commit sin!

We find that *our blessed Lord was on this occasion favored with a Divine seal and token of His Sonship*. From the opened heavens, the Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Him and a Voice came from the excellent glory, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Will He *now* be tried by the arch-fiend? Did the devil hear that? He has much too quick ears not to have heard it. He therefore must have known that Christ was God’s well-beloved Son—but has he the impudence to attack Him? Yes, so great a fool is the devil that he will thrust his hand into the fire and burn it! He will attack a child of God, though he must know that he cannot overcome him. So stultified is he by sin that he will rush upon the thick bosses of God’s buckler and stand in conflict with the Spirit who is infinitely stronger and greater than he!

Now, Beloved, you, perhaps, have had some very sweet witness with your spirit that you are born of God. “Abba, Father,” has been upon your tongue all day. When you knelt down to pray, the sweet beginning of the Lord’s Prayer was the beginning and end of it all, “Our Father, which are in Heaven,” and you took your mercies as coming from a Father’s hands and your sufferings and chastisements as from the same paternal love. I hope you are not sitting down and saying, “Now, my battle is over—my victory is won forever!” Beloved, if you do, you reckon without your adversary! You are thinking you are in port, while as yet you are only midway on the ocean! You are thinking about sweet fields before you have fairly crossed the swelling flood! Come and be wise, lest that arch-deceiver take you unawares! If you had hope of your adoption, be still on the watchtower, lest Satan come against you! The surer I am that I am a child of God, and the clearer that is made to appear to other people, the more the devil will make me a target for his arrows. I am borrowing many a good figure just now from one dear Friend who has written upon this subject fully and largely. He says, quoting an old Divine, “A man never goes forth to shoot his own fowls. When he goes forth with his gun, it is against *wild* birds. And so the devil never goes out to tempt his own children—that is not necessary, for they are his, already—but when he

knows that a man is a child of God, and is, as it were, a wild bird to him, then he goes out against him.” The more surely, then, you are known to be a child of God, the more certainly will Satan be against you!

Again, to return to the narrative, we are told by Luke that *Jesus Christ was full of the Holy Spirit*. He was full of the Holy Spirit, yet He was tempted. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is never given in vain and, if given to us, it is as a preparation for conflict in order that we may have strength proportioned to our need. And again, where the Holy Spirit is given, the evil spirit will soon labor for the very reason I have referred to before, because, where God’s treasure is, there the thief will try to break in. I think it was one of my predecessors who said that nobody ever broke into a Baptist minister’s house because it was well known there would be nothing for them to get! But thieves often broke into other people’s houses because they knew there was treasure there. So the devil does not go after people who are without Divine Grace. “Why,” he says, “there is nothing there for me to steal!” But if you are full of Grace, then you may expect the arch-adversary to come and attack you. When old Farmer Jones went home on Friday evening, nobody went to watch for him on the road. But it was on a market night, when he had been selling wheat and some fellow had marked him on the Exchange taking money—it was then that the thief stopped him and robbed him of his gold. The devil knows when you are getting rich and full of the Holy Spirit. Now he thinks there is something worth his time and trouble—and so he speeds with dragon wings to the place where this rich child of God is and he waylays him—that he may attack him and cast him down. Well, there is never a better time to fight the devil than when you are filled with the Spirit! So the devil is a fool for meddling with you then. There never was such a fool as the devil is and though he hears us say that now, he knows it! He is a fool and will be to the end of the chapter, till my Master puts the bit into his mouth and the bridle to his jaws and hurls him down to the regions where he shall dwell forever!

Thus much, then, for the circumstances preceding our Lord’s temptation. I think we may ring the alarm and this may be a note of warning to you, even though you may have been in deep devotion and may have performed acts of obedience in the most humble and acceptable manner—and received tokens of adoption and are now full of the Holy Spirit.

II. Now, to change the strain, THE SUCCEEDING CIRCUMSTANCES ARE WORTHY OF YOUR SERIOUS REFLECTION.

Jesus Christ was just beginning His public ministrations. As one says, “So long as Jesus Christ had nothing to meddle with but the chips in His father’s carpenter’s shop, the devil never tempted Him, but now that He was beginning to proclaim glad tidings to the poor, the devil attacked Him.” While we have nothing to do in the cause of God and are secret

and retiring, it may be we shall escape—but no common temptation will happen to the man who is engaged in unusual labor. Satan will find some extraordinary means of tempting him whom God puts upon extraordinary service. Satan is very much afraid of all beginnings except one. He loves the beginning of sin, for it is like the letting out of water, but he cannot bear the beginning of a new life in the Christian! “Behold, he prays!” “Ah,” says the devil, “I hate that first prayer.” Satan loves not the beginning of repentance. There is the letting out of water, indeed! The beginning of a holy project, the beginning of a Christian ministry, the beginning of some ardent missionary, the opening up of some new field of Christian labor, the devil hates. If he can nip these things in the bud, he knows they cannot come to perfection. So Jesus is beginning to preach the Gospel and Satan, therefore, attacks Him. To what may we trace the attacks of Satan just at these beginnings?

A primary cause is *Satan’s malice*. No sooner is Christ acknowledged openly to be Anointed of the Holy Spirit to preach glad tidings, than the devil says, “I will shoot my arrow at Him. This is the Heir! Come, let us kill Him and the inheritance shall be ours.” So, in the beginning of the Christian life, and especially at the outset of the Christian minister, Satan says, “Here is another God-ordained man—here is another raised up against me,” and there is another arrow directed at the child of God. It is the devil’s complimentary arrow on the earnest soul when first God launches it in life. Another cause is Satan’s craftiness. He can foresee where we cannot. When there is a good project in hand, many an unbeliever says, “Oh, nothing will come of it—it is an Utopian desire—fanaticism projected it and enthusiasm will carry it out for a little, but it will be all a bottle of smoke.” Do you hear the devil? He is saying to himself, “I know the beginnings are good. I have crushed too many of them not to know the look of the Lord.” “Ah,” he says, “if I leave this Man alone, all Jerusalem and Judaea will go after Him. I must crush Him at once.” There is a hellish industry about Satan. He knows that his Kingdom stands upon a rickety foundation and, therefore, he is always anxious. Like a man at sea in a leaky ship, who is afraid of every wind that blows, so is the devil afraid of every new good thing and every fresh device of Divine Grace! And when he sees the beginnings, he thinks, “I will destroy the beginnings! I will break down the foundations and then the walls can never be built.”

We may, then, attribute temptation, at the beginning of the Christian life or Christian effort, to Satanic craft as well as to Satanic malice.

A further reason why you are thus tempted and tried is that *God, in His wise Providence, is now testing you to see whether you are a right man for His work*. Before a firearm is sold, it is taken to the proof-shop and there it is loaded with a charge much heavier than it will ever have

to carry in the ordinary sportsman’s hand. The barrels are fired and if they burst in the proof-house, no great hurt is done. Whereas it would be exceedingly dangerous if they should burst in the hand of some unskillful hunter. So God takes His servants—some of whom He will make special use He, perhaps, loads with five times more temptation than He means they should ordinarily have to endure, in order that He may see and prove to onlookers that they are fit men for His Divine service! We have heard that the old warriors, before they would use their swords, would bend them across their knees. They must see whether they were made of the right stuff or not before they would venture into battle with them. And God acts thus with His servants. Martin Luther would never have been the Martin Luther he was if it had not been for the devil. The devil was, as it were, the proof-house for Martin Luther. He must be tried and tempted by Satan and so he became fit for the Master’s use.

Our Savior Himself became perfect through His sufferings. Through His temptations He became able to succor those who are tempted, for He was tempted in all points like as they are. And you, Christian, will never be of great service in God’s Church without temptation—you shall neither be able to strengthen the weak, nor to comfort the faint-hearted. You cannot teach the ignorant, or inspire with courage the wavering unless you have, yourself, been taught in the school of experience. John Bunyan, who teaches all the ages and will teach us till we meet in the Celestial City, must himself be taught, in five long years of dark despair, the ruin of the creature and the glory of Free Grace. I believe you will find it to be the case in regard to most of the preachers whom God has signally honored—in fact, I think in regard to all preachers who have been of great use in the Church, that there has been a preparatory struggle in the wilderness, a preparatory forty days’ fasting before they have come forth to labor for the Lord!

“Well!” says one of my hearers, “I think I have found something out tonight. When I came into this Tabernacle, this was my state of mind. I have been lately undertaking some new project and ever since I have thought of it, and commenced it, I have had such a gloom of heart as I have never known before.” My dear Friend, I think I have told you the reason of this. Take it as a favorable omen. Satan knows that your project will do a serious injury to his Kingdom and this is why he is endeavoring, with his entire strength, to divert you from it. I am sure you and I would do the same if we were engaged in the same struggle as Satan is—and as he has a vast deal more sense than we have, he will not be likely to leave that stone unturned. Go on, Brother, go on! If you tread on a dog, he will bark—and you may depend upon it that you have trodden upon him when he does bark—and so you may know you have done mischief to Satan when he begins to roar at you! Go on! Make him

roar more! Never mind his roaring—make him roar again! Yes, stir him up if you are in God’s service and count it a triumph when you hear a growl! It is a good sign that angels are singing when devils are howling. It is a good omen that you are progressing when Satan is so endeavoring to cast you down!

III. Taking the case of the Savior being tempted, as a whole, I may offer a few closing reflections.

First, *a holy character does not avert temptation.* Perfect, spotless, without any propensity to sin, yet is Jesus tempted! In Him the Prince of this world found nothing congenial to his temptations. When Satan tempts us, he strikes sparks on tinder. But, in Christ’s case, when the devil tempted Him, it was like striking sparks on water, yet he kept on striking. Now, if the devil goes on striking where there is no better result than that, how much more will he do it when he knows what inflammable stuff our hearts are made of? Expect it, then. Though you become ever so sanctified by the Holy Spirit and destroy sin after sin and lust after lust, you will have this great dog of Hell still barking at you!

The greatest distance from the world will not insure you from temptation. When we mix with the world, we know that we shall be tempted. In our business in the banking-house, on the farm, on the vessel, in the street, we expect that in the world we shall have temptation. But if you could get out of the world, you would still be tempted! Jesus Christ went right away from human society into the wilderness and, “then,” was He tempted by the devil. Solitude is no preservative against temptation from Satan! Solitude has its charms and its benefits and may be useful in curbing the flesh, and certainly in checking the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life—but the devil should be worsted by other weapons than that of solitude! Still he will attack you even there. Do not suppose, then, that it is only the worldly-minded who have dreadful thoughts and blasphemous temptations, for even spiritually-minded persons may have to endure the same! And with the boldest character and the holiest position, there may yet be the darkest temptation.

The utmost consecration of spirit will not insure you against Satanic temptation. Christ was consecrated through and through. His Baptism was real. He was truly dead to the world. He lived only to do His Father’s work. It was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him—yet He was tempted. Your hearts may glow with a seraphic or cherubic flame of love to Jesus and yet the devil will try to throw cold water upon it and to bring you down to Laodicean lukewarmness.

Nor will the highest form of Grace or the greatest development of a spiritual mind prevent our being tempted. No, the most eminent public service and the most favored private communion will not keep us from

being assailed! Asked one, “At what time may the Christian take off his armor?” If you will tell me when God permits a Christian to lay aside his armor, I will tell you when Satan has left off temptation. Inasmuch as we are to do as the old knights did in war time—to sleep with the helmet and breast plate buckled on—you may rest assured there is good need for it. At the very time we think not, the arch-deceiver will be on the watch to make us his prey! The Lord keep us watchful in all seasons and give us a final escape out of the jaw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear!

Alas, there are some here who are not thus tempted and who are, perhaps, congratulating themselves and saying, “We were never tempted like that!” Ah, you are never emptied from vessel to vessel! You are settled on the lees and why are you left so quiet? Is it not because there is no spiritual life in you? You are dead in trespasses and sins! You are the devil’s own—why should he hunt *you*? A man does not go forth with a lasso to catch a horse that stands in his stable already bridled and saddled for him to ride whenever he likes! He goes forth to hunt the wild horse that is free. So the devil knows that he has you bridled and saddled—and that he can ride you whenever he pleases—so he does not need to hunt you. But he will hunt the free Christian, upon whose back he cannot place a saddle and into whose mouth he cannot fix a bit. I wish you were tempted. I wish there was something in you worth the devil’s efforts, but there is not. May God renew your hearts and give you a right spirit! Remember that the way of salvation is to trust Jesus. Do that and you are saved. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. If you are believing in Jesus—trusting only in Jesus, entirely, with your whole head—then you are saved. Then you may defy the power of Hell and come off more than conqueror! May the Master bless these words to the warning of many and the comfort of some, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 4:1-11.**

Verse 1. *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.* He had just been baptized, the Spirit of God had descended upon Him and the Father had borne witness to Him, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” yet immediately after all that, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil! So, after your times of sweetest fellowship with God. After the happiest enjoyment of Gospel ordinances. After the sealing of the Spirit within your hearts, you must expect to be tempted by the devil. You must not suppose that in your Christian life, all will be sweetness—that all will be spiritual witness-bearing. You have to fight the good fight of faith and your great adversary will not be slow to begin the encounter! You are a

pilgrim in a strange land, so you must expect to find rough places on the road to Heaven. Yet, since you are so much weaker than your Master was, you will do well to pray the prayer that He taught His disciples, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.”

2, 3. *And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward hungry.* And when the tempter came to Him, see how Satan seizes opportunities. When he finds us weak, as the Savior was through long fasting—when he finds us in trying circumstances, as the Savior was when hungry in the desert—then it is that he comes to tempt us. This dastardly foe of ours takes every possible advantage of us, that he may, by any means, overthrow us.

3. *He said, If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made into bread.* He begins with an, “if.” He tries to cast a doubt upon the Savior’s Sonship—and this is the way that he often attacks a child of God now. He says to him, “If you are a son of God, do such-and-such.” He challenged Christ to work a miracle for Himself—to use His Divine Power on His own behalf, but this the Savior never did. He challenged Christ to distrust the Providence of God and to be His own Provider—and this is still a very common temptation to God’s people.

4. *But He answered and said, It is written.* That is the only sword that Christ used against Satan—“the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” There is nothing like it! And the old dragon himself knows what sharp edges this sword has. Christ said, “It is written.”

4. *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.* God can sustain human life without the use of bread, although it is the staff of life, bread does not sustain life unless God puts power into it to do so. And He can, if it pleases Him, use that power without the outward means. Our Lord thus showed that God could provide for Him in a desert without His interference with the plans of Divine Providence by selfishly catering for Himself. So the first victory was won,

5, 6. *Then the devil took Him up into the Holy City, and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple. And said unto Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down: for it is written.* Here He plays with the Word of God, for the devil can quote Scripture when it suits his purpose to do so—“It is written.”

6. *He shall give His angels charge concerning You: and in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You cast Your foot against a stone.* The devil did not quote correctly from Psalm 91:11, 12. He left out the most important words—“He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You in all Your ways”—but it was not Christ’s way to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple! Jesus therefore answered Satan’s misquotation with a true quotation.

7. *Jesus said unto him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.* I know some people who earn their living in employments which are very hazardous to their immortal souls. They are in the midst of evil, yet they tell me that God can keep them in safety there. I know that He can, but I also know that we have no right to go, voluntarily, where we are surrounded by temptation! If your calling is the wrong one and you are continually tempted in it, you may not presume upon the goodness of God to keep you, for it is *your business* to get as far as you can from that which will lead you into sin! God does not put His servants on the pinnacle of the Temple—it is the devil who puts them there and if they ever are there, the best thing they can do is to get down as quickly and as safely as they can—but they must not cast themselves down! They must look to Him who alone can bring them down safely. With some professors, presumption is a very common sin. They will go into worldly amusements and all sorts of frivolities and say, “Oh, we can be Christians, and yet go there!” Can you? It may be that you can be hypocrites and go there—that is far easier than going there as Christians!

8-10. *Again, the devil took Him up into an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and said unto Him, All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me. Then said Jesus unto him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.* Christ will not endure any more of this talk! When it comes to a bribe—the promise that the devil will give Him earth’s glory if He will but fall down and worship him—Christ ends the whole matter once and for all. Thrice assaulted, thrice victorious, blessed Master, enable us, also, to be more than conquerors through Your Grace!

11. *Then the devil left Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.* Regarding it as their highest honor to be the servants of their Lord!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— 266, 262, 55.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 16, 1883.

“And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If You are the Son of God.”
Matthew 4:3.

IN speaking upon the temptation of our Lord, I first want to say a few words that ought always to be remembered by those who are tempted, lest they encounter unnecessary sorrow. And to begin with, I remark that there is no sin in being tempted. Even when our first parents were in their perfect state, they were liable to temptation. The serpent came and beguiled them. It was not their fault that they were tempted—their sin was that they *yielded* to the temptation. We know that our blessed Lord was personally without the slightest taint of sin—“holy, harmless, undefiled”—yet He was tempted by Satan, himself, the prince and leader of all tempters, and He was tempted to what would have been the worst of sins. Still, there was no blame attached to Him on that account, for He did not yield to the assaults of the Evil One. So, dear Friends, should you be tempted while you are about your lawful calling, or when you are in the House of God, distinctly engaged in His service and worship, do not be surprised! Who are you that you should escape temptation when your Lord had to endure it? Do not be cast down by the fact of your being tempted, as though it were, in itself, a sin. The guilt lies with him who tempts—not with the tempted one until he yields to the temptation. Let that always be remembered.

And remember, next, that temptation does not necessitate sinning. It did not in the case of our Lord, for He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” And that which was possible of Him, in His life on earth, can also be possible of you by Him with whom all things are possible! A man need not fall into avarice because he is tempted to covetousness. A man need not become unchaste because he is tempted to lewdness. Remember the case of Joseph—he was none the less pure because he was so foully tempted. A man need not be false to his convictions because someone tries to bribe him to be so—rather, he may prove the honesty and uprightness of his heart by recoiling from the very touch of the briber. He who is tempted need not, therefore, sin, for God, who permits the temptation to come will, with the temptation, make a way of escape for him that he may be able to bear it. A man may walk in the midst of a furnace of temptation, yet not even the smell of fire shall be upon him. He may be “kept by the power of God through faith unto sal-

vation” and kept as well amid the most furious temptations as if he lived in a region that was most helpful to his Graces. A child of God may be specially, peculiarly, singularly and emphatically tempted, and yet he may be preserved from sin. In the case before us, we see that our Lord was not only tempted, but that He was tempted by Satan, by him who has the greatest power and the most cunning sleight of hand of all tempters and, though the arch-tempter put before Him the subtlest of temptations, yet He did not yield in any respect whatever. So may you, dear Friend, pass unharmed, as it were, between the very jaws of Hell, preserved and upheld by the Sovereign, Omnipotent Grace of God!

Note, yet again, that it may be necessary for you to be tempted. It evidently was so in the case of our Lord, for He did not fall into temptation through unwatchfulness. He did not go into temptation presumptuously, but we read of Him, that He was “led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil,” so that He was in His right place—He was in the path of duty even when He had to go through this, His great threefold trial in the desert. It was necessary that it should be so with Him that He might be made, in all points, like unto His brethren, that He might have full sympathy with us in all our temptations and that He might make His life-work complete in every respect.

Temptation may be necessary for us for the purpose of testing and trying us. We read, in the Book of Genesis, “It came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (or, *try*) Abraham.” That is, God *tested* him, put his faith to a very severe test. There are no champions in God’s army who are mere fair-weather soldiers. They must all endure hardships and their valor must be tried and proved. God sends none of His ships to sea without having first tested them—and when their seaworthiness is proved, then they may go on their long voyages. You, tried Believer, are to be tested, that the great Angel of the Covenant may say to you, as He said to the father of the faithful, “Now I know that you fear God.” God already knows this through His Omniscience, but He would know it practically by testing us and it is, therefore, necessary that we should be tempted in order that we may be tested. Temptation may also be necessary to us for our spiritual growth. Muscles are not developed except by exercise and if we were to be, spiritually, put under a glass case, and never suffered to endure temptation, we would become dwarfed and stunted—and some of our virtues would never be developed at all. Where would our patience be if there were no suffering to test it? Where would be the Grace of forgiveness if we never had to suffer injury from our fellows? It is for our growth in Divine Grace that the stormy winds of temptation are let loose upon us, that, like a stalwart oak, we may take firm root-hold. By this stern experience, Christian men grow “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” They sit loose to the world and they take a firmer grip on the invisible things of God as they are tried and tempted by Satan.

It may also be necessary for us to be tempted to increase our usefulness. He that was never tempted cannot help those who are tempted! He lacks sympathy because he has never passed through the fiery trial to which they are exposed. Dear young man, it may be that you wonder why

you have such a stormy inward life. Perhaps God is going to make you greatly useful as a dispenser of comfort to others. Men might be Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder, without trouble, but you could not be a Barnabas, a son of consolation, unless you had first known what it was to be comforted in time of trial. God might use you to scatter His Seed with a hand that was never wounded, but He could not use you to bind up the broken in heart unless that hand had been rendered tender and sensitive by trial. Your present experience, though painful, is a necessary preparation for something which will give you tenfold joy—so you may endure the present trial even with cheerfulness because of the blessed result that will come from it!

Beside that, Brothers and Sisters, we must be tempted, or else we cannot be victorious. The rule of the Kingdom is—no battles, no crowns; no conflicts, no conquests! We must stand foot to foot in deadly combat with the archenemy of souls or else we can never have a memorial pillar set up by the wayside, like that one of which Mr. Bunyan speaks, where Christian met Apollyon and it was recorded of him—

***“The man so bravely played the man,
He made the fiend to fly—
Of which a monument I stand,
The same to testify.”***

The great reason why God’s children are tempted is for God’s Glory, for, when they stand fast and defeat the foe, then the strong man is overcome by a stronger and then He that is the strongest of all—the mighty Son of God—gets fresh crowns upon His head as, one after the other, the weakest among His people put to rout the great adversary. There is a necessity, then, that you should, at times, be “in heaviness through manifold temptations” and, though you may pray not to be led into temptation and are bound to do so, yet sometimes it may be necessary that, like your Lord, you should be brought into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Note, once more, that solitude will not prevent temptation. “Oh,” said a young man, “I think that I must give up my job, for it involves me in so many temptations.” “Ah,” said a Christian woman, “I wish that I could get right away into some sisterhood where I should have no temptations.” Yes, and if you did, as some foolish women have done, you would have your temptations greatly increased! I am afraid that, sometimes, solitude is a *help* to temptations and that Christian people who are much tormented by Satan would do well to mix more often with other Believers, and tell out their sorrows. A good burst of tears and a narration of your grief to a sympathetic friend may be the best possible way for you to find relief from your sorrows. Do not be so shut up within yourself as to refuse to tell of the heartache that is wearing into your very soul—seek help from some Christian Brother or Sister, for we are bid to bear one another’s burdens, and I trust we are not slow to do so.

Having thus introduced the general subject of temptation at rather unusual length, I want, now, to speak with some brevity, but to practical purpose concerning the temptation of our LORD.

The text I have taken shows that Satan is apt at writing prefaces. He is cunning and crafty, if not wise. He does not come to the Savior and say

at once, "Command that these stones be made bread," but he begins thus, "If You are the Son of God." This is his old plan of insinuating doubts, by which Eve was vanquished in the Garden of Eden! And this is the sharp end of the wedge with which he thought to separate the Son of God from His Father. And notice, too, that Satan knows how to fire a double-shotted gun, for, while he began by insinuating doubt—"If You are the Son of God"—he linked it with rebellion—"Command that these stones be made bread." Thus there were two temptations at the same moment and, sometimes, our mind is greatly perplexed and our heart is wounded by two attacks at one time, or one following very closely upon the heels of the other. It is a part of Satan's tactics to be quick with his temptations so that we scarcely recover from one blow before he deals another—and then another—that, if possible, he may drive us out of our wits and overcome us by his cunning.

I. Let us look closely into this double temptation with which he attacked the Savior. "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." And notice, first, that THE TEMPTER BEGINS BY ASSAILING THE SAVIOR WITH AN, "IF."

Note that *he does not begin with a point-blank denial*, saying, "You are not the Son of God," but he suggests a doubt upon the point—"If You are the Son of God." At the present time there is a spirit of infidelity creeping over the Christian Church and it puzzles and perplexes me to lay hold of it because of its very vagueness. Ministers and others of the modern-thought school do not positively assert that the Scriptures are not Inspired, but they have a theory of inspiration which practically comes to that conclusion. They do not actually say that Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, but they try to explain away His Divinity in such a fashion that they might just as well deny it at once. As for the Fall—oh, of course, there was a fall, but it was a matter of very small importance and the idea that the serpent tempted Eve is held up to positive ridicule as a myth, an ancient fable! The depravity of the human heart is admitted in words, but it is really denied when you come to see what those words actually mean. There is a new theology, lately sprung up, which has taken every pea out of the pod and every kernel out of the shell—and its advocates present us with the empty shucks and shells and say, "Do not quarrel with us. We are all brothers and there is very little difference between what we hold and what you teach, only we are not so dogmatic and positive as you are." Yet, all the while, they are throwing doubts upon that which is our very life! And we cannot help feeling that they have learned the devil's way of dealing with the Truth of God—"If, if, if."

That is just how Satan comes to each Believer. He will not positively say, "You are not a child of God," but he tries to inject a doubt into our minds, "If you are a child of God." He will not declare that Christ's people will certainly perish, but he asks, "Suppose they should?" Often, when I have heard a great many suppositions, I have felt more indignation at them than I have ever felt at a point-blank denial. Somebody once said to Mr. Gough, "Now, Mr. Gough, suppose you were in a beer parlor." Mr. Gough said, "I will not allow you to suppose anything of the kind! With my convictions about the drink traffic, I will not have you suppose such

a thing!” And I do not know what better answer he could have given. Yet people come to us with their supposing and insinuations—and we feel as indignant as Mr. Gough did. It is the devil’s plan to assail with an, “if,” and we have met with many who have adopted his tactics. One says, “I am not an infidel. I am not a freethinker! I am practically the same as you are. I hold the same views, I subscribe to the same creed, I am in the same Union and Association!” Yet, as we go on talking with him, he undermines the whole thing with some dreadful, dreary, “if,” concerning the faith which we hold dear.

Notice, next, that *the devil grafts his, “if,” upon a holy thing.* He says, “If You are the Son of God.” This is the very title that had been applied to Christ by His Father at His Baptism—“This is My beloved Son.” Yet Satan attacks it by trying to graft an, “if,” on it. Thus does the devil still seek to do with every precious Truth of God and we must be always on the watch against him as those who are not ignorant of his devices. What a blessed stock is that glorious Doctrine of the Adoption of Believers into God’s family, but, with an, “if,” grafted upon it, what sour grapes it bears! It is with great joy we sing—

**“Behold what wondrous Grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!”**

But put an, “if,” on it, and then, ah, me! All the joy and all the wonder vanish at once.

Moreover, on this occasion, Satan put an, “if,” upon a plain utterance of God. The Father had said, “This is My beloved Son,” yet this impudent fiend dares, in the face of God’s Only-Begotten, to quote that title with an, “if,” added to it. I am never afraid of what any text of Scripture may teach, but I am often afraid of the gloss that has been put on a text and this Satanic glossing is the most mischievous of all mischief! It matters not how plainly any Truth may be revealed in the Scriptures, nor how clear is the language in which it is stated, so that we can see that it is certainly taught to us by God, but the devil will come and put an, “if,” on it. I suppose that some of us who have been Christians for many years have had to fight over every Doctrine in the Word of God. There is scarcely one Truth of God I believe for which I have not had to contend in my own soul. David said that he rejoiced over God’s Word “as one that finds great spoil.” Now, spoil is found after a battle, and God’s Truth is, to most of His people, a thing for which they have had to fight with the powers of darkness and they have had to take the Doctrine from the enemy by main force through the aid of the Holy Spirit. “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?” No, that which has been gained in battle by such soul-conflict as we have had shall be held fast till we die! Yet, while we say this, we know that Satan has the impertinence to come and write over many of the great Truths of Scripture his ugly, insinuating, “if.”

Yes, and not only does he put an, “if,” on Scripture, but *he puts an, “if,” also on past manifestations.* You enjoyed, some time ago, a blessed visit from God. You thought that you never could forget it—you said that you would never doubt again. The sacred Dove rested upon you and you were full of holy calm. The voice and witness of the Spirit were within you

and you knew that you were a child of God and that you lived in Jehovah's love. But the devil will come and say to you, "All that was fancy and excitement! There was nothing in it." Or if he is not so positive, he questions it with an, "if." With his great black pen, he scrawls, "if," right across all our sweet experiences, all the tops of Tabor—all the communion tables where we have met our Lord, all the places of secret retirement where our soul has been made like the chariots of Amminadib! And then, unless our Lord comes to our help, we lose the comfort of these past manifestations.

In this case, *the devil puts an, "if," across nearly the whole of Christ's life.* Our Lord had already had 30 years of retirement and preparation for His public ministry. I do not know whether Satan had tempted Him while He was in His obscurity, living with His father and mother in quiet. One would think that after 30 years of holy retirement, there must be a certainty of His being the Son of God, yet Satan has a bronze forehead and he says, "if," even to Him after all that! Some of us have been more than 30 years in God's ways. Some, perhaps, for 50 years have enjoyed the Lord's Presence and blessing, yet Satan will come and say, "If—if you are a child of God." Yes, and he has whispered that insinuation in the ears of dying saints whose faces have begun to glow with the Glory to be revealed! He has persecuted them with his cruel, "ifs," even to the last moment! Do not be astonished at it, Beloved, for our Lord Jesus Christ had no sin in Him—He had never done anything that could have made His sonship questionable, and yet, with a perfectly pure and holy and consecrated life before Him, this arch-enemy dares to sneer at it and to spit upon it one of his abominable, "ifs." "If You are the Son of God." There was our Divine Master, fully assured that He was the Son of God. His unerring consciousness told Him that He was so. He knew it, He was sure of it, as sure of it as He was of His own existence—and yet the fiend dared to say to Him, "If You are the Son of God." And you, Beloved, may feel the pulsing of the heavenly life—your heart may beat high with immortality—yet the hiss of the old serpent may be heard in your spirit, "If you are a child of God." That is his usual mode of attack, so be on your guard against it!

II. But, now, secondly, notice that THE TEMPTER AIMS THE, "IF," AT A VERY VITAL PLACE. "If You are the Son of God."

In like manner, with his poisoned arrow of an, "if," he will attack a child of God, sometimes, with *doubts as to whether Christ is God.* "If He is the Son of God." Oh, but that Doctrine of the Godhead of our Savior is a thing which we must be prepared to defend even with our life, if necessary—we can never give up that great Truth of God! It has been assailed all through the history of the Christian Church. The devil has seemed to say to his fiendish archers, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel." If he can get men to deny the Godhead of Christ, he knows that the chief Truth of God is assailed. If that were gone, there would be nothing left that would be worth having!

When he has not assailed the Godhead of Christ, he has often attacked *our sonship.* "Oh," he says, "are *you* a child of God? *You*, with all your imperfections and infirmities—are *you* a child of God?" And he puts

it to you, over and over again, as a matter of question, until, at last, you are driven almost out of your wits. This questioning of Satan is always with an evil intention. He knows that he is assailing us in a very vital place—he is attacking our faith—and faith is vital to a Christian. If faith should fail us, then our life has failed us.

He also, by this means, attacks *our childlike spirit*, for, if we are not children of God, why should we submit to His will? Why should we not kick and struggle against our daily trials? If we are childlike, we trust, we obey, we believe, we endure, we persevere—but Satan puts an, “if,” on all that and so he tries to disarm us.

Moreover, he is here *aiming at our Father’s honor*, for he as much as says, “Is He your Father? If He is your Father, why does He allow you to be tried as you are? Why are you so poor? Why are you so ill? Why are you so depressed in spirit? He certainly does not act towards you as if He were your Father.” Thus the devil tries to take from us all our comfort and all our delight, for if God is not the Father of us who believe, then are we orphans, indeed! We are strangers in this land and we have no other land to go to if God is not our Father and Heaven is not our home. The world has rejected us and if God does not acknowledge us, we are, of all men, most miserable. So, Satan attacks us with that, “if,” in the most tender place where he can most wound us. If he could succeed in his assault, he would, indeed, leave us naked, poor and miserable. He would prevent our prayers, destroy our patience and hinder us in every respect. And he does this that he may then make room in our hearts for any other form of temptation that he likes. If you are not a child of God and God will not take care of you, then something whispers to you, “Take care of yourself. Rob your fellow men. Do a dishonest thing, do something or other by which you can escape from your present difficulty.” This is what Satan is aiming at—therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, I earnestly entreat you to look well to this vulnerable part—your faith—your firm conviction of your sonship in relation to the Most High.

III. Thirdly, SATAN SUPPORTS HIS, “IF,” WITH OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

I will dwell only a minute or two upon this point. I think that the devil seemed to say to Christ, as he looked round the desert and saw that there was not a disciple or friend or anybody about—no guards to take care of this Prince of the blood—“*You, the Son of God, alone, deserted, forsaken, in a wilderness? You, the Son of God?*”

And, sometimes, he has come upon us *when we have been all alone*. We have looked and there was no man to help us. We had to war a warfare all by ourselves. Friends were all gone—some were dead, others had proved false—and then he said, “*You, a child of God? While He would have given His angels charge concerning you if you had been one of His children, He would not have left you all alone like this.*”

And then Satan, with a glance of his cruel eyes all around us, has seemed to say, “*You are in a desert. There is nothing but sand and stones—no food to eat, no water to drink, no shrubs or trees to shelter you. This is a pretty place for a child of God! Why, surely, if you had been one of His children, you would have been in a paradise! Was not that*

where God put Adam? How can you be a child of God and be in a desert?" Has he ever said something like this to you, Beloved? "You have had trials all around you. Losses, crosses, bereavements, afflictions, poverty—nothing but troubles and nobody to help you out of them." And you have echoed the devil's words, "Alone and in a desert!" And then the question has come, "Can I really be a child of God?"

Our Lord was also *with the wild beasts* and I have no doubt that Satan pointed them out to Him, and said, "You, the Son of God, along with lions and bears and leopards and wolves?" So, sometimes, you have gone out into what has been a desert to you and all day long you have been among wild beasts. When you have been at work, you have not heard a word to comfort or cheer you—you have been surrounded by blasphemers and filthy talkers. You have said, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Me-sech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar." The misery of your surroundings has gone right home to your heart and then the devil has said, "You, a child of God, and put into such a position as this?"

Then, last of all, we read that Jesus hungered. And, after 40 days fasting, well He might—and hunger is a hard thing to overcome. It bites and gnaws most terribly. It was then that the devil said to Him, "If you are the Son of God," and threw a sardonic sneer into it—"a *hungering* Son of God!" So, you see, Satan backs up his insinuations by appealing to the circumstances in which we are found. And I will put it to you now, whether there is anybody here—even the very bravest of us—who could endure such temptation as this!

Suppose you had to go out of that door, tonight, with ragged garments on you, without a single penny in your pocket, without a solitary friend left and no place where you could lay your head? Do you not think that it is very likely that you would begin to be afraid that, after all, you were not a child of God? Supposing that you had eaten nothing all this day, and for many days before, and you were faint and weary, and no man gave you anything—if the devil said to you, then, "If you are a child of God," I am afraid that you would say, "Ah, Satan, now that it has come to this pass, I am afraid that I am not!"

Or I will put it in another way. If there should knock at your door, tonight, a man without shoes on his feet, one who had nowhere to sleep, and was all in rage, and he told you that he had not broken his fast for days, would you believe that he was one of your Brothers in Christ, and that he was a child of God? Well, perhaps, you might, but I know a good many who would not—they would say, "No, no, no! You are an impostor and if you do not leave, I will call in a policeman." Do you see, then, what pith and force there is in the temptation, when, finding the Savior without a place to lay His head, hungering, alone, with the wild beasts and in a wilderness, the devil comes to Him, and says, "Are you, indeed, the Son of God?" It was only the true Son of God who could answer him with confidence when in such a plight as that!

IV. To close my discourse, let me remind you that IF THE TEMPTER CAN BE OVERCOME, IT WILL BE EXCEEDINGLY HELPFUL TO US ALL THE REST OF OUR LIFE.

For, first, note that, if an, *“if,”* about our being a child of God comes from the devil, it is as good as a certificate stating we are! “Oh,” you say, “how is that?” Why, the devil never puts an, “if,” to anything that is not true! Whenever he says, “if,” to a thing, we may be sure that it is true! If he comes along and finds a text of Scripture, and says, “If it is true,” that is the best homage which he can pay to it by trying to undermine it! I believe that your sonship is true when the devil tells you that it is not! If you were not a child of God, the devil would not be likely to utter an, “if,” about it. I hope I am not, in any sense, a servant of the devil, and whenever I see anyone in my congregation who is puffed up with carnal conceit and who thinks that he is a child of God, I say to myself, “I will try to preach, next Sunday, in such a way as to make him question whether he is or is not a Christian, for he ought most seriously to question it.” It is true, as Cowper says—

***“He that never doubted of his state,
He may perhaps—perhaps he may—too late.”***

It is no part of the devil’s work to make the self-deceived and hypocrites question themselves—he rather lulls them into deeper slumber—but when he does suggest to any man the doubt, “If you are a child of God,” you may depend upon it that the man is a child of God, or else the devil would never think it worth his while to raise a question about it! So you may take Satan’s insinuation for a certificate of your sonship!

When you are once able to battle with his evil suggestion, you may say, “If I were Satan’s own, he would not worry me. If I belonged to him, he would try to make me content in his service—and these doubts and fears, these questions, this self-examination, these great searching of heart are all evidences that I have escaped from the talons of the old dragon and that he worries me because he cannot devour me.” So we get a confirmation of our sonship even from Satan, himself!

Thus, dear Fiends, *if you once thoroughly overcome that “if,” it is very likely that it will not occur to you again for many a day*, for, as far as I know, our blessed Lord had not that, “if,” put to Him any more for years. The devil departed and angels came and ministered to Him, and He spoke with a holy confidence and joy in His Father’s love all the rest of His life. At the last, when He was in a still worse plight and His hands were nailed to the Cross, and He was faint with thirst and near to death, then cruel men stood around Him and repeated the Satanic insinuation, “If You are the Son of God.” Oh, but our blessed Master must have inwardly smiled as He thought, “You cannot tempt Me with that, ‘if,’—I have been tempted, long ago, by a far greater adversary than any of you—even by your master and lord, the arch-fiend, himself! In the wilderness, he said to Me, ‘If You are the Son of God,’ and I repulsed him, and turned the edge of his sword upon himself. And now you have only tried to pierce me with a blunted weapon—you cannot wound Me as you cry, ‘If You are the Son of God.’” Do you not see, Brothers and Sisters, that a temptation overcome may be used, the next time, to overcome another one? You may lay up this conquered temptation, just as David laid up Goliath’s sword and, one of these days, when you come the same way and need a sword, you will say, “There is none like it! Give it to me.” And

you will be glad to get the old sword into your hand again. So, temptations vanquished may be of service to us even on our dying bed and, as our Master triumphed on the Cross over a temptation which He had defeated in the desert, so, when we come to die, we may have peace and joy because of those early trials in which we were enabled to overcome our great adversary by the blood of the Lamb.

I have been all this while talking to God's children about the "if." Yet I fear that I am addressing some to whom the devil will not say, "if," for he knows, and perhaps your own conscience knows, that you are not a child of God. O dear Friends, do not deceive yourselves about this matter! If you are not His children, do not pretend that you are, but remember that if you are not the children of God, you are children of the Evil One and heirs of wrath, even as others. Oh, may Infinite Mercy adopt you into the family of God! And the way that mercy works is by leading you to trust in Christ Crucified. Then you shall be put among the children—adopted into the Lord's family—yes, born into it by a new birth through faith in Jesus Christ! The Lord grant it to every unconverted one here and grant it now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 3:13-17; 4:1-11.**

Matthew 3:13, 14. *Then came Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of You, and do You come to me? Who among us would not have felt as John did? Shall the servant baptize the Master and such a Master even his Lord and Savior? But mark the condescension of our blessed Lord! He would do everything that He wished His people to do afterwards and, therefore, He would be baptized and set the example that He would have them all follow.*

15. *And Jesus answering said unto him, Allow it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him.* We are never to be so modest as to become disobedient to Christ's commands! We have known some who have allowed their humility to grow alone in the garden of their heart without the other sweet flowers that should have sprung up side by side with it—and thus their very humility has developed into a kind of pride. John was easily persuaded to do what his feelings, at first, seemed to forbid. "Then he allowed Him."

16, 17. *And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo, a Voice from Heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* It has also happened unto the servants of Christ, as well as to their Master, that in keeping the Commandments of God there has been a sweet attestation borne by the Holy Spirit. I trust that we, too, according to our measure of sonship, have heard in our hearts the Voice from Heaven, saying, "This is My beloved son," and that we have experienced the descending of the dove-like Spirit, bringing us peace of mind and gentleness of nature.

Matthew 4:1. *Then was Jesus led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.* What a change it seems from the descent of the Holy Spirit to being led up into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil! Dear Friends, be especially on the watch after a great spiritual joy, for it is just then that you may have some terrible temptation! Perhaps the voice from Heaven is to prepare you to do battle with the enemy. I have noticed that the Lord has two special seasons of blessing His people—sometimes, before a great trial, to prepare them for it—and, at other times, after a great affliction, to remove the weakness which has been thereby occasioned. Think not that you can come up out of the waters of Baptism and then live without watchfulness! Imagine not, because the Spirit has sealed you, and borne witness with your spirit that you are the Lord's child, that, therefore, you are out of gunshot of the enemy. Oh, no! At that very time he will be preparing his most subtle temptations for you, just as Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil immediately after His Baptism and His Father's testimony, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. *And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He afterward was hungry.* I suppose that He was not "hungry" during His long fast, and this renders it a fast altogether by itself. We are here told, "He afterward was hungry."

3. *And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* "You can do it if You are, indeed, the Son of God. You are hungry, therefore feed Yourself. Your Father has forgotten You. His Providence has failed You! Be Your own Providence—work a miracle for Yourself." How little the tempter, with all his knowledge, understood the true Character of Christ! Our Lord never worked a miracle in order to supply His own needs.

4. *But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread, alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.* He had been attacked as a man who was hungry, so He quoted a text which evidently belonged to man—"Man shall not live by bread, alone." It was a wilderness text. It concerned the children of Israel in the desert, so it was suitable to the position of our Lord in that wilderness. He meant to let the tempter know that as God once fed man by manna from the skies, He could do it again. At any rate, this glorious Man, this true Son of God, was determined not to interfere with the ordinary working of Providence, but He left Himself and His needs in His Father's hands.

5, 6. *Then the devil took Him up into the Holy City and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said to Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you: and in their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone.* "It is written." Thus the devil tried to turn Christ's own sword against Himself—that two-edged sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God! And the devil can still quote Scripture to suit his own purpose. Yet it was a misquotation as to the letter of it, for he left out the essential words, "to keep you in all your ways." And it was a worse misquotation as to the spirit of it, for in the true meaning of the passage there is nothing to tempt us to *presumption*. There is a guaran-

tee of safety when we are walking where we should walk, but not in leaping from a temple's pinnacle down into the abyss!

7. *Jesus said to Him, It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.* Here was a plain, positive precept, which clearly forbade Christ to tempt God by such a presumptuous action as casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple! And we must always follow the precepts of Scripture whatever the tempter may say.

8. *Again, the devil took Him up into an exceedingly high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.* Notice that these temptations were in high places. Alas, high places are often full of trial, whether they are places of wealth and rank, or of eminent service in the Church of God. A pinnacle is a dangerous position, even if it is a pinnacle of the Temple. And the summit of an exceedingly high mountain is a perilous place even if the view from it is not the poverty of the city, nor the sin of the people, but the glory of the kingdoms of the world. Even with such a view as that, the mountain's brow is full of danger to our weak heads.

9. *And said to Him, All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.* Why, they were Christ's already! They never belonged to Satan and, though, for a while, he had, to some extent, usurped authority over them, it was only his impudence to offer to give away what was not his own!

10. *Then Jesus said to Him, Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.* Let the bribe be what it may, you must not worship or serve either yourself or the devil! Your God alone claims your homage. And if the whole earth might be yours through one act of sin, you would not be justified in committing it.

11. *Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.* What a change! When the devil goes, the angels come! Perhaps some of you are just now sorely tempted and much troubled. Oh, that you might speedily come to Mahanaim, of which we read, "And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him"—that there you might be met by troops of angels coming to minister to you, weary with the conflict with the Evil One, just as they ministered to your Lord! You need them as much as He did and, therefore, you are as sure to have them if you look up to Him and ask Him to send them to you.

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

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

INFALLIBILITY—WHERE TO FIND IT AND HOW TO USE IT NO. 1208

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 20, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“It is written.”
Matthew 4:4.***

THOUGHTFUL minds anxiously desire some fixed point of belief. The old philosopher wanted a fulcrum for his lever and believed that if he could only obtain it he could move the world! It is uncomfortable to be always at sea—we would gladly discover *terra firma* and plant our feet upon a rock. We cannot rest till we have found out something which is certain, sure, settled, decided and no longer to be questioned. Many a mind has peered into the hazy region of rationalism and has seen nothing before it but perpetual mist and fog. And, shivering with the cold chill of those arctic regions of skepticism, it has yearned for a clearer light, a warmer guide, a more tangible belief.

This yearning has driven men into strange beliefs. Satan, seeing their ravenous hunger, has made them accept a stone for bread. Many have held, and still hold, that it is possible to find your infallible foundation in the Pope of Rome. I do not wonder that they would rather have an infallible man than be altogether without a standard of truth. Yet it is so monstrous an idea that men should believe in papal infallibility, that did they not, themselves, swear to it, we would think it most insulting to accuse them of it! How any mind can, by any possible contortion, twist itself into a posture in which it will be capable of accepting such a belief is one of the mysteries of manhood!

Why, the popes err in trifles, how much more in great matters? In Disraeli's, “Curiosities of Literature,” is the following amusing incident, under the title of, “Errata” [plural of *erratum*—an error in printing or writing]—“One of the most conspicuous of all literary blunders is that of the edition of the Vulgate, by Sixtus V. His Holiness carefully superintended every sheet as it passed through the press and, to the amazement of all the world, the world remained without a rival—it swarmed with errors! A multitude of scraps were printed to satiate the erroneous passages, in order to give the true text. The book makes a whimsical appearance with these patches and the heretics exulted in this demonstration of papal infallibility! The copies were called in and violent attempts made to suppress it. A few still remain for the raptures of Biblical collectors—at a late sale the Bible of Sixtus V. fetched above 60 guineas—not too much for a mere book of blunders! The world was highly amused at the bull of the editorial pope prefixed to the first volume—excommunicates all printers who, in reprinting the work, should make any *alterations* in the text!”

The notion of infallibility residing in mortal man is worthy of a mad-house and scarcely deserves to be seriously discussed. You can scarcely read a page of such history, as even Catholics admit to be authentic, without discovering that popes have been men and not gods—and their bulls have been as blundering and erroneous as the decrees of worldly princes! So long as a clear understanding remains to a man, he cannot repose in the imaginary infallibility of a priest!

Others, however, linger hopefully around the idea of an infallible *Church*. They believe in the judgment of general councils and hope, there, to find the rock of certainty. Apparently this is more easy, for in the multitude of counselors there is wisdom—but in reality it is quite as preposterous! If you mass together a number of men, each one of whom is fallible, it is clear that you are no nearer infallibility! It is quite as easy to believe that *one* man is inspired as that five or 600 are so! The fact is that Churches have made mistakes as well as individual men and have fallen into grievous errors both in practice and doctrine.

Look at the Churches of Galatia, Corinth, Laodicea, Sardis and so on. No, we find that the first disciples of our Lord, who made up the truly primitive and Apostolic Church, were not infallible. They made a great mistake about a simple saying of our Lord. He said, concerning John, “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you?” “Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you?” Even the Apostles, themselves, could blunder and did blunder. They were infallible in what they *wrote* when they were under the *inspiration of the Holy Spirit*, but at no other time.

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, I marvel not that in the sore distress to which the mind is often brought, it has found it better to believe in an infallible Church than to be left to mere reason or to be tossed to and fro, a desolate waif, driven by ever changeful winds over the awful leagues of questions which are found in the restless ocean of unbelief. Longing, as I do, for a sure foundation, and rejecting both popes and councils, where shall I look?

We have a more sure word of testimony, a rock of Truth upon which we rest, for our infallible standard lies in, “It is written.” The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is our religion! Of this inspired Book we say—

**“This is the judge that ends the strife
When wit and reason fail.”**

It is said that it is hard to be understood, but it is not so to those who seek the guidance of the Spirit of God. There are, in it, great Truths which are above our comprehension—placed there, on purpose, to let us see how shallow are our finite minds. But concerning vital and fundamental points, the Bible is not hard to be understood—neither is there any excuse for the multitudes of errors which men pretend to have gathered from it. A babe in Grace taught by the Spirit of God may know the mind of the Lord concerning salvation and find its way to Heaven by the guidance of the Word alone. But be it profound or simple, that is not the question—

it is the Word of God and is the pure, unerring Truth of God. *Here is Infallibility and nowhere else!*

I wish to speak, this morning, upon this grand, Infallible Book, which is our sole court of appeal. I desire to speak especially to the young converts who, during the last few days, have found the Savior, for by them this Book must be used as the sword of the Spirit in the spiritual conflicts which await them. I would zealously exhort them to take to themselves this part of the whole armor of God that they may be able to resist the great enemy of their souls. "It is written." I shall commend this unfailing weapon to the use of our young soldiers by noting that *this is our Champion's own weapon*. Secondly, I shall urge them to note *to what uses He turned this weapon*. And, thirdly, we shall watch Him to see *how He handled it*.

I. I commend to every Christian here the constant use of the Infallible Word because IT WAS OUR CHAMPION'S CHOSEN WEAPON when He was assailed by Satan in the wilderness. *He had a great choice of weapons with which to fight with Satan, but He took none but this Sword of the Spirit*—"It is written." Our Lord might have overcome Satan by angelic force. He had only to pray to His Father and He would presently have sent Him 12 legions of angels, against whose mighty rush the arch-fiend could not have stood for a single moment!

If our Lord had but exercised His Godhead, a single word would have sent the tempter back to his infernal den. But instead of angelic power or Divine, He used, "It is written," thus teaching His Church that she is *never* to call in the aid of force, or use carnal weapons, but must trust, alone, in the Omnipotence which dwells in the sure Word of Testimony! This is our battle-ax and weapon of war! The patronages or the constraints of civil power are not for us! And neither dare we use either bribes or threats to make men Christians—a spiritual kingdom must be set up and supported by *spiritual* means only.

Our Lord might have defeated the tempter by unveiling His own Glory. The brightness of the Divine Majesty was hidden within the humility of His Manhood, but if He had lifted the veil for a moment, the fiend would have been as utterly confounded as bats and owls when the sun blazes in their faces. But Jesus deigned to conceal His excellent Majesty and only to defend Himself with, "It is written." Our Master might also have assailed Satan with rhetoric and logic. Why did He not discuss the points with him as they arose? Here were three different propositions to be discussed, but our Lord confined Himself to the one argument, "It is written."

Now, Beloved, if our Lord and Master, with all the choice of weapons which He might have had, nevertheless selected this true Jerusalem blade of the Word of God, let us not hesitate for a moment, but grasp and hold fast this one and only weapon of the saints in all times! Cast away the wooden sword of carnal reasoning! Trust not in human eloquence! Arm yourselves with the solemn Declarations of God, who cannot lie, and you need not fear Satan and all his hosts! Jesus, we may be sure, selected the best weapon. What was best for Him is best for you.

This weapon, it is to be noted, our Lord *used at the outset of His career*. He had not yet come into His public ministry, but, if I may use the expression, while His young hand was yet untried in public warfare, He grasped at once the Weapon ready forged for Him and boldly said, “It is written.” You young Christians lately converted have probably already been tempted, or before long you will be, for I remember that the very first week after I found the Savior I was subjected to a very furious spiritual temptation, and I should not wonder if the same happens to you. Now, I charge you, do as Jesus did and grasp firmly—“It is written.”

It is the child’s weapon as truly as it is the defense of the strong man. If a Believer were as tall as Goliath of Gath, he need have no better sword than this and, if he was a mere pigmy in the things of God, this sword will equally befit his hand and be equally effectual for offense or defense. What a mercy it is for you, young Christian, that you have not to argue but to believe, not to invent but to accept! You have only to turn over your Bibles, find a text, and hurl that at Satan, like a stone from David’s sling, and you will win the battle. “It is written,” and what is written is Infallible—here is your strength in argument. “It is written.” God has said it, that is enough. O blessed sword and shield which the little child can use to purpose, fit for the illiterate and simple-hearted, giving might to the feeble-minded and conquest to the weak!

Note next, that as Christ chose this weapon out of all others, and used it in His earliest conflict, so, too, *He used it when no man was near*. The value of Holy Scripture is not, alone, seen in public teaching or striving for the Truth of God—its still small voice is equally powerful when the servant of the Lord is enduring personal trial in the lonely wilderness. The severest struggles of a true Christian are usually unknown to any but himself. Not in the family do we meet the most subtle temptations, but in the closet. Not in the shop so much as in the recesses of our own spirit do we wrestle with principalities and powers. For these dread duels, “It is written,” is the best sword and shield!

Scripture to convince another man is good, but Scripture is most required to console, defend and sanctify our own soul. You must know how to use the Bible when you are alone, and understand how to meet the subtlest of foes with it, for there is a real and personal devil, as most Christians know by experience—they have stood foot to foot with him and known his keen suggestions, horrible insinuations, blasphemous assertions and fiendish accusations. We have been assailed by thoughts which came from a mind more vigorous, more experienced and more subtle than our own. And for these there is but one defense—the Infallible, “It is written.”

Conflicts have taken place full many a time between God’s servants and Satan which are more notable in the unpublished annals of the sacred history which the Lord records than the bravest deeds of ancient heroes whom men praise in their national songs. He is not the only conqueror who is saluted with blast of trumpet and whose statue stands in the public square—there are victors who have fought with angels and prevailed—whose prowess even Lucifer must grimly own. These all ascribe their vic-

stories to the Divine Grace which taught them how to use the Infallible Word of the Lord!

Dear Friend, you must have, “It is written,” ready by your side at all times! Some, when a spiritual conflict begins, run to a friend for help. I do not condemn the practice, but it would be much better if they turned to the Lord and His sure promises. Some, at the first onslaught are ready to give up all hope. Do not act in so dastardly a manner! Seek Grace to play the man. You must fight if you are to enter into Heaven. Look to your weapon, it cannot bend or grow blunt! Wield it boldly and plunge it into the heart of your enemy. “It is written” will cut through soul and spirit—and wound the old dragon, himself.

Note, that *our Lord used this weapon under the most trying circumstances*, but He found it to be sufficient for His need. He was alone. No disciple was there to sympathize. The Word of God was the man of his right hand, the Scripture communed with Him! He was hungry, for He had fasted 40 days and nights, and hunger is a sharp pain. Oftentimes the spirits sink when the body is in need of food. Yet, “It is written,” held the wolf of hunger at bay. The Word fed the Champion with such meat as not only removed all faintness, but made Him mighty in spirit! He was placed by his adversary in a position of great danger—high on the pinnacle of the lofty House of the Lord—yet there He stood and needed no surer foothold than that which the promises of the Lord supplied Him!

“It is written,” enabled Him to look down from the dizzy height and still baffle the tempter. He was placed, also, where the kingdoms of the world were stretched beneath His feet—a matchless panorama which has full often dazzled great men’s eyes and driven them onward to destruction—but, “It is written,” swept aside the snares of ambition and laughed at the fascination of power! Or in the desert, or on the Temple, or on an exceedingly high mountain, no change in His mode of warfare was required—the Infallible, “It is written,” availed in every position in which He found Himself! And so shall it be with us. Earnestly do I commend the Word of God to you who have lately enlisted beneath the banner of my Lord! As David said of Goliath’s sword, “there is none like it.” Even so say I of the Holy Scriptures! Our Lord was tempted in all points like as we are and, therein, He sympathizes with us. But He resisted the temptations and, therein, He is our *example*—we must follow Him fully if we would share His triumphs.

Observe that our Savior *continued to use His one defense*, although His adversary frequently shifted his point of attack. Error has many forms, the Truth of God has only one. The devil tempted Him to distrust, but that dart was caught upon the shield of, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.” The enemy aimed a blow at Him from the side of presumption, tempting Him to cast Himself down from the Temple. But how terribly did that two-edged sword fall down upon the head of the fiend, “It is written, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.” The next impudent blow was leveled at our Lord with the intent of bringing Him to His knees—“Fall down and worship me.” But it was met and returned with

crushing force by—“It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.” This smote leviathan to the heart!

This weapon is good at all points—good for defense and for attack—to guard our whole manhood or to strike through the joints and marrow of the foe. Like the seraph’s sword at Eden’s gate, it turns every way. You cannot be in a condition which the Word of God has not provided for! It has as many faces and eyes as Providence itself. You will find it unfailing in all periods of your life, in all circumstances, in all companies, in all trials and under all difficulties. Were it fallible it would be useless in emergencies, but its unerring Truth renders it precious beyond all price to the soldiers of the Cross. I commend to you, then, the hiding of God’s Word in your heart, the pondering of it in your minds!

“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.” Be rooted and grounded and established in its teaching, and saturated with its spirit. To me it is an intense joy to search diligently in my Father’s Book of Grace. It grows upon me daily. It was written by Inspiration in old times, but I have found, while feeding upon it, that not only *was* it Inspired when written, but it is still so! It is not a mere historic document—it is a letter fresh from the pen of God to *me*. It is not a sermon once delivered and ended—it still speaks! It is not a flower dried and put by in the *hortus siccus*, with its beauty clouded and its perfume evaporated—it is a fresh blooming flower in God’s garden, as fragrant and as fair as when He planted it!

I look not upon the Scriptures as a harp which once was played by skillful fingers and is now hung up as a memorial upon the wall. No, it is an instrument of 10 strings still in the minstrel’s hand, still filling the Temple of the Lord with Divine music which those who have ears to hear delight to listen to! Holy Scripture is an Aeolian harp through which the blessed wind of the Spirit is always sweeping and creating mystic music, such as no man’s ears shall hear elsewhere, nor hear even then, indeed, unless they have been opened by the healing touch of the Great Physician! The Holy Spirit is in the Word, and it is, therefore, living Truth! O Christians, be sure of this, and because of it, make the Word your chosen weapon of war!

II. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us TO WHAT USES TO PUT THIS, “IT IS WRITTEN.” Notice, first, that He used it to *defend His Sonship*. The fiend said, “If you are the Son of God,” and Jesus replied, “It is written.” That was the *only* answer He deigned to give. He did not call to mind evidences to prove His Sonship. He did not even mention that Voice out of the excellent Glory which had said, “This is My beloved Son.” No, but, “It is written.” Now, my dear young Brothers and Sisters, converted but newly, I do not doubt but that you have been already subjected to that infernal, “if.”

Oh, how glibly it comes from Satan’s lips! It is his darling word, the favorite arrow of his quiver! He is the Prince of skeptics and they worship him while he laughs in his sleeve at them, for he believes and trembles. One of his greatest works of mischief is to make men doubt. “If”—with what a sneer he whispers this in the ear of the newly-converted. “If,” says

he—“if.” “You say you are justified and pardoned, and accepted but *IF!* “May you not, after all, be deceived?” Now, dear Friends, I beseech you never let Satan get you away from the solid ground of the Word of God. If he once gets you to think that the fact of Christ being the Savior of sinners can only be proved by what you can see within *yourself*, he will very soon plunge you into despair!

The reason why I am to believe in Jesus lies in Jesus and not in me! I am not to say, “I believe in the Lord Jesus because I feel so happy,” for within half an hour I may feel miserable! But believe in Christ for salvation because it is written, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” I believe in the salvation provided by Jesus Christ, not because it agrees with my reason or suits my frame of mind, but because it is written, “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes in Me has everlasting life.” Nothing can alter this Truth of God—it stands and must stand forever!

Believer, abide by it, come what may. Satan will tell you, “You know there are many evidences. Can you produce them?” Tell him to mind his own business. He will say to you, “You know how imperfectly you have behaved, even since your conversion.” Tell him that he is not so wonderfully perfect that he can afford to find fault with you. If he says, “Ah, but if you were really a changed character you would not have those thoughts and feelings.” Do not argue at all with him, but dwell upon the fact that it is written, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” If you believe in Him, you cannot perish, but you have everlasting life, for so it is written! “It is written.” Stand there, and if the devil were 50 devils in one, he could not overcome you!

On the other hand, if you leave, “It is written,” Satan knows more about reasoning than you do. He is far older, has studied mankind very thoroughly and knows all our sore points—therefore the contest will be an unequal one. Do not argue with him, but wave in his face the banner, “It is written.” Satan cannot endure the Infallible Truth of God, for it is death to the falsehood of which he is the father. So long as God’s Word is true, the Believer is safe. If that is overthrown, our hope is lost, but, blessed be God, not till then! Flee to your stronghold, you tempted ones!

Our Lord next used the Scripture *to defeat temptation*. He was tempted to distrust. There lay stones at His feet, for all the world like loaves. There was no bread and He was hungry. Distrust said, “God has left You. You will starve. Therefore leave off being a Servant! Become a Master and command that these stones be made bread.” Jesus, however, met the temptation to provide distrustfully for Himself by saying, “It is written.” Now, young Christians or old Christians, you may be placed by Providence where you think you will be all alone. And, then, if you are afraid that God will not provide for you, the dark suggestion will arise, “I will deal after the way of the unjust, and so put myself in comfortable circumstances.”

True, the action would be wrong, but many would do it, and therefore Satan whispers, “Necessity has no law! Take the opportunity now before you.” In such an hour foil the foe with, “It is written, you shall not steal.”

We are commanded to never go beyond or defraud our neighbor. It is written, “Trust in the Lord and do good, so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” It is written, “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” In that way, only, can you safely meet the temptation to distrust. Then Satan tempted the Lord to presumption. “If you are the Son of God, cast Yourself down,” he said. But Christ had a Scripture ready to parry his thrust.

Many are tempted to presume. “You are one of God’s elect, you cannot perish. You may, therefore, go into sin. You have no need to be so very careful since you cannot fall finally and fatally”—so Satan whispers and it is not always that the uninstructed convert is ready to answer the base argument. If we are at any time tempted to yield to such specious, special pleadings, let us remember it is written, “watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.” It is written, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” It is written, “Be you holy, for I am holy. Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” Begone, Satan! We dare not sin because of the mercy of God—that were, indeed, a diabolical return for His goodness! We abhor the idea of sinning that Grace might abound.

Then Satan will attack us with the temptation to be traitors to our God and to worship other gods. “Worship me,” he says, “and if you do this your reward shall be great.” He sets before us some earthly object which he would have us idolize. Some selfish aim which he would have us pursue. At that time our only defense is the sure Word, “It is written, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.” “You are not your own, you are bought with a price.” “Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” “Little children keep yourselves from idols.” Quoting such Words as those with all our hearts, we shall not be suffered to fall.

Beloved, we must keep from sin! If Christ has, indeed, saved us from sin, we cannot bear the thought of falling into it! If any of you can take delight in sin, you are not the children of God! If you are the children of God you hate sin with a perfect hatred and your very soul loathes it. To keep you from sin, arm yourselves with this most holy and pure Word of God which shall cleanse your way and make your heart obedient to the voice of the thrice-holy God.

Next our Lord used the word as *a direction to His way*. This is a very important point. Too many direct their ways by what they call Providences. They do wrong things and they say, “It seemed such a Providence.” I wonder whether Jonah, when he went down to Joppa to flee to Tarshish, considered it a Providence that a ship was about to sail? If so, he was like too many, nowadays, who seek to lay their guilt upon *God* by declaring that they felt bound to act as they did, for Providence suggested it! Our Lord was not guided as to what He should do by the circumstances around Him. Anyone but our holy Lord would have obeyed the tempter and then have said, “I was very hungry, and I was sitting down in the wilderness—and it seemed such a Providence that a spirit should find me

and courteously suggest the very thing that I needed, that is, to turn the stones into bread.”

It was a Providence, but it was a *testing* Providence. When you are tempted to do evil to relieve your necessities, say to yourself, “This Providence is testing me, but by no means indicates to me what I ought to do, for my rule is, ‘It is written.’” If you make apparent Providence your guide, you will make a thousand mistakes. But if you follow, “It is written,” your steps will be wisely ordered. Neither are we to make our special gifts and special privileges our guide. Christ is on the pinnacle of the Temple and it is possible, no, it is *certain*, that if He had chosen to cast Himself down, He could have safely done so. But He did not make His special privileges a reason for presumption.

It is true that the saints shall be kept. Final Perseverance I believe to be undoubtedly the teaching of God’s Word—but I am not to presume upon a doctrine—I am to obey the precept. For a man to say, “I am a child of God, I am safe, therefore I live as I like,” would be to prove that he is *not* a child of God at all, for the children of God do not turn the Grace of God into licentiousness. It were only according to the devil’s logic to say, “I am favored more than others and, therefore, I may provoke the Lord more than they.” “It is written we love Him because He first loved us, and by this we know that we love God, if we keep His commandments.”

Then Satan tried to make his own personal advantage our Lord’s guide. “All these things will I give you,” he said, but Christ did not order His acts for His own personal advantage, but replied, “It is written.” How often have I heard people say, “I do not like to remain in a Church with which I do not agree, but my usefulness would be quite gone if I were to leave it.” On this system, if our Lord had been a mere man, He might have said, “If I fall down and perform this small act of ritualism I shall have a noble sphere of usefulness. All the kingdoms of the earth will be mine! Look at all those poor oppressed slaves—I could set them free! The hungry and the thirsty—how I could supply their needs! And with me for a King, the earth would be happy! Indeed, that is the very thing I am about to die for, and if it is to be done so easily, and in an instant, by bowing the knee before this spirit, why not do it?”

Far, far removed was our Lord from the wicked spirit of compromise. Alas, too many now say, “We must give and take in little points. It is of no use to stand out and to be so absurdly wedded to your own ideas! There is nothing like yielding a little to carry your point in greater things.” Thus many talk, nowadays, but our Lord did not so speak! Though the whole world would be at His disposal if He did but once bow His head before the fiend, He would not do it. “It is written” was His guide, not His usefulness or personal advantage.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, it will sometimes happen that to do the right thing will appear to be most disastrous. It will shipwreck your fortune and bring you into trouble, but I charge you do the right thing at any cost! Instead of your being honored, respected and accounted a leader in the Christian Church, you will be regarded as eccentric and bigoted if you speak straight out. But speak straight out and never mind what comes of

it. You and I have nothing to do with what becomes of us, or our reputations, or with what becomes of the world, or becomes of Heaven itself! Our *one* business is to do our Father's will. "It is written" is to be our role and with dogged obstinacy, as men call it, but with resolute consecration, as God esteems it, through the mire and through the slough, through flood and through the flame, follow Jesus and the Infallible Word! Follow the written Word wholly and never mar the perfection of your obedience to Him on account of usefulness, or any other petty plea which Satan puts in your way.

Note, further, that our Lord used, "It is written," for *maintaining His own Spirit*. I love to think of the calmness of Christ. He is not one whit flurried. He is hungry and He is told to create bread. And He answers, "It is written." He is lifted to the Temple's summit, but He says, "It is written," just as calmly as you or I might do sitting in an easy chair. There He is with the whole world beneath His feet, gazing on its splendor, but He is not dazzled. "It is written" is still His quiet answer. Nothing makes a man self-contained, cool and equal to every emergency like always falling back upon the Infallible Book and remembering the declaration of Jehovah, who cannot lie! I charge you, Brethren, see to this!

The last thought on this point is that our Lord teaches us that the use of Scripture is *to vanquish the enemy and chase him away*. "Go," said He to the fiend, "for it is written." You, too, shall chase away temptation if you keep firmly to this. "God has said it, God has promised it. God that cannot lie, whose very Word of Grace is strong as that which built the skies."

III. As our Lord chose the weapon and taught us its uses, so HE SHOWED US HOW TO HANDLE IT. How are we to handle this Sword of, "It is written"? First, *with deepest reverence*. Let every Word that God has spoken be Law and Gospel to you. Never trifle with it. Never try to evade its force or to change its meaning. God speaks to you in this Book as much as if, again, He came to the top of Sinai and lifted up His voice in thunder. I like to open the Bible and to pray, "Lord God, let the Words leap out of the page into my soul, Yourself making them vivid, quick, powerful and fresh to my heart."

Our Lord Himself felt the power of the Word. It was not so much the devil who felt the power of, "It is written," as Christ Himself. "No," He says, "I will not command stones to be made bread. I trust in God who can, without bread, sustain Me. I will not cast Myself down from the temple; I will not tempt the Lord, My God. I will not worship Satan, for God, alone, is God." The Manhood of Christ felt an awe of the Word of God and so it became a power to Him. To trifle with Scripture is to deprive yourself of its aid. Reverence it, I beseech you, and look up to God with devout gratitude for having given it to you.

Next *have it always ready*. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as soon as He was assailed, had His answer prepared—"It is written." A ready reckoner is an admirable person in a house of business—and a ready textuary is a most useful person in the House of God. Have the Scriptures at your fingertips! Better, still, have them in the center of your heart! It is a good thing to store the memory with many passages of the Word—the very Words them-

selves. A Christian ought no more to make a mistake in quoting a text of Scripture than a classic does when he quotes from Virgil or Homer. The scholar likes to give the *ipsissima verba* and so should we, for every Word is precious to us.

Our Savior knew so much of Holy Scripture that out of one single book, the Book of Deuteronomy, He obtained all the texts with which He fought the wilderness battle. He had a wider range, for the Old Testament was before Him, but He kept to one book, as if to let Satan know that He was not short of ammunition. If the devil chose to continue the temptation, the Lord had abundant defense in reserve. "It is written" is an armory in which hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men! It is not merely one, but a thousand, no, 10,000 weapons of war! It has texts of every kind, suitable for our aid in every emergency and effectual for repelling every attack.

Brothers and Sisters, study much the Word of God, and have it ready at hand. It is of no use treating the Bible as the fool did his anchor, which he had left at home when he came to be in a storm—have the Infallible Witness at your side when the Father of Lies approaches. Endeavor, also, to *understand its meaning* and so to understand it that you can discern between its meaning and its perversion. Half the mischief in the world, and perhaps more, is done, not by an ostensible lie, but by a perverted truth.

The devil, knowing this, takes a text of Scripture, clips it, adds to it, and attacks Christ with it. But our Lord did not, therefore, despise Scripture because the devil, himself, might quote it, but He answered him with a flaming text right in his face. He did not say, "The other is *not* written—you have altered it"—but He gave him a taste of what, "It is written" really was, and so confounded him! Do you the same! Search the Word. Get the true taste of it in your mouth and acquire discernment so that when you say, "It is written," you may not be making a mistake. There are some who think their creed, Scriptural, and yet it is not so. Texts of Scripture, out of their connection, twisted and perverted, are not, "It is written." The plain meaning of the Word should be known and understood. Oh, read the Word of God and pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, that you may know its meaning, for so will you contend against the foe.

Brethren, *learn also to appropriate Scripture to yourselves*. One of the texts our Lord quoted, He slightly altered. "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." The original text is also, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." But the singular lies in the *plural*, and it is always a blessed thing to be able to find it there. Learn so to use Scripture that you take home to yourself all its teaching, all its precepts, all its promises, all its doctrines—for bread on the table does not nourish—it is bread which you eat that will really sustain you.

When you have appropriated the texts to yourself, *stand by them, whatever they may cost you*. If to give up the text would enable you to make stones into bread, do not give it up! If to reject the precept would enable you to fly through the air like a seraph, do not reject it! If to go against the Word of God would make you emperor of the entire world, do

not accept the bribes! To the Law and to the Testimony—stand there! Be a Bible man, go so far as the Bible, but not an inch beyond it. Though Calvin should beckon you, and you esteem him, or Wesley should beckon, and you esteem him, keep to the Scripture, only to the Scripture! If your minister should go astray, pray that he may be brought back again, but do not follow him. Though we, or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel than this Book teaches you, do not, I pray you, give any heed to us—no, not for a single moment! Here is the only Infallibility—the Holy Spirit’s witness in this Book.

Remember, lastly, that your Lord at this time was *filled with the Spirit*. “Jesus, being filled with the Spirit,” went to be tempted. The Word of God, apart from the Spirit of God, will be of no use to you. If you cannot understand a book, do you know the best way to reach its meaning? Write to the author and ask him what he meant! If you have a book to read and you have got that author always accessible, you need not complain that you do not understand it. The Holy Spirit is come to abide with us forever. Search the Scriptures, but cry for the Spirit’s light and live under His influence.

So Jesus fought the old dragon, “being filled with the Spirit.” He smote leviathan through with this Weapon because the Spirit of God was upon Him. Go with the Word of God like a two-edged sword in your hand! But before you enter the battle, pray the Holy Spirit to baptize you into Himself and so shall you overcome all your adversaries and triumph even to the end. May God bless you, for Jesus’ sake.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Matthew 4*.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—478, 119 (VERS. 1), 262.**

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TEMPTATIONS ON THE PINNACLE

NO. 689

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 6, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it is written, ‘He shall give His angels charge over You,’ and, ‘in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You dash Your foot against a stone.’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is written again, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’ ”
Matthew 4:5-7.

THE clearest and most important exposition of the Revelation of God in the inspired Book is the Revelation of God in the renewed man. Every Christian will discover, in proportion to his advances in Divine knowledge, that the very things which are written in these hallowed pages are written in his own experience. We never fully understand Divine Truth until we have experienced it. The diamond of Divine promise never glistens so brightly as when it is placed in the setting of personal trial and experience. And the gold of sacred Truth is not valued until it has been tried “so as by fire.” Holy Scripture is full of narratives of temptations. Expect, therefore, Christian, that your life will be as abundantly garnished with them as is a rose with thorns.

Provision is made in the Word of God for the assaults of Satan from all quarters and in all fashions—believe, therefore, most confidently that the wise provisions of forethought are not made in vain—but will be needed in your own proper person. You will have to do battle with those spiritual foes which have beset and buffeted other saints in days gone by, and you will be wise to array yourself in those pieces of heavenly armor which proved to be so great a safeguard to them in their seasons of warfare.

This remark, that the Word of God is written out again in the life of the Christian, is emphatically true in that part of it which concerns the life of Jesus. Every Christian is the image of Christ in proportion as he is a Christian—in proportion as the Spirit sanctifies us—spirit, soul, and body. As the Spirit makes us like the Master we are conformed to Him. And this not only in the holiness and spirituality which sanctification produces, but also in our experience of conflict, sorrow, agony, and triumph. In all points Jesus was made like unto His brethren, and now it remains that in all things His brethren should be made like He.

The Savior’s public life begins and ends with temptation. It commences in the wilderness in a close contest with Satanic craft. It ends in Gethsemane in a dreadful affray with the powers of darkness. There are a few bright spots between, but the gloom of the desert deepens into the mid-

night darkness of the Cross—as if to show us that we, also, must begin with trial and must reckon upon ending with it. The victory of our Lord was won upon Golgotha in blood and wounds amid the blasphemous exultation of His foes—and the victory of the Believer will not be cheaply bought. Our crown is not to be won without wrestling and overcoming. We must fight if we would reign, and through the same conflicts which brought the Savior to His crown, must we obtain the palm branch of everlasting victory. Be it so, O Master! Only let us be prepared for it and by Your Grace may we be strengthened so that we may be more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.

I shall, this morning, first of all take you, dear Friends, to look at the temptation itself as we have felt it. And then, secondly, I shall offer a few considerations deduced.

I. First we are to VIEW THE TEMPTATION ITSELF. The landscape is colored by the glass through which the observer looks—but still the landscape is really seen. And so in giving you, this morning, much of that which I have myself been made to endure, I may color our Lord's trial—but you will see it notwithstanding—and the Holy Spirit will show you what is really of Jesus, and what is only mine.

Our trials are sent us on purpose to make us comprehend our Lord's trials and especially is it so with ministers of the Gospel. Martin Luther was a mighty master in the art of consolation because there was scarcely a temptation, except that of covetousness, which he had not experienced. Melancthon bears witness of Luther that he was sometimes so tempted of the devil that he appeared to be at the point of death—the sap and strength of his life seemed to be dried up—and his soul was full of heaviness. After such seasons he would so preach that each of his hearers thought that he was speaking concerning him alone and wondered from where his knowledge was derived. He learned the art of spiritual navigation from having himself done business upon deep waters of spiritual tribulation. Luther's remark stands true that prayer, meditation, and temptation are the three best instructors of the Gospel minister—and since I have been much of late in the last school—I cannot do other than use what I have learned.

Now it may be while I am describing this temptation of our Lord, or rather our own temptations as they are conformed to the temptations of Jesus, that I may meet the peculiar case of some troubled one who has been long in doubt and darkness and who may, today, find light and peace. If it is so, the Spirit of God shall be glorified and it shall be to me a sweet recompense for those gloomy hours through which I have lately groped my way.

I first call your attention to the *place* of this temptation. “Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple.” It was a high place and a holy place, hence a double danger. It was a high place—the temptation could not have acted upon the Savior had He been sitting in the desert or kneeling in the garden—but aloft, above the city, on the towering pinnacle the foothold was slender, and the fall would

have been terrible. Beneath Him lay a wondrous panorama—the courts of the Lord's House, the streets of the city, the towns and villages of Judea—and the broad acres of Immanuel's land.

Little, however, would He care for all these, for His thoughts were concentrated upon the combat within. Yet the widened prospect must have added to the sense of elevation and so have aided the temptation. Brethren, it is very hard to stand in high places. Those of you who are in humble positions of society may be very grateful for the safety which usually grows out of lowliness. No doubt you envy those who are more known and more wealthy, but if you knew all, instead of envying them you would thank God for the lot which is meted out to you.

I would be afraid to exchange my temptations with any other man and yet I know my own to be full more than I should be able to sustain were it not for the Grace of God and the promise, "My grace is sufficient for you." It is hard to carry a full cup without spilling some of the contents—when half full you may carry it more carelessly without a slip—but when the golden chalice is full to the brim, beware, you cup-bearer of the King! You may walk along the plain, no, you may leap like the children at their play! You may sport at random where you will, but up along yon narrow knife-like ridge where awful precipices descend on either side, take care, O Traveler, for one slip may be fatal.

Look beneath you through the grim mist which hides the depths below, and be deeply grateful for the invisible and Omnipotent hand which has sustained you until now. The remark as to high places does not merely apply to really high places of wealth, or influence, or fame, but to places high for us—comparatively high places of enjoyment and satisfaction. Nor must I exclude holy places from the remark. The mountain may be Tabor, but it is still a mountain. If you are called to the elevated position of one who dwells in rapt fellowship with Christ, there are temptations peculiar even to that happy state of mind.

The pinnacle is none the less a pinnacle because it happens to be the pinnacle of the temple. No, let me here note that it is even *more* dangerous. The place was not only high but *holy*. Note how that is marked in the text. He took Him to the holy city and to the pinnacle of the temple—two words—as if to bring up vividly before the reader's mind the sanctity of the position. To stand in a high place, my Brethren, in God's House is very desirable and very honorable, but oh, it is both responsible and perilous! Let those beware whom God exalts in Israel! He of whom it is written that it were better for that man that he had never been born was no less than an *Apostle*. He who kept the bag and was the intimate friend of Christ is that man whose damnation surpasses all others in its flaming terrors.

It is a very delightful thing, no doubt, to minister to a large congregation, and to be pastor of a numerous flock. It is a very good degree to earn to be an officer of the Christian Church. It is no small privilege to be permitted by the pen or by the tongue to edify multitudes of saints. But alas, the high places, even of God's temple, are dizzy places! And lofty positions in the Church are sites where temptations attack us which would be un-

known to us if in the humble obscurity of a retiring piety we were to lie down in green pastures and feed beside the still waters. After all, if I might be allowed to envy anybody it would be the position of John Bunyan's Shepherd, singing as he feeds his flock in the valley—

***“He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride.
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.”***

What do you think, Brethren, were the temptations which came upon the Savior on account of His position on the high and holy place? We frequently forget, when we are speaking of the Savior, that He was most truly Man. He was Divine without mitigation of the royalty and splendor of Deity—but He was Man—altogether such as we are, so that He felt as you and I would have felt in a similar condition. How, then, did He feel? Did He not tremble with fear of falling? Standing there and looking down, I believe the natural fear came over Him that He must fall, and that falling He would stain the battlements of the consecrated place and crimson the House of God with His own blood!

You will think me singular in imagining that the Savior could be the subject of such feelings, but was He not a Man, and what man would feel otherwise? It is natural that a shivering emotion of dread should creep over anyone standing in so lofty and unprotected a position! Now this is a temptation—a temptation to which God's servants who are put upon the pinnacle of the temple will find themselves frequently subject. But is it a *fault* to be afraid of falling? Yes. No. It is no fault to be *afraid* of falling, else the Savior would not have felt it—He was holy and consequently no sinful emotion could cross His breast.

But there is a something growing out of the fear of falling which is very faulty, namely, the temptation to do something desperate in order to escape from the position which is so full of peril. It is right for me to be afraid of falling into sin—it is not right for me either to mistrust God's Grace, which will sustain me—or to run to foolish means in order to escape from the particular peril in which I happen to be involved. Jesus did not doubt His Father's care—He could not, for He was perfect. But He did tremble because of the danger in which He was placed. He must have done so because He was a man of like passions like ourselves.

Now, Brethren, may I picture some of you lifted up to such a position? Either in wealth, or in honor, or in communion, or in some way you are lifted up into a sphere of danger and you begin to say to yourself, “Suppose I should fall! Oh, suppose I should disgrace my profession and bring dishonor upon the cause of Christ? What if my foot should slip and I should defile the Church of God with the blood of my eternal ruin and of my present disgrace?” I can understand that thought crossing your mind without any sin being involved in it—no, with even a good resolve springing from it—namely, to walk humbly with your God.

But I can suppose it to be the fulcrum upon which Satan may plant his lever and begin to work so as to bring you into a very sadly weakened and

wretched state of mind. Oh Brethren, when I see others falling from their pinnacles! When I feel my own head grow dizzy! When I look down and see the ruin that must come upon every man who apostatizes from the faith! When I look up and see the holiness of God and then look down and feel the attractions of the world enticing and drawing me down to destruction I can but tremble! I cannot do otherwise, and I cannot understand the man who would not!

If you are placed in such a position you *must* feel it—it is not possible for you to escape from the fear lest, after all, after having been honored and favored you should become a castaway. This seems to me to be the reason why the devil put our Lord on the pinnacle of the temple. The first effort of the devil was to sap the foundations of the Savior's strength with a doubt. The devil whispers to Him, "If—*if* You are the Son of God." Faith is the Christian's strength. He who doubts not, staggers not. Unbelief is the source of our chief weakness. As soon as we begin to distrust, our feet begin to slide. Hence, Satan, knowing this, injects that cruel and wicked suspicion, "If—*if* you are the Son of God."

Notice the point of attack—it was our Lord's Son-ship. Satan knows that if he can make any of us doubt our interest in the Father's love—doubt our regeneration and adoption—then he will have us very much in his power. How can I pray, "Our Father which are in Heaven," if I do not know Him to be my Father? If the dark suspicion crosses my mind that I am no child of His, I cannot say with the prodigal, "I will arise and go unto my Father," for I do not know that I have a Father to go to! Having a Father, I feel sure that He will pity my infirmities, that He will feel for my needs, redress my wrongs, protect me in the hour of danger and succor me in the moment of peril.

But if—*if* I have no Father in Heaven. If I am not His child, then, miserable orphan! What shall I do—where shall I flee? Standing on a pinnacle as God's child I shall stand there erect, though every wind should seek to whirl me from my foothold. But if He is not my Father and I am upon a pinnacle, then my destruction is inevitable and my ruin will be swift and total. "If you are the Son of God."

Oh, dear Friends, beware of unbelief! Those who justify unbelief hold a candle to the devil. I cannot suppose myself doing better service to an ill cause than by excusing you in your unbelief of God, or excusing myself in it. God is faithful—why do we doubt Him? God is true—how can we suppose that He will be false? That we are His children is also true if we have believed in Jesus. If, having nothing, I have cast myself at the foot of the Cross. If, all guilty and defiled, I have seen in Jesus Christ all that my soul can need—then I am one with Jesus and a joint heir with Him. I must be the child of God because I am one with Christ Jesus, His only begotten and His well-beloved!

Dear Brethren, let me exhort and stir you all up to seek after the full assurance of your son-ship with God the Father! Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids unless you know that you are in the Divine family! Remember that doubts here are perilous to the last degree

and most of all perilous to those of you who stand upon the pinnacle! Let those doubt who are in the valley and they bring themselves sorrow—but those on the mountain must not doubt, for it is by faith alone that they can stand—and where to slip will be so destructive they must take care that their faith is firm and strong.

Thus, you see, the Savior was first assailed with a malicious and cruel insinuation of *doubt*. The cunning Tempter has paved the way for the Satanic suggestion, “Cast Yourself down.” That advice looks like the most absurd thing that could be suggested. He is afraid of falling, and is therefore bid to throw Himself down? Ah, but if you do not understand this it is because you are not acquainted with Satanic machinery! The human mind oscillates very strangely. Though at first it may be driven by main force from left to right, it naturally swings to the left again, returning by sheer necessity to the same point. There have been persons who have starved themselves to death from the fear of being poor and destitute—and have brought on disease by fearing disease!

There have been instances of persons who have sought to destroy themselves when condemned because they dreaded being hanged! What escape from death suicide can offer, it is hard to say, but some have tried it. In a position where I cannot stand, the natural thing is to throw myself down directly. You are afraid, as you stand on the brink of the cliff, afraid that you may fall over, and all the while a mad inclination to fall over may steal over you. It is strange, but then we are strange creatures. Though it looks to you as if it would be a very unlikely temptation to a man afraid of falling to say, “Cast yourself down,” it is not unnatural! It is consistent with the well-known laws of consciousness that we are often tempted to do the very thing which we are afraid of doing, and to do it in order to escape from it. Cast yourself down, lest you should fall.

Let me show you the shapes in which this temptation has come to some of us. The minister of Christ is placed in a position where his labors and his troubles are incessant. He is afraid, with so much to do and such delicate things to handle, that he may make a mistake and injure the Church which he designs to bless. The dark suggestion crosses his mind, “Give it up! Leave the work,” that is to say, do the worst mischief that you can do to the Church in order to prevent your doing it any mischief!

The same thing happens in business. You have been toiling hard to pay every man his own, to provide things honest in the sight of all men. You have been able to do it until now, but things are, at this moment, very unpropitious. Satan has whispered to many a tradesman, “Throw it up! Get out of it! Go somewhere else! Leave it, and flee the country.” Take another case. You are a Christian and you wish to be an honor to the Christian Church. But you live in a family where there is everything uncongenial to your piety. You can scarcely get alone to pray. You certainly never hear a good word from any others of the circle. You have been fighting for God until now and the enemy is at this moment saying, “Do not try it any longer! Renounce your profession! Give it all up—go back to the world again!”

In other words, in order that you may not dishonor Christ you are tempted to dishonor Him—and for fear lest you should fall, the whisper is, “Fall at once.” It is strange, but strangely true! I thank God for the story of Jonah! That miserable, morose old Prophet has ever been a warning to some of us. When God said to Jonah, “Go to Nineveh and preach!” “No,” thought Jonah, “I cannot do it. How can I go and preach to such a city? It will not be to my honor.” So away he goes to Tarshish. He little knew that in trying to avoid trouble he was running into it!

So it is also with us. You want to go to Tarshish to get away from Babylon, that is, you run into the depths of the sea to escape the rivers! You run into the fire to escape from the frying pan! Should I happen to be addressing a Christian who is passing through this terrible, severe, and fiery ordeal, I would point him to the Savior standing on the pinnacle of the temple, with the suggestion, “Cast Yourself down,” and bid him imitate Him in standing fast and firm against the desperate foe. “Stand fast in the Lord, and having done all, still stand.”

The suggestion to cast Himself down was next backed up by a text of Scripture—wicked advice sustained by a foolish argument. “Throw Yourself down because He has given His angels charge over You, to keep You.” You notice he knocks out the words, “in all your ways,” which limits the protection promised. The Lord never promises to keep us in ways of our *own* choosing! If we go into By-Path Meadow, we go there without a guarantee of Divine protection, for the Word has it, “in all your ways.” Every duty that is required of us, and every path that is mapped out by Providence shall have Divine protection accorded to its travelers. But if we go our *own* road we have no promise that we shall be cared for.

When the devil takes something away from a text, he generally puts something of his own in its place. He therefore added these words, “lest at any time.” His object was to make the text more general than it was—to take away its specialties, to break down its hedges, and to remove its landmarks. And so he says, “to keep You, lest at any time You dash Your foot against a stone.” Old Master Trapp has well observed that in his day the king was bound to protect travelers on the king’s highway between certain hours, “but,” said he, “he did not promise to protect them out of the king’s highway, nor did he promise to protect them in it if they traveled at all hours, for instance, at the dead of night.”

So we have a promise that along the King’s highway to Heaven no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up from it, but the redeemed shall be found there. But if I strike off a path into the *wilderness*, or go away into the jungle of my own superstition and my own folly, I cannot expect protection. And if I begin to travel at any time, choosing my own times instead of waiting for the pillar of cloud, then I am not under the Divine protection, nor can I expect it.

Does the text, as you find it in the ninety-first Psalm, give you any reason to believe that if you throw yourself down from the pinnacle God would bring you to the bottom safely? Certainly not! A fair reading of it only shows that God will keep us in the path of duty. And so, dear

Friends, let us, when Satan tells us a Christian is all right and always safe, go where he may—let us respond to that, that it is true the Christian is safe in the way of duty, and will be kept in the path of God’s commands—but he that presumptuously runs in the teeth of God’s will, and disobeys the Most High must look to it lest a lion tear him in pieces!

Brethren, it is a precious doctrine that the saints are safe! But it is a damnable inference from it that, therefore, they may live as they like! It is a glorious Truth that God will keep His people, but it is an abominable falsehood that sin will do them no harm. Remember that God gives us liberty, not license. And while He gives us protection He will not allow us presumption. I knew a person once when I was a child—I remember seeing him go into a country wake in a little village where I lived, though he was a professed Christian—going to spend the evening in a dancing booth. And with others he was drinking as other men did. And when I, in my warm zeal, said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” his reply was, “I am a child of God and I can go where I like and yet be safe.”

And though for the moment I knew not what text to quote to answer him, yet my soul revolted from the man ever afterwards—for I felt that no child of God would ever be so wicked as to take poison in the faith that his Father would give him the antidote—or thrust himself into the fire in the hope that he should not be burned. If *God* sends me trouble He will yield me deliverance from it—but if *I* make trouble myself I must bear it. If Providence permits the devil to set me upon a pinnacle, even then God will help me. But if I throw myself down and go in the very teeth of Providence, then woe unto me, for I give proof by my presumption that the Grace of God is not in me at all!

Yet the temptation is not uncommon. Do such-and-such a thing—your eternal interests are safe, therefore shun God’s service, throw up the reins—and let the horses go as they will! God will guide them! Do not touch the tiller, the God of the wind will manage the vessel! Do not put your shoulder to the wheel at all but cry out to God to help you—and sit down and be lazy. That is the devil’s talk and our poor silly distracted minds too readily drink it in! But if God gives us Divine Grace, we shall say, “God helps those who help themselves. God works for those that work for Him, and in the name of God I set up my banner. Wherever He will call me I will go, though it be through floods and flames. And if He sets me upon the pinnacle of the temple, I will do nothing but stand there till He takes me down. But as to throwing myself down in order to escape, O my Father, my God, by the love You bear me, help me to wrestle with this temptation and make me more than a conqueror through Your dear Son.”

Only one thing more remains to be spoken of while upon the text itself, and that is the answer which the Savior gave. He said, “It is written, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.” I noticed, when I was carefully reading this verse over and thinking of it, that Jesus met a promise misused with a precept properly applied. At that moment the precept was worth more to Christ than the promise. Beloved, there are certain people who

love the *promise* part of God's Word, but cannot bear the *precept*. We have men among us, who, when the minister preaches upon a sweet text, are greatly delighted! That is savory meat such as their soul loves! But if the pastor expounds a precept of God's Word, they turn upon their heel superciliously and say, "He is a legal preacher."

It is not safe to pick and choose in the matters of Divine Truth! All hail, you fair promises! You meet me as the angels met Jacob at Mahanaim! But all hail, fair precepts! You meet me as Nathan met David and rebuke me for my sins! You, also, are my friends and I salute you and am glad to bear your company. Brethren, we cannot do without a promise, precept, exhortation, and rebuke. The compound of the Scripture, like the powders of the merchants for sweetness and excellence, must not be injured by being robbed of one single ingredient. Love the precept, I pray you. Be of the mind of David who wrote the whole of the one hundredth and nineteenth Psalm—not so much in praise of the promises as in praise of the statutes and the Laws of God as he found them given in that part of the Old Testament which it was his privilege to read.

Sometimes a precept is the necessary counteracting principle to guard us from the perversion of a promise. Promises alone are like candy given to children, which, when too profusely eaten, bring on sickness. But the precept comes in as a healthy tonic so that you may feed upon the promise without injury. Brethren, is there one of you who is so false and faithless as to desire to shun God's service and God's love? Hear this—"You shall not tempt the Lord your God." You do so—you tempt God—you tempt Him to sanction your sin when you use wrong means in order to escape from danger. A Christian man in business who is going to stoop to a transaction that is not altogether clean in order to escape from his present dilemma is tempting God, for he asks God to help him and then uses evil tools to effect escape!

Will you tempt God to assist you in defrauding your neighbor? Dare you ask God to aid you in doing what is not strictly upright? Do not dare to do this! "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." The Christian worker who dares to run away from work and says, "God will take care of me"—what is he doing? He is asking God one of two things—either to destroy him, which God will not do, for He is a faithful God. Or he is tempting Him to uphold him and comfort him when he is not in the path of duty—which it would be wrong for God to do since He cannot give the sweetness of His comfort and the joy of His countenance to a man who would thereby be countenanced and encouraged in sin.

Beware of provoking God to jealousy! Let your walk be such that the Lord may be honored by it and may look down with complacency upon you. Do not run to such shifts as would involve your asking God to assist you in a wrong thing in order to effect your deliverance. Though there are great depths beneath you, you cannot fall while He upholds. Though others are dashed in pieces and you can hear the crash of their fearful fall, yet he upholds the righteous. Though your own brain turns giddy and you

are ready to slip from your foothold, yet the eternal God is your refuge and underneath you are the everlasting arms!

Your extremity of weakness shall be the opportunity of His power. And when you fall back faint and ready to die, then it is that the angelic wings shall be of service and the cherub-helpers shall bear you up in their arms, lest you dash your foot against a stone! Only be very courageous and confident, and say unto the Fiend of Hell, "Get away from me, for the God who allowed me to be placed here never did forsake me and never will! And while He is for me I will not fear." What may occur is no business of mine, it rests with Him. It is mine to stand in the path of duty, for thus I shall be in the place of safety.

II. I have said much upon the temptation itself, and now in closing I wish to offer A FEW CONSIDERATIONS DEDUCED FROM THE WHOLE. The first is this—it is a commonplace thought, but it has tasted like nectar to my weary heart—Jesus was tempted as I am. You have heard that Truth of God a thousand times—have you grasped it? He was not exempted from *any* of the sinful temptations which occur to us! He was tempted to the very same sins into which we fall!

Do not dissociate Jesus from yourself. It is a dark room which you are going through, but Jesus went through it before. It is a sharp fight which you are waging, but Jesus has stood foot to foot with the same enemy! It was a great encouragement to the Macedonians in their weary marches when they saw Alexander toiling always with them. Had Alexander always been riding on Bucephalus when the rest of them were marching, they would have grown weary. But Alexander marched like a common soldier. And when water was scarce Alexander thirsted with them, and refused to drink of the little water which was reserved as a royal luxury. "No," he said, "I will suffer with my men."

They won their battles and they drove the Persian rabble before them as lions drive a herd of sheep, principally through the personal prowess of Alexander. First to leap into the ditch, first to cross the river or scale the rampart, always adventuring himself for death or glory—every man grew into a hero at the sight of the hero! Let it be so with followers of Jesus! He stays not in the pavilion when His children are in conflict. He robes not Himself in scarlet apparel like a king at his ease—but He buckles on His armor and puts on His helmet—and above the cry of them that contend for mastery may be heard His cry, "I have trod down strength."

Jesus goes so far into the fight that He advances *beyond* the front rank, and can say, "I have trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me." Oh Brothers and Sisters! Let us be of good cheer! Christ has trod the way before us and the bloody footprints of the King of Glory may be seen along the road which we traverse at this hour! There is something yet sweeter—Jesus was tempted, but Jesus never sinned! Then, my Soul, it is not necessary for *you* to sin, for Jesus was a Man—and if one Man endured these temptations and sinned not—then by the same Grace another may do so!

I know it seems to some of you beginners in the Divine life that you cannot be tempted without sinning, but believe me, this is not only possible, but I hope attainable by you. A man may be tempted to run away from the service of God, but he may hate the temptation and then there is no sin in it to him. If I should meet a thief on the road today who should ask me to break into a person's house, I should at once condemn the suggestion—do you think I should sin because I happened to be tempted in that way? Not at all! The sin would lay with the *tempter*, not with the tempted person who instantaneously rejected the suggestion.

If I were to dally with the thief and say, "How much is to be gained by it? What are your plans? I will go with you if so-and-so," then I sin. But if I say at once, "How dare you come to me with such a temptation? I loath it," then I should commit no sin. Often God's servants, in their worst and most bitter temptations, are, to a great extent, free from sin and are to be pitied—not to be blamed. John Bunyan has a famous picture of Christian going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. When the fiends whispered temptations in his ears, "So," said he, "I did verily think that these were in my own heart," whereas they were only temptations of the devil, and not his own. And because he hated them there was no sin in them—to *him* I mean. Of course there was sin to the person who made the suggestion, but not to the person suffering it, inasmuch as he stopped his ears against it and refused to touch it.

Now, Christian, in this you may be encouraged, that you may go through the fiercest possible temptation heated seven times hotter, like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, and yet the fire may not injure you but you may come out with not so much as the smell of fire upon you though you have trod in the midst of the glowing coals!

The third thing which comforts us, is this—Jesus not only did not fall, but He gloriously triumphed! Satan received a desperate fall and a deep discouragement as the result of this conflict, and as Jesus overcame, so may we. Jesus is the representative Man for His people. The Head has triumphed and the members share in the victory. While a man's head is above the water you cannot drown his body. The head is above the great floodwaters of temptation, and we, who are the lower members, are not drowned, nor shall we be! We shall wade through the swelling current and land safely upon Canaan's side. "They feared as they entered into the cloud," it is said of the disciples on the Mount, but their Master was with them there and therefore their fears were frivolous.

We, too, are fearing because we have entered the cloud or are in the midst of it. But our fears are needless and vain, for Christ is with us, armed for our defense! Brothers and Sisters, our place of safety is the bosom of the Savior! Perhaps we are tempted just now in order to drive us nearer to Him. Blessed be any wind that blows me into the port of my Savior's love! Happy, happy, happy wounds which make me seek the beloved Physician! Yes, blessed Death, which with black wings shall bear me up to my Savior's Throne! Anything is good that brings us to Christ—anything is mischievous that parts us from Him. Come, you Tempted, wherever you

wander! Come to your tempted Savior! Come, you cast-down and troubled ones, however much dismayed, come to Him—

***“Though now He reigns exalted high
His love is still as great.”***

He forgets not the temptations through which He passed, and He is ready to succor and to help you in the same.

Ah, but there are some here who do not know Him—some who say, “We do not understand this sermon, for we never feel such temptations.” I can understand why not. You see, you have no *spiritual* life. The tree planted by the river feels not the chill which breeds in the marsh and lurks in the swamp. But put a man there and before long you will see him shivering from head to foot! And the carnal mind, dead in sin, knows not the fog of temptation which lurks around him! But oh, if you were alive unto God your struggle would begin and you would cry to the strong for help! My advice to you is that which I gave to the Christian just now—the Believer must go to Christ for help—and so must you.

There is balm in Gilead! There is a Physician there! Sinner, if you look to Christ you shall live! Though you stand today upon the pinnacle—for life is such—though death is your dreadful fate and the fiery lake is your everlasting portion, presume not! Dash not yourself further into sin! Plunge not into ruin but lift your eyes upwards and say, “My God, my Father, help me! God the Son who did redeem with precious blood, wash me from my sin! Spirit of the living God renew me in heart and life,” and it shall be done, for, “he that asks, receives, he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.”

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SATAN DEPARTING, ANGELS MINISTERING NO. 2326

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 1893.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 15, 1889.**

***“And when the devil had ended all the temptation,
he departed from Him for a season.”
Luke 4:13.***

***“Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.”
Matthew 4:11.***

BELOVED Friends, we have very much to learn from our Lord's temptation. He was tempted in all points, like as we are. If you will study the temptation of Christ, you will not be ignorant of Satan's devices. If you see how He worsted the enemy, you will learn what weapons to use against your great adversary. If you see how our Lord conquers throughout the whole battle, you will learn that, as you keep close to Him, you will be more than conqueror through Him that loved you. From our Lord's temptation we learn, especially, to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Let us never mistake the meaning of that petition! We are to pray that we may not be tempted, for we are poor flesh and blood and very frail. It is for us to cry to God, “Lead us not into temptation.” But we also learn a great deal from the close of our Lord's great threefold trial. We find Him, afterwards, peaceful—ministered unto by angels—and rejoicing. That should teach us to pray, “But, if we must be tempted, deliver us from the evil,” or, as some render it, and very correctly, too, “Deliver us from the Evil One.” First, we pray that we may not be tempted at all and then, as a supplement to that prayer, yielding the whole matter to Divine Wisdom, “If it is necessary for our manhood, for our growth in Grace, for the verification of our Graces and for God's Glory, that we should be tempted, Lord, deliver us from the evil, and especially deliver us from the impersonation of evil, the Evil One!”

With that as an introduction, for a short time, tonight, let me call upon you to notice in our text, first, *the devil leaving the tempted One*—“Then the devil left Him.” Secondly, we shall keep to Matthew's Gospel and notice *the angels ministering to the tempted One* after the fallen angel had left Him. And then, thirdly, *the limitation of the rest which we may expect*—the limitation of the time in which Satan will be gone—for Luke puts it, “When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him *for a season*,” or, as some put it, “until a fit opportunity,” when he would, again, return, and our great Lord and Master would once more be tried by his wicked wiles.

I. First, we have as the subject for our happy consideration, THE DEVIL LEAVING THE TEMPTED ONE.

When did the devil leave our Lord? *When he had finished the temptation.* It must have been a great relief to our Divine Master when Satan left Him. The very air must have been more pure and fit to be breathed. His soul must have felt a great relief when the evil spirit had gone away—but he went not, we are told, until he had finished all the temptation. So Luke puts it—“When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season.” Satan will not go till he has shot the last arrow from his quiver. Such is his malice that as long as he can tempt, he will tempt. His will desires our total destruction, but his power is not equal to his will. God does not give him power such as he would like to possess—there is always a limit set to his assaults. When Satan has tempted you throughout and ended all his temptation, then he will leave you. You have not yet undergone all forms of temptation, so you may not expect absolutely and altogether to be left by the arch-enemy.

It may be a long time, when you are suffering from his attacks, before he will hold his hand, for he will try all that he possibly can to lead you into evil and to destroy the Grace that is in you. Still, he does come to an end with his temptations sooner than he desires, for, as God has said to the mighty sea, “Until this time shall you come, but no further; and here shall your proud waves be stayed”—and so says He to the devil. When He permitted Satan to try the Graces of Job and to prove his sincerity, He let him go just so far, but no farther. And when he asked for a further stretch of power, still there was a limit. There is *always* a limit to Satan’s power and when he reaches that point, he will be pulled up short—he can do no more. You are never so in the hands of Satan as to be out of the hands of God. You are never so tempted, if you are a Believer, that there is not a way of escape for you! God permits you to be tried for many reasons which, perhaps, you could not altogether understand, but which His infinite wisdom understands for you. But He will not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous. It may fall there, but it shall not rest there. The Lord may let you be put into the fire, but the fire shall be heated no hotter than you are able to bear. “When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him.”

Satan did not depart from Christ, however, until *he had also failed in every temptation.* When the Lord had foiled him at every point—had met every temptation with a text of Holy Scripture and had proved His own determination to hold fast His integrity and not let it go—it was not till *then* that the enemy departed. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if you can hold out, if you can stand against this and then, against, that. If you are protected against frowns and protected against flatteries. If you are protected against prosperity and against adversity. If you are protected against sly insinuations and open attacks—when you have won the day, as by God’s Grace you will do, even as your Master did—then the enemy will depart from you! “Well,” says one, “I wish that he would depart from me, for I have been sorely troubled by him,” to which I say most heartily, “Amen.”

Let us think, for a minute or two, about when Satan will depart from the child of God, as he did from the great Son of God.

I have no doubt that he will do that when he finds that it is necessary for him to be somewhere else. Satan is not everywhere and cannot be, for he is not Divine. He is not Omnipresent, but, as one has said, although he is not everywhere present, it would be hard to say where he is *not*, for he moves so swiftly, he is such an agile spirit, that he seems to be here and there and everywhere. And where he is not in person, he is represented by that vast host—the legions of fallen spirits who are under his control. And even where they are not, he carries out his evil devices so that he leaves the leaven to work, the evil seeds to grow when he, himself, has gone elsewhere. Yet it is, probably, not many times in one's life that any man is actually called into conflict with Satan, himself, personally. There are too many of us, now, for him to give all his time and strength to one—he has to be somewhere else. Oh, I long to be the means of multiplying the number of God's people by the preaching of the Word of God, that the Gospel of the Grace of God may fly abroad and bring in myriads—that the devil may have more to do and, therefore, not be able to give so much of his furious attention, as he does in one direction and another, to the children of God!

He also leaves God's people very quickly when he sees that they are sustained by superior Grace. He hopes to catch them when Grace is at a low ebb. If he can come upon them when faith is very weak, when hope's eyes are dim, when love has grown cold—then he thinks that he will make an easy capture. But when we are filled with the Spirit as the Master was, (God grant that we may be), he looks us up and down and he presently leaves. Like an old pirate who hangs about on the lookout for merchant vessels, but if he meets with ships that have plenty of guns on board and hardy hands to give him a warm reception, he goes after some other craft not quite so well able to resist his assaults. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, be not *merely* Christians, *only barely* Christians, with just enough Grace to let you see your imperfections, but pray to God to give you mighty Grace, that you may “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” so that, after the devil has tested you and found that the Lord is with you, that God dwells in you, then you may expect that, as it was with your Master, so it will be with you—Satan will leave you.

Sometimes I think, however, that Satan personally leaves us because he knows that *not* to be tempted is, to some men, a greater danger than to *be* tempted! “Oh,” you say, “how can that be?” Brothers, Sisters, do you know nothing of carnal security, of being left, as you think, to grow in Grace and to be very calm, very happy and, as you hope, very useful and to find beneath you a sea of glass with not a ripple on the wave? “Yes,” you say, “I do know that experience and I have been thankful for it.” Have you never found creeping over you, at the same time, the idea that you are somebody, that you are getting wonderfully experienced, that you are an eminent child of God, rich and increased in goods? And have you not said, like David, “I shall never be moved”?

Possibly you have looked askance on some of your friends who have been trembling and timid and crying to God, from day to day, to keep them. You have been Sir Mighty—you have been Lord Great-One and everybody must bow down before you! Ah, yes, you have now fallen into a worse condition than even those are in who are tempted of Satan! A calm in the tropics is more to be dreaded than a tempest! In such a calm everything gets to be still and stagnant, the ship scarcely moves. It is like a painted ship on a painted sea and it gets to be in something like the state described by Coleridge's Ancient Mariner—

***“The very deep did rot—
Alas, that ever this should be!
And slimy things with legs did crawl
Over the slimy sea.”***

“Oh,” you say, “that is horrible!” Yes, and that is the tendency of a soul that is at peace with itself and is not emptied from vessel to vessel. I fear that is often the case with those who believe themselves to be supernaturally holy. A curious fact can be proven by abundant evidence, namely, that the boast of human perfection is closely followed by obscenity and licentiousness! The most unclean sects that have ever defaced the page of history have been founded by those who had the notion that they were beyond temptation, that they had ceased to sin and could never transgress again. “Ah,” says Satan, “this notion does my work a great deal better than tempting a man! When I tempt him, then he stands up to resist me. He has his eyes open, he grasps his sword and puts on his helmet. He cries to God, “Lord, help me!” And he watches night and day—and the more tempted he is—the more he looks to God for strength. But if I leave him quite alone and he goes to sleep, well, then, he is not in the battle! And if he begins to feel quite secure, then I can steal in upon him unawares and make a speedy end of him.” This is one reason why Satan leaves some men untempted. A roaring devil is better than a sleeping devil—and there is no temptation much worse than that of never being tempted at all.

Again, I doubt not that Satan leaves us—no, I know that he does—when the Lord says to him what He said in the wilderness, “Get you hence, Satan.” And He does say that when He sees one of His poor children dragged about, tortured, wounded, bleeding. He says, “Get you hence, Satan. I permit you to fetch in My stray sheep; but not to worry them to death. Get you hence, Satan.” The old Hell-dog knows his Master and he flies at once.

This voice of God will come when the Lord sees that we cast ourselves wholly upon Him. In my Brother's prayer, he suggested to us, if you remember, that in casting our burden upon the Lord, we might not be able to get rid of it. The way was to cast *ourselves and our burden*, both, upon the Lord. The best way of all is to get rid of the burden entirely, to cast yourself, but *without* your burden, upon the Lord! Let me remind you of a story that I once told you, of a gentleman who, riding along in his coach, saw a packman carrying a heavy pack, and asked him if he would like a ride. “Yes, and thank you, Sir.” But he kept his pack on his back while riding. “Oh,” said the friend, “why do you not take your pack off and put it

down in front?" "Why, Sir," he said, "it is so kind of you to give me a ride that I do not like to impose upon your good nature, and I thought that I would carry the pack myself!" "Well," said the other, "but, you see, it makes no difference to me whether you carry it or do not carry it—I have to carry you *and* your pack—so you had better unstrap it and put it down in front."

So, Friend, when you cast your burden upon God, unstrap it! Why should you bear it yourself when God is prepared to bear it? Beloved, there are times when we forget that, but when we can come and absolutely yield ourselves right up, saying, "Lord, here I am, tempted, poor and weak. But I come and rest in You. I know not what to ask at Your hands, but Your servant has said, 'Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.' I lie at your feet, my Lord. Here I am, here would I be. Do with me as seems good in Your sight—only deal in tender mercy with Your servant." Then will the Lord rebuke the enemy! The waves of the sea shall be still and there shall be a great calm.

So much for the devil leaving the tempted One. He does so, he *must do* so, when God commands it.

II. But now, secondly, let us think Of THE ANGELS MINISTERING TO THE TEMPTED ONE.

The angels came and ministered to our Lord after Satan was gone. Notice that they did not come while our Lord was in the battle. Why not? Why, because it was necessary that He should tread the winepress alone, and because it was more glorious for Him that of the people there should be none with Him! Had there been any angels there to help Him in the duel with the adversary, they might have shared the honor of the victory, but they must stay away till the fight is over. But when the foe is gone, *then* the angels come. It has been noted that it does not say that the angels came very often and ministered to Jesus, as much as to make us think that they were always near, that they hovered within earshot, watching, and ready to interpose if they might. They were a bodyguard round about our Lord, even as they are, today, about His people, for, "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But the moment that the fight was over, then the angels came and ministered to Christ. Why was that?

I suppose, first, because, as Man, *He was especially exhausted*. He was hungry, we are told, and that proves exhaustion. But, besides that, the strain of *forty days'* temptation must have been immense! Men can bear up under a strain, but when it is eased, then they fall. Elijah can do marvels. He can strike the priests of Baal and behave like a hero, but, after it is all over, Elijah fails! As Man, our Lord was subject to the sinless infirmities of our flesh, and it was necessary that angels should come and minister to Him, even as the angel did in the Garden, after the agony and bloody sweat.

But it was also because, being Man, *He was to partake of the ministry which God had allotted to man*. He has appointed angels to watch over His own people and, inasmuch as Jesus is our Brother, as the children were

partakers of the ministry of angels, He, Himself, also took part with the same that He might show how He took our weakness upon Him and, therefore, needed and received that succor which the Father has promised to all His children.

Was it not, again, because *He was so beloved of the angels and they were so loyal to Him?* They must have been amazed when they saw Him born on earth and living here in poverty! And when they saw Him tempted of the enemy, they must have loathed the adversary. How could Satan be permitted to come so near their pure and holy Master? I think that Milton could have pictured this scene and that he would have drawn every seraph there as longing to let his sword of flame find a scabbard in the heart of the foul fiend that dared to come so near to the Prince of purity! But they must not interfere. Yet, as soon as they might, then they joyfully came and ministered to Him.

And does it not also go to show that *His was a Nature very sensitive to the angelic touch?* You and I are coarse, hard-hearted—

***“Myriads of spirits throng the air—
They are about us now.”***

Women are to cover their heads in worship “because of the angels.” There are many acts of decorum in holy worship that are to be kept up “because of the angels.” They are innumerable. They are sent to minister to us, but we are not aware of them—often we do not perceive them. But Jesus was all tenderness and sensitiveness—and He knew that the angels were there, so it was easy for them to come and minister to Him. What they did in ministering to Him, we cannot tell. I should certainly think that they sustained His bodily Nature, for He was hungry and they readily brought food to Him. But they also sustained His mental and His spiritual Nature with words of comfort. The sight of them reminded Him of His Father’s house, reminded Him of the Glory which He had laid aside. The sight of them proved that the Father did not forget Him. He had sent the household troops of Heaven to succor and support Him. The sight of them must have made Him anticipate the day of which the poet sings—

***“They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His Throne—
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
‘The glorious work is done!’”***

Well now, Brothers and Sisters, if we are tempted, shall we have any angels to succor us? Well, we shall certainly have the *equivalent* of angels! Oftentimes, after a temptation, God sends His human messengers. Many of you can tell how, when you have been hearing the Word after a bad time of temptation, the Gospel message has been wonderfully sweet to you. You have sat in your pew and said, “God sent that sermon on purpose for me.” Or, if you have not had a sermon, you have read the Bible and the Words have seemed to burn and glow on the page! And you have warmed your soul by their heat. Has it not been so with you often? Are not all the holy things more sweet after trial than they were before? Have you not found them so? I bear my willing witness that never does Christ seem so precious, never do the promises seem so rich and rare, never does Evangelical Doctrine cling so closely to my heart, and my heart to it,

as after a time of painful trial when I have been laid aside from holy service and racked with anguish! Oh, then the angels come and minister to us, in the form of men who preach the Word, or in the form of the living page of God's written Word!

I have noticed, too, that God sometimes cheers His tempted people with clear sunshine after rain, by some very gracious Providences. Something happens that they could not have looked for—so pleasant, so altogether helpful—that they have had to burst into singing, though just before they had been sighing! The cage door was set wide open and God's bird has had such a flight and sung so sweetly, as it mounted up to Heaven, that the soul seemed transformed into a holy lark in its ascending music! Have you not found the Lord very gracious to you after some severe trial, or some strong temptation? I believe that this will be the testimony of many experienced Christians.

And, as these choice Providences come, so, I do not doubt, there also come actual angels ministering to us, though we are unaware of their presence. They can suggest holy thoughts, I doubt not, to bring us comfort. But, above the angels, far superior to angelic help, is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter! How sweetly can He close up every wound and make it even sing as it heals! He makes the bones that God had broken to rejoice and fills us with a deeper experience of delight than we have ever known before!

Well now, I suppose that some of you here, tonight, are in this condition—that Satan has left you and angels are ministering to you. If so, you are very happy. Bless your God for it! There is a great calm. Thank God for the calm after the storm. I hope, my Brothers and Sisters, that you are the stronger for what you have endured, and that the conflict has matured you, and prepared you for something better. Now, what did our Lord do after the devil had left Him and the angels had come to minister to Him? Did He go home and stay there and begin to sing of His delightful experiences? No, we find Him preaching directly afterwards, full of the Spirit of God. He went everywhere, proclaiming the Kingdom of God. He was found in the synagogue, or on the hillside. Just in proportion as the Spirit of God had enabled Him to overcome the enemy, we find Him going forth to spend that strength in the service of His Lord!

O tempted one, have you a respite? Spend that respite for Him who gave it to you! Is it calm, now, after a storm? Go, now, and sow your fields with the good Seed! Have you wiped your eyes and are the salt tears gone? Go sing a Psalm, then—sing unto your Well-Beloved—and go down into His vineyard and take the foxes, and prune the vines, and dig about them—and do necessary work for Him who has done so much for you! Listen! You have been set free! There are many under bondage to Satan—not as you are, fighting against him—but his willing slaves. Oh, come, my Brothers and Sisters—your God has set you free—go after them! Go after the fallen woman and the drunken man. Go, seek and find the most debauched, the most depraved. Specially look after any of your own house who have played the prodigal—

“Oh, come, let us go and find them!”

***In the paths of death they roam—
At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say,
'I have brought some lost one home!'"***

And it will be right to say it, if the Lord has dealt so well with you.

III. Now, I have to close by reminding you of the third point, which is a searching truth, namely, THE LIMITATION OF OUR REST. Satan left Christ “for a season,” or until a fit occasion.

Did the devil assail our Lord again? I am not sure that he personally did, but he did so in many ways by others. I notice that, before long, he tried to entangle Him in His speech. That is a very easy thing to do with us. Somebody, tonight, can take up something that I have said, twist it from its connection, and make it sound and seem totally different from what was meant by it. You know how the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees did this with our Lord—they tried to entangle Him in His speech. In all of that, Satan led them on. Satan also actively opposed Christ’s ministry and Christ opposed Satan—but Jesus won the day, for He saw Satan fall like lightning from Heaven!

A more artful plan, still, was that by which the devil’s servants, the demons that were cast out of possessed persons, called Jesus the Son of God. He rebuked them because He did not want any testimony from them. No doubt the devil thought it a very cunning thing to praise the Savior—then the Savior’s friends would begin to be suspicious of Him if He was praised by the devil. This was a deep trick, but the Master made him hold his peace. You remember how He said on one occasion, “Hold your peace, and come out of him”? It was something like this, “Down dog! Come out!” Christ is never very polite with Satan—a few words and very strong ones are all that are necessary for this arch-prince of wickedness!

Satan tempted our Lord through Peter. That is a plan that he has often tried with us, setting a friend of ours to do his dirty work. Peter took his Lord and rebuked Him, when He spoke about being spit upon and put to death. And then the Lord said, “Get you behind Me, Satan!” He could see the devil using Peter’s tenderness to try to take Him off from His Self-sacrifice. Oh, how often has Satan tempted us that way, entangling us in our speech, opposing us in our work, praising us out of wicked motives to try to deceive us and then setting up some friend to try to take us off from holy self-denial!

There were also occasional heart-sinking in our Lord. Thus we read in John 12:27, “Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour?” He seems to have been very heavy in heart at that time. But the deepest soul-sinking was when, in the Garden, His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” Satan had a hand in that sore trial, for the Lord had said, “The Prince of this world comes,” and He said to those who came to arrest Him, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” It was a dreadful season. Our Lord’s ministry began and ended with a fierce onslaught from Satan. He left Him after the temptation, but only for a season.

Well now, dear Friends, if we have peace and quietness tonight, and are not tempted, do not let us become self-secure. The devil will come to us,

again, at a fit opportunity. And when will that be? There are a great many fit opportunities with you and with me. One is when we have nothing to do. You know Dr. Watts' lines—

***“Satan finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do.”***

He will come and attack us when we are alone. I mean, when we are sad and lonely, and are sitting still, and moping by ourselves.

But Satan also finds a very fit occasion when we are in company, especially when it is very mixed company—a company of persons, perhaps, who are superior to ourselves in education and in station—but who do not fear God. We may easily be overawed and led astray by them. Satan will come then.

I have known him frequently come and find an occasion against the children of God *when we are sick and ill*, the old coward! He knows that we would not mind him when we are in good health, but sometimes when we are down in the dumps through sickness and pain—then it is that he begins to tempt us to despair.

So will he do with us when *we are very poor*. When a man has had a great loss in business, down comes Satan and insinuates, “Is this how God treats His children? God’s people are no better off than other people.”

Then, *if we are getting on in the world*, he turns it the other way, and he says, “Does Job fear God for nothing? He gets on by his religion.” You cannot please the devil and you need not want to please him! He can make a temptation for you out of *anything*!

I am going to say something that will surprise you. One time of great temptation is *when we are very spiritual*. As to myself, I have never been in such supreme danger as when I have led some holy meeting with sacred fervor and have felt carried away with delight in God. You know that it is easy to be on the Mount of Transfiguration and then to meet Satan at the foot, as our Lord did when He came down from that hill.

Another time of temptation is when *we have already done wrong*. “Now he begins to slip,” says Satan. “I saw him trip. Now I will have him down!” Oh, for speedy repentance and an earnest flight to Christ whenever there has been a grave fault, yes, and before the grave fault comes, that we may be preserved from falling!

And Satan finds a good occasion for tempting us when *we have not sinned*. After we have been tempted and we have won the day and stood fast, then he comes and says, “Now, that was well done on your part, you are a splendid saint!” And he who thinks himself a splendid saint is next door to a shameful sinner, depend upon it! And Satan soon gets the advantage over him.

If you are successful in business or successful in holy work, then Satan will tempt you. If you are not successful and have had a bad time, then Satan will tempt you. When you have a heavy load to carry, he will tempt you. When that load is taken off, then he will tempt you worse than ever! He will tempt you when you have obtained some blessing that you have been thinking was such a great gift, just as, in the wilderness, when they would cry for flesh and said that they must have flesh, God gave them

their heart's desire—but sent leanness into their soul. Just as you have secured the thing that you are seeking, then comes a temptation—to which all I have to say is this—“Watch.”

“What I say unto you, I say unto all,” said Christ, “Watch. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.” And by the conflict and the victory of your Master, go into the conflict bravely and expect to conquer by faith in Him, even as He overcame!

But what shall I say to those who are the slaves and the friends of Satan? The Lord have mercy upon you! If you desire to escape, there is only one way! There is the Cross and Christ hangs upon it. Look to Jesus! He can set you free. He came on purpose to proclaim liberty to the captives. Look and live! Look, now, and live, now! I implore you, do it for His dear sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

LUKE 4:1-15.

Verse 1. *And Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.* “Full of the Holy Spirit.” And then, led “into the wilderness” to be tempted. You would not expect that. Yet it is a sadder thing to be led into a wilderness when you are *not* filled with the Spirit, and a sadder thing to be tempted when the Spirit of God is not resting upon you. The temptation of our Lord was not one to which He wantonly exposed Himself. He “was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” The Spirit of God may lead us where we shall have to endure trial. If He does so, we are safe, and we shall come away conquerors even as our Master did.

2. *Being forty days tempted of the devil.* Six weeks of temptation! We read the story of the temptation, perhaps, in six minutes, but it lasted for nearly six weeks. “Forty days tempted of the devil.”

2. *And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward was hungry.* It does not appear, therefore, that Jesus was hungry while He was fasting. He was miraculously sustained during that period. After fasting, one looks for deeper spiritual feeling and more holy joy. But the most prominent fact, here, is that, “He afterward was hungry,” Think not that you have lost the benefit of your devout exercises when you do not at once feel it. Perhaps the very best thing that can happen to you, after much prayer, is a holy hunger. I mean not a *natural* hunger, as it was with our Lord, but a blessed hungering after Divine things. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

3. *And the devil said unto Him, If You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.* Satan met the hungry Man and suited the temptation to His present pangs, to His special weakness at that moment—“If You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” The devil suspected and I think he *knew* that Jesus was the Son of God, but he began the temptation with an, “if.” He hissed into the Savior’s ear—“If You are the Son of God.” If you, Believer, can be led to doubt your sonship and to fear that you are *not* a son of God, Satan will have

begun to win the battle. So he begins to storm the royal fort of faith—"If You are the Son of God." Our Lord *is* the Son of God, but *then* He was suffering as our Substitute—and in that condition He was a lone and humble Man. What if I call Him, "a common soldier in the ranks"? Satan invites Him to work a miracle of an improper kind on His own behalf, but Jesus worked no miracle for Himself. Now, it may be that the devil is trying some of you, tonight. You are very poor, or business is going very awkwardly, and Satan suggests that you should help yourself in an improper manner. He tells you that you can get out of your trouble very easily by some action which, although it may not be strictly right, may not be so very wrong after all. He said to Jesus, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread."

4. *And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written.* That is Christ's sword. Look how swiftly He drew it out of its sheath! What a sharp two-edged sword is this to be used against Satan! You also, Believer, have this powerful weapon in your hand—let no man take it from you. Believe in the Inspiration of Scripture. Just now there is a fierce attack upon the Book of Deuteronomy. It is a very curious thing that all the texts Christ used during the temptation were taken out of Deuteronomy, as if that was to be the very armory out of which He would select this true Jerusalem blade with which He should overcome the tempter, "It is written," "It is written," "It is said."

4. *That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God.* "God can sustain Me without My turning the stone into bread. God can bring Me through my trouble without My saying or doing anything wrong. I am not dependent upon the outward and visible." If you can feel like that. If you can appropriate the promise of God and quote it to Satan, saying, "It is written," using it as Christ did, you will come off conqueror in the time of temptation even as He did!

5. *And the devil.* Now he tries Him again. There is wave upon wave trying to wash the Son of Man off His feet.

5. *Taking Him up into an high mountain, showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.* Skeptics have asked how that could be done. Well, they had better ask him who did it! He knows more about them and they know more about him than I do! But he did it. I am sure, for here it is written, that he "showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."

6. *And the devil said unto Him, All this power will I give You, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto and to whomever I will I give it.* Does not he talk proudly in the presence of his Lord and Master? What an audacious dog he must have been to howl, thus, in the Presence of Him who could have destroyed him by a look or a word, if He had wished to do so!

7, 8. *If You therefore, will worship me, all shall be Yours. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get you behind Me, Satan.* The temptation annoyed Him—it was so foreign to His holy Nature it vexed His gracious spirit—so He cried out indignantly to the tempter, "Get you behind Me, Satan."

8. *For it is written.* Here flashed forth the sword again.

8. *You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.* Then let us pay no reverence, no worship to any but God! Consciences and minds are made for God, alone—before Him let us bow—and if all the world were offered to us for a moment’s idolatry, let us not fall into the snare of the tempter!

9. *And he brought Him to Jerusalem.* Satan now takes Christ to holy ground. Temptations are generally more severe there.

9. *And set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple.* The highest point of all. Elevated high above the earth.

9-11. *And said unto Him, If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down from here, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You: and in their hands they shall bear You up, lest at any time You dash Your foot against a stone.* Now Satan tries to quote Scripture, as he can do when it answers his purpose, but he never quotes it correctly. You young Brothers who go out preaching, mind that you do not imitate the devil by quoting part of a text, or quoting Scripture incorrectly! He did it, however, with a purpose—not by misadventure or from forgetfulness—he left out the very necessary words, “In all Your ways.” “He shall give His angels charge over You, to keep You in all Your ways.” Satan left out those last four words, for it was not the way of a child of God to come down from a pinnacle of the Temple headlong into the gulf beneath!

12. *And Jesus answering, said unto him, It is said, You shall not tempt the Lord your God.* Do nothing presumptuously. Do nothing which would lead the Lord to act otherwise than according to His settled Laws which are always right and good.

13, 14. *And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.* He had not lost anything by the temptation, “the power of the Spirit” was still upon Him.

14, 15. *And there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.* He became popular. The people resorted to Him and were glad to hear Him. He who has had secret temptation and private conflict is prepared to bear open success without being elevated by it. Have you stood foot to foot with Satan? You will think little of the applause or of the attacks of your fellow men!

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LIGHT FOR THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS

NO. 1010

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way
of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.
The people which sat in darkness saw great Light,
and to them which sat in the region and shadow of
death Light is sprung up.”
Matthew 4:15, 16.*

FULL of love to the place where He had been brought up, our Lord had gone to Nazareth, and in the Synagogue He had preached the most glad tidings. But, alas, the greatest of Prophets and the Lord of Prophets received no honor in His own country. “He came unto His own and His own received Him not.” Expelled from the city by violence, the Patient One turned His footsteps another way. And yet, even when justly angry, love guided His footsteps. He must go, for the Nazarenes had proved themselves unworthy—but where shall He go? He will go to the outcasts, to that part of His country which was most neglected—to that region where the population was mixed and degenerate so as to be called not Galilee of the Jews—but Galilee of the Gentiles.

He must go a distance from Jerusalem where little was known of the worship of the temple, where error was rampant, where men’s minds were enveloped in darkness, and their hearts in the gloom of the shade of death. The loss of Nazareth shall be the gain of Galilee. Even His judgment upon a place is overruled in mercy, and even thus, today, there are some in this house who have often had Jesus preached to them from their very childhood. And until this hour they have refused obedience to the Gospel’s command. What if He should now turn away from them? I pray He may not have done so already. Yet, in turning away from them, He will deal with others in mercy. As the casting away of the Jews was the salvation of the Gentiles, so the leaving of these privileged ones shall open a door of mercy and hope to those who have not enjoyed the privilege before this time.

To you who are not familiar with the Gospel sound, to you who count yourselves more unworthy than the rest of mankind, to you desponding and despairing ones who write bitter things against yourselves, to you is the Gospel sent! As previously, the Lord preached to Zabulon and Nephthalim, and the people who sat in darkness saw a great light, even so is He this day proclaimed among you. From the text it appears that *some are in greater darkness than others*. And that, secondly, *for such there is a hope of light*. But that, thirdly, *the light which will come to them lies all in Christ*. And, fourthly (joyful news!) *that light is already sprung up all around them*—they have but to open their eyes to delight in it.

I. SOME SOULS ARE IN GREATER DARKNESS THAN OTHERS. It appears from the text that it was so in Christ's day, and certainly it is so now. Divine Sovereignty runs through all God's dealings. He does not even distribute the privilege of hearing the Gospel to all alike, for some lands are as yet untrod by the missionary's foot, while here at the corner of all our streets the Gospel is preached to us. Some, from the very circumstances of their birth and parentage, have never attended the worship of God, while others, even before they had the discretion to choose, were carried in their parents' arms to the place where prayer is likely to be made.

God distributes His Grace and privileges even as He wills. In the text, those persons who were more deplorably circumstanced than others are described first as being *in darkness*. "The people that sat in darkness," by which is meant, first, *ignorance*. The Galileans were notoriously ignorant—few teachers of the Law had been among them. They did not know even the letter of the Law. So are there many to whom the Gospel, even in the theory of it, is a thing scarcely known. They may have gone to places of worship in this country from their youth up, and have never heard the Gospel, for the Gospel is a rare thing in some synagogues.

You shall hear philosophy, you shall hear ceremonialism and Sacramentarianism cried up, but the blessed Truth of God, "Believe, and live," is kept in the background so that men may come to full age, yes, and even to old age, in Christian England, and yet the plan of salvation by the righteousness of Jesus Christ may be an unknown thing to them. They sit in the darkness of ignorance. The consequence is that another darkness follows—the darkness of *error*. Men who know not the Truth of God, since they must have some faith, seek out many inventions. If they are not taught of God, they soon become taught of Satan, and apt scholars are they in *his* school! Galilee was noted for the heresies which abounded there.

But what a mercy it is that God can save heretics. Those who have received false doctrine, and added darkness to darkness in so doing, can yet be brought into the glorious light of Truth. Though they may have denied the Deity of Christ, though they may have doubted the inspiration of Scripture, though they may have fallen into many traps and pitfalls of false doctrine, yet the Divine Shepherd, when He seeks His lost sheep, can find them out and bring them home again. In consequence of being in the darkness of ignorance and error, these people were wrapt in the gloom of *discomfort and sorrow*. Darkness is an expressive type of sorrow. The mind that knows not God, knows not the heart's best rest.

There is no solace for our griefs like the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and those who are ignorant of it are tossed about upon a stormy sea without an anchor. Glory be to God! When sorrow has brought on a midnight, Grace can transform it into noon. This darkness of sorrow was no doubt attended with much *fear*. We love not darkness because we cannot see what is before us, and therefore we are alarmed by imaginary dangers. And, in the same way, those who are ignorant of the light of Christ will frequently be the victims of superstitious dread. Yes, and true and well-

founded fears will arise, too, for they will dread death, and the bar of God, and the sentence of justice.

Believe me, there is no darkness so black as the horror which surrounds many an awakened conscience when it sees its ruin, but cannot find a Savior. When it feels its sin, and cannot see the way by which it may be expiated. Here, then, we have considered one part of this sad condition—perhaps it describes some of you. It is said next that they “*sat in darkness.*” Matthew did not quote from Isaiah correctly. I think he purposely alters it. Isaiah speaks, in his ninth chapter, of a people that “*walked in darkness.*” But here the Evangelist speaks of a people who “*sat in darkness.*” That is a state of less hopefulness. The man who walks is active—he has some energy left, and may reach a brighter spot. But a man sitting down is inactive and will probably abide where he is. “The people which sat in darkness”—as if they had been there a long while, and would be there longer yet.

They sat as though they had been turned to stone. They “sat in darkness,” probably through despair. They had, after a fashion, strived for the light, but had not found it, and so they gave up all hope. Their disappointed hearts told them that they might as well spare those fruitless efforts and down they sat with the stolidity of hopelessness. Why should they make any more exertion? If God would not hear their prayers, why should they pray any longer? Being ignorant of His abounding Grace, and of the way of salvation by His Son, they considered themselves as consigned to perdition. They “sat in darkness.”

Perhaps they sat there so long that they reached a state of insensibility and indifference, and this is a horrible condition of heart, but, alas, a very common one. They said, “What matters it, since there is no hope for us? Let it be as fate appoints, we will sit still—we will neither cry nor pray.” How many have I met with who are not only thus in darkness, but are half-content to dare the terrible future, and sullenly wait till the storm-cloud of wrath shall burst over them? It is a most sad and wretched condition, but what a blessing it is that this day we have a Gospel to preach to such!

Our description is not complete, for the text goes on to speak of them as sitting “*in the region of death.*” That is to say, these people lived in a territory that appeared to be ruled by death, and to be death’s haunt and natural abode. Many at this time, and in this city, are truly living in the domain of spiritual death. All around them is death. If they have stepped into this house this morning, their position is an exception to their general one. They will go home to a Sunday-breaking household. They hear oaths habitually, profane language, and lascivious songs. And thus they breathe the reek of the morgue.

If they have a good thought, it is ridiculed by those about them. They dwell as among the tombs, with men whose mouths are open sepulchers, pouring forth all manner of offensiveness. How sad a condition! It seems to such poor souls, perhaps, being now a little awakened, that everything about them is prophetic of death. They are afraid to take a step lest the earth should open a door to the bottomless pit. I remember well, when I

was under conviction, how all the world seemed in league against me—the beasts of the field and even the stones. I wondered if the heavens could refrain from falling upon me, or the earth from opening her mouth to swallow me up. I was under sentence of Divine wrath, and felt as if I were in a condemned cell, and all creation were but the walls of my dungeon.

“They sat in the region of death.” But it is added that they sat “*in the shadow of death*.” That is, under its cold, poisonous, depressing shade. As though grim Death stood over them in all they did, and his shadow kept from them the light of Heaven. They are sitting there this morning—they are saying to themselves, “Preach, Sir, as you may, you will never comfort me—you may tell me of love and mercy, but I shall never be cheered. I am chilled through my very marrow, as though the frost of death had smitten me—I am unable now to hope, or even to pray—my desires are all but dead. Like a frozen corpse is my soul.”

And it is implied, too, that such death itself is very near, for those who are in the shadow of a thing are near to the thing itself. And the sinner, bewildered and amazed at the guilt of his sin, is only sure of one thing—and that is that he is in immediate danger of being cast into Hell. I have known some afraid to shut their eyes at night, lest they should open them in torment. Others have been afraid to go to their beds, lest their couch should become their coffin. They have not known what to do, by reason of depression of spirit. Job’s language has been theirs, “My soul is weary of my life.”

It is clear to me that the description of the text very accurately pictures many of the sons of men. I pray God that none of you poor darkened souls may be so foolish as to try to exclude yourself from it, though such is the perversity of despondency that I greatly fear you may do so. However small we make the meshes of the Gospel net, there are certain little fish that will find a way of escaping from its blessed toils. Though we try to meet the character, we miss it through the singular dexterity of despair.

The fact is that when a man is sin-sick, his soul abhors all manner of meat, and unless the Beloved Physician shall interpose, he will die of famine with the Bread of Life spread out before him. Dear Friends, may the Lord visit you with His saving health, and give to the saddest of you joy and peace in believing.

II. Having given the description of those in the darkness, let us now pass on to the second point. FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN A WORSE CONDITION THAN OTHERS THERE IS HOPE AND LIGHT. To the benighted land of Zabulon and Naphtali the Gospel came, and evermore to souls wrapt in gloom the Gospel has come as a cheering and guiding light. And there are good reasons why it should be so. For, first, among such people the Gospel has reaped very rich fruit. Among barbarous nations Christ has won great trophies. The poor Karens are wonders of Divine Grace. The cannibals of the South Sea Islands are miracles of mercy—and among the once enslaved Ethiopians there are warm and loving hearts which rejoice in Jesus’ name.

In this city, I will venture to say that no Churches reflect more honor upon the Master's name than those which have been gathered from among the destitute districts. What wonders God has done by that blessed Church in Golden Lane, under our dear brother Orsman! What conversions have taken place in connection with the mission churches of St. Giles' and Whitechapel—Churches made of the poorest of the poor and the lowest of the low. God is glorified when the thief and the harlot are washed and cleansed and made obedient to the Law of Christ. When those who are healed stand at the pastor's side, even ribald tongues are silent, or are made to exclaim, "What has God worked?"

The same is true of persons mentally depressed, who are despairing of themselves—many such have been converted. Some of us were brought very low before we found the Savior—lower we could not well have been—we were emptied like a dish that a man wipes and turns upside down. We had not even a drop of hope left in us. But we rejoice in Christ today and we say to despairing souls—we are personal witnesses that Christ has saved such as you are—He has in our case caused light to shine on those who sat in darkness, and out of death's cold shade into life's full light He has brought us as prisoners of hope. And, therefore, He can do the same with you. Be of good courage, there is hope for you!

It is a further consolation to sad hearts that many promises are made to such characters, even to those who are most dark. How precious is that word, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is not that made for you, you burdened and laboring sinners? What do you say to that gracious word—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them"? Is there no light in that word of love—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"?

Is there no music in this passage—"Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us. He will subdue our iniquities. And You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea"? I remember when my soul was stayed for weeks on that one short word, "Whoever *calls* upon the Lord, shall be saved." I knew I did call on His name, and therefore I hoped to see His salvation. Many have laid hold and rested themselves on this faithful saying, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

He will receive any "him" or "her" in all the world that comes, be he or she ever so defiled. That also is a rich word, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." What a word was that of our Master when He commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature, beginning at Jerusalem! They were to commence their labors among His murderers, among hypocritical Pharisees and proud Herodians. They were to

begin where the devil reigned most supreme, and to present Christ to the worst sinners first.

Don't you see, then, that great sinners, so far from being excluded, are just those to whom the Good News is to be first published? Be of good comfort, then, you that sit in darkness—there are special promises for you. Moreover, remember that the conversion of the more deplorably dark and despairing brings the highest degree of glory to God. When His Glory passes by great sin, then it is mercy, indeed. Where it is greatly displaced, it is greatly extolled. Many are saved by Christ in whom the change is not very apparent, and consequently but little fame is brought to the Good Physician through it. But, oh, if He will have mercy upon yonder mourner who has been these ten years in despair. If He will say, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmities," the whole parish will ring with it!

If Jesus will come and save that evil, ignorant sinner, whom everybody knows because he has become a pest and a nuisance to the town. If such a demoniac has the devil cast out of him, how all men will say, "This is the finger of God." Yes, a poor wretch brought back again, as the sixty-eighth Psalm has it, "from Bashan, and from the depths of the sea," is a splendid trophy to the conquering power of Almighty Grace. God's great object is to glorify His great name. And, as this is best accomplished when His mercy delivers the worst cases, there is surely hope for those who sit in darkness, bound in affliction and iron.

Moreover, when they happily behold the light, such persons frequently become eminently useful to others. Their experience aids them in counseling others and their gratitude makes them eager to do so. O sweet Light, how precious are You to blind eyes, when they are newly opened. You do not know what it is to be blind—thank God that you do not—there are some here, however, who painfully know what constant darkness is. It is a grievous privation—but when their eyes are opened, as they will be in another state, and they see that best of sights, the King in His beauty, how sweet will Light be to them!—

***"Nights and days of total blindness
Are their portion here below.
Beams of love from eyes of kindness,
Never here on earth they know.
But on high they shall behold
Angels tuning harps of gold.
Rapture to the new-born sight!
Jesus in celestial light!"***

So, when the spiritual eye has long been dim and we have mourned and wept for sin, but could not behold a Savior, light is sweet beyond expression. And because it is so sweet there is a necessity within the enlightened soul to tell others the joyful news! When a man has deeply felt the evil of sin and has at length obtained mercy, he cries with David, "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted unto You." John Bunyan's impulse, when he found the Savior, was to tell the crows on the plowed ground about it, and he lived to do better than talk to crows, for day by day, from generation to generation, his works proclaim the Friend of sinners, who leads them from the City of Destruction to the Celestial glory.

Zealous saints are usually those who once were in great darkness. They see what Divine Grace has done for them, and for that very reason they feel an attachment to their dear Lord and Master which they might never had felt if they had not once sat in the valley of the shadow of death. So, poor troubled ones, for these reasons, and fifty more I might bring if time did not fail me, there is hope for you.

III. But now, the best part of our discourse comes under the third head. THE TRUE LIGHT FOR A SOUL IN DARKNESS IS ALL IN CHRIST. Hear the text—"The people which sat in darkness saw great Light." Now Christ is not only Light, but great Light. He reveals great things, He manifests great comforts, saves us from great sin and great wrath, and prepares us for great glory. He is, however, a Savior that must be seen. "The people that sat in darkness *saw* great Light." Light is of no use unless it is seen. Faith must grasp the blessings which the Savior brings. "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." We must see the Savior with a glance of faith—then we have Light. Let us consider how clearly Christ Jesus Himself is the Light of every believing eye, and delivers the most troubled soul from its misery.

In Him is light, and the Light is the light of men. Jesus personally is the day-dawn and the morning without clouds. First, there is Light in Christ's *name* for a troubled sinner. What is it? *Jesus*. Jesus, a Savior! I am a sinner lost and ruined, but I rejoice, for Jesus has come to seek and to save that which was lost! My sins trouble me, but He shall save His people from their sins. Satan annoys me, but He has come to destroy the works of the devil. He is not a nominal, but a *real* Savior. We know captains and colonels who have no troops, and never saw fighting, but not so the Captain of our salvation! He brings many sons unto Glory. If a man is called a builder, we expect him to build. If a merchant, we expect him to trade. And as Jesus is a Savior, He will carry on His sacred business—He will save multitudes.

Why, surely there is comfortable hope here! Do you not see the dawning in the name of Savior? Surely if He comes to save, and you need saving, there is a blessed suitability in you for one another. A prisoner at the bar is glad to meet one who is by profession an advocate. A ship out of its track welcomes a pilot. A traveler lost on the moors is delighted if he meets one who is by trade a guide. And so a sinner should rejoice at the bare mention of a Savior.

There is similar encouragement in the second name, *Christ*, for it means Anointed. Our Lord Jesus is not an amateur Savior who has come here without a commission from God. He is not an adventurer, who sets up on his own account to do a kind of work for which he is not qualified—no, the Spirit of the Lord is upon Jesus, for the Lord has anointed Him to this work of saving souls. He is Jesus Christ, whom God has sent. God the Father has sealed Him. He spoke not of Himself, but God who is with Him, and in Him. Why, Beloved Friend, now that I am in the Light I can see a whole sun full of splendor in that double name Jesus Christ!

And yet I fear that those who are in darkness may not perceive it. Whom God anoints to save must surely be both able and willing to save

the guilty. This name is as the morning star! Look at it, and know that day is near. It has such joy in it that misery itself ought to leap with holy mirth at the sound of it. It is our delightful task to add that there is light for those who sit in darkness in our Lord's *Person and Nature*. Mark right well who this Jesus Christ is. He is in the constitution of His Person both God and man, Divine and human—equal with God and fellow with man. Do you not see in this fact the love of God, that He should be willing to take humanity into union with Himself?

If God becomes Man, He does not hate men, but has love towards them. Do you not see the suitability of Christ to deal with you, for He is like yourself a Man, touched with the feeling of your infirmities? Born of a human mother, He hung at a woman's breast. He suffered hunger and thirst and weariness. And, dead and buried in the tomb, He was partaker in our doom as well as our sorrow. Jesus of Nazareth was most truly a Man—He is bone of our bone and flesh of your flesh. O Sinner, look into the face of the Man of Sorrows and you must trust Him!

Since He is also God, you see there His power to carry on the work of salvation. He touches you with the hand of His humanity, but He touches the Almighty with the hand of His Deity. He is Man, and feels your needs. He is God, and is able to supply them. Is anything too tender for His heart of love? Is anything too hard for His hand of power? When the Lord Himself, that made the heavens and dug the foundations of the earth, comes to be your Savior, there remains no difficulty in your being saved! Omnipotence cannot know a difficulty, and, O Sinner, to an Omnipotent Savior it is not hard to save even you! A look of faith will give you perfect pardon. A touch of the hem of the Redeemer's garment will heal you at once. Come, then, and trust the Incarnate God. Cast yourself into His arms at once.

There is light, moreover, in *His offices*, and, indeed, a brightness of Glory which a little thought will soon perceive. What are His offices? I cannot stay to mention a tithe of them, but one of them is that of Mediator. Your soul longs to speak to God and find acceptance with Him, but you are afraid to venture into His terrible Presence. I wonder not at your fear, for "even our God is a consuming fire." But be of good comfort, the way of access is open, and there is One who will go in unto the King with you, and open His mouth on your behalf. Jesus has interposed and filled the great gulf which yawned between the sinner and his righteous Judge. His blood has paved the crimson way. His Cross has bridged each stream. His Person is the highway for those who would draw near to God.

Now, as Christ Jesus is the Mediator between God and man, and you want one, take Him and you will have Light at once. You desire, also, this day a sacrifice to make atonement for your iniquities. That, also, you will find in Christ. God must punish sin. Every transgression must receive its just recompense of reward. But, lo, Christ has come, and as the Scapegoat He has carried sin away. As the sin-offering He has removed transgression. Is not this good news? But I hear you say that your sins are too many and great. Do you, then, foolishly think that Christ is a sin-bearer for the innocent? That would be ridiculous!

Do you suppose that Christ bore little sins only? That is to make Him a little Savior. Beware of this! No, but mountain sins, Heaven-defying sins, were laid on Him when He hung upon the tree, and for these He made effectual Atonement. Is there no Light in all this? Moreover, to mention only one other office, our Lord is an Intercessor. Perhaps one of your greatest difficulties is that you cannot pray. You say, "I cannot put a dozen words together. If I groan, I fear I do not feel in my heart what I ought to feel." Well, there is One who can pray for you if you cannot for yourself. Give Him your cause to plead, and do not doubt but that it shall succeed. God grant you Grace, as you see each office of Christ, to perceive that it has a bright side for sinners.

I doubt not that light streams continually from every part of the sun to cheer the worlds that revolve around it. So, from the whole of Christ there issues forth comfort for poor and needy souls. He delights in mercy. He is a Savior and a great one. He is all love, all tenderness, all pity, all goodness. And the very chief of sinners, if they do but see Him, shall see Light.

Once again, if you want Light, think of *His Character* as the meek and lowly Savior. Little children loved Him. He called them and they willingly came, for He was meek and lowly of heart. O Sinner, could He refuse you? Do you think He could give you a hard word and send you about your business if you were to seek mercy today? It could not be! It is not in the nature of Him, who was both the Son of God and the Son of Man, ever to repel a heart that gladly would cling to Him. Until He has once acted harshly to a coming sinner, you have no right to dream of His rejecting you if you come to Him. Think for a minute of His life. He was "separate from sinners," we are told, and yet it is elsewhere said of Him, "this man receives sinners, and eats with them."

Friend of sinners was His name, and is still. Think of that self-denying life spent among the sick and the sinful for their good. And then think of His death, for here the Light of Grace is focused. The Cross, like a burning-glass, concentrates the light and heat of Christ's love upon the sinner. See Him agonizing in the garden for sins that were not His own—see Him scourged with awful flagellations for transgressions in which He had no share. Behold Him bleeding and dying on the tree for His enemies—Sufferer for iniquities in which He never was a participator—for in Him was no sin.

It must be true that God can save me, if Christ has died in the place of the guilty. This argument has killed my unbelief. I cannot disbelieve when I see Incarnate God suffering for the guilty, the Just for the unjust, to bring them to God—

***"Sinners! Come, the Savior see,
Hands, feet, side, and temples view.
See Him bleeding on the tree,
See His heart on fire for you!
View awhile, then hasten away,
Find a thousand more, and say—
Come, you sinners! Come with me,
View Him bleeding on the tree."***

I wish it were in my power to convey the Light which I see in the Cross into the mental eyeballs of all my hearers, but I cannot. God the Holy

Spirit must do it. Yet, Beloved, if ever you get Light, it will be in this way—Christ must be a great Light to you. Nobody ever found light by raking in his own inward darkness. That is, indeed, seeking the living among the dead. You may rake as long as ever you will among the embers of your depravity before you will find a spark of good there. Away from self! Away from your own resolutions! Away from your own prayers, repentances, and faith! Away to Christ on the Cross must you look!

All your hope and help are laid on Immanuel's shoulders. You are nothing. Not a rag nor a thread of your own righteousness will do. Christ's robe of righteousness must cover you from head to foot. Blow out your paltry candles! Put out the sparks which you have vainly kindled, for behold the Sun is risen! "Arise, shine. For your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." You want no other light than that of Jesus—dream of no other. Give up self, give up self-hope—be in utter despair of anything that you can do. And now, whether you sink or swim, throw yourself into the sea of Christ's love—rest in Him and you shall never perish, neither shall any pluck you from His hands—

***"Cast your deadly 'doing' down,
Down at Jesus' feet,
Stand in him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete."***

IV. But, lastly, we would say to every poor soul in darkness, you need be in darkness no longer. For LIGHT IS ALL AROUND YOU—it has already "sprung up." What a mercy, my dear despairing Hearer, that you are not in Hell! You might have been there—many no worse than you are there. And yet, here you are in the land of hope. This day God does not deal with you according to the Law, but after the Gospel fashion. You are not come to Sinai this morning—no burning mountain is before you—and no tones of thunder peal from it. You are come unto Mount Zion, where the Mediator of the New Covenant speaks peace and pardon.

I have no commission to curse you, but I have distinct authority from my Master to bid you come and receive His blessing. On Zion's top today you have come to the blood of sprinkling. You might have been called to the blood of your own execution! No devils are around you—just an innumerable company of angels who wish you well. See that you refuse not him that speaks. Remember, dear Hearers, that today the Gospel command is sent to you all. You that are most despairing—you are bid to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Prove that," you say. I prove it thus—He bade His disciples go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

You are a creature, therefore we preach it to you. And what is the Gospel? Why, just this—"He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned." That Gospel, then, comes to you—God commands all men, everywhere, to repent. O what mercy it is that the Light of the Gospel shines around you still! Will you shut your eyes to it? I beseech you, do not! Moreover, the provisions of the Gospel, which are full of light and love, are all around you at this moment. If you will now believe in Christ Jesus, every sin that you have committed shall be forgiven you for His namesake.

You shall be to God as though you had never sinned. The precious blood shall make you as white as snow. "But that will not suffice," says one, "for God righteously demands obedience to His holy Law, and I have not kept His Commandments. Therefore I am weighed in the balances and found wanting." You shall have a perfect righteousness in one moment if you believe in Jesus, "even as David also describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works." Happy is the man to whom Jesus Christ is made wisdom and righteousness, and He is so to everyone that believes."

"There is, therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Ah," you say, "but I have a bad heart and an evil nature." If you believe, your nature is changed already, "A new heart also will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them." "They shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them." He can change you so that you shall scarcely know yourself. You shall be a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things shall pass away and all things shall become new. He will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh.

"Alas," you say, "even this is not enough, for I shall never *hold on* in the ways of righteousness, but shall go back unto perdition." Hear, O Trembler, these gracious words—"I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from Me." And what says our Lord, Himself? He says, "They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life."

"But what, if I go astray?" asks one. Then He will heal your backslidings, receive you graciously, and love you freely. "He restores my soul." He will not suffer even His wandering sheep to perish, but once again will He put them in the right way. "Ah, but my soul-poverty is deep, and my wants will be too great." How can you say this? Is He not the God All-Sufficient? Has the arm of the Lord waxed short! Did He not furnish a table in the wilderness? Is it not written, "My God shall supply all your need?" He shall cause all Grace to abound towards you. "Fear not you worm, Jacob, I will help you, says the Lord."

"Ah, but," says one, "I shall surely be afraid to die, for I am afraid of it even now." "He that lives and believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you." Death is swallowed up in victory. Having loved His own which are in the world, He will love them to the end. You shall have such faith in dying moments that you shall say—"O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?" "But you do not mean *me*," says one.

I mean you that sit in darkness, you that are ignorant, you that are depressed, you that have no good thing of your own, you that cannot help yourselves, you lost ones, you condemned ones, I mean you! And this is God's message to you—"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." "Whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He

might be just, and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned.”

Oh, come, you guilty ones! For He is ready to forgive you. Come, you filthy! The fountain is ready for your cleansing. Come, you sorrowful ones, since joy is prepared—His oxen and fatlings are killed, for all things are ready—come to the feast of love. But I hear you say, “I must surely do *something*.” Have done with your doings! Take *Christ’s* doings. “Oh, but I do not feel as I should.” Have done with your *feelings*—Christ’s feelings on the Cross must save you, not your own feelings. “Oh, but I am so vile.” He came to save the vile—

***“Come, in all your filthy garments,
Tarry not to cleanse or mend.
Come, in all your destitution,
As you are, and He’ll befriend.
By the Tempter’s vain allurements,
Be no longer you beguiled—
God the Father waits to own you
As His dear adopted child.”***

“But I have been an adulterer, I have been a thief, I have been a whoremonger, and everything that is bad.” Be it so, yet it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save SINNERS. All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. It is true that you are very much worse than you *think* you are—you may tell me you are horribly bad, but you have no idea how bad you are—you deserve the hottest place in Hell. But it is to you the mercy is sent! To you, Man! To you, Woman! To you who have defiled yourself with all manner of unmentionable enormities—even to you!

Thus says the Lord, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins. Return unto Me and I will have mercy upon you.” I cannot say more. I wish I had the power to speak, I was about to say, with the tongues of men and of angels, but I have such a blessed message to deliver to you that I feel it need not fancy words. The message itself is all that is needed if the Spirit blesses it. Oh, do not reject it, I beseech you, you guilty ones! You despairing ones, do not turn from it! Put not away from you the kingdom lest you prove yourselves unworthy, and bring upon yourselves wrath unto the uttermost. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. Receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, now, on the spot. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to do this, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Matthew 4:12-25, and 5:1-12.**

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HOW TO BECOME FISHERS OF MEN

NO. 1906

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

***“And Jesus said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
Matthew 4:19.***

WHEN Christ calls us by His Grace we ought not only to remember what we are, but we ought also to *think of what He can make us*. It is, “Follow Me, and I will *make you*.” We should repent of what we have been, but rejoice in what we may be. It is not, “Follow Me because of what you already are.” It is not, “Follow Me because you may make something of yourselves,” but, “Follow Me because of what I will make you.” Verily, I might say of each one of us, as soon as we are converted, “It does not yet appear what we shall be.” It did not seem a likely thing that lowly fishermen would develop into Apostles; that men so handy with the net would be quite as much at home in preaching sermons and in instructing converts! One would have said, “How can these things be? You cannot make founders of Churches out of peasants of Galilee!” That is exactly what Christ did and when we are brought low in the sight of God by a sense of *our own* unworthiness, we may feel encouraged to follow Jesus because of what He can make us.

What did the woman of a sorrowful spirit say when she lifted up her song? “He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill to set them among princes.” We cannot tell what God may make of us in the new creation since it would have been quite impossible to have foretold what He made of chaos in the old creation! Who could have imagined all the beautiful things that came forth from darkness and disorder by that one fiat, “Let there be light”? And who can tell what lovely displays of everything that is divinely fair may yet appear in a man’s formerly dark life when God’s Grace has said to him, “Let there be light”? O you who see in yourselves at present nothing that is desirable, come and follow Christ for the sake of what He can make out of you! Do you not hear His sweet voice calling to you and saying, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”?

Note, next, that *we are not made all that we shall be*, nor all that we ought to *desire* to be when we are, ourselves, fished for and caught. This is what the Grace of God does for us at first, but it is not all. We are like the fishes, making sin to be our element, and the good Lord comes and, with the Gospel net, He takes us and delivers us from the life and love of sin. But He has not worked for us all that He can do, nor all that we should wish Him to do when He has done this, for it is another and a

higher miracle to make us, who were fish, to become fishers! To make the saved ones saviors—to make the convert into a converter—the receiver of the Gospel into an imparter of that same Gospel to other people. I think I may say to every person whom I am addressing—If you are saved, the work is but half done until you are employed to bring others to Christ! You are as yet but half formed in the image of your Lord. You have not attained to the full development of the Christ-life in you unless you have commenced, in some feeble way, to tell others of the Grace of God—and I trust that you will find no rest for the soles of your feet till you have been the means of leading many to that blessed Savior who is your confidence and your hope!

His word is—Follow Me, not merely that you may be saved, nor even that you may be sanctified, but, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Be following Christ with that intent and aim—and fear that you are not perfectly following Him unless, in some degree, He is making use of you to be fishers of men. The fact is that every one of us must take to the business of a man-catcher. If Christ has caught us, we must catch others. If we have been apprehended by Him, we must be His constables, to apprehend rebels for Him! Let us ask Him to give us Grace to go fishing and so to cast our nets that we may take a great multitude of fish! Oh that the Holy Spirit may raise up from among us some master fishermen who shall sail their boats in many a sea and surround great shoals of fish!

My teaching at this time will be very simple, but I hope it will be eminently practical, for my longing is that not one of you that love the Lord may be backward in *servicing* Him. What does the Song of Solomon say concerning certain sheep that come up from the washing? It says, “Every one bears twins, and none is barren among them.” May that be so with all the members of this Church and all the Christian people that hear or read this sermon! The fact is, the day is very dark. The heavens are lowering with heavy thunderclouds. Men little dream of what tempests may soon shake this city and the whole social fabric of this land—even to a general breaking up of society! So dark may the night become that the stars may seem to fall like blighted fruit from the trees. The times are evil! Now, if never before, every glowworm must show its spark. You with the tiniest farthing candle must take it from under the bushel and set it on a candlestick! There is need of you all! Lot was a poor creature. He was a very, very wretched kind of Believer, but still, he might have been a great blessing to Sodom had he but pleaded for it as he should have done.

And poor, poor Christians, as I fear many are, one begins to value every truly converted soul in these evil days and to pray that each one may glorify the Lord. I pray that every righteous man, vexed as he is with the conversation of the wicked, may be more importunate in prayer than he has ever been, return to his God and get more spiritual life, that he may be a blessing to the perishing people around him. I address you, therefore, at this time, first of all upon this thought. Oh that the Spirit of God may make each one of you feel his personal responsibility!

Here is for Believers in Christ, in order to their usefulness, *something for them to do*. “Follow Me.” But, secondly, here is *something to be done by*

their great Lord and Master—“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men! You will not grow into fishermen by yourselves, but this is what Jesus will do for you if you will but follow Him. And then, lastly, here is a *good illustration*, used according to our great Master’s custom, for scarcely without a parable did He speak to the people. He presents us with an illustration of what Christian men should be—*fishers of men*. We may get some useful hints out of it and I pray the Holy Spirit to bless them to us.

I. First, then, I will take it for granted that every Believer here wants to be useful. If he does not, I take leave to question whether he can be a true believer in Christ. Well, then, if you want to be really useful, here is SOMETHING FOR YOU TO DO TO THAT END—“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

What is the way to become an efficient preacher? “Young man,” says one, “go to college.” “Young man,” says Christ, “*follow Me*, and I will make you a fisher of men.” How is a person to be useful? “Attend a training class,” says one. Quite right, but there is a surer answer than that—Follow Jesus and He will make you fishers of men. The great training school for Christian workers has Christ at its head—not only as a Tutor, but as a Leader—we are not only to learn of Him in study, but to *follow* Him in action. “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” The direction is very distinct and plain—and I believe that it is exclusive, so that no man can become a fisherman by any other process. This process may appear to be very simple, but assuredly it is most efficient. The Lord Jesus Christ, who knew all about fishing for men was, Himself, the Dictator of the rule, “Follow Me, if you want to be fishers of men. If you would be useful, keep in My tracks.”

I understand this, first, in this sense—*be separate unto Christ*. These men were to leave their pursuits. They were to leave their companions. They were, in fact, to quit the world so that their one business might be, in their Master’s name, to be fishers of men. We are not all called to leave our daily business, or to quit our families. That might be rather running away from the fishery than working at it in God’s name. But we are called most distinctly to come out from among the ungodly, to be separate and not to touch the unclean thing! We cannot be fishers of men if we remain among men in the same element with them. Fish will not be fishers! The sinner will not convert the sinner. The ungodly man will not convert the ungodly man and, what is more to the point, the worldly Christian will not convert the world! If you are of the world, no doubt the world will love its own, but you cannot save the world. If you are dark and belong to the Kingdom of Darkness, you cannot remove the darkness. If you march with the armies of the Wicked One, you cannot defeat them!

I believe that one reason why the Church of God, at this present moment, has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the Church! Nowadays we hear Nonconformists pleading that they may do this and they may do that—things which their Puritan forefathers would rather have died at the stake than have tolerated! They plead that they may live like worldlings and my sad answer to them, when they crave for this liberty, is, “Do it if you dare! It may not do

you much hurt, for you are so bad, already. Your cravings show how rotten your hearts are. If you have a hungering after such dog's meat, go, dogs, and eat the garbage! Worldly amusements are fit food for mere pretenders and hypocrites. If you were God's children, you would loathe the very *thought* of the world's evil joys and your question would not be, 'How far may we be like the world?' but your one cry would be, 'How far can we get away from the world? How much can we come out from it?'"

Your temptation would be rather to become sternly severe and ultra-Puritanical in your separation from sin, in such a time as this, than to ask, "How can I make myself like other men and act as they do?" Brothers, the use of the Church in the world is that it should be like salt in the midst of putrefaction—but if the salt has lost its savor, what is the good of it? If it were possible for salt, itself, to putrefy, it could but be an increase and a heightening of the general putridity. The worst day the world ever saw was when the sons of God were joined with the daughters of men. Then came the Flood—for the only barrier against a flood of vengeance on this world is the separation of the saint from the sinner! Your duty as a Christian is to stand fast in your own place and stand out for God, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh! Yours must be a resolve, like one of old, that, let others do as they will, as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord!

Come, children of God, you *must* stand out with your Lord outside the camp! Jesus calls to you, today, and says, "Follow Me." Was Jesus found at the theater? Did He frequent the sports of the racecourse? Was Jesus seen, do you think, in any of the amusements of the Herodian court? Not He! He was "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." In one sense no one mixed with sinners so completely as He did, when, like a physician, He went among them healing his patients, but, in another sense, there was a gulf fixed between the men of the world and the Savior which He never crossed and which they could not cross to defile Him. The first lesson which the Church has to learn is this—follow Jesus into the separated state and He will make you fishers of men. Unless you take up your cross and protest against an ungodly world, you cannot hope that the holy Jesus will make you fishers of men.

A second meaning of our text is very obviously this—*abide with Christ* and then you will be made fishers of men. These disciples whom Christ called were to come and live with Him. They were to be associated with Him every day. They were to hear Him publicly teach the everlasting Gospel and, in addition, they were to receive choice explanations in private of the Word which He had spoken. They were to be His servants and His familiar friends. They were to see His miracles and hear His prayers and, better still, they were to be with Him and become one with Him in His holy labor. It was given to them to sit at the table with Him and even to have their feet washed by Him! Many of them fulfilled that Word of God, "Where you dwell I will dwell"—they were with Him in His afflictions and persecutions. They witnessed His secret agonies. They saw His many tears. They marked the passion and the compassion of His soul and thus, after their measure, they caught His spirit—and so they learned to be fishers of men.

At Jesus' feet we must learn the art and mystery of soul-winning! To live with Christ is the best education for usefulness. It is a great blessing to any man to be associated with a Christian minister whose heart is on fire. The best training for a young man is that which the Vaudois pastors were known to give when each old man had a young man with him who walked with him whenever he went up the mountainside to preach. He lived in the house with him and marked his prayers and saw his daily piety. This was a fine instruction, was it not? But it does not compare with that of the Apostles who lived with Jesus, Himself, and were His daily companions! Matchless was the training of the twelve. No wonder that they became what they were with such a heavenly Tutor to saturate them with His own Spirit! And now, today, His bodily Presence is not among us, but His spiritual power is, perhaps, more fully known to us than it was to those Apostles in those two or three years of the Lord's corporeal Presence.

There are some of us to whom He is intimately near. We know more about Him than we do about our dearest earthly friend. We have never been quite able to read our friend's heart in all its twists and turns, but we know the heart of the Well-Beloved! We have leaned our head upon His bosom and have enjoyed fellowship with Him such as we could not have with any of our own kith and kin! This is the most sure method of learning how to do good. Live with Jesus, follow Jesus and He will make you fishers of men! Watch how He does the work and so learn how to do it, yourself. A Christian man should be bound apprentice to Jesus to learn the trade of a savior! We can never save men by offering a redemption, for we have none to present, but we can learn how to save men by warning them to flee from the wrath to come and setting before them the one great effectual Remedy! Watch how Jesus saves and you will learn how the thing is done—there is no learning it anyway else! Live in fellowship with Christ and there shall be about you an air and a manner as of one who has been made in heart and mind apt to teach and wise to win souls.

A third meaning, however, must be given to this, "Follow Me," and it is this—"Obey Me, and then you shall know what to do to save men." We must not talk about our fellowship with Christ, or our being separated from the world unto Him unless we make Him our Master and Lord in everything. Some public teachers are not true in all points to their convictions, so how can *they* look for a blessing? A Christian man, anxious to be useful, ought to be very particular as to every point of obedience to his Master. I have no doubt whatever that God blesses our Churches even when they are very faulty, for His mercy endures forever. When there is a measure of error in the teaching and a measure of mistake in the practice, He may still vouchsafe to use the ministry, for He is very gracious. But a large measure of blessing must necessarily be withheld from all teaching which is knowingly or glaringly faulty. God can set His seal upon the Truth that is in it, but He *cannot* set His seal upon the *error* that is in it! Out of mistakes about Christian ordinances and other things, especially errors in heart and spirit, there may come evils which we never looked for. Such evils may even now be telling upon the present age and may work

worse mischief upon future generations. If we desire, as fishers of men, to be largely used of God, we must copy our Lord Jesus in everything and obey Him in *every point*.

Failure in obedience may lead to failure in success. Each one of us, if he would wish to see his child saved, or his Sunday school class blessed, or his congregation converted, must take care that, bearing the vessels of the Lord, he is, himself, clean. Anything we do that grieves the Spirit of God must take away from us some part of our power for good. The Lord is very gracious and full of pity, but He is a jealous God. He is sometimes sternly jealous towards His people who are living in neglects of known duty, or in associations which are not clean in His sight. He will wither their work, weaken their strength and humble them until, at last, they say, "My Lord, I will take Your way after all. I will do what You bid me to do, for otherwise You will not accept me." The Lord said to His disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And He promised them that signs would follow and so they did follow them and so they will.

And so we must get back to Apostolic practice and to Apostolic teaching—we must lay aside the commandments of men and the whims of our own brains and we must do *what* Christ tells us, *as* Christ tells us and *because* Christ tells us! Definitely and distinctly we must take the place of *servants*—and if we will not do that, we cannot expect our Lord to work *with* us or *by* us. Let us be determined that, as true as the needle is to the pole, so true will we be, as far as our light goes, to the command of our Lord and Master. Jesus says—"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." By this teaching He seems to say—"Go beyond Me, or fall behind Me, and you may cast the net; but it shall be night with you and that night you shall take nothing. When you shall do as I bid you, you shall cast your net on the right side of the ship and you shall find."

Again, I think that there is a great lesson in my text to those who preach their own thoughts instead of preaching the thoughts of Christ. These disciples were to follow Christ that they might listen to Him, hear what He had to say, drink in His teaching and then *go and teach what He had taught them*. Their Lord says, "What I tell you in darkness, speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the house-tops." If they will be faithful reporters of Christ's message, He will make them "fishers of men." But you know the boastful method, nowadays, is this—"I am not going to preach this old, old Gospel, this musty Puritan doctrine! I will sit down in my study, burn the midnight oil and invent a new theory—then I will come out with my brand new thought and blaze away with it!" Many are not following Christ, but following themselves—and of them the Lord may well say, "You shall see whose word shall stand, Mine or theirs."

Others are wickedly prudent and judge that certain Truths which are evidently God's Word had better be kept back. You must not be rough, but must prophesy smooth things! To talk about the punishment of sin, to speak of eternal punishment, why, these are unfashionable doctrines! It may be that they are taught in the Word of God, but they do not suit the

genius of the age. We must pare them down. Brothers in Christ, I will have no share in this! Will you? O my Soul, come not into their secret! Certain things not taught in the Bible, our enlightened age has discovered. Evolution may be clean contrary to the teaching of Genesis, but that does not matter! We are not going to be believers of Scripture, but original thinkers. This is the vain-glorious ambition of the period! Mark you, in proportion as the modern theology is preached, the vice of this generation increases!

To a great degree, I attribute the looseness of the age to the laxity of the doctrine preached by its teachers. From the pulpit they have taught the people that sin is a trifle. From the pulpit these traitors to God and to His Christ have taught the people that there is no Hell to be feared! A little, little Hell, perhaps, there may be—but just punishment for sin is made nothing of! The precious atoning Sacrifice of Christ has been derided and misrepresented by those who were pledged to preach it! They have given the people the name of the Gospel, but the Gospel, itself, has evaporated in their hands. From hundreds of pulpits the Gospel is as clean gone as the dodo from its old haunts—and still the preachers take the position and name of Christ's ministers! Well, and what comes of it? Why, their congregations grow thinner and thinner—and so it must be. Jesus says, "Follow Me, I will make you fishers of men," but if you go in your own way, with your own net—you will make nothing of it and the Lord promises you no help in it. The Lord's directions make Himself our Leader and Example! It is, "Follow Me, follow Me! Preach My Gospel. Preach what I preached! Teach what I taught and keep to that!" With that blessed servility which becomes one whose ambition it is to be a copyist and never to be an original, copy Christ even in jots and tittles! Do this and He will make you fishers of men! But if you do *not* do this, you shall fish in vain.

I close this head of discourse by saying that we shall not be fishers of men unless we follow Christ in one other respect and that is, by endeavoring, in all points, to *imitate His holiness*. Holiness is the most real power that can be possessed by men or women. We may preach orthodoxy, but we must also *live* orthodoxy. God forbid that we should preach anything else, but it will be all in vain unless there is a life at the back of the testimony. An unholy preacher may even render the Truth of God contemptible! In proportion as any of us draw back from a living and zealous sanctification, we shall draw back from the place of power. Our power lies in this word, "Follow Me." Be Jesus-like! In all things endeavor to think, speak and act as Jesus did—and He will make you fishers of men. This will require self-denial. We must daily take up the cross. This may require willingness to give up our reputation—readiness to be called fools, idiots and the like, as men are apt to call those who are keeping close to their Master. There must be the cheerful resigning of *everything* that looks like honor and personal Glory in order that we may be wholly Christ's and glorify His name.

We must live His life and be ready to die His death, if need be. O Brothers, Sisters, if we do this and follow Jesus, putting our feet into the footprints of His pierced feet, He will make us fishers of men! If it should so

please Him that we should even die without having gathered many souls to the Cross, we shall speak from our graves! In some way or other the Lord will make a holy life to be an influential life! It is not possible that a life which can be described as a following of Christ should be an unsuccessful one in the sight of the Most High. "Follow Me," and there is an, "I will," such as God can never draw back from—"Follow Me, and *I will* make you fishers of men."

Thus much on the first point. There is something for us to do—we are graciously called to follow Jesus. Holy Spirit, lead us to do it!

II. But secondly, and briefly, there is SOMETHING FOR THE LORD TO DO. When His dear servants are following Him, He says, "I will make you fishers of men" and be it *never* forgotten that *it is He that makes us follow Him*, so that if the following of Him is the step to being made a fisher of men, yet He gives this to us! 'Tis all of His Spirit. I have talked about catching His spirit, abiding in Him, obeying Him, listening to Him and copying Him—but none of these things are we capable of apart from His working them all in us! "From Me is your fruit found," is a text which we must not, for a moment, forget! So, then, if we do follow Him, it is He that makes us follow Him and so *He makes us fishers of men*.

But, further, if we follow Christ, He will make us fishers of men *by all our experience*. I am sure that the man who is really consecrated to bless others will be helped in this by all that he feels, especially by his afflictions. I often feel very grateful to God that I have undergone fearful depression of spirits. I know the borders of despair and the horrible brink of that gulf of darkness into which my feet have almost gone—but hundreds of times I have been able to give a helpful grip to Brothers and Sisters who have come into that same condition, which grip I could never have given if I had not known their deep despondency, myself. So I believe that the darkest and most dreadful experience of a child of God will help him to be a fisher of men if he will but follow Christ. Keep close to your Lord and He will make every step a blessing to you.

If God, in Providence, should make you rich, He will fit you to speak to those ignorant and wicked rich who so much abound in this city—and so often are the cause of its worst sin. And if the Lord is pleased to let you be very poor, you can go down and talk to those wicked and ignorant poor people who so often are the cause of sin in this city—and so greatly need the Gospel. The winds of Providence will take you where you can fish for men! The wheels of Providence are full of eyes and all those eyes will look this way to help us to be winners of souls! You will often be surprised to find how God has been in a house that you visit—before you get there, His hands have been at work in its chambers! When you wish to speak to some particular individual, God's Providence has been dealing with that individual to make him ready for just that Word of God which you will say, but which nobody else but you could say. Oh, follow Christ and you will find that He will, by every experience through which you are passing, make you fishers of men!

Further than that, if you will follow Him, He will make you fishers of men *by distinct monitions in your own heart*. There are many monitions

from God's Spirit which are not noticed by Christians when they are in a callous condition. But when the heart is right with God and living in communion with God, we feel a sacred sensitiveness so that we do not need the Lord to shout, but His faintest whisper is heard. No, He need not even whisper. "You shall guide me with Your eyes." Oh, how many mulish Christians there are who must be held in with bit and bridle—and receive a cut of the whip every now and then! But the Christian who follows his Lord shall be tenderly guided. I do not say that the Spirit of God will say to you, "Go and join yourself to this chariot," or that you will *hear* a word in your ears—but yet in your *soul*, as distinctly as the Spirit said to Philip, "Go and join yourself to this chariot," you shall hear the Lord's will! As soon as you see an individual, the thought shall cross your mind, "Go and speak to that person." Every opportunity of usefulness shall be a call to you. If you are ready, the door shall open before you and you shall hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk you in it." If you have the Grace to run in the right way, you shall never be long without an intimation as to what the right way is! That right way shall lead you to river or sea, where you can cast your net and be a fisher of men.

Then, too, I believe that the Lord meant by this that *He would give His followers the Holy Spirit*. They were to follow Him and then, when they had seen Him ascend into the Holy Place of the Most High, they were to tarry at Jerusalem for a little while and the Spirit would come upon them and clothe them with a mysterious power. This Word was spoken to Peter and Andrew and you know how it was fulfilled to Peter! What a host of fish he brought to land the first time he cast the net in the power of the Holy Spirit! "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Brethren, we have no conception of what God could do by this company of Believers gathered in the Tabernacle to-night. If now we were to be filled with the Holy Spirit, there are enough of us to evangelize London! There are enough here to be the means of the salvation of the world! God saves not by many nor by few. Let us seek a benediction and if we seek it, let us hear this directing voice, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." You men and women that sit before me, you are by the shore of a great sea of human life swarming with the souls of men! You live in the midst of millions—and if you will follow Jesus and be faithful to Him—and true to Him and do what He bids you, He will make you fishers of men! Do not ask, "Who shall save this city?" The weakest shall be strong enough! Gideon's barley cake shall smite the tent and make it fall down! Samson, with the jawbone taken up from the earth, where it was lying bleaching in the sun, shall smite the Philistines! Fear not, neither be dismayed! Let your responsibilities drive you closer to your Master. Let horror of prevailing sin make you look into His dear face who long ago wept over Jerusalem and now weeps over London. Clasp Him and never let go! By the strong and mighty impulses of the Divine life within you, quickened and brought to maturity by the Spirit of God, learn this lesson from your Lord's own mouth—"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." You are not fit for it, but He will make you fit! You cannot do it by yourselves, but He will make you do it! You do not know how to spread nets and draw

shoals of fish to shore, but He will teach you! Only follow Him, and He will make you fishers of men!

I wish that I could somehow say this as with a voice of thunder, that the whole Church of God might hear it. I wish I could write it in stars across the sky, "Jesus says, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." If you forget the precept, the promise shall never be yours. If you follow some other track, or imitate some other leader, you shall fish in vain. God grant us to believe fully that Jesus can do great things *in* us—and then do great things *by* us for the good of our fellows!

III. The last point you might work out in full, for yourselves, in your private meditations with much profit. We have here A FIGURE FULL OF INSTRUCTION. I will give you but two or three thoughts which you can use. "I will make you *fishers of men*." You have been fishers of *fish*—if you follow Me, I will make you fishers of *men*.

A fisher is a person who is *very dependent and needs to be trustful*. He cannot see the fish. One who fishes in the sea must go and cast in a net, as it were, at an uncertainty. Fishing is an act of faith. I have often seen, in the Mediterranean, men go with their boats and enclose *acres* of sea with vast nets and yet, when they have drawn the net to shore, they have not had as much result as I could put in my hand! A few wretched silvery nothings have made up the whole take. Yet they have gone again and cast the great net several times a day, hopefully expecting something to come of it.

Nobody is so dependent upon God as the minister of God! Oh, this fishing from the Tabernacle pulpit! What a work of faith! I cannot tell that a soul will be brought to God by it. I cannot judge whether my sermon will be suitable to the persons who are here, except that I do believe that God will guide me in the casting of the net! I expect *Him* to work salvation and I depend upon Him for it! I love this complete dependence and if I could be offered a certain amount of preaching power by which *I* could save sinners, which should be entirely at my own disposal, I would beg the Lord not to let me have it, for it is far more delightful to be entirely dependent upon Him at all times! It is good to be a fool when Christ is made wisdom unto you. It is a blessed thing to be weak if Christ becomes more fully your strength! Go to work, you who would be fishers of men and yet feel your insufficiency. You that have *no strength*, attempt this Divine work! Your Master's strength will be seen when your own has all gone. A fisherman is a dependent person, he must look up for success every time he puts the net down, but still he is a trustful person and, therefore, he casts in the net joyfully.

A fisherman who gets his living by it is *a diligent and persevering man*. The fishers are up at dawn. At daybreak our fishermen off the Dogger Bank are fishing and they continue fishing till late in the afternoon. As long as hands can work, men will fish. May the Lord Jesus make us hard-working, persevering, unwearied fishers of men! "In the morning sow your seed and in the evening withhold not your hands, for you know not what shall prosper, either this or that."

The fisherman, in his own craft, is *intelligent and watchful*. It looks very easy, I dare say, to be a fisherman, but you would find that it was no child's play if you were to take a real part in it. There is an art in it, from the mending of the net right on to the pulling it to shore. How diligent the fisherman is to prevent the fish leaping out of the net! I heard a great noise one night in the sea, as if some huge drum were being beaten by a giant. I looked out and I saw that the fishermen of Mentone were beating the water to drive the fish into the net, or to keep them from leaping out when they had once encompassed them with it! Ah, yes, and you and I will often have to be watching the corners of the Gospel net lest sinners who are almost caught should make their escape. They are very crafty, these fish, and they use this craftiness in endeavoring to avoid salvation! We shall have to be always at our business and to exercise all our wits—and *more* than our own wits if we are to be successful fishers of men!

The fisherman is *a very laborious person*. It is not at all an easy calling. He does not sit in an armchair and catch fish. He has to go out in rough weathers. If he that regards the clouds will not sow, I am sure that he that regards the clouds will never fish. If we never do any work for Christ except when we feel up to the mark, we shall not do much. If we feel that we will not pray because we cannot pray, we shall never pray! And if we say, "I will not preach today because I do not feel that I could preach," we shall never preach any preaching that is worth the preaching! We must always be at it until we wear ourselves out, throwing our whole soul into the work, for Christ's sake, in all weather!

The fisherman is *a daring man*. He tempts the boisterous sea. A little brine in his face does not hurt him. He has been wet through and through a thousand times—it is nothing to him. He never expected, when he became a deep-sea fisherman, that he was going to sleep in the lap of ease. So the true minister of Christ who fishes for souls will never mind a little risk. He will be bound to do or say many a thing that is very unpopular—and some Christian people may even judge his utterances to be too severe. He must do and say that which is for the good of souls. It is not his to entertain a question as to what others will think of his doctrine, or of him—but in the name of the Almighty God he must feel, "If the sea roars and the fullness thereof, still, at my Master's command, I will let down the net."

Now, in the last place, the man whom Christ makes a fisher of men is *successful*. "But," says one, "I have always heard that Christ's ministers are to be *faithful*, but that they cannot be sure of being *successful*." Yes, I have heard that saying and, one way I know it is true, but another way I have my doubts about it. He that is faithful is, in God's way and in God's judgment, successful, more or less. For instance, here is a Brother who says that he is faithful. Of course, I must believe him, yet I never heard of a sinner being saved under him. Indeed, I would think that the safest place for a person to be in if he did not want to be saved would be under this gentleman's ministry because he does not preach anything that is likely to awaken, impress, or convict anybody! This Brother is "faithful," so he says.

Well, if any person in the world said to you, "I am a fisherman, but I have never caught anything," you would wonder how he could be called a fisherman, wouldn't you? A farmer who never grew any wheat, or any other crop—is he a farmer? When Jesus Christ says, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men," He means that you shall *really catch men*—that you *shall really save some*, for He that never did get any fish is not a fisherman! He that never saved a sinner after years of work is not a minister of Christ! If the result of his lifework is zero, he made a mistake when he undertook it. Go with the fire of God in your hands and fling it among the stubble, and the stubble will burn. You can be sure of that! Go and scatter the good Seed—it may not all fall in fruitful places, but some of it will. You can be sure of that! Do but shine and some eyes or other will be lightened! You must, you *shall* succeed. But remember, this is the Lord's word—"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Keep close to Jesus and do as Jesus did, in His Holy Spirit, and He will make you fishers of men.

Perhaps I speak to an attentive hearer who is not converted at all. Friend, I have the same thing to say to you. You, also, may follow Christ and then He can use you, even you. I do not know but that He has brought you to this place that you may be saved and that in later years He may make you speak for His name and Glory. Remember how He called Saul of Tarsus and made him the Apostle of the Gentiles? Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers and saved sinners make the ablest preachers! Oh, that you would run away from your old master, tonight, without giving him a minute's notice—for if you give him any notice, he will hold you. Hasten to Jesus and say, "Here is a poor runaway slave! My Lord, I bear the fetters still upon my wrists. Will You set me free and make me Your own?" Remember, it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Never runaway slave came to Christ in the middle of the night without His taking him in—and He never gave one up to his old master! If Jesus make you free, you shall be free, indeed! Flee away to Jesus, then, right now! May His good Spirit help you and He will, by-and-by, make you a winner of others to His praise! God bless you. Amen.

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“STRAIGHTWAY”

NO. 2618

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 16, 1899.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 15, 1882.**

*“They straightway left their nets, and followed Him.”
Matthew 4:20.*

“THEY straightway left their nets.” Immediately, without hesitation, without question. At once, on the spot, then and there, instantaneously—at the Master’s call they “left their nets, and followed Him.” It was one mark of our Savior’s authority and power that, when He commanded, men obeyed. Your memories will help you to recall many instances in which persons and even inanimate things instantly obeyed when Christ gave them the word of command. Satan and legions of demons, diseases of every kind and even winds and waves—those things which usually seem to be lawless and wild always gave heed to the Law which issued from His lips. When He spoke, it was done, for His Word was with power.

This is a mark of the effectual calling by Divine Grace—whenever it comes, men are led “straightway” to obey it. I may call you as long as I please, yet you will not come to Christ for all my calling. But if Christ shall call you by His Spirit, you will come. Yes, and come “straightway.” When the command of Christ is applied to the soul with Divine energy, there is an immediate yielding of the heart to Him and His Law is obeyed. Judge yourselves, therefore, dear Friends, whether the Word of God has come with power to you or not, for if it has not come with almighty power, but you merely hear it as I speak it, you will say to me, as Felix said to Paul, “Go your way for a time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for you.” But if the Truth of God proclaimed shall be accompanied with the energy of the Holy Spirit, then, as soon as the Lord says, “Seek you My face,” your heart will respond to Him, “Your face, Lord, will I seek.” Pray to the Lord, you who have heard and answered the call of His Spirit, that the same call may be given to others, and be effectually applied to them, to the praise of the Glory of God’s Grace.

I am going to use, in two ways, one word in my text—“straightway.” First, I suggest that this word, “straightway,” should be a motto for all Christians. All disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ should take that word as their guiding star! Secondly, *let all seekers take it as their motto, too—“straightway.”* If you would find Christ, seek Him at once—“straightway.”

I. First, then, let this word, “straightway,” be THE MOTTO OF EVERY DISCIPLE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

When I preached, many years ago, in the cathedral at Geneva, after the service was ended, the Brothers presented me with a large bronze commemorative medal of John Calvin, on which is this passage, “He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible,” which was a most suitable motto text for him. Upon the covers of his works are these words, which are also truly descriptive of the man, “*Prompte et sincere in opere Domini*”—“Prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord.” I was pleased with both those mottos and my prayer, then, was, and still is, that they may both be mine as well as Calvin’s. I pray that I may endure, as seeing Him who is invisible, and that I may also live to earn that other commendation, “prompt and sincere in the work of the Lord.” Sincere, I trust we all are, who love the Savior, but we are not all as prompt as we are sincere! You know, in business, people like a man of prompt payments upon whom they can always depend. We also like persons to be prompt in carrying out their promises, but, oh, to be prompt in the work of the Lord, so as to not only do the right thing, but to do it at the right *time*—and that right time almost always is the time suggested by my text, “straightway.” “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,” and do it at once. Leave it not to lie by among the lumber of good intentions, but if you are prompted to do it, set to work and do it immediately!

“Straightway,” then, is to be the motto of the Christian, first, *in obeying Christ’s Laws*. The moment, my dear Friend, that you find yourself in the Kingdom of Heaven by faith in Christ, endeavor to be a loyal, Law-keeping subject. Mary said to the servants at the marriage feast of Cana, concerning her Son, “Whatever He says unto you, do it.” And I say the same. “Whatever He says unto you”—He whom you have now taken to be your Lord and King—do not merely talk about it, or think of it, but do it and do it at once! “I counsel you,” said Solomon, “to keep the King’s commandment.” Take Solomon’s advice and let me add as a rider to it, “Keep the King’s commandments *straightway*.” As soon as ever a man becomes a Believer in Christ, the next step for him to take is to be *baptized*. The two things are constantly joined together in the New Testament. Our Lord said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” When the eunuch came to a certain water, he asked Philip, “What does hinder me to be baptized?” Philip answered, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” I add to that, “If you believe with all your heart, you not only *may*, but you are *bound* to do it according to the Law of the Kingdom of Christ!” Do you tell me that you cannot see it to be your duty? I would advise you candidly to search the Scriptures and find out the teaching and practice of our Lord and His Apostles concerning Believers’ Baptism. If, after that, you still say the same, I must leave you to your Master—I am not your judge.

I hope there will be no question with any of you who love the Lord about the next point. It is the duty of every Believer in Christ to come to His Table. He said, “This do in remembrance of Me.” He bids us gather in His name and commemorate His death in the breaking of bread and the pouring out of wine. So how can you say that you are His obedient disciple if you have lived, to now, in total negligence of that great commemo-

rative ordinance? “Straightway,” Friend—“straightway” obey *both* the ordinances of the Kingdom—and delay no longer!

“Straightway,” also, unite yourself with the people of God. Christ’s servants—Christ’s blood-bought ones—are called “sheep.” Sheep are gregarious creatures—they always go in flocks. Join yourself to your Brothers and Sisters somewhere. If they are evilly spoken of, go and be evilly spoken of with them. Do not attempt to fare better than the rest of your Master’s servants, but take up Christ’s Cross and follow Him. Give yourselves first to Christ and afterwards to us, or to some other Christian Church, according to the will of God. And do this “straightway!” And whatever else appears to be the Law of the House—and the Law of Christ’s House is very plainly written in the Gospels and the Epistles—obey the Law of the House—and obey it “straightway.”

Next, dear Friends, make this word, “straightway,” your motto *in entrance upon Christian service*. Do you ask, “When should a Believer begin to work for Christ?” I answer, “Straightway.” There are no laborers for the Master who are so useful as those who begin to be useful while they are young. Sometimes God converts men in mid life, or even in old age, and uses them in His service, but, still, I venture to assert that Church History will show that the most useful servants of Christ were those who were caught early and who, from their youth up, bore testimony to the Gospel of Christ. At any rate, as soon as *you* are converted, I pray you to begin to do something for Jesus so as to get your hand in for future labor. In the case of some old people who have been professors of religion for years, but who have done next to nothing for Christ, I find it very difficult to ever stir them up at all. When I do get a saddle on them, they are very restless creatures, like a horse that has never been broken in—but if I break them in while they are colts, they get used to their work, it becomes a delight to them and they would not be happy unless they had something to do for the Lord Jesus! If Christ has redeemed, you, Beloved, and you know it, get to His service “straightway.” Let there be no delay whatever, but at once commence to labor for your Lord!

I remember having a considerable share of sneers and rebukes from some who thought themselves very wise men because I began preaching at the age of sixteen. I was recommended to tarry at Jericho till my beard had grown, and a great many other pieces of advice were given to me, but I confess that I have never regretted that I was a “boy-preacher” of the Word of God—and if I could have my time over, again, I would like to do just the same as I did then. O you young men who are just converted, try to serve God at once, for, if you idle away your years until the boy has ripened into a full-grown man and his beard adorns his chin, I question whether he will not be “a lazy-beard” all the rest of his life. No, no—get to work at once—“straightway!” Find out your niche and stand in it. Ask the Master to allot you your portion of the great harvest field and go to work in it with all your might. And keep on at it, God helping you, till your dying day. “Straightway,” then, is to be your motto concerning the service of the Master.

And while I give this motto for the commencement of our whole life-work, I beg to propose it to all Christian friends as a suitable motto for each work as it arises. If there is anything good to be done, when shall I do it? "Straightway." There is no time like the present for the fulfillment of a good design. How many excellent projects have been postponed for a time and, therefore, never carried out for the benefit of men! Now, dear Friends, especially you who have your children around you, if you ask me, "When shall I commence to train them for God?" I answer, "Straightway." "But they are so young." Well, never mind how young they are, you will find bad tempers and many other evils springing up from the hearts of even the smallest children! And the time to repress them is as soon as they appear. You will find that Satan will take the earliest hour that he can find for doing his deadly work. He is always up early in the morning and he will try, if he can, to sow the tares in that little plot of ground. Take as early an hour as Satan takes and ask God, by His Grace, that you may teach your child the things of eternal life "straightway." I would say to you, dear Mother, if you have never talked with your daughter about her soul, do it this very night. "But," you reply, "when I get home, she will be in bed." If so, then wake her up, but do talk and pray with her tonight! And then let her fall asleep again. Begin this holy service at once if you have neglected it until now.

And you, dear Father, if you have never yet personally spoken to your children about the Savior, you cannot tell the power you might have over them if you would do so. I shall never forget when my father spoke to me, as a boy, about my soul, and asked me to pray. I remember with what shamefacedness I declined the attempt—and how wounded I felt, in my heart, to think that I was not able to pray. I had my groans and crying unto God in secret, but they were deepened and intensified by the question that he had put to me. O dear parents, do begin at once, that they may become God's children while yet they are your children! A little boy once said, "Father, please take me to Chapel with you tonight." "My Dear," the father replied, "you are too young. I will take you when you grow older." "Father," answered the child, "if I don't go now, very likely when I get older, I shall not want to go at all." And, alas, that is often the case! Take them, therefore, while they are yet little, where they may get a benefit to their souls and "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Then, with regard to any individuals with whom you may meet, take care to speak to them about the Savior. If you ask me when you shall speak to them, I answer, "Straightway"—tomorrow morning, across the counter, or in the workshop, or whenever there is a quiet minute or two that you can use. Perhaps the friend to whom you think of speaking may be dead if you delay until the end of the week, so go to him "straightway." There is a minister now preaching the Gospel, and God is greatly blessing him, who says he owes his earnestness to a remark I made in a certain College that I visited. I was asked, as we say, "on the spur of the moment," to speak a word to the students, and I said, "Well, Brothers, I have nothing to say to you except this—whenever you see the devil, have

a shot at him." The young man told me that he remembered that sentence and it had often been of service to him. So I say it again to every Christian here—Whenever you see the devil, have a shot at him! If you see sin, rebuke it! If you see doubt, try to remove it! If you see darkness, bring the Light of God to bear upon it—and do it "straightway," for opportunities are flying and will soon be gone unless we seize them as they come near us!

There is a lamentable story told of a man in a boat being carried down a waterfall and drowned and, an hour after, one who had been standing with others on the shore said, "I could have saved him if I had thought of it before." They asked him, "How would you have done it?" And he laid before them a perfectly feasible commonsense plan that might have been easily carried out and, I think, he went home very miserable, for all the spectators of the disaster seemed to say, "Why did you not think of it before? You are wise too late." So, when certain men have died, I think some of you must have known what it was to say, "Oh, I wish I had spoken to him! That Gospel which saved me might have been a blessing to him, but now he is gone and I have thought of the remedy too late!" Do not let it be possible to have such regrets, but, whenever you find an opportunity of speaking about salvation to others, do it "straightway."

And, once again, let this word, "straightway," be your motto with regard to your own soul. Whenever you find your spiritual life declining, your faith growing weak and your love getting cold, go back to Jesus and ask for quickening—and do it "straightway." Always nip these things in the bud! Most diseases must have the remedies applied at once if they are to be cured. If they are allowed to remain unchecked for a time, they gather strength to the great injury of the patient. The moment you feel that you have not the power in prayer that you once had, go "straightway" to Jesus! The instant you realize that you have not the love for souls that you once had, fly away to Jesus and tell Him all about your sad condition. Oh, if we always took heed to our backsliding as soon as it began, how much of sorrow and how much of sin might be spared! So, dear Friends, if I am describing your case, I implore you to renew your communion with your Lord—get back to Christ, ask for pardon at His hands—and do all this "straightway."

Dear Christian Brothers and Sisters, this is the motto for you, "STRAIGHTWAY!" Let it flame like a lightning flash through the place! Whatever ought to be done, let it be done at once, without even a second thought. O Beloved, will you still delay in such a matter of urgency as this? Then let me further plead with you for a minute or two before I turn to the other part of my subject. Imagine the day of battle and a colonel issuing the order to his regiment to march into the midst of the fray. Do the men hesitate? Do they stand still? Then there is mutiny in the ranks! "Forward!" he said, but the troops stay where they are. They are disloyal. How can the battle be won by men who act like that? But see how the faithful soldiers in the army behave. The command is given, "Charge!" It matters not how many are their foes—away they go like a whirlwind—who can stop them? Let it be so with you, dear Friends. Good soldiers of

Jesus Christ must not hesitate, but must obey the Captain of their salvation "straightway."

Have you a vivid imagination? Can you, in your mind's eye, picture an angel up yonder before the burning Throne of God? The voice of Jehovah has said to him, "Descend to earth." Can you imagine Gabriel staying there, with his finger on his lips, deliberating whether he shall fly or not? Do you not often ask that you may do God's will on earth as angels do it in Heaven? Then, how can you hesitate, even for an instant, to do what you are clearly commanded by Christ to do? Let me ask you another question—Did Christ delay His great mission of mercy? No, for it was with Him as good Dr. Watts sings—

***"Plunged in a gulf of dark despair
We wretched sinners lay
Without one cheerful beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.
With pitying eyes, the Prince of Grace
Beheld our helpless grief.
He saw, and oh, amazing love,
He ran to our relief!
Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste He fled,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead."***

There was no hesitating in Christ! Then, shall there be any in you who are called by His name?

Further, did God lose any time before He saved you when you cried to Him? Does He delay to bless you now? If there is a seeming delay, it is Infinite Wisdom that makes you wait, only that the blessing may be all the more valued by you when it comes! But He is always ready to bless you. He stands prepared to give you all that you need. I charge you, therefore, by all these reasons, take this word, "straightway," as your motto. You are, yourself, a dying man, and if you do not accomplish your life-work "straightway," when will you perform it? Others are dying all around you! If you are not made a blessing to them "straightway," when may you hope to do them good? If anything is right, do it at once—there cannot be a good reason for any delay! Why should you ask for second thoughts about a plain duty? In such a case, first thoughts are best, and those first thoughts should be followed by immediate and energetic action. "Straightway!" Write it on your banners! Let it wave in the breeze, for victory will be given to the Church of Christ when she advances to the fight with all her hosts "straightway!"

II. Now I ask the prayers of all Believers while, during the rest of my discourse, I try to speak to those who are "out of the way." In this large congregation there must be many who are not saved. It is idle to suppose that we are, all of us, the children of God and the servants of Christ, for we are not. There are some here who are not saved—but among them there are, I hope, some who wish to be saved. Well, if you really desire to be Christians. If the Holy Spirit has made you start seeking the Savior, I ask you to put this word into your bosom and bear it home with you, "straightway," for IT IS A MOST SUITABLE MOTTO FOR ALL SEEKERS.

Are you seeking the Lord? Again, I pray you, *hear the Gospel* “straightway.” The Gospel is not preached everywhere. Some go to certain places of worship because the music is admirable. Others because the preacher is clever. Some because it is considered “respectable” to go to such a place. I charge you, if you have not found Christ, care for nothing but finding Him! And where will you find Him except where He is fully and faithfully preached? If He is the head and front of the minister’s discourses, then go there—not where they preach the “modern gospel,” which would not save a mouse—but where Christ on the Cross is lifted high as the one hope for the salvation of sinners! Go there, go at once, and make a habit of going where Christ Crucified is constantly proclaimed! Remember how the Lord gave the invitation to the heavenly feast even by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah. “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money; come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And you labor for that which satisfies not? Harken diligently unto Me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”

But when you are hearing the Gospel, be not content with merely hearing, but *repent* “straightway.” You cannot have Christ and keep your sins, therefore, give up all evil at once! May God’s blessed Spirit now separate you from your sins! Have you been inclined to drunkenness? Turn the intoxicating cup bottom upwards once and for all, and have done with it! What has been your particular besetting sin? Though it were dear as your right eye, pluck it out! Though it were precious as your right arm, cut it off and cast it from you! And do it “straightway.” “Oh,” you say, “I will see about it tomorrow!” Then, I know that God’s Spirit is not effectually calling you, or you would be ready at once to turn from every false way, to Him, and then the time of your deliverance would have come. Therefore, I repeat—Repent “straightway.” But then you must also *pray* “straightway.” Plead with the Lord just where you are now in your seat, or, if you desire quiet and retirement, pray as soon as you reach your house—yes, pray in the street, on the road home! Lift up your heart to God and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” But do it at once, or, as the text says, “straightway.”

Above all, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ* “straightway.” That word, “straightway,” is implied in every Gospel exhortation! We are not sent to preach to our Hearers, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ tomorrow!” No minister of Christ is authorized to say, “Put off faith in Christ for a week.” No, but our message is, “Behold, *now* is the accepted time! Behold, *now* is the day of salvation!” Believe in Jesus and believe in Him *now*! And if the Spirit of God is really working in your spirit, you will be moved to believe *now*. If it is only my talk and my persuasion, you will still say, “Tomorrow.” But if it is God’s Word, it will go with power to your heart and you will say, “Now, Lord, even now, bring my soul out of prison, that I may trust Your Son and praise Your holy name.” For a man to delay, who

has nothing to depend upon but the breath in his nostrils, is the height of folly! For a man to delay, who stands on the brink of the grave, when that grave will conduct him to Hell, is indeed terrible!

Delay is dangerous, but I confess that I do not understand men and their criminal carelessness. I daresay you read in the papers, a short time ago, about the destruction of the Swiss village of Elm. What an extraordinary affair it was, that the people should have had it reported to them, for months, that the forest which overhung the village was often seen to tremble when the rocks were blasted at the quarry. They knew that, sooner or later, the mountain above them would inevitably come down and crush them! Yet they went to church on the Sunday morning, and were gathered together as comfortably and quietly as if nothing alarming could ever happen to them. Many of you, no doubt, remember the story and, therefore, I need not tell you how, all of a sudden, the great forest above the village seemed to come down upon them—and when stalwart men from the upper end of the village hurried to help their fellow countrymen, they had scarcely arrived before the mountain, itself, descended in one tremendous mass and buried the whole village in a moment! The people knew that such a calamity as that would certainly happen—they had been warned of it again and again—yet they persisted in living there.

I do not know how men could get so accustomed to impending danger as they did, and I must blame the foolhardiness of those who willfully ran such a risk of destruction. But it is nothing compared with the madness of man and women who see the great mountain of Divine Wrath trembling and about to fall upon them, to crush them to all eternity and yet they go on with their games and occupy themselves with their sports, just as if there were no God to judge them, no Heaven to be sought, no Hell to be shunned! They sin as if iniquity were mere child's play and there were no punishment for it in the world to come! Delay is dangerous at all times, but I feel moved to say that it is especially dangerous for some of you just now, for, as the Lord lives, unless you find salvation within another week, you will be in the world where it shall be impossible for you either to seek or to find it! If not saved soon, you will be lost forever. Delay is dangerous—therefore escape for your lives and escape at once!

Besides, delay will be a great loss to you. If I were unsaved at this moment and in my right senses, I would wish to be saved here and now. I do not know what has been done with the two men who have been lying in prison for the last two years under what is believed to be a false accusation. We heard that the Home Secretary had fetched them up from Chatham to Pentonville to Millbank and that they were brought up in their own clothes, with a view to setting them free to-morrow, but I guarantee you, if I had been in their position and had been asked, "Would you prefer to be set at liberty on Saturday, or wait till Monday?" I would have said, "Oh, set me free at once, straightway!" Any delay would be to my loss. Who wants to stay in prison on a Sunday when he can walk at large? Who wishes to be there five minutes longer than he is compelled to

be? And, in like manner, who would be unconverted five minutes longer than he needs to be? It is a loss to a man to be unsaved—even if he is ultimately saved, all the time that went before his conversion is just so long spent in prison—it is dead time, lost time! Therefore, let there be no delay in trusting Christ, for all delay is a loss.

And, besides, delay makes it more difficult to get into the way of life. A person, on a certain line of railway, wants to go North, but he gets into the wrong train and, therefore, travels South. After he has gone a little way, he puts his head out and says, “This is not the station that I ought to pass!” And, as the porters cry out a name altogether different from what he expected to hear, he exclaims, “Why, I am on the wrong train!” What does he do then? Go on and say, “Well, I will get out by-and-by”? Not he! If he is a man of business and needs to keep an appointment, he jumps out at the first station after he discovers his mistake, and he says, “Tell me, please, when is there a train back? I have evidently come South instead of going North, and I need to return as quickly as possible.” My dear Friends, some of you are traveling on the wrong line and you have come to a station, tonight! It is not a station where you ought to be. Do not, I entreat you, go on to another in the same direction, but I pray God, by His Grace, that you may get out of the train in which you have been traveling on the down line, and say, “Which is the train for Heaven? I must get into it somewhere—first class, second class, third class, or in the goods wagon—I do not care where I am, as long as I do but get in, for I have made a mistake, and I would not continue to make it—for the longer I remain as I am, the more difficult will it be for me to get right.”

Do you not also know, dear Friends, that every moment in which a man delays he is committing more sin? When I am not doing that which is right, I sin by omission. When a man neglects a duty for a week, how many times does he sin? “Once,” you answer. Ah, no! It is his duty to do it now, but he has not done it, so that is sin. It will be equally his duty in five minutes’ time, and every moment he puts it off, he keeps on committing sin upon sin! The longer he delays, he continues to sin. Have you ever heard the legend of one who had often delayed his repentance till he was taken into a forest where he saw an old man chopping sticks for his fire. He cut away till he had enough to make a large pile of firewood and then he tied the firewood up and stooped to put it on his shoulders, but it was too heavy for him to lift. The old man sighed, took his axe and cut down some more branches and added them to his bundle. But when he tried to take it up, of course it was still heavier than before! So the foolish old man, with many a sigh, went on cutting more wood and put that on the heap, and then tried to lift it, but of course it was heavier still! And the longer he delayed, the heavier the burden became. That is just your case, dear Friend, if you are delaying to repent—

***“Longer wisdom you despise,
Harder is she to be won.”***

There is all the more sin to be repented of, there is the more hardness of heart to be overcome, so you are adding to the difficulty every moment that you delay! “Grandfather,” said a little child, “the preacher talked about loving Jesus. Do you love Him?” “No, child,” said the old man. “I

have never thought of those things, but I hope that you will while your heart is tender." "But, Grandfather, you will die soon. Please, won't you love Jesus?" "No, child," replied the old man, "my heart is too hard, now. It is no use for me to think about it." Many a man has said that! It is a great mistake, for the Lord can soften the hardest heart and bring the oldest man or woman to Himself. Still, there is great force in the grandfather's words and it is a blessed thing when we begin to serve the Lord early, for there is a hardening process that goes on every hour of delay, which I pray God, of His Infinite Mercy, to prevent by bringing every one of you to Jesus Christ "straightway."

Shall I tell you one thing more before I finish? It is this—whenever a man will not have Christ "straightway." Whenever he will not give up his sin "straightway." Whenever he will not believe in Jesus "straightway," that is a roundabout method of saying, "No," to Christ! The father in the parable said to the son, "Go, work today in my vineyard," and he replied, "I go, Sir." That is to say, "I am going, Sir. I mean to go. Give me just a little time to think it over. It is all right, Sir, I will go." But how does the parable put it? "He said, I go, Sir, and went not." It was an indirect way of saying that, after all, he did not mean to go. Alas, that is what I fear some of you will do tonight. You will say, "Yes, what the preacher says is quite correct. We should seek Christ and plead for mercy—and we will do so—by-and-by. Soon—not immediately. Of course we cannot be in a hurry about these things, but we will attend to them some day." I tell you, Sirs, plainly, that you will not! You are the sort of people who will not come to Christ! You have not the moral courage to say, "No," but you mean, "No," all the while! And if you said, "No," I would have more hope of you, for the rest of the parable runs thus—"He said to the other son, Go, work today in my vineyard. And he said, I will not." That was pretty plain. "But afterwards he repented, and went." Now, I would rather have you say, "I will not," and then afterwards go home and repent and come to Christ, than I would have you beat about the bush and say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes," thinking that you are complimenting Christ with your lying—I dare not use a milder term! That "yes, yes, yes," means that you will not!

Have you never noticed, when you have been collecting subscriptions, if you go to a person who does not say, "No," straight out, but says, "Well, let me look at your list—yes, what is the objective of it?" that he usually adds, "I have many calls. I will think about it"? I have known such people, "think about it," a very long while, but nothing ever came of all their thinking! You smile at what people do with regard to a subscription list—and it is, in some respects, a thing to smile over. But beware lest you do the same with your soul! Do not, I pray you, act like that towards the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not merely think about it, but *do it*! Go straight to Him and think of it afterwards—and you will then have to think, with joy—and delight, that the best day's work His Grace ever enabled you to do was this getting away to Christ and casting yourself on Him!

God bless you, dear Friends! May we all meet in Heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 25:1-13.**

Verses 1, 2. *Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.* What a division this makes in the visible Church of God! Let us hope that we are not to gather from this that as many as half the professors of Christianity at any time are like these foolish virgins! Yet our Lord would not have mentioned so high a proportion if there were not a very large mixture of foolish with the wise—"Five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

3. *They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them.* They thought that if they had the external, it would be quite enough. The secret store of oil they judged to be unnecessary because it would be unseen. They would employ one hand in carrying the lamp, but to occupy the other hand by holding the oil-flask seemed to them to be doing too much—giving themselves up too thoroughly to the work—so they "took their lamps, and took no oil with them." They might just as well have had no lamps at all!

4. *But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.* Oil in their lamps and oil *with* their lamps. Lamps are of no use without oil, yet the oil needs the lamp, or else it cannot be rightly used. The light of profession cannot be truly sustained without the oil of Grace. Grace, wherever it exists, ought to show itself, as the oil is made to burn by means of the lamp, but it is no use to attempt to make a show unless there is that secret store somewhere by which the external part of religion may be maintained.

5. *While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.* Both the wise and the foolish fell into a state which seemed alike in them both. In the case of good men, Christ's delaying His coming often causes disappointment, weariness and then lethargy. And even the true Church falls into a deep slumber. In the foolish—the mere professors—this condition goes much further. There being in them no true life, the very name to live becomes abandoned and, before long they give up even the profession of religion when there is no secret oil of Grace to sustain it.

6. *And at midnight when things had come to the worst.* "At midnight"—the coldest and darkest hour, when everybody was asleep.

6. *There was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him.* That was a cry which startled everybody! None of the virgins could sleep when once it was announced that the bridegroom was coming. I wish, dear Friends, that we thought more of the great Truth of the Second Advent. The more often it is preached in due proportion with other Truths of God, the better. We still need to hear that midnight cry, "Go you out to meet Him."

7. *Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.* They could not sleep any longer. They were fairly startled and awakened.

8. *And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us some of your oil. Ah, me! Now they began to value what they had, before, despised! They were foolish enough to think that oil was unnecessary, but now they saw that it was the one essential thing, so they cried to the wise virgins, “Give us some of your oil.” And hear the dreadful reason—*

8. *For our lamps are gone out.* I do not know any more terrible words than those, “Our lamps are gone out.” It is worse to have a lamp that has gone out than never to have had a lamp at all. “Our lamps are gone out.’ We once rejoiced in them. We promised ourselves a bright future. We said, ‘All is well for the marriage supper.’ But ‘our lamps are gone out,’ and we have no oil with which to replenish them.” O Sirs, may none of us ever have to lift up that mournful cry! On a dying bed, in the extremity of pain, in the depth of human weakness it is an awful thing to find one’s profession burning low, one’s hope of Heaven going out like the snuff of a candle!

9. *But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go you rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.* It is no easy matter to go and wake up the seller of oil when the midnight hour has struck. O you who are putting off repentance to a dying bed, you are foolish virgins, indeed! Your folly has reached the utmost height! You will have more than enough to do when you lie there with the death-sweat cold upon your brow, without then having to seek the Grace which you are neglecting to obtain today, but which you will value then!

10. *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came.* While they were not there.

10, 11. *And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.* Too late! So that they could not enter.

12. *But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.* “I never knew you,” says Christ in another place, and this knowledge of His is always bound up with affection. He loves no heart that He knows not in this sense. Those whom He knows, He loves. Will He ever say to me or to you, dear Friend, “I know you not”? God grant that He never may have cause to do so!

13. *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man comes.*

HYMN FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—416, 520, 492.

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

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

THREE HOMILIES FROM ONE TEXT

NO. 333

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

*“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues
and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom and healing
all manner of sickness and all manner of disease
among the people. And His fame went
throughout all Syria: and they
brought unto Him all sick
people that were taken with different diseases
and torments and those which were
possessed with devils and those
which were lunatic, and those
that had the palsy. And He healed them. And there
followed Him great multitudes of people from
Galilee and from Decapolis and from
Jerusalem, and from Judea and
from beyond Jordan.”
Matthew 4:23-25.*

THE ministry of our most blessed Lord bears upon its own countenance the stamp of the Truth of God. “He taught as one having authority and not as the Scribes.” Whatever His enemies might lay to His door, I do not find they were ever able to summon audacity enough to impeach His correctness, or suspect His sincerity. We believe that Jesus Christ’s sermons were their own witnesses—the words He uttered had in them so much power to convict the conscience, that there would have been willfulness sufficient for the condemnation of the men who rejected His ministry—even though it had not been attended with supernatural credentials.

Nevertheless, our Lord and Master—that unbelievers might have no cloak for their sin—was pleased to supplement His doctrines with His miracles, so that the works which He did, as well as the words which He spoke, might bear witness of Him that He came forth from God. Those miracles were to the men of that generation, the sign and seal and warrant, that Jesus was really sent of the Father.

Let us mark here, my Brethren, how very different were the seals of Jesus’ ministry from those which were given by Moses. When it was demanded of Moses to prove whether he was sent of God or not, he took the wonder-working rod in his hand and achieved prodigies. But if you will remember, they were all miracles of judgment—not of mercy. Did he not turn their rivers into blood and slay their fish? Did he not bring a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness which might be felt? Did he not smite their first-born—yes, and bring the waters of the Red Sea upon the chivalry of Egypt and so sweep them all away?

And afterwards in the midst of the children of Israel, though there were miracles of mercy, yet for the most part were they not miracles of

judgment and did not the people see different plagues and different wonders among them, even when they were in the wilderness? I repeat it—Moses, the type of the Law, has his credentials in judgment. How different with Jesus. He is full of grace and truth and the seals of His ministry must be works of beneficence, acts of mercy and kindness. He turns not the water into blood, but He turns the water into wine. He slays not their fish, but multiplies a few small fishes and feeds thousands therewith. He does not smite their wheat with hail and break their sycamore trees with His thunderbolts but instead thereof, He multiplies the bread, He gives them many blessings.

He sends away no disease or boils or sores, but He heals their sicknesses. Instead of striking the first-born dead, He heals the dying and rescues from the grasp of death some who had even gone down to the grave. This must be ever a hopeful sign to the poor, trembling conscience. Jesus comes with deeds of mercy—these are indeed the warrants of His mission—“And why should He not come to me with deeds of mercy?” Let the poor disconsolate heart ask, “Why should He not work a wonder of mercy in me? If I had to deal with Moses, he might find it needful to smite me with death, to prove himself sent of God. But if Jesus will still prove Himself to be full of grace and truth, may He not work a wonder of mercy in washing away my sins, in saving my poor soul, clothing it with His robe of righteousness and making me at last stand among the glorified?”

Having thus prefaced my text, permit me now to come more nearly and closely to it. And I think it will suggest three short homilies, three brief sermons, which I will endeavor to utter and may God bless them. And first, it seems to me, in my text there is a brief homily for ministers upon the work of faith. Then a lecture to saints upon their labor of love. And yet again, a longer sermon full of encouragement to poor trembling sinners.

I. My text seems to me to contain A BRIEF AND PITHY HOMILY TO MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL—“Jesus Christ went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom.”

Does it not say to us, my Brethren in the ministry, that we should be instant in season and out of season, preaching the Word? Does it not suggest to us that perhaps we might preach more frequently? And that we might do more good if by journeying about from place to place we commanded a different audience and so brought more hearers under the sound of the Word and more hearts under the influence of the Truth of God? Do ministers of the Gospel preach as often as they might? Is there any precedent in Scripture for preaching two sermons on the Sabbath and one during the week and doing no more?

Ought we not to be more fully given up to our ministry? Should we not often be preaching the Word and would it not be well with us if we could say with John Bradford, “I count that hour lost in which I have not either with tongue or with pen said something for the world’s good and for my Master’s honor.” Might we not be less particular about our preparation? Oh how much there is of worldly flesh-pleasing, in our pruning up our sentences and trying to polish our periods! Might not that time which is spent in studious elaboration be much more profitably spent in public exhortation? And might we not get more power by practicing the ministry

than we can by sitting still and endeavoring to catch the sacred spell from books, though written by the wisest of men?

Is it not after all the fact that the blacksmith's arm is made strong not by studying a book upon nerves and upon anatomy but by using his hammer? And is not the minister to achieve power in his ministry rather by the exercise of it than by any learning or teaching that he can ever procure? Might it not be, perhaps, less for our honor, but more for our Master's glory, if we preached more frequently and itinerated more widely and here and there and everywhere preached the word of Jesus? I know some Brethren who have remained in one place so long without having ever gone from it that the people know the very tones of their voice and they go to sleep under it almost out of necessity.

If these Brethren, without giving up their charge, would spend many week days in going abroad to preach in the streets, in the highways and hedges, to preach under God's blue sky, it would do their very voices good. Oh there is no place like it when you have a little hillock for your pulpit, ten or twenty thousand people gathered around you and the heavens for your sounding board! Whitfield used to call it his throne and well, indeed, he might. For there is a marvelous power which thrills through the soul of a man when—there unshackled and free—he stands with thousands of earnest eyes gazing upon him, to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ!

If I can only convince ministers that the work to which they are called is not restricted to their pulpits, but that they ought to come out of their pulpits and preach the Gospel to every creature—I shall feel that this short homily has been worthy of being expounded. I do not believe if we preach in our own pulpits from the first of January to the last of December that we shall clear our heads from the blood of men, provided that is we have voice and strength equal to the labor. You are not to sit still and expect sinners to come to you. Soldiers of Christ are not everlastingly to lie in the trenches. Up, men and at them—up and charge upon your foes! If you would win souls, you must seek them.

The sportsman knows that his game will not come to the window of his house to be shot. The fisherman knows that the fish will not come swimming up to his door. Do they not go abroad and seek their prey? And so must you and I. If we would win souls we must not stand forever in one place, but wherever there is found opportunity—be it in an uncanonical place, yes, be it in a place that has been desecrated to the service of Satan—even there, let us preach the name of Jesus. And we shall see greater things than it is ever possible for us to behold by going on in our old way of routine—standing in our square hut of a thing called a pulpit and hoping to win souls by prophesying there.

I sometimes wish that some of our congregations were without Chapels, or that they might be driven out of them—for some of them have stuck inside their own doors so long, that everybody seems content to dwell there with spiders and cobwebs and never to come forth to make a stir in the world. Why, if the hundred and fifty Baptist Churches of London, let alone all the members of other denominations, did but feel that they are not to be bounded within four walls and that their work is not to be done

in regular spheres, but everywhere—surely there would be better days for London and we should have to rejoice that God had made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the people.

II. And now I turn to my second homily, which is not for ministers particularly, but FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN GENERAL. We read in the Matthew 4:24—“And they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with different diseases and torments and those which were possessed with devils and those which were lunatic and those that had the palsy. And He healed them.”

Let the emphasis rest upon those few words, “They brought unto Him all sick people.” We have here assembled, my Brethren, a very large number of persons who know the Truth of God as it is in Jesus and who love it in their hearts, for they have felt its power and they bless God that they know it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. To you I speak, Brothers and Sisters! Now that you are yourselves redeemed and converted, there is a great work laid upon you. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of this world. You are a city set upon a hill that cannot be hid.

Your business is from this time forth to do battle against the powers of darkness and to seek, as much as lies in you, to pluck sinners as brands from the awful burning. I would stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, upon this solemn duty. Do you exercise it as you should? Are you all of you longing to be the winners of souls? Have you all the laudable ambition of being fathers and mothers in Israel, by bringing others to that Cross which is so precious to you?—

***“Do you gladly tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior you have found?”
“Point them to His redeeming blood,
And say, ‘Behold the way to God?’ ”***

Some of you can say, “Yes,” but none of us can say that we have done as much and as well as we ought to have done. Permit me to give you a thought which may perhaps help you, my Christian Brethren, in your work of faith and labor of love for the redemption of the souls of men. Let me tell you that if you would have souls saved, you must bring them to Jesus. “But,” you say, “they must come themselves.” Yes, I answer they must if they shall ever be saved, but before they will ever come themselves, you must bring them.

You notice in the text, those men who had the palsy could not walk to Christ, but others brought them. Many of those poor demoniacs would not come, but they bound them hand and foot and made them come. Doubtless, some of the lunatics struggled very hard not to be brought, but they would bring them. And people that were very near death’s door, who could not stir hand or foot and were unconscious—they were brought, too. The loving earnestness of their friends supplied the lack of strength in themselves. They could not come, but their friends could bring them.

And now you say you have little power to do good, but I think in this matter you have far more power than you dream of. You can bring sick souls to Christ. Do you ask me how? I answer, first by prayer. If you should select some one person and lay his case specially before God in

prayer and never cease your supplications till you were heard for that one, you will have reason to attest that God is verily one that hears and that answers prayer. And if you should have sufficient faith to carry five or six, no, to carry a whole family on the loving arms of your prayers up to the Mercy Seat of God, you will find that in answer to your fervent cry, they will assuredly be saved.

Oh, there are many of us here who were brought to Christ by our mothers. We knew it not, but they were carrying our names, like the high priest of old, upon their breasts before the Lord, while we were living in sin and indulging in iniquity. There are men here that were converted to God instrumentally by their sisters. For when they were going on in all their gaiety and frivolity, a loving sister was weeping for them, or pleading with God both night and day, that her brother might live. And I do not doubt hundreds of you have been brought to God by your minister, because your minister has made you the object of prayer and has pleaded with God for you.

And many of you by the elders of the Church—by the deacons, or by others, who, looking upon you as a congregation, have fixed their eye on someone and said, “That interesting young man, I will make him a matter of prayer—that intelligent father of a family who has stepped in, but who only comes occasionally, he shall be the subject of my petition.” In fact, I think it probable that when the records of eternity shall be unfolded, it shall be found that every soul that came to Christ was brought instrumentally by some other—not perhaps, by any visible means—but some other person praying for that man and God heard that prayer and so that soul was saved.

Have you any sick in your house? Bring them out on the bed of prayer to Christ. Mother, bring out your sick son and your sick daughter! Wife, bring out your demoniacal husband who seems as if he were possessed of the devil. I say to one and another among you, bring out that friend of yours who acts as if he were mad with sin, like a very lunatic. Bring them all out as they did of old and plead this day with Christ for their salvation. I think I see that day when Jesus walked through the streets of Capernaum. No sooner did He rise in the morning, than, stepping outside, He saw a bed here, and a mattress there, and a couch there—multitudes assembled with all manner of sick folks—some of them leaning on crutches and saying, “When will the morning come?”

And there was a good deal of struggling as to who should get the best place and who should be nearest to Him as He came outside. At last, you would hear if you were half a mile from the house where Jesus is residing, you would hear a buzz—“He is coming out! He is coming out!” And then He would come forth from His house and touching some lunatic, He would cool his fevered brain and the man would fall at His feet and begin to kiss Him. But, before he could pay his homage, Christ would have touched some palsied or paralytic man and he would be cured. And going onwards, dropsy, fevers, devils all fly before Him.

And then you would see a great crowd as they all came behind Him, some of them waving the crutches they no longer required. Some blind man holding up in the air the bandage he used to wear to conceal that

horrid eye of his, out of which he could not see, yes, and all of them crying, “Blessed be the name of the Son of David. Blessed be His name!” Oh, I am sure had you been there that day, if you had a sick daughter, you would hire any help to bring her out. You would say, “Let her be brought out and He will heal her.” And so it is today. Jesus is here this morning and here you are—sick upon beds—the beds of your indifference and carelessness. Here you are subject to many sins and lusts and passions.

The Master walks among you—“Now, Christians! NOW! Lift up your prayers. Now bear upon your arms of faith these poor cripples, lame, deaf, dumb souls and cry, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on them.” And His walk of love of old shall be eclipsed in the grandeur of His walk of loving kindness and tender mercy which He shall exercise today.

In addition, however, to the arms of prayer, take care that you bring your relatives to Christ on the arms of your faith. Ah, faith is that which puts strength into prayer. The reason why we do not receive the answer to our supplications is because we do not believe we shall be heard. You remember my sermon the other Sabbath morning from the text, “Whatever things you shall desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them”? If you can exercise faith for a dead soul, that dead soul shall be quickened and receive faith itself. If you can look to Christ with the eye of faith for a blind soul, that blind soul shall have sight given it and it shall see.

There is a wonderful power in vicarious faith—faith for another. Not that anyone of you can be saved without faith, yourself. But when another believes for you and on your account quotes the promise before God for you, you may be unconscious of it, but God hears and answers that faith and breathes on your soul and gives you faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not think Christians exercise this power enough. They are so busy with faith about their troubles, faith about their sins, faith about their personal experience, that they have not time to exercise that faith for another. Oh but surely that gift was never bestowed upon us for our own use merely, but for other people.

Try it, Christian man. Try it, Christian woman—see whether God is not as good as your faith when your faith is exercised concerning the soul of your poor neighbor, of your poor drunken kinsman, or of some poor soul who up to now has defied every effort to reclaim him from the error of his ways. If we can bring souls by faith, Jesus Christ will heal them.

And I might add here, that in the ministry of the Gospel there is great need that ministers should bring souls to God by faith. How often you hear the question put, “What is the reason of such-and-such a man’s power in preaching?” I will tell you what is the reason of any man’s power if it is worth having. It is not his retentive memory, it is not his courage, it is not his oratory, but it is his *faith*. He *believes* God is with him and acts as if it were so. He believes that his preaching will save souls and preaches as if he believed it. He staggers not at the Word, himself, and does not mince and try to prove what he says, but speaks out boldly what God has sent him to speak, knowing that what he says is true and must

be received. And then he believes that the Word will be blessed and it is blessed and then men wonder and say, "Why is it?"

It is faith. That is the secret of any man's success. I refer you, if you want proof, to the lives of all those that God has ever blessed. Look at Paul or Peter in the canon of Scripture. Look at such men as Martin Luther and John Calvin in the annals of Church history. Why, you could not catch them doubting at any moment. Look at Luther when he comes up into the pulpit. He is a man that has no neck. He has got his head set right down on his shoulders. He believes with his heart and speaks with his mouth. His convictions and his utterances are in the closest alliance. Then people say, "What a dogmatist he is!" Of course, and a man must be, if he would do any good. Hear how he preaches! He knows he is right and he does not allow a momentary doubt upon it. He talks to men as if he were sure that God had given him a message for them and the people believe that God has given him a message and it is proven that it is so.

But some other of the Reformers might have come and occupied his place and the reformation would have been a failure, because with more wisdom, and yes, perhaps more love, than Luther had, they would have had less faith and their preaching would have had less effect. The fact is we want to feel within our ministry that the power lies very much in the faith which is exercised in it. I do believe that the true minister of Christ, though he cannot heal the sick, ought to preach with as firm a faith in the authority and power of his ministry through the Holy Spirit, as did Peter and John when they said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."

Some ministers dare not say this. They cannot preach to dead sinners. They do not like to exhort them, because, say they, "The sinner has not any power." Whoever thought he had? But there is power in *your ministry* to make them live if God sent you. Your business is to say, "You dry bones live!"—not because there is power in your voice, but because your voice is the echo of Jehovah's voice. Speak Jehovah's truth by the high warrant of Jehovah Himself and you must believe that those dry bones will live, for live they must. Before the power of faith nothing is impossible.

Earnestly would I pray for all of us who preach the Word that we may have this power to bring souls before Jesus, not looking to their free will, not looking to their soft hearts—above all not looking to our own power of speech, but looking to the power of the Gospel, as we speak it and believing that there is in it a power still to cast out devils, still to quicken the dead and still to heal the sick and we shall find it to be so. Oh, my Brethren, think not that the preaching of the Word is on a level with mere lecturing or talking upon subjects that may be of thrilling interest.

The moment a man preaches God's Truth, if God has sent him, he is gifted with a power which no learning or eloquence can confer upon another man whom God has not called. A man preaches with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. His every word is a thunder stroke—one tremendous lightning blast among the sons of men—and God owns him and God blesses him, or, if God does not own him and does not bless him, he has good reason to believe that God never sent him—that he is not a

servant of God—that the Lord has not raised up nor qualified him for the salvation of the souls of men.

My homily then, is this, that it should be the business of every Christian man—of ministers, perhaps, in particular—but of all in their measure, to bring those who won't come to Christ and to bring them to Christ by their prayers, by their faith and by their authoritative and believing preaching knowing that God ever has sanctioned prayer for others and has accepted faith and heard that faith and in reply to it, has given faith to the unbelieving one. Is there anyone here of so cold a heart that he is saying, "Whom shall I bring to Christ?" I hope not. For whenever a man asks what he shall do, I feel I could say with Pharaoh, "You be idle, you be idle."

There is so much to be done that the question should be "What out of a hundred things shall I do?" Bring not those who live in the same street, or court, or alley—bring those who sit in the same pew with you on Sunday, or dwell in the same part of this great city. And—oh if it should ever come to pass!—that all these be saved—look across the sea and bring before God in prayer those teeming myriads of souls that as yet sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. Plead with God for sinners who are under Popish night, or have but the moonlight of Mohammedanism, or those who are in blacker darkness still, bowing down before their gods of wood or of stone.

O Church of God! If you had but faith to bring out your sick, what wonders might be worked! Oh, if the Church could but lay China and India before her Lord, believing that He had power to save—if she would bring out Italy and France and Spain and lay them, as it were, like sick men in their beds before Jesus Christ, earnestly believing in his power to heal them! Alas, we have not power to believe in Christ yet, but when we have power to believe, we shall never find Christ's power to be inferior to our power to believe Him.

May the Lord yet increase His people's confidence, until their prayer shall extend for the conversion of the islands of the sea, until they shall bring the whole world, with all its hideous deformities and infirmities and lay it there like a poor paralytic on his couch and in one tremendous cry say, "O Lord, let Your kingdom come and let Your will be done on earth, even as it is in Heaven," and it shall be done. Faith shall achieve it. God shall own the cry of faith and the world shall yet become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

III. I have now some little time reserved for my main business this morning and oh, may God make the last part of the sermon very, very useful, to those who up to now have been strangers to Him. The last part of my text is A SERMON ADDRESSED BY WAY OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO POOR SINNERS—to those who never have undergone a change of heart—have never been regenerated and passed from death to life.

Sinner, look on my text and take encouragement, for as Jesus Christ healed all sorts of diseases, so he is able at this day to heal all sorts of sins. Great physicians generally have some specialty. One man is famous for his cures of deformed feet. Another has peculiar gifts with regard to diseases of the heart. And some seem to be greatly successful in their

treatment of the eyes. But Jesus Christ is a physician who is equally skillful in all cases—His love and His blood are precious medicines that are able to cure all diseases—whatever sort they may be, however long they may have been endured and how deeply so ever rooted they may be in the human system. Christ is able to cure all sorts of sins.

Are you today possessed with the fever of lust? He can cool your hot blood and make you chaste and honest. Do you suffer today from the dropsy of drunkenness? He can cure you of it and you shall no more go to your cups to wallow therein. Are you now today blind, or deaf, or dumb, after a spiritual sort? He can remove all these infirmities. Do you suffer from stone in your heart? He can take the stony heart away and give you a heart of flesh. Whatever your disease—though you have become a very lunatic in your sin—such that the laws of your country have had to hold you fast in prison and though now you are so wild that men call you a very devil in iniquity—so that you are become a demon—He has power to heal you now.

Oh, cast yourself on your face before him and cry, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” Oh, Jesus, stop and look upon some of all sorts and let them be saved. Do you know Sinner, whatever may have been your peculiar vice, there is a pattern in the Bible for you—a pattern of mercy to show that just such an one as you has already been saved. John Bunyan says in his, “*Grace Abounding*”—“Whenever I hear of a poor drunkard saved, I always say, ‘Then the door is open for every drunkard.’ If I hear of a great adulterer, a great thief, or a great harlot being saved, then I say, ‘Those who are of a like sort with these men and women, may take heart and say, ‘Then the door is open for me.’”

Why, you know if you are ever sick and meet with an advertisement in a paper—perhaps a wrong one—of some person whose case was just like yours—if upon application, you should meet with this man and he should say, “Yes, my symptoms were the same. My disease lasted just as long. I was just as sad and sick and wasting as you are. I went to such a doctor and he has healed me.” Oh, it makes you feel as if you were half-cured already. “Then, Sir,” you say, “my case is not altogether hopeless. He has healed the likes of me, he can heal me.”

Oh, Sinner, take this, I beseech you, to your soul as a comfort. There have been sinners saved that were just like you. And there are some in Heaven that were once just such as you are. And when you shall come to Heaven you will not be one by yourself, but there will be those who will tell you they have sinned as you have sinned, that they have rebelled as you have rebelled and yet mercy saved them. Oh there are many in Heaven that are like the stars in the sky called Gemini, the twins. There are many sacred clusters—Pleiades of great stars—Divine constellations of men who plunged into like sin and like iniquity, all redeemed and made to shine in the firmament of Heaven as stars forever and ever.

Be of good cheer, Sinner. I know not who you are, nor what has been your sin. There has been a sinner like you saved—just like you—and why may not you? Oh, may it be true in your case, that you may be saved! Christ not only healed sinners of all sorts, but He healed incurable sinners—people who had diseases which were not within the reach of the

physicians' skill. The palsied and the lunatic especially, were considered in the East to be quite beyond all medical power and it is believed by many eminent commentators that nearly all the diseases which Jesus Christ healed were those which were called the laughter of physicians, because they put all surgical skill, all medical power to scorn.

Jesus Christ healed incurable diseases and He is able to heal even incurable sinners. "Why," says one, "that is just what I am. I believe I am incurable." There have been many incurables that have been cured here. When I look at my Church book and see the story of many, many souls, I cannot help looking upon this Exeter Hall as having been an hospital for incurables. Why there have been sinners that never entered into a place of worship for five and twenty, thirty, or forty years. Swearers, blasphemers—men who had committed every crime in the catalogue of iniquity, and here Sovereign Grace met with them. They sit here this very day and if it were the proper time and place, they would stand up and say "That is true. I was one of the incurables, but free, rich grace renewed my heart and changed my soul."

And now, you incurable soul—you incorrigible dog—you who have gone on so long that friends and companions have given you up—there is hope yet, there is hope yet. Yet may you break your fetters—yet live—yet become a Christian and rejoice with the people of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. You remember when Christ died, He told his disciples to preach to all nations beginning at Jerusalem, because there were the biggest sinners in Jerusalem. There were the men there that had pierced His side. They had put that sponge full of vinegar to His lips. "Begin with them," said He. "Begin with them." And so Jesus loves to begin with *you*. Believe me, when my Master sends me out fishing, He does not bid me go and fish for minnows, but to harpoon you who are like great whales and leviathans in iniquity.

Oh, Spirit of God, send in the shaft this morning and may some incurable soul this day begin to think that if there is mercy for him it is time for him not to despise the mercy, but to turn to God with full purpose of heart. Jesus healed incurable diseases. Let us proceed to add that Jesus healed diseases from all countries and so he can heal sinners of all lands. "There followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jerusalem, from Judea and from Jordan." Here are people assembled this morning from all lands. I look about me and I can very easily discern some score of American Brethren from across the sea. A great many, of course, dwell in London. But there is a representation, perhaps, here of every county in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland—some from all parts—Brethren from Germany, some of all people come together here to listen to the Word of God.

And be it sweet in your ears, you of many languages and countries, who as yet have never found the Savior, that He is able to save without any distinction of race or clime, or time, or place. There is one fountain for us all, my Brethren, one robe of righteousness and that, too, always of the same fashion for every one of us. There is one precious name at which we all must bow and one sure salvation upon which we all must build. Oh, that we may all build upon Christ and all find Jesus precious today!

Have you come from the far West, my Brother, and have you never thought of Jesus yet? Oh, think of Him today. Perhaps the Lord brought you across the Atlantic to save you and He will send you back a new man. Have you come from the busy haunts of New York, where every man is bustling and seeking to make his own fortune? Maybe you are come to make your fortune. Perhaps you may this day win the pearl of great price. Oh, I pray God it be so. Lord, hear this prayer! May some soul find Jesus now.

And oh, my farming friends, you have come up today, have you? You came up yesterday to attend your market and you have come today to listen to the Word. I pray that you may go back to your family with a new heart and though you used to be a brandy drinker and often to frighten your poor wife when you came home late, I pray that you may have to say to her, "Blessed be God, I am a new man." I trust it will turn out to be so and that you will have to say, "It was that Sunday that I spent in that Hall that the Lord came and though I struggled hard, He would have me. Though I seem to shut both my eyes and heart against Him, yet in came the Word and like as a hammer it broke the iron crust of my soul and then like a fire melted the very vitals of my spirit, till the tears ran down my hardened cheeks."

Again, I say, be it so and unto God shall be all the glory. If you have come from the very end of the earth today, from a land where you have seldom if ever heard the Gospel, oh, that you may hear it now and like the Ethiopian eunuch go back to tell to others the message which you have heard with your own ears and received in your own heart. Christ knows, then, no distinction between sinners. They may be of every land.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ healed sinners without any limitation in numbers. They brought to Him, as you will perceive, all sorts of sick people and all manner of diseases. "And there followed him great multitudes." The Physician was just as able to heal a thousand as fifty. When the crowd grew and increased till probably they covered acres of ground, He walked in among them and as the sick lay there the healing virtue never ceased. It was like the widow's oil. It lasted as long as it was wanted. And as many vessels as there were to fill, on flowed the oil and never stayed, till at last the vessels were full of mercy.

So is it today. Here is a crowd gathered together, a great multitude. Christ is as able to save a multitude as to save one. The same word which is blessed to one sinner, may be blessed to fifty sinners. Old Trapp says, "Though there was such a great crowd, we do not find that anyone of them kept the other back and so though there may be as great a multitude as ever coming to Christ, there is plenty of room for them." It is not like a place of worship that is too small, where some must turn away but here is room enough for all who come, enough for all who seek, enough for all who trust, enough for all who believe. No sinner was ever sent back empty who came to seek mercy for Jesus Christ's sake.

Upon none of these points must I stay long. Jesus Christ healed all these, but He received nothing for all that He did, except the fame and the honor and the gratitude of their loving hearts. So today, poor sinner, Jesus will take nothing at your hands and it is a mercy for you, for you

have nothing to give. If you had to wait for salvation till you could fashion one good work, you would have to wait forever, for when you has brought one that looked like the real silver of good works, you will find it is some poor plate and when you do begin to rub it with a little self-examination, the bare metal will soon appear and the thin film of silver soon rubs away.

I tell you, Man, you could never find a good thought that you have ever had that would not be so mixed with sin and infirmity as to take all its goodness away. But Jesus wants nothing of you. He bids you come and welcome. Rutherford says, "All the saints in Heaven sit rent free. They never bought their thrones and they do not pay for them even now." Poor Sinner, I tell you, when you come to Christ, you must come without toll, without money, without hindrance—

***"All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him;
This He gives you,
It is His Spirit's rising beam."***

He does not ask experience of you—He does not ask grace and fruits of you. He will give you all these for nothing. If you come to Him just as you are, covered with the rags of your sin, yes and perhaps with rags literally, too, He will receive you. Though you have dived into the kennels of sin and vice and are smothered with the mire of iniquity—He will wash you clean, He will clothe you with the robe of righteousness—He will put away your sins and save your souls. A gratis Gospel—a Gospel of Grace—the Gospel which asks nothing of us but gives all to us. This is the Gospel that I preach. Look to Jesus and be saved.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so will I lift up Christ. Behold His wounds—His pierced hands, His bleeding feet. Behold His side open for you! Sinner, His death must be your life—His wounds must be your healing. Trust, I beseech you, in what He did. Repent of the sins you have committed—but trust Christ for merit which He has performed. The moment your soul trusts Christ—that moment your sins are all forgiven you. The moment you put your arms about the Cross—that moment you are saved, yes and saved beyond risk of being lost. Oh, that now you might say—

***"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that His blood was shed for me;
And that He bids me come—
Oh Lamb of God, I come."***

May God now add His own blessing and may Jesus walk among us still to heal, for His own name's sake. Amen.

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THE BEATITUDES

NO. 3155

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE PULPIT,
IN THE YEAR 1873.

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are they who mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.”
Matthew 5:1-12.

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called “a series of sententious homilies” on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are now, however, four Sermons upon the Beatitudes, three of which have already been published—
See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—
THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED and #3065, Volume 53—
THE THIRD BEATITUDE—and this one. Read/download the entire sermons,
free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

ONE enjoys a sermon all the better for knowing something of *the preacher*. It is natural that, like John in Patmos, we should turn to see the voice which spoke with us. Turn here, then, and learn that the Christ of God is the Preacher of the Sermon on the Mount! He who delivered the Beatitudes was not only the Prince of Preachers, but He was, beyond all others, qualified to discourse upon *the subject* which He had chosen. Jesus the Savior was best able to answer the question, “Who are the saved?” Being Himself the ever-blessed Son of God, and the channel of blessings, He was best able to inform us who are, indeed, the blessed of the Father. As Judge, it will be His office to divide the blessed from the accursed at the last and, therefore, it is most meet that in Gospel majesty He should declare the principle of that judgment, that all men may be forewarned.

Do not fall into the mistake of supposing that the opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount set forth how we are to be saved, or you may cause your soul to stumble. You will find the fullest light upon that matter in other parts of our Lord’s teaching, but here He discourses upon the question, “*Who are the saved?*” or, “*What are the marks and evidences of*

a work of Grace in the soul?" Who should know the saved as well as the Savior does? The shepherd best discerns his own sheep, and the Lord, Himself alone knows Infallibly them who are His. We may regard the marks of the blessed ones here given as being the sure witness of Truth, for they are given by Him who cannot err, who cannot be deceived and who, as their Redeemer, knows His own. The Beatitudes derive much of their weight from the wisdom and glory of Him who pronounced them and, therefore, at the outset your attention is called thereto. Lange says that "man is the mouth of creation, and Jesus is the mouth of humanity." But we prefer, in this place, to think of Jesus as the mouth of Deity and to receive His every Word as gift with Infinite Power!

The occasion of this sermon is noteworthy. It was delivered when our Lord is described as "seeing the multitudes." He waited until the congregation around Him had reached its largest size and was most impressed with His miracles—and then He took the tide at its flood, as every wise man should. The sight of a vast concourse of people ought always to move us to pity, for it represents a mass of ignorance, sorrow, sin and necessity far too great for us to estimate. The Savior looked upon the people with Omniscient eyes which saw all their sad condition. He *saw* the multitudes in an emphatic sense and His soul was stirred within Him at the sight. His was not the transient tear of Xerxes when he thought on the death of his armed myriads, but it was practical sympathy with the hosts of mankind! No one cared for them—they were like sheep without a shepherd, or like shocks of wheat ready to shale out for lack of harvesters to gather them in. Jesus therefore hastened to the rescue. He notices, no doubt, with pleasure, the eagerness of the crowd to hear—and this drew Him on to speak. A writer quoted in the "Catena, Aurea" has well said, "Every man in his own trade or profession rejoices when he sees an opportunity of exercising it. The carpenter, if he sees a goodly tree, desires to have it felled, that he may employ his skill on it. And even so the preacher, when he sees a great congregation, his heart rejoices and he is glad of the occasion to teach." If men become negligent of hearing and our audience dwindles down to a handful, it will be a great distress to us if we have to remember that when the many were anxious to hear, we were not diligent to preach to them. He who will not reap when the fields are white unto the harvest, will have only himself to blame if in other seasons he is unable to fill his arms with sheaves! Opportunities should be promptly used whenever the Lord puts them in our way. It is good fishing where there are plenty of fish and when the birds flock around the fowler it is time for him to spread his nets!

The place from which these blessings were delivered is next worthy of notice. "Seeing the multitudes, He went up *into a mountain*." Whether or not the chosen mountain was that which is now known as the Horns of Hattim, is not a point which it falls in our way to contest—that He ascended an elevation is enough for our purpose. Of course this would be mainly because of the accommodation which the open hillside would afford to the people. And the readiness with which, upon some jutting crag, the Preacher might sit down and be both heard and seen. But we believe the chosen place of meeting had also its instruction. Exalted Doctrine

might well be symbolized by an ascent to the mount—at any rate, let every minister feel that he should ascend in spirit when he is about to descant upon the lofty themes of the Gospel! A Doctrine which could not be hidden and which would produce a Church comparable to a city set on a hill, fitly began to be proclaimed from a conspicuous place! A crypt or cavern would have been out of all character for a message which is to be published upon the housetops and preached to every creature under Heaven!

Besides, mountains have always been associated with distinct eras in the history of the people of God. Mount Sinai is sacred to the Law of God and Mount Zion symbolical of the Church. Calvary was also, in due time, to be connected with redemption and the Mount of Olives with the ascension of our risen Lord. It was meet, therefore, that the opening of the Redeemer's ministry should be connected with a mountain such as "the hill of the Beatitudes." It was from a mountain that God proclaimed the Law. It is on a mountain that Jesus expounds it! Thank God it was not a mountain around which bounds had to be placed—it was not the mountain which burned with fire from which Israel retired in fear! It was, doubtless, a mountain all carpeted with grass and dainty with fair flowers—upon whose side the olive and fig flourished in abundance except where the rocks pushed upward through the sod and eagerly invited their Lord to honor them by making them His pulpit and throne! May I not add that Jesus was in deep sympathy with Nature and, therefore, delighted in an audience chamber whose floor was grass and whose roof was the blue sky? The open space was in keeping with His large heart! The breezes were akin to His free spirit and the world around was full of symbols and parables in accord with the Truths of God He taught. Better than long-drawn aisle, or tier on tier of crowded gallery, was that grassed hillside meeting place! Would God we more often heard sermons amid soul-inspiring scenery! Surely preacher and hearer would be equally benefited by the change from the house made with hands to the God-made temple of Nature!

There was instruction in *the posture* of the preacher. "When He was seated," He commenced to speak. We do not think that either weariness or the length of the discourse suggested His sitting down. He frequently stood when He preached at considerable length. We incline to the belief that when He became a pleader with the sons of men, He stood with uplifted hands, eloquent from head to foot—entreating, beseeching and exhorting with every member of His body, as well as every faculty of His mind. But now that He was, as it were, a Judge awarding the blessings of the Kingdom, or a King on His throne separating His true subjects from aliens and foreigners, He sat down. As an authoritative Teacher, He officially occupied the Chair of Doctrine and spoke *ex cathedra*, as men say, as a Solomon acting as the master of assemblies or a Daniel come to judgment! He sat as a refiner and His word was as a fire. His posture is not accounted for by the fact that it was the Oriental custom for the teacher to sit and the pupil to stand, for our Lord was something more than a didactic teacher—He was a Preacher, a Prophet, a Pleader—and,

consequently, He adopted other attitudes when fulfilling those offices. But on this occasion He sat in His place as Rabbi of the Church, the authoritative Legislator of the Kingdom of Heaven, the Monarch in the midst of His people. Come here, then, and listen to the King in Jeshurun, the Divine Lawgiver, delivering not the Ten Commands, but the seven, or, if you will, the nine Beatitudes of His blessed kingdom!

It is then added, to indicate the *style* of His delivery, that "*He opened His mouth.*" And certain cavilers of shallow wit have asked, "How could He teach without opening His mouth?" To which the reply is that He very frequently taught, and taught much without saying a word since His whole life was teaching and His miracles and deeds of love were the lessons of a master instructor. It is not superfluous to say that "He opened His mouth, and taught them," for He had taught them often when His mouth was closed. Besides that, teachers are to be frequently met with who seldom open their mouths—they hiss the everlasting Gospel through their teeth, or mumble it within their mouths as if they had never been commanded to—"cry aloud, and spare not." Jesus Christ spoke like a man in earnest. He enunciated clearly and spoke loudly. He lifted up His voice like a trumpet and published salvation far and wide—like a Man who had something to say which He desired His audience to hear and feel! Oh, that the very manner and voice of those who preach the Gospel were such as to bespeak their zeal for God and their love for souls! So should it be, but it is not so in all cases. When a man grows terribly in earnest while speaking, his mouth appears to be enlarged in sympathy with his hearers—this characteristic has been observed in vehement political orators—and the messengers of God should blush if no such characteristic can be laid at their door!

"He opened His mouth, and taught them"—have we not here a further hint that as He had from the earliest days opened the mouths of His holy Prophets, so now He opens His own mouth to inaugurate a yet fuller Revelation of God? If Moses spoke, who made Moses' mouth? If David sang, who opened David's lips that he might show forth the praises of God? Who opened the mouths of the Prophets? Was it not the Lord, by His Spirit? Is it not, therefore, well said that now He opened His own mouth and spoke directly as the Incarnate God to the children of men? Now, by His own inherent power and Inspiration, He began to speak, not through the mouth of Isaiah, or of Jeremiah, but by His own mouth! Now was a spring of Wisdom to be unsealed from which all generations should drink rejoicing! Now would the most majestic and yet most simple of all discourses be heard by mankind! The opening of the fountain which flowed from the desert rock was not one half as full of joy to men! Let our prayer be, "Lord, as You have opened Your mouth, open our hearts," for when the Redeemer's mouth is open with blessings—and our hearts are open with desires—a glorious filling with all the fullness of God will be the result! And then our mouths shall also be opened to show forth our Redeemer's praise!

Let us now consider the Beatitudes, themselves, trusting that by the help of God's Spirit, we may perceive their wealth of holy meaning. No

words in the compass of Sacred Writ are more precious or more freighted with solemn meaning.

The first word of our Lord's great standard sermon is, "Blessed." You have not failed to notice that the last word of the Old Testament is, "*curse*," and it is suggestive that the opening sermon of our Lord's ministry commences with the word, "Blessed." Nor did He begin in that manner and then immediately change His strain, for nine times did that charming word fall from His lips in rapid succession. It has been well said that Christ's teaching might be summed up in two words, "Believe," and, "Blessed." Mark tells us that He preached, saying, "Repent, and believe the Gospel." And Matthew in this passage informs us that He came saying, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." All His teaching was meant to bless the sons of men, for "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."—

***"His hand no thunder bears,
No terror clothes His brow!
No bolts to drive our guilty souls
To fiercer flames below."***

His lips, like a honeycomb, drop sweetness. Promises and blessings are flowing out of His mouth. "Grace is poured into Your lips," said the Psalmist, and consequently Grace poured *from* His lips! He was blessed forever and He continued to distribute blessings throughout the whole of His life, till, "as He blessed them, He was taken up into Heaven." The Law had two mountains, Ebal and Gerizim—one for blessing and another for cursing—but the Lord Jesus blesses evermore—and curses not.

The Beatitudes before us, which relate to character, are seven. The eighth is a benediction upon the persons described in the seven Beatitudes when their excellence has provoked the hostility of the wicked and, therefore, it may be regarded as a confirming and summing up of the seven blessings which precede it. Setting that aside, then, as a summary, we regard the Beatitudes as seven and will speak of them as such. *The whole seven describe a perfect character and make up a perfect benediction.* Each blessing is separately precious, yes, more precious than much fine gold. But we do well to regard them as a whole, for as a whole they were spoken, and from that point of view they are a wonderfully perfect chain of seven priceless links put together with such consummate art as only our heavenly Bezaleel, the Lord Jesus, ever possessed! No such instruction in the art of blessedness can be found anywhere else. The learned have collected 288 different opinions of the ancients with regard to happiness—and there is not one which hits the mark! But our Lord has, in a few telling sentences, told us all about it without using a solitary redundant word, or allowing the slightest omission! The seven golden sentences are perfect as a whole and each one occupies its appropriate place. Together they are a ladder of light—and each one is a step of purest sunshine!

Observe carefully and you will see that *each one rises above those which precede it.* The first Beatitude is by no means so elevated as the third, nor the third as the seventh. There is a great advance from the poor in spirit to the pure in heart and the peacemaker. I have said that

they rise, but it would be quite as correct to say that *they descend*, for from the human point of view they do so—to mourn is a step below and yet above being poor in spirit. And the peacemaker, while the highest form of Christian, will find himself often called upon to take the lowest place for peace's sake. "The seven Beatitudes mark deepening *humiliation* and growing *exaltation*." In proportion as men rise in the reception of the Divine Blessing, they sink in their own esteem—and count it their honor to do the humblest works.

Not only do the Beatitudes rise, one above another, but *they spring out of each other* as if each one depended upon all that went before. Each growth feeds a higher growth and the seventh is the product of all the other six! The two blessings which we shall have first to consider have this relation. "Blessed are they that mourn" grows out of, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Why do they mourn? They mourn because they are "poor in spirit." "Blessed are the meek" is a benediction which no man reaches till he has felt his spiritual poverty, and mourned over it. "Blessed are the merciful" follows upon the blessing of the meek because men do not acquire the forgiving, sympathetic, merciful spirit until they have been made meek by the experience of the first two benedictions. This same rising and outgrowth may be seen in the whole seven. The stones are laid, one upon the other, in fair colors and polished after the similitude of a palace—they are the natural sequel and completion of each other—even as were the seven days of the world's first week.

Mark, also, in this ladder of light, that though each step is above the other and each step springs out of the other, yet *each one is perfect in itself* and contains within itself a priceless and complete blessing. The very lowest of the blessed, namely, the poor in spirit, have their peculiar benediction and, indeed, it is one of such an order that it is used in the summing up of all the rest! "Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" is both the first and the eighth benediction. The highest characters, namely, the peacemakers, who are called the children of God, are not said to be more than blessed—they doubtless enjoy more of the blessedness, but they do not, in the Covenant provision, possess more.

Note, also, with delight, that *the blessing is, in every case, in the present tense*—a happiness to be enjoyed and delighted in now! It is not "Blessed *shall be*," but, "Blessed *are*." There is not one step in the whole Divine experience of the Believer—not one link in the wonderful chain of Divine Grace—in which there is a withdrawal of the Divine smile or an absence of real happiness! Blessed is the first moment of the Christian life on earth—and blessed is the last! Blessed is the spark which trembles in the flax and blessed is the flame which ascends to Heaven in a holy ecstasy! Blessed is the bruised reed and blessed is that tree of the Lord which is full of sap, the cedar of Lebanon, which the Lord has planted! Blessed is the babe in Grace and blessed is the perfect man in Christ Jesus! As the Lord's mercy endures forever, even so shall our blessedness!

We must not fail to notice that in the seven Beatitudes, *the blessing of each one is appropriate to the character*. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is appropriately connected with enrichment in the possession of a Kingdom

more glorious than all the thrones of earth! It is also most appropriate that those who mourn should be comforted. That the meek, who renounce all self-aggrandizement, should enjoy most of life and so should inherit the earth. It is Divinely fit that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness should be filled—and that those who show mercy to others should obtain it themselves! Who but the pure in heart should see the Infinitely pure and holy God? And who but the peacemakers should be called the children of the God of Peace?

Yet the careful eye perceives that *each benediction*, though appropriate, is worded *paradoxically*. Jeremy Taylor says, “They are so many paradoxes and impossibilities reduced to reason.” This is clearly seen in the first Beatitude, for the poor in spirit are said to possess a Kingdom. And it is equally vivid in the collection as a whole, for it treats of happiness—and yet poverty leads the van and persecution brings up the rear! Poverty is the opposite of riches and yet how rich are those who possess a Kingdom! And persecution is supposed to destroy enjoyment and yet it is here made a subject of rejoicing! See the sacred art of Him who spoke as never man spoke! He can, at the same time, make His words both simple and paradoxical—and thereby win our attention and instruct our intellects. Such a Preacher deserves the most thoughtful of hearers.

The whole of the seven Beatitudes composing this celestial ascent to the House of the Lord conducts Believers to an elevated table-land upon which they dwell alone and are not reckoned among the people. Their holy separation from the world brings upon them persecution for righteousness’ sake, but in this they do not lose their happiness, but rather have it increased to them and confirmed by the double repetition of the benediction! The hatred of man does not deprive the saint of the love of God—even revilers contribute to his blessedness! Who among us will be ashamed of the Cross which must attend such a crown of loving kindness and tender mercies? Whatever the curses of man may involve, they are so small a drawback to the consciousness of being blessed in a sevenfold manner by the Lord, that they are not worthy to be compared with the Grace which is already revealed in us!

Here we pause for now and shall, by God’s help, consider one of the Beatitudes in our next homily.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 5:1-30.

Verses 1, 2. *And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him: and He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying.* Our Savior soon gathered a congregation. The multitudes perceived in Him a love to them and a willingness to impart blessing to them. And, therefore, they gathered about Him. He chose the mountain and the open air for the delivery of this great discourse—and we would be glad to find such a place for our assemblies—but in this variable climate we cannot often do so. “And when He was seated.” The Preacher sat and the people stood. We might make a helpful

change if we were sometimes to adopt a similar plan now. I am afraid that ease of posture may contribute to the creation of slumber of heart in the hearers. There Christ sat and “His disciples came to Him.” They formed the inner circle that was ever nearest to Him—and to them He imparted His choicest secrets. But He also spoke to the multitude and therefore it is said that, “He opened His mouth,” as well He might when there were such great Truths of God to proceed from it and so vast a crowd to hear them! “He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying.”

3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* This is a gracious beginning to our Savior’s discourse, “Blessed are the poor.” None ever considered the poor as Jesus did, but here He is speaking of a poverty of spirit, a lowliness of heart, an absence of self-esteem. Where that kind of spirit is found, it is sweet poverty! “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* There is a blessing which often goes with mourning, itself, but when the sorrow is of a *spiritual* sort—mourning for sin—then is it blest, indeed!—

**“Lord, let me weep for nothing but sin
And after none but Thee.
And then I would—oh, that I might—
A constant mourner be!”**

5. *Blessed are the meek.* The quiet-spirited, the gentle, the self-sacrificing.

5. *For they shall inherit the earth.* It looks as if they would be pushed out of the world but they shall not be, “for they shall inherit the earth.” The wolves devour the sheep, yet there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves. And the sheep continue to multiply and to feed in green pastures.

6. *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness.* Pining to be holy, longing to serve God, anxious to spread every righteous principle—blessed are they!

6, 7. *For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful—*those who are kind, generous, sympathetic, ready to forgive those who have wronged them—blessed are they.

7, 8. *For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart.* It is a most blessed attainment to have such a longing for purity as to love everything that is chaste and holy—and to abhor everything that is questionable and unhallowed. Blessed are the pure in heart.

8. *For they shall see God.* There is a wonderful connection between hearts and eyes! A man who has the stains of filth on his soul cannot see God. But they who are purified in heart are purified in vision, too—“they shall see God.”

9. *Blessed are the peacemakers.* Those who always end a quarrel if they can. Those who lay themselves out to prevent discord.

9-10. *For they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* They share the Kingdom of Heaven with the poor in spirit! They are often evilly spoken of. They have sometimes to suffer the spoiling of their goods—many of them have laid down their lives for Christ’s sake. But they are truly blessed, for “theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

11. *Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.* Mind, it must be said *falsely*, and it must be *for Christ's sake*, if you are to be blessed. There is no blessing in having evil spoken of you truthfully, or in having it spoken of you falsely because of some bitterness in your own spirit.

12. *Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.* You are in the true prophetic succession if you cheerfully bear reproach of this kind for Christ's sake—you prove that you have the stamp and seal of those who are in the service of God!

13. *You are the salt of the earth.* Followers of Christ, “you are the salt of the earth.” You help to preserve it and to subdue the corruption that is in it!

13. *But if the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted?* A professing Christian with no Grace in him—a religious man whose very religion is dead—what is the good of him? And he is in a hopeless condition. You can salt meat, but you cannot salt salt!

13. *It is, therefore, good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.* There are people who believe that you can be children of God, today, and children of the devil tomorrow—then again children of God the next day and children of the devil again the day after. But believe me, it is not so! If the work of Grace is really worked of God in your soul, it will last through your whole life! And if it does not so last, that proves that it is not the work of God! God does not put His hand to this work a second time! There is no regeneration twice over—you can be born-again—but you cannot be born again, and again, and again as some teach! There is no note in Scripture of that kind. Hence I do rejoice that regeneration once truly worked of the Spirit of God is an incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever! But beware, professor, lest you should be like salt that has lost its savor and, therefore, is good for nothing.

14. *You are the light of the world.* [See Sermon #1109, Volume 19—THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Christ never contemplated the production of secret Christians—Christians whose virtues would never be displayed—pilgrims who would travel to Heaven by night and never be seen by their fellow pilgrims or anyone else.

14, 15. *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle* [See Sermon #1594, Volume 27—THE CANDLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house.* Christians ought to be seen and they ought to let their light be seen! They should never even attempt to conceal it. If you are a lamp, you have no right to be under a bushel, or under a bed—your place is on the lamp stand where your light can be seen.

16. *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.* Not that they may glorify you—but that they may glorify your Father who is in Heaven.

17, 18. *Think not that I have come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all is fulfilled.* No cross of a “T” and no dot of an “I” shall be taken from God’s Law! Its requirements will always be the same—immutably fixed and never to be abated by so little as “one jot or one tittle.”

19, 20. *Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.* Who seemed to have reached the very highest degree of it—indeed, they thought they went rather over the mark than under it—but Christ says to His disciples, “Unless your righteousness goes beyond that.”

20. *You shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* These are solemn words of warning! God grant that we may have a righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, a righteousness worked by the Spirit of God, a righteousness of the heart and of the life!

21. *You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.* Antiquity is often pleaded as an authority, but our King makes short work of “them of old time.” He begins with one of their alterations of His Father’s Law. They added to the saved oracles. The first part of the saying which our Lord quoted was Divine, but it was dragged down to a low level by the addition about the human court and the murderer’s liability to appear there. It thus became rather a proverb among men than an Inspired utterance from the mouth of God. Its meaning, as God spoke it, had a far wider range than when the offense was restrained to actual killing, such as could be brought before a human judgment seat. To narrow a command is measurably to annul it. We may not do this even with antiquity for our warrant. Better the whole Truth newly stated than an old lie in an ancient language.

22. *But I say unto you, That whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire.* Murder lies within anger, for we wish harm to the object of our wrath, or even wish that he did not exist—and this is to kill him in desire. Anger “without a cause” is forbidden by the Commandment which says, “You shall not kill,” for unjust anger is killing in *intent*. Such anger without cause brings us under higher judgment than that of Jewish police courts. God takes cognizance of the emotions from which acts of hate may spring and calls us to account as much for the angry feeling as for the murderous deed! Words also come under the same condemnation—a man shall be judged for what he “shall say to his brother.” To call a man, *Raca*, or a worthless fellow, is to kill him in his reputation. And to say to him, “*You fool*,” is to kill him as to the noblest characteristics of a man. Hence all this comes under such censure as men distribute in their councils. Yes, and what is far worse—the punishment awarded by the highest court of the universe which dooms

men to “Hell fire.” Thus our Lord and King restores the Law of God to its true force and warns us that it denounces not only the overt act of killing, but every thought, feeling and word which would tend to injure a brother, or annihilate him by contempt.

23, 24. *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.* The Pharisee would urge as a cover for his malice that he brought a sacrifice to make atonement, but our Lord will have forgiveness rendered to our brother, *first*, and then the offering presented. We ought to worship God thoughtfully and if, in the course of that thought, we remember that our brother has anything against us, we must stop. If we have wronged another, we are to pause, cease from the worship and hasten to seek reconciliation. We easily remember if we have anything against our brother, but now the memory is to be turned the other way! Only when we have remembered *our* wrong doing and made reconciliation can we hope for acceptance with the Lord. The rule is—first peace with man and then acceptance with God. The holy must be traversed to reach the Holiest of All. Peace being made with our brother, then let us conclude our service towards our Father—and we shall do so with lighter heart and truer zeal. I would anxiously desire to be at peace with all men before I attempt to worship God, lest I present to God the sacrifice of fools.

25, 26. *Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, You shall by no means come out from there till you have paid the uttermost farthing.* In all disagreements be eager for peace. Leave off strife before you begin. In law-suits, seek speedy and peaceful settlements. Often in our Lord’s days, this was the most gainful way and usually it is so now. Better lose your rights than get into the hands of those who will only fleece you in the name of justice and hold you fast so long as a semblance of a demand can stand against you, or another penny can be extracted from you! In a country where “just fee” meant robbery, it was wisdom to be robbed and to make no complaint. Even in our own country, a lean settlement is better than a fat law-suit. Many go into the court to get wool, but come out closely shorn. Carry on no angry suits in courts, but make peace with the utmost promptness!

27, 28 *You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.* In this case our King again sets aside the glosses of men upon the commands of God and makes the Law to be seen in its vast spiritual breadth. Whereas tradition had confined the prohibition to an overt act of unchastity, the King shows that it forbade the unclean *desires of the heart*. Here the Divine Law is shown to refer not only to the act of criminal activity, but even to the desire, imagination, or passion which would suggest such an infamy! What a King is ours who stretches His scepter over the realm

of our inward lusts! How Sovereignly He puts it—“*But I say unto you!*” Who but a Divine Being has authority to speak in this fashion? His Word is Law. So it ought to be, seeing He touches vice at the fountainhead and forbids uncleanness in the heart. If sin were not allowed in the mind, it would never be made manifest in the body! This, therefore, is a very effectual way of dealing with the evil. But how searching! How condemning! Irregular looks, unchaste desires and strong passions are of the very essence of adultery—and who can claim a life-long freedom from them? Yet these are the things which defile a man. Lord, purge them out of my nature and make me pure within!

29. *And if your right eye offends you, pluck it out and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell.* That which is the cause of sin is to be given up as well as the sin itself. It is not sinful to have an eye, or to cultivate keen perception—but if the eye of speculative knowledge leads us to offend by intellectual sin, it becomes the cause of evil and must be mortified. Anything, however harmless, which leads me to do, or think, or feel wrongly, I am to get rid of as much as if it were in itself an evil! Though to have done with it would involve deprivation, yet must it be dispensed with, since even a serious loss in one direction is far better than the losing of the whole man! Better a blind saint than a quick-sighted sinner! If abstaining from alcohol caused weakness of body, it would be better to be weak than to be strong and fall into drunkenness. Since vain speculations and reasoning land men in unbelief, we will have none of them! To “be cast into Hell” is too great a risk to run to merely indulge the evil eye of lust or curiosity.

30. *And if your right hand offends you, cut it off, and cast it from you: for it is profitable for you that one of your members should perish, and not that your whole body should be cast into Hell.* The cause of offense may be rather active as the hand than intellectual as the eye, but we had better be hindered in our work than drawn aside into temptation. The most dexterous hand must not be spared if it encourages us in doing evil! It is not because a certain thing may make us clever and successful that we are to allow it—if it should prove to be the frequent cause of our falling into sin—we must have done with it and place ourselves at a disadvantage for our life-work rather than ruin our whole being by sin. Holiness is to be our first objective—everything else must take a very secondary place. Right eyes and right hands are no longer right if they lead us wrong. Even hands and eyes must go that we may not offend our God by them. Yet, let no man read this *literally* and, therefore, mutilate his body as some foolish fanatics have done! The real meaning is clear enough.

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

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

THE FIRST BEATITUDE

NO. 3156

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1909.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
IN THE YEAR 1873.**

***“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”
Matthew 5:3.***

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called “a series of sententious homilies” on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, five Sermons upon the Beatitudes, four of which have already been published—See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED; #3155, Volume 55—THE BEATITUDES—#3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE—and this one—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

BEARING in mind the objective of our Savior’s discourse, which was to describe the saved, and not to declare the plan of salvation, we now come to consider the first of the Beatitudes—

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

A ladder, if it is to be of any use, must have its first step near the ground, or feeble climbers will never be able to mount. It would have been a grievous discouragement to struggling faith if the first blessing had been given to the pure in heart—to that excellence the young beginner makes no claim—while to poverty of spirit he can reach without going beyond his line! Had the Savior said, “Blessed are the rich in Divine Grace,” he would have spoken a great Truth of God, but very few of us could have derived consolation from there. Our Divine Instructor begins at the beginning—with the very A B C of experience—and so enables the babes in Grace to learn of Him. Had He commenced with higher attainments, He would have had to leave the little ones behind. A gigantic step at the bottom of these sacred stairs would have effectually prevented many from beginning to ascend—but tempted by the lowly step, which bears the inscription, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” thousands are encouraged to attempt the heavenly way!

It is worthy of grateful note that *this Gospel blessing reaches down to the exact spot where the Law leaves us when it has done for us the very best within its power or design.* The utmost the Law can accomplish for our fallen humanity is to lay bare our spiritual poverty and convince us of it. It cannot by any possibility enrich a man—its greatest service is to tear him away from his fancied wealth of self-righteousness, show him his overwhelming indebtedness to God and bow him to the earth in self-despair. Like Moses, it leads away from Goshen, conducts into the wil-

derness and brings to the verge of an impassable stream—but it can do no more! Joshua Jesus is needed to divide the Jordan and conduct into the promised land. The Law rends the goodly Babylonian garment of our imaginary merits into ten pieces and proves our wedge of gold to be mere dross. And thus it leaves us, “naked, and poor, and miserable.” To this point Jesus descends—His full line of blessing comes up to the verge of destruction, rescues the lost and enriches the poor! The Gospel is as full as it is free!

This first Beatitude, though thus placed at a suitably low point where it may be reached by those who are in the earliest stages of Grace is, however, none the less rich in blessing. The same word is used in the same sense at the beginning as at the end of the chain of Beatitudes—the poor in spirit are as truly and emphatically blessed as the meek, or the peacemakers. No hint is given as to lower degree, or inferior measure, but on the contrary, the very highest benison, which is used in the 10th verse as the gathering up of all the seven Beatitudes, is ascribed to the first and lowest order of the blessed—“theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” What more is said even of the co-heirs with Prophets and martyrs? What more, indeed, could be said than this? The poor in spirit are lifted from the dunghill and set, not among hired servants in the field, but among princes in the Kingdom of God! Blessed is that soul-poverty of which the Lord Himself utters such good things! He sets much store by that which the world holds in small esteem, for His judgment is the reverse of the foolish verdict of the proud. As Watson well observes, “How poor are they that think themselves rich! How rich are they that see themselves to be poor! I call it *the jewel of poverty*. There are some paradoxes in religion which the world cannot understand—for a man to become a fool that he may be wise, to save his life by losing it, and to be made rich by being poor. Yet this poverty is to be strived for more than riches—under these rags is hid cloth of gold and out of this carcass came honey.”

The cause for placing this Beatitude first is found in the fact that *it is first as a matter of experience*. It is essential to the succeeding characters. It underlies each one of them and is the soil in which alone they can be produced. No man ever mourns before God until he is poor in spirit! Neither does he become meek towards others till he has humble views of himself. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness are not possible to those who have high views of their own excellence—and mercy to those who offend is also a Grace, difficult for those who are unconscious of their own spiritual need. Poverty in spirit is the porch of the temple of blessedness. As a wise man never thinks of building up the walls of his house till he has first dug out the foundation, so no person skillful in Divine things will hope to see any of the higher virtues where poverty of spirit is absent. Till we are emptied of self we cannot be filled with God. Stripping must be worked upon us before we can be clothed with the righteousness which is from Heaven. Christ is never precious till we are poor in spirit—we must see our own needs before we can perceive His wealth. Pride blinds the eyes and sincere humility must open them or the beauties of Jesus will be forever hidden from us. The strait gate is not

wide enough to allow that man to enter who is great in his own esteem. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man conceited of his own spiritual riches to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Hence it is clear that the character described in connection with the first Beatitude is essential to the production of those which follow—and unless a man possesses it, he may look in vain for favor at the hands of the Lord! The proud are cursed, their pride alone secures them the curse and shuts them out from Divine regard! “The proud He knows afar off.” The lowly in heart are blessed, for to them and to their prayers Jehovah always has a tender regard.

It is worthy of double mention that *this first blessing is given rather to the absence than to the presence of praiseworthy qualities*—it is a blessing not upon the man who is distinguished for this virtue or remarkable for that excellence—but upon him whose chief characteristic is that he confesses his own sad deficiencies! This is intentional, in order that Grace may be all the more manifestly seen to be Grace, indeed, casting its eyes first, not upon purity, but upon poverty. Not upon showers of mercy, but upon those who need mercy. Not upon those who are called the children of God, but upon those who cry, “We are not worthy to be called Your sons.” God wants nothing of us except our needs and these furnish Him with room to display His bounty when He freely supplies them! It is from the worse and not from the better side of fallen man that the Lord wins glory for Himself. Not what I have, but what I have not, is the first point of contact between my soul and God. The good may bring their goodness, but He declares that “there is none righteous, no, not one.” The pious may offer their ceremonies, but He takes no delight in all their oblations. The wise may present their inventions, but He counts their wisdom to be folly. But when the poor in spirit come to Him with their utter destitution and distress, He accepts them at once! Yes, He bows the heavens to bless them and opens the storehouses of the Covenant to satisfy them. As the surgeon seeks for the sick and as the alms-giver looks after the poor, even so the Savior seeks out such as need Him—and upon them He exercises His Divine office. Let every needy sinner drink comfort from this well!

Nor ought we to forget that this lowest note upon the octave of Beatitude, *this keynote of the whole music gives forth a certain sound as to the spirituality of the Christian dispensation*. Its first blessing is allotted to a characteristic, not of the outer, but of the inner man—to a state of soul and not to a posture of body—to the poor in spirit and not to the exact in ritual. That word, spirit, is one of the watchwords of the Gospel dispensation. Garments, genuflections, rituals, oblations and the like are ignored—the Lord’s eyes of favor rest only upon broken hearts and humbled spirits before Him. Even mental endowments are left in the cold shade and the spirit is made to lead the van—the soul, the true man, is regarded and all besides left as of comparatively little worth! This teaches us to mind, above all things, those matters which concern our spirits. We must not be satisfied with external religion. If, in any ordinance, our spi-

rit does not come into contact with the great Father of Spirits, we must not rest satisfied. Everything about our religion which is not heart work must be unsatisfactory to us. As men cannot live upon the chaff and the bran, but need the flour of the wheat, so do we need something more than the form of godliness and the letter of truth—we require the secret meaning, the grafting in of the Word into our spirit, the bringing of the Truth of God into our inmost soul—all short of this is short of the blessing!

The highest grade of outward religiousness is not blessed, but the very lowest form of spiritual Grace is endowed with the Kingdom of Heaven! Better to be spiritual, even though our highest attainment is to be poor in spirit, than to remain carnal, even though in that carnality we should brag of perfection in the flesh. The least in Grace is higher than the greatest in Nature! Poverty of spirit in the publican was better than fullness of external excellence in the Pharisee. As the weakest and poorest man is nobler than the strongest of all the beasts of the field, so is the meanest spiritual man more precious in the sight of the Lord than the most eminent of the self-sufficient children of men. The smallest diamond is worth more than the largest pebble, the lowest degree of Grace excels the loftiest attainment of Nature! What do you say to this, beloved Friend? Are you spiritual? At least, are you enough so to be poor in spirit? Does there exist for you a spiritual realm, or are you locked up in the narrow region of things seen and heard? If the Holy Spirit has broken a door for you into the spiritual and unseen, then you are blessed even though your only perception as yet is the painful discovery that you are poor in spirit! Jesus on the mountain blesses you, and blessed you are!

Drawing still nearer to our text, we observe, first, that THE PERSON DESCRIBED HAS DISCOVERED A FACT—he has ascertained his own spiritual poverty. And secondly, BY A FACT HE IS COMFORTED—for he possesses “the Kingdom of Heaven.”

I. The fact which he has ascertained is an old Truth of God, for the man was always spiritually poor. From his birth he was a pauper and at his best estate he is only a mendicant. “Naked, and poor, and miserable” is a fair summary of man’s condition by nature. He lies covered with sores at the gates of Mercy, having nothing of his own but sin, unable to dig and unwilling to beg—and therefore perishing in a penury of the direst kind.

This Truth is also universal, for all men are by nature thus poor. In a clan, or a family, there will usually be at least one person of substance. And in the poorest nation there will be some few possessors of wealth. But alas for our humanity! Its whole store of excellence is spent and its riches are utterly gone. Among us all there remains no remnant of good! The oil is spent from the cruse and the meal is exhausted from the barrel—a famine is upon us, direr than that which desolated Samaria of old! We owe ten thousand talents and have nothing with which to pay—even so much as a single penny of goodness we cannot find in all the treasures of the nations!

This fact is deeply humiliating. A man may have no money and yet it may involve no fault and, therefore, no shame. But our estate of poverty has this sting in it—it is moral and spiritual—and sinks us in blame and sin. To be poor in holiness, truth, faith and love to God is disgraceful to us. Often does the poor man hide his face as one greatly ashamed, but far more cause have we to do so who have spent our living riotously, wasted our Father's substance and brought ourselves to want and dishonor. Descriptions of our state which describe us as miserable are not complete unless they also declare us to be guilty! True, we are objects of pity, but much more of censure. A poor man may be none the less worthy of esteem because of the meanness of his apparel and the scantiness of his provision, but spiritual poverty means fault, blameworthiness, shame and sin. He who is poor in spirit is therefore a humbled man and is on the way to be numbered with those that mourn, of whom the second benediction says that, "they shall be comforted."

The fact discovered by the blessed one in the text is but little known. The mass of mankind are utterly ignorant upon the matter. Though the Truth as to man's lost condition is daily taught in our streets, yet few understand it. They are not anxious to know the meaning of a statement so uncomfortable, so alarming—and the bulk of those who are aware of the Doctrine and acknowledge that it is Scriptural, yet do not believe it, but put it out of their thoughts and practically ignore it! "We see," is the universal boast of the world's blind men! So far from realizing that they are destitute, the sons of men are, in their own esteem, so richly endowed that they thank God that they are not as other men! No slavery is so degrading as that which makes a man content with his servility. The poverty which never aspires, but is content to continue in its rags and filth, is poverty of the deepest dye—and such is the spiritual condition of mankind.

Wherever the truth as to our condition is truly known, it has been spiritually revealed. We may say of everyone who knows his soul poverty, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonas, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you." To be spiritually poor is the condition of all men—to be poor in spirit, or to know our spiritual poverty is an attainment especially granted to the called and chosen! An Omnipotent hand created us out of nothing and the same Omnipotence is needed to bring us to feel that we are nothing! We can never be saved unless we are made alive by Infinite Power, nor can we be made alive at all unless that same Power shall first slay us. It is amazing how much is needed to strip a man and lay him in his true place! One would think that so penniless a beggar must be aware of his penury, but he is not and never will be unless the eternal God shall convince him of it! Our imaginary goodness is more difficult to conquer than our actual sin. Man can sooner be cured of his sicknesses than be made to forego his bouts of health. Human weakness is a small obstacle to salvation compared with human strength—there lies the work and the difficulty! Hence it is a sign of Grace to know one's need of Grace. He has some Light of God in his soul who knows and feels

that he is in darkness. The Lord Himself has worked a work of Grace upon the spirit which is poor and needy, and trembles at His Word. And it is such a work that it bears within it the promise, yes, *the assurance of salvation*—for the poor in spirit already possess the Kingdom of Heaven—and none have that but those who have eternal life!

One thing is certainly true of the man whose spirit knows its own poverty—he is in possession of at least one Truth of God, whereas before he breathed the atmosphere of falsehood and knew nothing which he ought to know. However painful the result of poverty of spirit may be, it is the result of the Truth of God—and a foundation of Truth being laid, other Truths will be added and the man will abide in the Truth. All that others think they know concerning their own spiritual excellence is but a lie—and to be rich in lies is to be awfully poor. Carnal security, natural merit and self-confidence—however much of false peace they may produce—are only forms of falsehood, deceiving the soul. But when a man finds out that he is by nature and practice, “lost,” he is no longer utterly a pauper as to the Truth of God—he possesses one precious thing at any rate—one coin minted by Truth is in his hand! For my own part, my constant prayer is that I may know the worst of my case, whatever the knowledge may cost me. I know that an accurate estimate of my own heart can never be otherwise than lowering to my self-esteem, but God forbid that I should be spared the humiliation which springs from His Truth! The sweet apples of self-esteem are deadly poison—who would wish to be destroyed by them? The bitter fruits of self-knowledge are always healthful, especially if washed down with the waters of repentance and sweetened with a draught from the wells of salvation! He who loves his own soul will not despise them. Blessed, according to our text, is the poor cast-down one who knows his lost condition and is suitably impressed thereby—he is but a beginner in Wisdom’s school, yet he is a disciple and his Master encourages him with a benediction, yes, He pronounces him one of those to whom the Kingdom of Heaven is given!

The position into which a clear knowledge of this one Truth has brought the soul is one peculiarly advantageous for obtaining every Gospel blessing. Poverty of spirit empties a man and so makes him ready to be filled! It exposes his wounds to the oil and wine of the Good Physician. It lays the guilty sinner at the gate of Mercy or among those dying ones around the pool of Bethesda to whom Jesus is known to come. Such a man opens his mouth and the Lord fills it—he hungers and the Lord satisfies him with good things! Above all other evils we have most cause to dread our own fullness! The greatest unfitness for Christ is our own imaginary fitness! When we are utterly undone, we are near to being enriched with the riches of Divine Grace. Out of ourselves is next door to being in Christ. Where we end, mercy begins, or rather, mercy has begun and mercy has already done much for us when we are at the end of our merit, our power, our wisdom and our hope! The deeper the destitution the better—

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

If the heart is distressed because it cannot sufficiently feel its own need, so much the better—the poverty of spirit is just so much the greater and the appeal to Free Grace all the more powerful! If the need of a broken heart is felt, we may come to Jesus *for* a broken heart if we cannot come *with* a broken heart. If no kind or degree of good is perceptible, this also is but a clear proof of utter poverty—and in that condition we may dare to believe in the Lord Jesus! Though we are nothing, Christ is All. All that we need to begin with we must find in Him, just as surely as we must look for our ultimate perfecting to the same Source!

A man may be so misled as to make a merit out of his sense of sin and may dream of coming to Jesus clothed in a fitness of despair and unbelief! This is, however, the very reverse of the conduct of one who is poor in spirit, for he is poor in feelings as well as in everything else and dares no more commend himself on account of his humility and despair than on account of his sins. He thinks himself to be a hard-hearted sinner as he acknowledges the deep repentance which his offenses call for. He fears that he is a stranger to that saved quickening which makes the conscience tender and he dreads lest he should, in any measure, be a hypocrite in the desires which he perceives to be in his soul. In fact, he does not dare to think himself to be any other than poor, grievously poor, in whatever light he may be viewed in his relation to God and His righteous Law. He hears of the humiliations of true penitents and wishes he had them. He reads the descriptions of repentance given in the Word of God and prays that he may realize them, but he sees nothing in himself upon which he can put his finger and say, “This, at least, is good. In me there dwells at least some one good thing.” He is poor in spirit and from him all boasting is cut off, once and for all. It is better to be in this condition than falsely to account one’s self a saint and sit in the chief places of the synagogue. Yes, it is so sweetly safe a position to occupy, that he who is fullest of faith in God and joy in the Holy Spirit finds it adds to his peace to retain a full consciousness of the poverty of his natural state and to let it run parallel with his persuasion of security and blessedness in Christ Jesus! Lord, keep me low! Empty me more and more! Lay me in the dust! Let me be dead and buried as to all that is of self—then shall Jesus live in me, reign in me and be truly my All-in-All!

It may seem to some to be a small matter to be poor in spirit. Let such persons remember that *our Lord so places this gracious condition of heart that it is the foundation stone of the celestial ascent of the Beatitudes*—and who can deny that the steps which rise from it are sublime beyond measure? It is something inexpressibly desirable to be poor in spirit if this is the road to purity of heart and to the godlike character of the peacemaker! Who would not lay his head on Jacob’s stone to enjoy Jacob’s dream? Who would scorn the staff with which in poverty he crossed the Jordan if he might but see the Kingdom of Heaven opened as the Patriarch did? Welcome the poverty of Israel if it is a part of the conditions upon which we shall receive the blessing of Israel’s God! Instead of despising the poor in spirit, we shall do well to regard them as possessing

the dawn of spiritual life, the germ of all the Graces, the initiative of perfection, the evidence of blessedness!

II. Having spoken thus much upon the character of those who are poor in spirit as being formed by the knowledge of a fact, we have now to note that **IT IS BY A FACT THAT THEY ARE CHEERED AND RENDERED BLESSED**—“For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

It is not a promise as to the future, but a declaration as to the present—not theirs *shall be*, but “theirs *is* the Kingdom of Heaven.” This Truth is clearly revealed in many Scriptures by necessary inference, for first, *the King of the heavenly kingdom is constantly represented as reigning over the poor*. David says in the 72nd Psalm, “He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy...He shall spare the poor and needy and shall save the souls of the needy.” As His virgin mother sang, “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.” Those who enlist beneath the banner of the Son of David are like those who of old came to the son of Jesse in the cave of Adullam—“Everyone that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them.” “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” His title was “A Friend of Publicans and Sinners.” “Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor,” and it is therefore right that the poor should be gathered unto Him. Since Jesus has chosen the poor in spirit to be His subjects and said, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom,” we see how true it is that they are blessed.

The rule of the Kingdom is such as only the poor in spirit will endure. To them it is an easy yoke from which they have no wish to be released. To give God all the glory is no burden to them. To cease from self is no hard command. The place of lowliness suits them, the service of humiliation they count an honor! They can say with the Psalmist (Psalm 131:2), “Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.” Self-denial and humility, which are main duties of Christ’s Kingdom, are easy only to those who are poor in spirit. A humble mind loves humble duties and is willing to kiss the least flower which grows in the Valley of Humiliation. But to others, a fair show in the flesh is a great attraction and self-exaltation the main object of life. Our Savior’s declaration, “Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,” is an iron rule which shuts out all but the poor in spirit! But, at the same time it is a gate of pearl which admits all who are of that character.

The privileges of the Kingdom are such as only the spiritually poor will value. To others, they are as pearls cast before swine. The self-righteous care nothing for pardon, though it cost the Redeemer His life’s blood. They have no care for regeneration, though it is the greatest work of the Holy Spirit. And they set no store by sanctification, though it is the Father, Himself, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance

of the saints in light! Evidently the blessings of the Covenant were meant for the poor in spirit—there is not one of them which would be valued by the Pharisee. A robe of righteousness implies our nakedness. Manna from Heaven implies the lack of earthly bread. Salvation is vanity if men are in no danger. Mercy is a mockery if they are not sinful. The charter of the Church is written upon the supposition that it is formed of the poor and needy and is without meaning if it is not so. Poverty of spirit opens the eyes to see the preciousness of Covenant blessings. As an old Puritan said, “He that is poor in spirit is a Christ-admirer. He has high thoughts of Christ, he sets a high value and appreciation upon Christ, he hides himself in Christ’s wounds, he bathes himself in His blood, he wraps himself in His robe. He sees a spiritual dearth and famine at home, but he looks out to Christ and cries, ‘Lord, show me Yourself, and it suffices.’” Now, inasmuch as the Lord has made nothing in vain and since we find that the privileges of the Gospel Kingdom are only suitable to the poor in spirit, we may rest assured that for such they were prepared and to such they belong!

Moreover, *it is clear that only those who are poor in spirit do actually reign as kings unto God.* The crown of this Kingdom will not fit every head. In fact, it fits the brow of none but the poor in spirit! No proud man reigns—he is the slave of his boastings, the serf of his own loftiness. The ambitious worldling grasps after a kingdom, but he does not possess one. The humble in heart are content and in that contentment they are made to reign! High spirits have no rest—only the lowly heart has peace. To know one’s self is the way to self-conquest—and self-conquest is the grandest of all victories! The world looks out for a lofty, ambitious, stern, self-sufficient man and says he bears himself like a king and yet, in very truth, the real kings among their fellows are meek and lowly like the Lord of All—and in their unconsciousness of self lies the secret of their power! The kings among mankind, the happiest, the most powerful, the most honorable, will one day be seen to be not the Alexanders, Caesars and Napoleons, but the men akin to Him who washed the disciples’ feet—those who in quietness lived for God and their fellow men, unostentatious because conscious of their failures, unselfish because self was held in low esteem, humble and devout because their own spiritual poverty drove them out of themselves and led them to rest alone upon the Lord! The time shall come when glitter and gewgaw will go for what they are worth and then shall the poor in spirit be seen to have had the Kingdom!

The dominion awarded by this Beatitude to the poor in spirit is no common one. It is the Kingdom of Heaven, a heavenly dominion far excelling anything which can be obtained this side of the stars. An ungodly world may reckon the poor in spirit to be contemptible, but God writes them down among His peers and princes. And His judgment is true and far more to be esteemed than the opinions of men or even of angels! Only as we are poor in spirit have we any evidence that Heaven is ours. But having that mark of blessedness, all things are ours, whether things present or things to come. To the poor in spirit belong all the security, honor and

happiness which the Gospel Kingdom is calculated to give upon earth! Even here below they may eat of its dainties without question and revel in its delights without fear. Theirs are also the things not seen as yet, reserved for future Revelation. Theirs the Second Advent, theirs the Glory, theirs the fifth great monarchy, theirs the Resurrection, theirs the Beatific Vision, theirs the eternal ecstasy!

“Poor in spirit.” The words sound as if they described the owners of nothing, and yet they describe the inheritors of all things! Happy poverty! Millionaires sink into insignificance! The treasures of the Indies evaporate in smoke while to the poor in spirit remains a boundless, endless, faultless Kingdom which renders them blessed in the esteem of Him who is God over all, blessed forever! And all this is for the present life in which they mourn and need to be comforted, hunger and thirst and need to be filled. All this is for them while yet they are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. What, then, must be their blessedness when they shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father and in them shall be fulfilled the promise of their Master and Lord, “to him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne”?

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:31-42.**

[Continued from Sermon #3155, Volume 55.]

31, 32. *It has been said, Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: but I say unto you, That whoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.* This time our King quotes and condemns a permissive enactment of the Jewish State. Men were known to bid their wives, “begone,” and a hasty word was thought sufficient as an act of divorce. Moses insisted upon “*a writing of divorcement,*” that angry passions might have time to cool and that the separation, if it must come, might be performed with deliberation and legal formality. The requirement of a writing was to a certain degree a check upon an evil habit which was so engrained in the people that to refuse it altogether would have been useless—and would only have created another crime. The law of Moses went as far as it could practically be enforced. It was because of the hardness of their hearts that divorce was tolerated—it was never approved.

But our Lord is more heroic in his legislation. He forbids divorce except for the one crime of infidelity to the marriage vow. She who commits adultery does, by that act and deed, in effect break the marriage bond—and it ought then to be formally recognized by the State as being broken. But for nothing else should a man be divorced from his wife. Marriage is for life and cannot be loosed except by the one great crime which severs its bond, *whichever of the two is guilty of it.* Our Lord would never have tolerated the wicked laws of certain of the American States which allow married men and women to separate on the merest pretext. A woman di-

vanced for any cause but adultery, and marrying again, is committing adultery before God, whatever the laws of man may call it! This is very plain and positive—and thus a sanctity is given to marriage which human legislation ought not to violate. Let us not be among those who take up novel ideas of wedlock and seek to deform the marriage laws under the pretense of reforming them. Our Lord knows better than our modern social reformers. We had better let the Laws of God alone, for we shall never discover any better.

33-37. *Again, you have heard that it has been said by them of old time, You shall not forswear yourself, but shall perform unto the Lord your oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither of Heaven, for it is God's Throne: nor by the earth, for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil.* False swearing was forbidden of old, but every kind of swearing is forbidden now by the word of our Lord Jesus. He mentions several forms of oath and forbids them all—and then prescribes simple forms of affirmation or denial as all that His followers should employ. Notwithstanding much that may be advanced to the contrary, there is no evading the plain sense of this passage—that every sort of oath, however solemn or true, is forbidden to a follower of Jesus! Whether in court of law, or out of it, the rule is, “Swear not at all.” Yet, in this Christian country we have swearing everywhere—and *especially* among law-makers! Our legislators begin their official existence by swearing. By those who obey the Law of the Savior's Kingdom, all swearing is set aside so that the simple word of affirmation or denial, calmly repeated, may remain as a sufficient bond of truth. A bad man cannot be believed on his oath and a good man speaks the truth without an oath—to what purpose is the superfluous custom of legal swearing preserved? Christians should not yield to an evil custom, however great the pressure put upon them! They should abide by the plain and unmistakable command of their Lord and King.

38. *You have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.* The law of an eye for an eye, as administered in the proper courts of law was founded in justice and worked far more equitably than the more modern system of fines, for that method allows rich men to offend with comparative impunity. But when the *lex talionis* came to be the rule of daily life, it fostered revenge—and our Savior would not tolerate it as a principle carried out by individuals. Good law in court may be very bad custom in common society. He spoke against what had become a proverb and was heard and said among the people, “*You have heard that it has been said.*” Our loving King would have private dealings ruled by the spirit of love and not by the rule of law.

39. *But I say unto you, That you resist not evil: but whoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.* Non-resistance and forbearance are to be the rule among Christians. They are to endure personal ill-usage without coming to blows. They are to be as the anvil when

bad men are the hammers, and thus they are to overcome by patient forgiveness. The rule of the judgment seat is not for common life, but the rule of the Cross and the all-enduring Sufferer is for us all. Yet how many regard all this as fanatical, utopian and even cowardly? The Lord, our King, would have us bear and forbear, and conquer by mighty patience. Can we do it? How are we the servants of Christ if we have not His spirit?

40. *And if any man will sue you at the law, and take away your coat, let him have your cloak, also.* Let him have all he asks and more. Better lose a suit of clothes than be drawn into a suit in law. The courts of our Lord's day were vicious and His disciples were advised to suffer wrong sooner than appeal to them. Our own courts often furnish the surest method of solving a difficulty by authority, and we have known them resorted to with the view of preventing strife. Yet even in a country where justice can be had, we are not to resort to law for every personal wrong. We should rather endure to be put upon than be forever crying out, "I'll bring an action." At times this very rule of self-sacrifice may require us to take steps in the way of legal appeal, to stop injuries which would fall heavily upon others. But we ought often to forego our own advantage, yes, always when the main motive would be a proud desire for self-vindication. Lord, give me a patient spirit, so that I may not seek to avenge myself, even when I might righteously do so!

41. *And whoever shall compel you to go a mile, go with him two.* Governments in those days demanded forced service through their petty officers. Christians were to be of a yielding temper and bear a double exaction rather than provoke ill words and anger. We ought not to evade taxation, but stand ready to render to Caesar his due. "Yield" is our watchword! To stand up against force is not exactly our part—we may leave that to others. How few believe the long-suffering, non-resistant Doctrines of our King!

42. *Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away.* Be generous. A miser is no follower of Jesus. Discretion is to be used in our giving, lest we encourage idleness and beggary. But the general rule is, "*Give to him that asks you.*" Sometimes a loan may be more useful than a gift, do not refuse it to those who will make right use of it. These precepts are not meant for fools—they are set before us as our general rule—but each rule is balanced by other Scriptural commands and there is the teaching of a philanthropic commonsense to guide us. Our spirit is to be one of readiness to help the needy by gift or loan—and we are not exceedingly likely to err by excess in this direction—hence the boldness of the command.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE THIRD BEATITUDE

NO. 3065

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1907.

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“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”
Matthew 5:5.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the Beatitudes are as follows—#422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER and #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

I HAVE often reminded you that the Beatitudes in this chapter rise one above the other and spring out of one another and that those which come before are always necessary to those that follow after. This third Beatitude, “Blessed are the meek,” could not have stood first—it would have been quite out of place there. When a man is converted, the first operation of the Grace of God within his soul is to give him true poverty of spirit, so the first Beatitude is, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The Lord first makes us know our emptiness and so humbles us. Then next He makes us mourn over the deficiencies that are so manifest in us. Then comes the second Beatitude, “Blessed are they that mourn.” First, then, is a true knowledge of ourselves and then a sacred grief arising out of that knowledge. Now, no man ever becomes truly meek, in the Christian sense of that word, until he first knows himself and then begins to mourn and lament that he is so far short of what he ought to be. Self-righteousness is never meek. The man who is proud of himself will be quite sure to be hard-hearted in his dealings with others. To reach this rung of the ladder of the Light of God he must first set his feet upon the other two. There must be poverty of spirit and mourning of heart before there will come that gracious meekness of which our text speaks.

Note too that this third Beatitude is of a higher order than the other two. There is something positive in it as to virtue. The first two are rather expressive of deficiency, but here there is a something supplied. A man is poor in spirit—that is, he feels that he lacks a thousand things that he ought to possess. The man mourns—that is, he laments over his state of spiritual poverty. But now there is something really given to him by the Grace of God—not a negative quality, but a positive proof of the work of the Holy Spirit within his soul so that he has become meek. The first two characteristics that receive a benediction appear to be wrapped up in themselves. The man is poor in spirit—that relates to himself. His mourning is his own personal mourning which ends when he is comforted. But the meekness has to do with other people. It is true that it has a relationship to God, but a man’s meekness is especially towards

his fellow men. He is not simply meek within himself—his meekness is manifest in his dealings with others. You would not speak of a hermit who never saw a fellow creature as being meek. The only way in which you could prove whether he was meek would be to put him with those who would try his temper. So that this meekness is a virtue—larger, more expansive, working in a wider sphere than the first two characteristics which Christ has pronounced blessed. It is superior to the others, as it should be, since it grows out of them. Yet, at the same time, as there is through the whole of the Beatitudes a fall parallel with the rise, so is it here. In the first case, the man was poor—that was low. In the second case, the man was mourning—that also was low. But if he kept his mourning to himself, he might still seem great among his fellow men. But now he has come to be meek among them—lowly and humble in the midst of society—so that he is going lower and lower! Yet he is rising with spiritual exaltation, although he is sinking as to personal humiliation, and so has become more truly gracious.

Now, having spoken of the connection of this Beatitude, we will make two enquiries with the view of opening it up. They are these—first, *who are the meek?* And, secondly, *how and in what sense can they be said to inherit the earth?*

I. First, then, WHO ARE THE MEEK? I have already said that they are those who have been made poor in spirit by God and who have been made to mourn before God and have been comforted. But here we learn that they are also meek, that is, lowly and gentle in mind before God and before men.

They are meek before God. And good old Watson divides that quality under two heads, namely, that they are submissive to His will and flexible to His Word. May these two very expressive qualities be found in each one of us!

So the truly meek are, first of all, *submissive to God's will*. Whatever God wills, they will. They are of the mind of that shepherd on Salisbury Plain, of whom good Dr. Stenhouse enquired, "What kind of weather shall we have to-morrow?" "Well," replied the shepherd, "we shall have the sort of whether that pleases me." The doctor then asked, "What do you mean?" And the shepherd answered, "What weather pleases God always pleases me." "Shepherd," said the doctor, "your lot seems somewhat hard." "Oh, no, Sir!" he replied, "I don't think so. For it abounds with mercies." "But you have to work very hard, do you not?" "Yes," he answered, "there is a good deal of labor, but that is better than being lazy." "But you have to endure many hardships, do you not?" "Oh, yes, Sir!" he said, "a great many. But then I don't have so many temptations as those people have who live in the midst of towns, and I have more time for meditating upon my God. So I am perfectly satisfied that where God has placed me is the best position I could be in." With such a happy, contented spirit as that, those who are meek do not quarrel with God! They do not talk as some foolish people do of having been born under a wrong planet and placed in circumstances unfavorable to their development! And even when they are smitten by

God's rod, they do not rebel against Him and call Him a hard Master, but they are either dumb with silence, and open not their mouth because God has done it or, if they do speak, it is to ask for Grace that the time they are enduring may be sanctified to them, or they may even rise so high in Grace as to glory in infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon them! The proud-hearted may, if they will, arraign their Maker. And the thing formed may say to Him who formed it, "Why have You made me thus?" But these men of Grace will not do so. It is enough for them if God wills anything! If He wills it, so let it be—Solomon's throne or Job's dunghill—they desire to be equally happy wherever the Lord may place them, or however He may deal with them!

They are also *flexible to God's Word*. If they are really meek, they are always willing to bend. They do not imagine what the Truth of God ought to be and then go to the Bible for texts to prove what they think should be there—they go to the Inspired Book with a candid mind and they pray with the Psalmist, "Open You my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law." And when, in searching the Scriptures, they find deep mysteries which they cannot comprehend, they believe where they cannot understand and where, sometimes—different parts of Scripture seem to conflict with one another—they leave the explanation to the Great Interpreter who alone can make all plain. When they meet with Doctrines that are contrary to their own notions and hard for flesh and blood to receive, they yield themselves to the Divine Spirit and pray, "What we know not, teach You to us." When the meek in spirit find, in the Word of God, any precept, they seek to obey it at once. They do not cavil at it or ask if they can avoid it, or raise that oft-repeated question, "Is it *essential* to salvation?" They are not so selfish that they would do nothing unless salvation depended upon it—they love their God so much that they desire to obey even the least command that He gives, simply out of love to Him. The meek in spirit are like a photographer's sensitive plates—as the Word of God passes before them, they desire to have its image imprinted upon their hearts. Their hearts are the fleshy tablets on which the mind of God is recorded. God is the Writer and they become living Epistles, written not with ink, but with the finger of the living God! Thus are they meek towards God.

But meekness is a quality which also relates largely to men and I think it means, first, that *the man is humble*. He bears himself among his fellow men not as a Caesar who, as Shakespeare says, does "bestride the narrow world like a Colossus," beneath whose huge legs ordinary men may walk and peep about to find themselves dishonorable graves, but he knows that he is only a man and that the best of men are but men at the best. And he does not even claim to be one of the best of men. He knows himself to be less than the least of all saints and, in some respects, the very chief of sinners. Therefore he does not expect to have the first place in the synagogue, nor the highest seat at the feast—he is quite satisfied if he may pass among his fellow men as a notable instance of the power of God's Grace and may be known by them as one who is a great debtor to

the loving kindness of the Lord. He does not set himself up to be a very superior being. If he is of high birth, he does not boast of it. If he is of low birth, he does not try to put himself on a level with those who are in a higher rank of life. He is not one who boasts of his wealth, or of his talents. He knows that a man is not judged by God by any of these things—and if the Lord is pleased to give him much Grace and to make him very useful in His service, he only feels that he owes the more to his Master and is the more responsible to Him. So he lies the lower before God and walks the more humbly among men.

The meek-spirited man is always of a humble temper and carriage. He is the very opposite of the proud man who you feel must be a person of consequence—at any rate to himself—and to whom you know that you must give way unless you would have an altercation with him. He is a gentleman who expects always to have his top-gallants flying in all weathers. He must always have his banner borne in front of him and everybody else must pay respect to him. The great “I” stands conspicuous in him at all times. He lives in the first house on the street, in the best room, in the front parlor—and when he wakes in the morning, he shakes hands with himself and congratulates himself upon being such a fine fellow as he is! That is the very opposite of being meek and, therefore, humility, although it is not all that there is in meekness, is one of the chief characteristics of it.

Out of this grows gentleness of spirit. *The man is gentle.* He does not speak harshly. His tones are not imperious, his spirit is not domineering. He will often give up what he thinks to be lawful because he does not think it is expedient for the good of others. He seeks to be a true brother among his brethren, thinks himself most honored when he can be the doorkeeper of the House of the Lord, or perform any menial service for the household of faith. I know some professing Christians who are very harsh and repellent. You would not think of going to tell them your troubles. You could not open your heart to them. They do not seem to be able to come down to your level. They are up on a mountain and they speak down to you as a poor creature far below them. That is not the true Christian spirit—that is not being meek. The Christian who is really superior to others among whom he moves is just the man who lowers himself to the level of the lowest for the general good of all! He imitates his Master who, though He was equal with God, “made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant.” And in consequence, he is loved and trusted as his Master was, and even little children come to him and he does not repel them. He is gentle towards them, as a loving mother avoids all harshness when dealing with her children.

In addition to being humble and gentle, *the meek are patient.* They know “it must be that offenses come,” yet they are too meek either to give offense or to take offense. If others grieve them, they put up with it. They do not merely forgive seven times, but 70 times seven! In fact, they often do not feel as if anything had been done that needed any forgiveness, for they have not taken it as an affront. They consider that a mistake was

made, so they are not angry at it. He may be angry for a moment—he would not be a man if he were not. But there is such a thing as being angry and yet not sinning—and the meek man turns his anger wholly upon the evil and away from the person who did the wrong—and is as ready to do him a kindness as if he had never transgressed at all! If there should be anybody here who is of an angry spirit, kindly take home these remarks and try to mend that matter, for a Christian must get the better of an angry temper. Little pots soon boil over and I have known some professing Christians who are such very little pots that the smallest fire has made them boil over! When you never meant anything to hurt their feelings, they have been terribly hurt. The simplest remark has been taken as an insult and a construction put upon things that never was intended. And they make their brother offenders for a word, or for half a word, yes, and even for not saying a word! Sometimes if a man does not see them in the street through being short-sighted, they are sure he passed them on purpose and would not speak to them because they are not so well off as he is. Whether a thing is done or is left undone, it equally fails to please them. They are always on the alert for some cause of annoyance and almost remind one of the Irishman at Donnybrook Fair, trailing his coat in the dirt and asking for somebody to tread on it, that he may have the pleasure of knocking that somebody down! When I hear of anybody like that losing his temper, I always pray that he may not find it again, for such tempers are best lost. The meek-spirited man may be naturally very hot and fiery, but he has had Grace given to him to keep his temper in subjection. He does not say, “That is my constitution and I cannot help it,” as so many do. God will never excuse us because of our constitution—His Grace is given to us to cure our evil constitutions and to kill our corruptions! We are not to spare any Amalekites because they are called constitutional sins, but we are to bring them all out—even Agog who goes delicately—and slay them before the Lord who can make us more than conquerors over every sin, whether constitutional or otherwise!

But since this is a wicked world and there are men who will persecute us, and others who will try to rob us of our right and do us serious injury, the meek man goes beyond merely bearing what has to be borne, for he *freely forgives the injury that is done to him*. It is an ill sign when anyone refuses to forgive another. I have heard of a father saying that his child should never darken his door again. Does that father know that he can never enter Heaven while he cherishes such a spirit as that? I have heard of one saying, “I will never forgive So-and-So.” Do you know that God will never hear your prayer for forgiveness until you forgive others? That is the very condition which Christ taught His disciples to present—“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” If you take your brother by the throat because he owes you a hundred pence, can you think that God will forgive you the thousand talents which you owe Him? So the meek-spirited man forgives those who wrong him—he reckons that injuries are permitted to be done to him as trials of his Grace, to see

whether he can forgive them—and he does so, and does so right heartily. It used to be said of Archbishop Cranmer, “Do my lord of Canterbury an ill turn and he will be a friend to you as long as you live.” That was a noble spirit, to take the man who had been his enemy and to make him henceforth to be a friend. This is the way to imitate Him who prayed for His murderers, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” And this is the very opposite of a revengeful spirit. There are some who say that they have been wronged and they will retaliate. But “retaliation” is not a Christian word! “Revenge” is not a word that ought to be found in a Christian’s dictionary—he reckons it to be of the Babylonian dialect and of the language of Satan. His only revenge is to heap coals of fire upon his adversary’s head by doing him all the good he can in return for the evil that he has done.

I think that meekness also involves *contentment*. The meek-spirited man is not ambitious. He is satisfied with what God provides for him. He does not say that his soul loathes the daily manna. And the water from the Rock never loses its sweetness to his taste. His motto, is, “God’s Providence is my inheritance.” He has his ups and his downs, but he blesses the Lord that his God is a God of the hills and also of the valleys. And if he can have God’s face shining upon him, he cares little whether it is hills or valleys upon which he walks. He is content with what he has and he says, “Enough is as good as a feast.” Whatever happens to him, seeing that his times are in God’s hand, it is with him well in the best and most emphatic sense. The meek man is no Napoleon who will wade through human blood to reach a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind. The meek man is no miser, hoarding up, with an all-devouring greed, everything that comes to his hands and adding house to house and field to field so long as he lives. The meek man has a laudable desire to make use of his God-given talents and to find for himself a position in which he may do more good to his fellow men. But he is not unrestful, anxious, fretful, grieving, grasping—he is contented and thankful.

Put those five qualities together and you have the truly meek man—humble, gentle, patient, forgiving and contented—the very opposite of the man who is proud, harsh, angry, revengeful and ambitious. It is only the Grace of God, as it works in us by the Holy Spirit, that can make us thus meek. There have been some who have thought themselves meek when they were not. The Fifth Monarchy men, in Cromwell’s day, said that they were meek and that they were, therefore, to inherit the earth—so they wanted to turn other men out of their estates and houses so that they might have them—and thereby they proved that they were not meek! For if they had been, they would have been content with what they had and let other people enjoy what belonged to them. There are some people who are very gentle and meek as long as nobody tries them. We are, all of us, remarkably good-tempered while we have our own way. But the true meekness which is a work of Grace will stand the fire of persecution and will endure the test of enmity, cruelty and wrong—even as the meekness of Christ did upon the Cross of Calvary.

II. Now, in the second place, let us think of HOW THE MEEK INHERIT THE EARTH.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." This promise is similar to the Inspired declaration of Paul, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." So first, it is the meek man who inherits the earth, for *he is the earth's conqueror*. He is the conqueror of the world whenever he goes. William the Conqueror came to England with sword and fire, but the Christian conqueror wins his victories in a superior manner by the weapons of kindness and meekness. In Puritan times there was an eminent and godly minister named Mr. Deering, who has left some writings that are still valuable. While sitting at a table one day, a graceless fellow insulted him by throwing a glass of beer in his face. The good man simply took his handkerchief, wiped his face and went on eating his dinner. The man provoked him a second time by doing the same thing—and he even did it a third time with many oaths and blasphemy. Mr. Deering made no reply, but simply wiped his face and, on the third occasion, the man came and fell at his feet and said that the spectacle of his Christian meekness, and the look of tender, pitying love that Mr. Deering had cast upon him, had quite subdued him. So the good man was the conqueror of the bad one! No Alexander was ever greater than the man who could bear such insults like that! And holy Mr. Dodd, when he spoke to a man who was swearing in the street, received a blow in the mouth that knocked out two of his teeth. The holy man wiped the blood from his face and said to his assailant, "You may knock out all my teeth if you will permit me just to speak to you so that your soul may be saved." And the man was won by this Christian forbearance! It is wonderful what rough natures will yield before gentle natures. After all, it is not the strong who conquer, but the weak. There has been a long enmity, as you know, between the wolves and the sheep. And the sheep have never taken to fighting, yet they have won the victory and there are more sheep than wolves in the world today. In our own country, the wolves are all dead, but the sheep have multiplied by tens of thousands. The anvil stands still while the hammer beats upon it, but one anvil wears out many hammers. And gentleness and patience will ultimately win the day. At this present moment, who is the mightier? Caesar with his legions or Christ with His Cross? We know who will be the victor before long—Mohammed with his sharp scimitar or Christ with His Doctrine of Love. When all earthly forces are overthrown, Christ's Kingdom will still stand. Nothing is mightier than meekness! And it is the meek who inherit the earth in that sense.

They inherit the earth in another sense, namely, that *they enjoy what they have*. If you find me a man who thoroughly enjoys life, I will tell you at once that he is a meek, quiet-spirited man. Enjoyment of life does not consist in the possession of riches. There are many sick men who are utterly miserable and there are many poor men who are equally miserable. You may have misery or you may have happiness according to

your state of *heart* in any condition of life. The meek man is thankful, happy and contented—and it is contentment that makes life enjoyable. It is so at our common meals. Here comes a man home to his dinner. He bows his head and says, “For what we are about to receive, the Lord make us truly thankful.” And then opens his eyes and grumbles, “What? Cold mutton again?” His spirit is very different from that of the good old Christian who, when he reached home, found two herrings and two or three potatoes on the table and he pronounced over them this blessing, “Heavenly Father, we thank You that You have ransacked both earth and sea to find us this entertainment.” His dinner was not so good as the other man’s, but he was content with it and that made it better! Oh the grumbling that some have, when rolling in wealth, and the enjoyment that others have when they have but little, for the dinner of herbs is sweeter than the stalled ox if contentment is but there! “A man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses,” but in the meek and quiet spirit which thanks God for whatever He pleases to give.

“Oh!” says someone, “but that is not inheriting the earth—it is only inheriting a part of it.” Well, it is inheriting as much of it as we need and there is a sense in which the meek do really inherit the whole earth. I have often felt, when I have been in a meek and quiet spirit, as if everything around me belonged to me. I have walked through a gentleman’s park and I have been very much obliged to him for keeping it in such order on purpose for me to walk through it! I have gone inside his house and seen his picture gallery—and I have been very grateful to him for buying such grand pictures and I have hoped that he would buy a few more so that I might see them when I came next time. I was very glad that I had not to buy them and to pay the servants to watch over them—and that everything was done for me! And I have sometimes looked from a hill upon some far-reaching plain, or some quiet village, or some manufacturing town, crowded with houses and shops, and I have felt that they were all mine, although I had not the trouble of collecting the rents which people, perhaps, might not like to pay. I had only to look upon it all as the sun shone upon it and then to look up to Heaven and say, “My Father, this is all Yours and, therefore, it is all mine, for I am an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.” So, in this sense, the meek-spirited man inherits the whole each.

He also inherits it in another sense—that is to say, *whatever other men have, he is glad to think that they have it*. Perhaps he is walking and gets weary. Someone comes riding by and he says to himself, “Thank God that man does not need to walk and get tired as I do. I am glad there is somebody who is free from that trial.” He works very hard and perhaps earns very little, but he lives next door to a workingman who has twice his wages and he says, “Thank God that my neighbor does not have such a pinch as I have. I should not like to see him in such a plight as I am in.” Sometimes, when I am ill, someone comes in and says, “I have been to see somebody who is worse than you are,” but I never get any comfort out of such a remark as that. And my usual answer is, “You have made

me feel worse than I was before by telling me that there is somebody worse even than I am." The greater comfort for a meek man is this, "Though I am ill, there are plenty of people who are well." Or this, "Though I am blind, I bless God that my dear Brothers and Sisters can see the flowers and the sun." Or this, "Though I am lame, I am thankful that others can run." Or this, "Though I am depressed in spirit, I am glad that there are sweet-voiced singers." Or this, "Though I am an owl, I rejoice that there are larks to soar and sing, and eagles to mount towards the sun." The meek-spirited man is glad to know that other people are happy—and their happiness is his happiness! He will have a great number of heavens, for everybody else's Heaven will be a Heaven to him! It will be a Heaven to him to know that so many other people are in Heaven, and for each one whom he sees there, he will praise the Lord. Meekness gives us the enjoyment of what is other people's, yet they have none the less because of our enjoyment of it!

Again, the meek-spirited man inherits the earth in this sense—if *there is anybody who is good anywhere near him, he is sure to see him*. I have known persons join the Church and after they have been a little while in it, they have said, "There is no love there." Now, when a Brother says, "There is no love there," I know that he has been looking in the mirror and that his own reflection has suggested his remark. Such persons cry out about the deceptions and hypocrisies in the professing church—and they have some cause for doing so—only it is a pity that they cannot also see the good people, the true saints who are there! The Lord still has a people who love and fear Him, a people who will be His in the day when He makes up His jewels. And it is a pity if we are not able to see what God so much admires. If we are meek, we shall the more readily see the excellences of other people. That is a very beautiful passage, in the second part of "The Pilgrim's Progress" which tells that when Christiana and Mercy had both been bathed in the bath and clothed in the fine linen, white and clean, "they began to esteem each other better than themselves." If we also do this, we shall not think so badly as some of us now do of this poor present life, but shall go through it thanking God and praising His name—and so inheriting the earth.

With a gentle temper and a quiet spirit, and Grace to keep you so, you will be inheriting the earth under any circumstances. If trouble should come, you will bow to it as the willow bows to the wind and so escapes the injury that falls upon sturdier trees. If there should come little vexations, you will not allow yourself to be vexed by them, but will say, "With a little patience, they will all pass away." I think I never admired Archbishop Leighton more than when I read a certain incident that is recorded in his life. He lived in a small house in Scotland and had only a manservant beside himself in the house. John, the manservant, was very forgetful and, one morning when he got up before his master, he thought he would like to have a day's fishing, so he went off and locked his master in. He fished until late in the evening, forgot all about his master, and when he came back, what do you think the bishop said to him? He

simply said, "John, if you go out for a day's fishing again, kindly leave me the key." He had had a happy day of prayer and study all by himself. If it had been some of us, we would have been fuming, fretting and getting up a nice lecture for John when he came back—and he richly deserved it—but I do not suppose it was worthwhile for the good man to put himself out about him. The incident is, I think, a good illustration of our text.

But the text means more than I have yet said, for the promise, "They shall inherit *the earth*," may be read, "they shall inherit *the land*," that is, the promised land, the heavenly Canaan! These are the men who shall inherit Heaven, for up there they are all meek-spirited. There are no contentions there! Pride cannot enter there. Anger, wrath and malice never pollute the atmosphere of the Celestial City. There, all bow before the King of kings and all rejoice in communion with Him and with one another. Ah, Beloved, if we are ever to enter Heaven, we must fling away ambition, discontent, wrath, self-seeking and selfishness! May God's Grace purge us of all these, for as long as any of that evil leaven is in our soul—where God is, we cannot go.

And then, dear Friends, the text means yet more than that—we shall inherit this earth by-and-by. David wrote, "The meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." After this earth has been purified by fire. After God shall have burned the works of men to ashes and every trace of corrupt humanity shall have been destroyed by the fervent heat, then shall this earth be fitted up again, and angels shall descend with new songs to sing and the New Jerusalem shall come down out of Heaven from God in all her glory! And then upon this earth, where once was war, the clarion shall ring no more! There shall be neither swords nor spears and men shall learn the arts of war no more. The meek shall then possess the land and every hill and valley shall be glad, and every fruitful plain shall ring with shouts of joy, and peace, and gladness throughout the long millennial day! The Lord send it and may we all be among the meek who shall possess the New Eden, whose flowers shall never wither and where no serpent's trail shall ever be seen!

But this must be the work of Grace. We must be born-again, or else our proud spirits will never be meek. And if we have been born-again, let it be our joy, as long as we live, to show that we are the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus with whom gracious words I close my discourse—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." So may it be, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:1-12.**

Verse 1. *And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain.* For convenience and quietude and to be out of the way of traffic He went up

into a mountain. Elevated Doctrines would seem most at home on the high places of the earth.

1. *And when He was set.* For that was the mode of Eastern teaching.

1. *His disciples came unto Him.* They made the inner ring around Him and others gathered around them.

2. *And He opened His mouth and taught them.* Chrysostom says that He taught them even when He did not open His mouth! His very silence was instructive. But when He did open His mouth, what streams of wisdom flowed forth! He “taught them.” He did not open His mouth to make an oration, He was a Teacher, so His aim was to teach those who came to Him. And His ministers best follow their Lord’s example when they keep to the vein of teaching. The pulpit is not the place for the display of oratory and eloquence, but for real instruction—“He opened His mouth, and taught them.”

2, 3. *Saying, Blessed.* The Old Testament closes with the word “curse.” The New Testament begins here, in the preaching of Christ, with the word, “Blessed.” He has changed the curse into a blessing. “Blessed.”

3. *Are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* This is a paradox that puzzles many, for the poor in spirit often seem to have nothing—yet they have the Kingdom of Heaven, so they have everything! He who thinks the least of himself is the man of whom God thinks the most. You are not poor in God’s sight if you are poor in spirit.

4. *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* They are not only poor in spirit, but they are weeping, lamenting, mourning. Worldlings are frivolous, frolicsome, light-hearted and loving everything that is akin to mirth—yet it is *not* said of them, but of those that mourn, that “they shall be comforted.”

5. *Blessed are the meek.* Not your high-spirited, quick-tempered men who will put up with no insults—your hectoring, lofty ones who are always ready to resent any real or imagined disrespect. There is no blessing here for them! But blessed are the gentle—those who are ready to be thought nothing of.

5. *For they shall inherit the earth.* Some say that the best way to get through the world is to swagger along with a coarse impudence and to push out of your way all who may be in it. But there is no truth in that idea. The truth lies in quite another direction—“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”

6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.* The course of these Beatitudes is like going downstairs. They began with spiritual poverty, went on to mourning, came down to gentle-spiritedness and now we come to hunger and thirst. Yet we have been going up all the time, for here we read, “They shall be filled.” What more can we have than full satisfaction?

7. *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.* “The merciful” are those who are always ready to forgive, always ready to help the poor and needy, always ready to overlook what they might well condemn—“they shall obtain mercy.”

8. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.* When the heart is washed, the dirt is taken from the mental eyes. The heart that loves God is connected with an understanding that perceives God. There is no way of seeing God until the heart is renewed by Sovereign Grace. It is not greatness of intellect, but purity of affection that enables us to see God.

9. *Blessed are the peacemakers.* Not only the passively peaceful, but the actively peaceful who try to rectify mistakes and to end all quarrels in a peaceful way.

9. *For they shall be called the children of God.* They shall not only be the children of God, but men shall call them so! They shall recognize in them the likeness to the peace-making God.

10. *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* They have it now, they are already participating in it for, as Christ was persecuted and He is again persecuted in them, as they are partakers of His sufferings, so are they sharers in His Kingdom.

11, 12. *Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you. You have an elevation by persecution—you are lifted into the peerage of martyrdom, though you occupy but an inferior place in it, yet you are in it. Therefore, "rejoice and be exceedingly glad."*

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

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

THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED

NO. 2103

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after
righteousness: for they shall be filled.”
Matthew 5:6.*

BECAUSE man had perfect righteousness before the Fall, he enjoyed perfect blessedness. If you and I shall, by Divine Grace, attain to blessedness hereafter, it will be because God has restored us to righteousness. As it was in the first Paradise, so must it be in the second—righteousness is essential to the blessedness of man. We cannot be truly happy and live in sin. Holiness is the natural element of blessedness. And it can no more live out of that element than a fish could live in the fire.

The happiness of man must come through his righteousness—his being right with God, with man, with himself—indeed, his being right all round. Since, then, the first blessedness of our unfallen state is gone and the blessedness of perfection hereafter is not yet come, how can we be blessed in the interval which lies between? The answer is, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Though they have not yet attained the righteousness they desire, yet even the *longing* for it makes them a blessed people.

The massive blessedness of the past, and the priceless blessedness of the eternal future, are joined together by a band of present blessedness. The band is not so massive as those two things which it unites. But it is of the same metal, has been fashioned by the same hand and is as indestructible as the treasures which it binds together.

Of this hunger and thirst I am going to speak this morning. I feel so unfit for the effort that I must correct myself and say that I hunger and thirst to preach to you but, that is all the power I have. Oh, that I, too, may be filled for your sakes! May the Spirit of the Lord fulfill my intense desire to minister to you from this beatitude of our Lord Jesus, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

First, then, in our text we have mention of singular appetites—“hunger and thirst”—not for bread and water but, “after righteousness.” Secondly, we have a remarkable declaration about these hungering people—Jesus says that they are “blessed,” or happy. And beyond a doubt His judgment is true. Thirdly, in our text is mentioned a special satisfaction meeting their necessity and in its foresight making them blessed—our Savior says, “they shall be filled.”

I. To begin, then, we shall speak of SINGULAR APPETITES. In this case, one insatiable desire takes different forms. They hunger and they thirst—the two most urgent needs of the body are used to set forth the cravings of the soul for righteousness. Hunger and thirst are different but they are both the language of keen desire. He that has ever felt either of these two knows how sharp are the pangs they bring. And if the two are combined in one craving, they make up a restless, terrible, unconquerable passion.

Who shall resist a man hungering and thirsting? His whole being fights to satisfy his awful needs. Blessed are they that have a longing for righteousness, which no one word can fully describe and no one craving can set forth. Hunger must be joined with thirst, to set forth the strength and eagerness of the desire after righteousness.

This desire is like hunger and thirst in constancy. Not that it is always equally raging, for the hungry man is not always equally in pain. But, still, he can never quite forget the gnawing within, the burning at the heart. Blessed is the man who is always desiring righteousness with an insatiable longing that nothing can turn aside. Hunger and thirst are irrepressible. Until you feed the man, his wants will continue to devour him. You may give a hungry man the best music that was ever drawn from strings, or breathed from pipes—but his cravings are not soothed—you do but mock him.

You may set before him the fairest prospect. But unless in that prospect there stands conspicuous a loaf of bread and a cup of water, he has no heart for flood or field, mountain or forest. They are blessed, says Christ, who, with regard to righteousness, are always seeking it and cannot be satisfied until they find it. The desire toward righteousness, which a man must have in order to be blessed, is not a faint one, in which he feebly says, "I wish I could be righteous." Neither is it a passing outburst of good desires. But it is a *longing* which, like hunger and thirst, abides with a man and masters him.

He carries it to his work, carries it to his house, carries it to his bed, carries it wherever he, himself, goes, for it rules him with its imperative demands. As the horse-leech cries, "Give, give," so does the heart cry after purity, integrity and holiness when once it has learned to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

These appetites are concentrated upon one object—the man hungers and thirsts after *righteousness* and nothing else. Theological works mostly say either that this is imputed righteousness, or implanted righteousness. No doubt these things are meant, but I do not care to insert an adjective where there is none—the text does not say either "imputed" or "implanted"—why need we mend it? It is *righteousness* which the man pants after—righteousness in all its meanings.

First, he feels that he is not right with God and the discovery causes him great distress. The Spirit of God shows him that he is all wrong with God, for he has broken the Laws which he ought to have kept and he has not paid the homage and love which were justly due. The same Spirit makes him long to get right with God. And, his conscience being aroused, he cannot rest till this is done. This, of course, includes the

pardon of his offenses and the giving to him of a righteousness which will make him acceptable to God—he eagerly cries to God for this gift.

One of the bitterest pangs of his soul's hunger is the dread that this need can never be met. How can man be just with God? It is the peculiar glory of the Gospel that it reveals the righteousness of God—the method by which sinners can be put right with God. And this comes with peculiar sweetness to one who is striving and praying, hungering and thirsting, after righteousness. When he hears of righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he leaps at it and lays hold upon it, for it exactly meets his needs.

The hunger now takes another form. The pardoned and justified man now desires to be right in his conduct and language and thought—he pines to be righteous in his whole *life*. He would be marked by integrity, kindness, mercifulness, love and everything else which goes to make up a right condition of things towards his fellow creatures. He ardently desires to be correct in his feelings and conduct towards God—he craves rightly to know, obey, pray, praise and love his God. He cannot rest till he stands towards God and man as he ought to stand.

His longing is not only to be treated as righteous by God, which comes through the atoning blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but that he may be actually righteous before the heart-searching God. Nor will this suffice him—not only must his conduct be right, but he pants to be himself right. He finds within himself irregular desires and he would have these utterly destroyed. He finds tendencies towards unrighteousness. And although he resists these, and overcomes them, yet the tendencies themselves are abhorrent to him.

He finds longings after pleasures that are forbidden. And though he rejects those pleasures with loathing, his trouble is that he should have any inclination towards them at all. He wants to be so renewed that sin shall have no power over him. He has learned that a lustful *look* is adultery, that a covetous *desire* is theft, and that wrongful *anger* is murder. And therefore he craves not only to be free from the look and the desire and the passion, but even from the *tendency* in that direction. He longs to have the fountain of his being cleansed. He hungers to, “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”

He thirsts to be “renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him.” He cannot be content till he is himself like Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God, the mirror of righteousness and peace. But, mark you, if the man should even attain to this, his hunger and thirst would only take another direction. The godly man hungers and thirsts to see righteousness in others. At times, when he sees the conduct of those around him, he cries, “My soul is among lions. And I lie even among them that are set on fire.” The more holy he becomes, the more sin vexes his righteous soul and he cries, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!”

He often wishes that he had “wings like a dove,” that he might “fly away and be at rest.” Like Cowper, he cries—

**“Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,**

***Where rumor of oppression and deceit,
Of unsuccessful or successful war,
Might never reach me more!***

He hungers for godly company—he thirsts to see the unholy made holy. And therefore he cries in his daily prayer, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.” With hunger and thirst he cries, “Lord, end the reign of sin! Lord, cast down idols! Lord, chase error from the earth! Lord, turn men from lust and avarice and cruelty and drunkenness.” He would live for righteousness and die for righteousness. The zeal of it consumes him.

Brothers and Sisters, I hope you have been able to follow, by your own knowledge, the various movements of this absorbing passion for righteousness, which I have thus feebly sketched for you. Note well that these concentrated appetites are very discriminating. The man does not long for twenty things but only for *one* thing and for that one thing by itself. The hunger and the thirst are “after righteousness.” The man does not hunger for wealth—he would rather be poor and be righteous, than be rich through evil.

He does not hunger after health—though he would wish to have that great blessing, yet he would rather be sick and have righteousness, than enjoy good health and be unrighteous. He does not even set before himself, as his great object, the *rewards* of righteousness. These are very desirable—the respect of one’s fellows, peace of mind and communion with God, are by no means little things. But he does not make these the chief objects of his desire, for he knows that they will be added to him if in the first place he seeks after righteousness itself.

If there were no Heaven, the godly man would wish to be righteous. If there were no Hell, he would dread unrighteousness. His hunger and thirst are after honesty, purity, rectitude and holiness—he hungers and he thirsts to be what God would have him to be. Always distinguish between seeking Heaven and seeking God, between shunning Hell and shunning sin. For any hypocrite will desire Heaven and dread Hell. But only the sincere hunger after righteousness.

The thief would shun the prison but he would like to be once more at his theft. The murderer would escape the gallows but he would readily enough have his hand on his dagger again. The desire to be happy, the wish to be at ease in conscience—these are poor things. The true and noble hunger of the soul is the desire to be right for righteousness’ sake. Oh, to be holy, whether that should mean joy or sorrow! Oh, to be pure in heart, whether that would bring me honor or contempt! This—this is the blessed thirst.

Now, where there is this hunger and thirst, these will work in their own way. Hunger and thirst are not the bed-makers of the house of manhood. No, they ring the alarm bells and even shake the foundations of the house. The starving man cannot bear himself. Ultimately, his terrible needs may reduce him to a passive condition by the way of faintness and insensibility. But while sense remains in the man, hunger and thirst are fierce forces, which nerve him to the most intense endeavors.

When a prisoner was set at the prison gate to plead for the poor debtors, in the old time, he did plead. Himself reduced to a skeleton, he rattled the box in the ears of persons passing by and cried most piteously that they would give something to the poor debtors who were starving inside. How a hungry man looks at you! His very look is a piercing prayer. A man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, pleads with God with his whole soul. There is no sham prayer about him.

The man that is hungry and thirsty after righteousness is the wrestling man. This makes him also the active man. For hunger will break through stone walls. He will do anything for food. The worst of it is, that he often attempts foolish things—he tries to stay his hunger with that which is not bread, and spends his labor upon that which satisfies not. Still, this only proves how energetic are these appetites and how they call out every power of manhood when they are set upon righteousness.

Beloved, these are by no means common. Multitudes of people in the world never hunger and thirst after righteousness. Some of you would like to be saved. But you can do very well if you are not. A man that is hungry and thirsty will never say, “I should like a meal but I can do very well without it.” And you do not hunger and thirst, if you can rest without the blessing you profess to value. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, you want it at once—these cravings will not bear delay—they clamor for immediate supplies. The hungry man’s tense is the present.

Oh, how many there are who, by their delay and by their carelessness, prove that they never hunger and thirst after righteousness! I see also others who are righteous already. They are as good as they want to be. Hear the man talk—“I do not make any profession of religion but I am a great deal better than many that do.” Oh, yes, I know you, Sir. And the Virgin Mary knew you, for she said in her song, “He has filled the hungry with good things. And the rich he has sent empty away.” You will one day be emptied but you will never be filled. Why should you be? You are so blown up with wind that there is no room for the heavenly substance within your heart.

Many refuse the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bread of Heaven. No man can be said to be hungry if he refuses wholesome food. When your child sits down at the table and says that he does not want any dinner, he is evidently not hungry. They that put Christ away and will not have His atonement and His sanctification, are not hungry after righteousness. Many criticize the little things of the Gospel, the insignificant matters about the minister’s voice and tone and appearance.

When a man sits down to dinner and begins to notice that one of the dishes is chipped and one of the roses in the center has an insect on it and the saltshaker is not in the right position to half an inch, and the parsley is not nicely arranged around the cold meat, that fellow is not hungry. Try a poor dockyard laborer, or, better still, his wife and children, and they will eat meat without mustard, and bread without butter. The hungry man will eat fat as well as lean, I guarantee you. Preaching would not so often be submitted to silly remarks if men were really hungry after the Truth of God.

“Give me a knife and a chance,” says the man who is hungry. “Give me the Gospel,” says the anxious enquirer, “and I care nothing for the eloquence.” Beloved, I wish you may so hunger and thirst after righteousness, that trifles may be trifles to you and the essential Truth of God be your only care.

But alas, there are some that we are sure do not hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they do not care even to *hear* about it. When your boy stays out in the road at dinnertime, you may be sure that he is not very hungry. The dinner bell is a very prevailing reasoner when it finds its arguments within the listener. As soon as there is notification that food is to be had, the hungry man hastens to the table. I would to God we had more spiritually hungry people to preach to. He would be a blessed preacher who preached to them, for he would be preaching to a blessed people. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

II. I have very feebly given you the description of the character and now I come to notice the REMARKABLE DECLARATION of our Lord. He says, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

This is a paradox. It does not seem possible that people should be hungry and thirsty and yet blessed. Hunger and thirst bring pain. I know you, my Friend, you are here this morning and you are saying within yourself, “Oh, that I could be right! I am a great sinner; oh, that I were forgiven! Oh, that I could become righteous before God!” Another is saying, “I trust I am forgiven and saved. But I feel a dreadful fear lest I should fall into sin. O wretched man that I am, to have sinful tendencies! Oh, that I could be perfect and altogether delivered from this embodied death which surrounds me in the form of a sinful nature!”

Or, perhaps, another friend sitting here is crying, “God has been very gracious to me. But my children, my husband, my brother—they are living in sin and these are my daily burdens. I have come here with a very heavy heart because they know not the Lord.”

Hearken, dear Friend, and be encouraged. Whatever form your hunger after righteousness may take, you are a blessed person. Albeit that you endure that pain about yourself and others, you are blessed. Hunger and thirst often cause a sinking feeling and that sinking feeling sometimes turns to a deadly faintness. It may be I am speaking to one who has reached that stage. To him I say, “You are blessed.” I hear you sighing, “Oh, that I could be what I want to be! O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

“These inward corruptions, these evil imaginations, they will kill me, I cannot bear them. God has taught me to love what is good and now to will is present with me but how to perform that which is good, I find not. Even my prayers are interrupted by wandering thoughts and my tears of repentance have sin mixed with them.” Beloved, I understand that faintness and sinking, that groaning and pining. But, nevertheless, you *are* blessed, for the text says it, and it is a very remarkable saying, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

Why are they blessed? Well, first, because Jesus says they are. And if He says it, we do not need any further proof. If, looking round on the

crowd, our Lord passes by those who are self-satisfied, and if His eyes light on the men that sigh, and cry, and hunger and thirst after righteousness and if, with smiling face, He says, "These are the blessed ones," then depend upon it—they are so. For I know that those whom He declares to be blessed must be blessed, indeed. I would rather be one whom Christ counted blessed, than one who was so esteemed by all the world—for the Lord Jesus knows better than men do.

The man hungering after righteousness ought to consider himself a happy man, because he has been made to know the right value of things. Before, he set a high value upon worthless pleasure, and he reckoned the dross of the praise of men to be as pure gold. But now he values righteousness and is not as the child who prizes glass beads more than pearls. He has already obtained some measure of righteousness, for his judgment reckons rightly. He ought to be thankful for being so far enlightened.

Once he put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—darkness for light and light for darkness. But now the Lord has brought him to know what is good and what it is that the Lord does require of him—in gaining this right judgment he is a blessed man and on the way to still greater blessedness!

Observe, further, that not only does he estimate things correctly, but he has a heart towards that which is good and desirable. Once he only cared for earthly comforts. Now he hungers and thirsts after righteousness. "Give me a bit of meat in the pot," cries the worldling, "and I will leave your precious righteousness to those who want it." But this man prizes the spiritual above the natural—righteousness is happiness to him. His one cry is, "Give me righteousness."

His whole heart is set on it and this is no mean privilege. He that is filled with the desire of that which God approves, is himself approved. To such a man is given a magnanimity which is of more than royal nature, and for it, he should be grateful to God. He is blessed because, in the presence of this hunger, many meaner hungers die out. One master passion, like Aaron's rod, swallows up all the rest. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness. And, therefore, he has done with the craving of lust, the greed of avarice, the passion of hate, the pining of ambition.

We have known sickly men to be overtaken by a disease which has driven out their old complaints—a fresh fire has put out the former ones. So men, under the influence of a craving for righteousness, have found hunger for land, and hunger for gold, and thirst for pride and lust, by God's Divine Grace, come to an end. The new affections have expelled the old. Even as the Israelites drove the Canaanites into the mountains, or slew them, God alone can give this hungering and thirsting after righteousness. And it is one of its grand qualities that it drives out the groveling and sinful lusting which otherwise would consume our hearts.

These men are blessed by being delivered from many foolish delusions. The delusion is most common that man can get everything that he needs in religion out of himself. Most men are deluded in this way—they think they have a springing well of power within from which they can cleanse and revive and satisfy themselves. Try a hungry man, or a thirsty man

with this doctrine, "My dear fellow, you need not be hungry—you can satisfy yourself from yourself." What is his answer? "I have tied a hunger belt around myself to keep down the hunger. But even that I did not find within myself. I am hungry and must have food from outside, or I shall die."

He cannot eat his own heart, nor feed upon his own liver—it is not possible for him to satisfy his hunger from himself. The common spiritual delusion of men is of like kind. They imagine that they can, by an effort of their own, satisfy conscience, make themselves pure, and produce righteousness of character. Still do they dream of bringing a clean thing out of an unclean. Let spiritual hunger and thirst come upon them and they escape from this snare. The man cries, "Self-trust is a refuge of lies, I must be helped from Above. I must be saved by Divine Grace, or I shall remain unrighteous to the end." Spiritual hunger and thirst are wonderful teachers of the Doctrines of Grace and very speedy dispellers of the illusions of pride.

Once again—these men are blessed because they are already worked upon by the Holy Spirit. Hunger and thirst after righteousness are always the production of the Holy Spirit. It is not natural for man to love the good and the holy. He loves that which is wrong and evil. He loves the trespass or the omission, but strict rectitude before God he does not seek after. When a man is hungry to be true, hungry to be sober, hungry to be pure, hungry to be holy—his hunger is a gift from Heaven and a pledge of the Heaven from which it came.

Once more—this man is blessed, for in his hunger and thirst he is in accord with the Lord Jesus Christ. When our Lord was here, He hungered after righteousness, longing to do and suffer His Father's will. His disciples, on one occasion, went away to the city to buy meat. And He, being left alone, thirsted to bless the poor sinful woman of Samaria, who came to the well to draw water. To her He said, "Give me to drink," not only to commence the conversation but because He thirsted to make that woman righteous.

He thirsted to convince her of her sin and lead her to saving faith. And when He had done so, His desire was gratified. When His disciples came back, though He had not touched a morsel of bread, or a drop of water, He said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me and to finish His work."

Our Lord, on the Cross, said, "I thirst," and that thirst of His lips and of His mouth was but the index of the deeper thirst of His heart and soul that righteousness might reign by His death. He died that the righteousness of God might be vindicated. He lives that the righteousness of God may be proclaimed. He pleads that the righteousness of God may be brought home to sinners. He reigns that this righteousness may chase out of this world the iniquity which now destroys it. When you hunger and thirst after righteousness in any of the shapes I have described, you are in a measure partakers with Christ and have fellowship with Him in His heart's desire. As He is blessed, so are you, for "blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

I think I must have astonished some who have been mourning and crying, “Oh, that the Lord would give me to live upon His righteousness and I would thank Him forever and ever!” Why, *you* are one of the blessed! “Alas,” cries one, “I am pining to be delivered from sin—I do not mean from the punishment of it, Sir, but from the taint of it. I want to be perfectly pure and holy.” Do you? My dear Friend, you are numbered among the blessed at this very moment.

A great professor at your side in the pew is saying, “Blessed be God, I am perfect already” Well, I am not sure about *that* party’s blessedness. That fine bird is not mentioned in my text. But I am sure about yonder soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, for the Word is clear and plain—“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

III. And now I close with the best of all, SPECIAL SATISFACTION. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

This is a singular statement. They are to be blessed while they hunger and thirst. If they become filled, will they still be blessed? Yes, and what is more, they will still hunger and thirst. You say that is strange. Yes, it is. But everything is wonderful in the kingdom of God. Paradoxes, in spiritual things, are as plentiful as blackberries. In fact, if you cannot believe a paradox, you cannot believe in Christ Himself, for he is God and Man in one Person—and that is a paradoxical mystery. How can one Person be infinite and yet finite? How can He be immortal and yet die?

Ours is a Gospel wherein lies many an orthodox paradox. He that is filled by Christ hungers more than he did before, only the hunger is of another kind and has no bitterness in it. He that hungers most is the man who is full in the highest sense—

***“I thirst but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share.
Your wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.”***

Lord, when I get what You give me of Your Divine Grace, then I feel a new craving, which seeks after higher things! My soul enlarges by what it feeds upon and then it cries, “Give me still more.” When a man leaves off crying for more, he may doubt whether he has ever received anything at all. Divine Grace fills and then enlarges. Increase of Grace is increase of capacity for Grace. Cry still, “Lord, increase my faith, my love, my hope, my every Grace! Enlarge my soul, that I may take in more and more of You!”

Now I am going to show you how it is that we can be filled, even now, although still hungry and thirsty. For first, although we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we are more than filled with the righteousness of God. I do believe my God to be perfectly righteous, not only in His Nature and Essence, in His Law and judgment, but also in all His decrees, acts, words, and teachings. I sit down and anxiously peer into the dreadful truth of the eternal perdition of the wicked. But my heart is full of rest when I remember that God is righteous—the Judge of all the earth must do right.

I cannot untie the knots of difficulty over which some men stand perplexed, but I know that God is righteous, and there I leave my bewilderments. God will see to it that the right thing is done in every case and forevermore. Moreover, as I see how iniquity abounds in the world, I am right glad that there is no iniquity in the Lord, my God. As I see error in the Church, I rest in the fact that no error finds countenance with Him. Wrongdoing seems to be everywhere—certain men would rend away every man's property from him and the opposite order would grind down the poor in their wages. But this is our anchor—there is a power which makes for righteousness, and that power is God. I am filled with joy as I see righteousness enthroned in God. Do you not know this gladness?

Next, we are also filled with the righteousness of Christ. What if I am sinful, what if I have no righteousness that I dare bring before God. Yet—

***“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.”***

True, I have to cry with the leper, “Unclean, unclean.” And yet, as a Believer in the Lord Jesus, I am justified in Him, accepted in Him—and in Him *complete*. God looks on me, not as *I* am, but as Christ is. He sees me through the perfect obedience of the Well-Beloved and I stand before Him without condemnation., No, with full acceptance and favor. The more you think of the righteousness of Christ, the more it will fill you with grateful satisfaction—for His righteousness is far greater than your unrighteousness.

Yet you will be crying all the same, “O Lord, perfect me in Your image, and give me righteousness!” A fullness of Divine content, even to running over, will be yours, while you sing, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” You will be satisfied, first, with the righteous character of God, and next, with the plan of Divine righteousness revealed in Christ Jesus.

Look at the sin of this world and groan over it. What a wicked world it is! Read of wars and oppressions, falsehoods and superstitions. Or, if you prefer, see with your own eyes the slums of East London, or the iniquity of our great folks in West London. And then you will hunger and thirst. But even concerning all this, you will be filled as you think of the atonement of Christ and remember that it is more sweet to God than all the sin of man is nauseous. The sweet savor of His sacrifice has removed from the thrice-holy God the reek of this dunghill world and He no longer says that it repents Him that He has made man upon the earth. Because of Christ's righteousness, the Lord God bears with guilty man and still waits, that He may be gracious to the earth and make it anew in Christ Jesus.

Again, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness are filled with the righteousness which the Holy Spirit works in them. I do not say that they are satisfied to remain as they are, but they are very grateful for what they are. I am a sinner but yet I do not love sin—is not this delightful? Though I have to fight daily against corruption, yet I have received an inner life which will fight and must fight and will not be conquered. If I have not yet vanquished sin, it is something to be struggling

against it. Even now, by faith we claim the victory. “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Have you ever felt as if you were full to the brim, when you knew that you were, “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”?

Have you not been filled with delight to know that you were no longer what you used to be, but that you were now made a partaker of the Divine nature and elevated into the spiritual sphere, wherein you have fellowship with just men made perfect? Never despise what the Holy Spirit has done for you. Never undervalue Divine Grace already received. But, on the contrary, feel a Divine delight, a filling-up of your heart, with what the Lord has already done. Within your soul, perfection lies in embryo—all that you are yet to be is there in the seed. Heaven slumbers in repentance, like an oak within an acorn. Glory be to God for a new heart—glory be to God for life from the dead!

Here we are filled with thankfulness. And yet we go on hungering and thirsting that the blessing which God has given may be more fully enjoyed in our experience and displayed in our life.

Brethren, I can tell you when again we get filled with righteousness and that is when we see righteousness increasing among our fellow men. The sight of one poor child converted has filled my heart for a week with joy unspeakable. I have talked frequently—I did last week—with poor people who have been great sinners and the Lord has made them great saints, and I have been as filled with happiness as a man could be. A dozen conversions have set all the bells of my heart ringing marriage-peals and kept them at it by the month together.

It is true that I might have remembered with sadness the multitudes of sinners who are still perishing, and this would have made me go on hungering and thirsting as I do. But still, a score or two of conversions have seemed so rich a blessing that I have been filled with joy even to overflowing. Then have I felt like good old Simeon, when he said, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen Your salvation.” Do you not know what this means? Perhaps not, if you are a big man and must do everything on a big scale.

But for a poor soul like I am, it has been Heaven enough to save a single soul from death. I reckon it a great reward to save a little child. It is bliss to me to bring a humble working man to the Lord’s feet and see him learning the way of righteousness. Oh, try it, Beloved! Try and see if hunger after the souls of men will not be followed by a fullness of delight, which will again lead on to further hunger to bring back lost sheep to Christ’s fold. You will never say, “I have had many conversions, and therefore I am satisfied to have no more.” No, the more you succeed, the more you will hunger and thirst that Christ’s kingdom may come in the hearts of the sons of Adam.

By-and-by we shall quit this mortal body and we shall find ourselves in the disembodied state, “forever with the Lord.” We shall have no ears and eyes, but our spirit will discern and understand without these dull organs. Set free from this material substance, we shall know no sin. Soon will sound the resurrection trumpet and the spirit will enter the re-

finer and spiritualized body and perfected manhood will be ours. Then the man will have his eyes but they will never cast a lustful glance. He will have his ears, but they will never long for unclean talk. He will have his lips but they will never lie.

He will have a heart that will always beat truly and obediently—there will be nothing amiss within his perfect manhood. Oh, what a Heaven that will be to us! I protest that I want no other Heaven than to be with Christ and to be like He is. Harps for music, and crowns for honor are little as compared with the “kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Then shall we be filled with righteous society. You will not have to watch your tongue, for fear somebody should make you an offender for a word.

You will not be plagued with idle chit-chat and silly gossip when you get to Heaven. You will hear no lying there, you will hear nothing that derogates from the infinite majesty of the Most High. Everybody will be perfect. Oh, will you not delight yourself in the abundance of righteousness? And then your Lord will descend from Heaven with a shout and the dead in Christ shall rise and He shall reign with them upon the earth, King of kings and Lord of lords.

Then will come a thousand years of perfect peace and rest, and joy and glory. And you will be there. What a swimming in a sea of righteousness will be yours! You will then be like Christ in all things and all your surroundings will agree with His. Heaven and earth shall link hands in righteousness. Eternity will follow with its unbroken blessedness. There shall be no impurity in the kingdom of the blessed God. No devil to tempt, no flesh to corrupt, no want to worry, nothing to disturb. But you will be—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”***

Oh, this will be to be filled with righteousness!

My Hearers, you will never be filled unless you hunger first. You must hunger and thirst here, that you may be filled hereafter. If you are hungering and thirsting, what should you do? Look to Jesus, for He alone can satisfy you. Believe on our Lord Jesus Christ. Believe on Him now, for He is made of God unto us righteousness. And if you want righteousness you will find it in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God.

I am sure those dear Friends who called out so loudly just now, will join with me in crying out from the heart, “AMEN! AMEN!” May everybody here begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness at once. Let us all say, “AMEN.”

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

THE FOURTH BEATITUDE

NO. 3157

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 14, 1873

***“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.”
Matthew 5:6.***

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called “a series of sententious homilies” on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, six Sermons upon the Beatitudes, five of which have already been published—See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED; #3155, Volume 55—THE BEATITUDES; #3156, Volume 55—THE FIRST BEATITUDE ; #3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE—and this one—

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I REMARKED, on a former occasion, that each of the seven Beatitudes rises above the one which precedes it, and rises out of it. It is a higher thing to hunger and thirst after righteousness than to be meek, or to mourn, or to be poor in spirit. But no man ever becomes hungry and thirsty after righteousness unless he has first passed through the three preliminary stages—has been convinced of his soul poverty, has been made to mourn for sin and has been rendered humble in the sight of God. I have already shown that the meek man is one who is contented with what God has given him in this world, that he is one whose ambition is at an end and whose aspirations are not for things beneath the moon. Very well then, having ceased to hunger and thirst after this world, he is the man to hunger and thirst after another and a better one! Having said farewell to these gross and perishing things, he is the man to throw the whole intensity of his nature into the pursuit of that which is heavenly and eternal—which is here described as “righteousness.” Man must first of all be cured of his ardor for earthly pursuits before he can feel fervor for heavenly ones. “No man can serve two masters.” And until the old selfish principle has been driven out and the man has become humble and meek, he will not begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

I. Proceeding at once to consider our text, we notice here, first, THE OBJECTIVE WHICH THE BLESSED MAN DESIRES. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

As soon as the Spirit of God quickens him and really makes him a blessed man, *he begins to long after righteousness before God.* He knows

that he is a sinner and that as a sinner he is unrighteous and, therefore, is condemned at the bar of the Most High. But he wants to be righteous. He desires to have his iniquity removed and the defilement of the past blotted out. How can this be done? The question which he asks again and again is, "How can I be made righteous in the sight of God?" And he is never satisfied until he is told that Jesus Christ is made of God unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." Then when he sees that Christ died in the sinner's place, he understands how the sinner's sins are put away—and when he comprehends that Christ has worked out a perfect righteousness, not for Himself, but for the unrighteous—he comprehends how, by imputation, he is made righteous in the sight of God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ! But until he knows that, he hungers and thirsts after righteousness—and he is blessed in thus hungering and thirsting.

After he has found Christ to be his righteousness as far as justification is concerned, this man then *longs to have a righteous nature*. "Alas," he says, "it is not enough for me to know that my sin is forgiven. I have a fountain of sin within my heart and bitter waters continually flow from it. Oh, that my *nature* could be changed so that I, the lover of sin, could be made a lover of that which is good! That I, now full of evil, could become full of holiness!" He begins to cry out for this and he is blessed in the crying—but he never rests until the Spirit of God makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus. Then is he renewed in the spirit of his mind and God has given him, at least in measure, that which he hungers and thirsts after, namely, righteousness of nature. He has passed from death unto life, from darkness to light! The things he formerly loved, he now hates, and the things he then hated he now loves!

After he is regenerated and justified, he still pants after righteousness in another sense—*he wants to be sanctified*. The new birth is the commencement of sanctification and sanctification is the carrying on of the work commenced in regeneration—so the blessed man cries, "Lord, help me to be righteous in my character. You desire Truth in the inward parts—keep my whole nature pure. Let no temptation get the mastery over me. Subdue my pride. Correct my judgment. Keep my will in check. Make me to be a holy man in the innermost temple of my being and then let my conduct toward my fellow men be in all respects all that it should be. Let me speak so that they can always believe my word. Let me act so that none can truly charge me with injustice. Let my life be a transparent one—let it be, as far as is possible, the life of Christ written over again." Thus, you see, the truly blessed man hungers and thirsts for justification, for regeneration, and for sanctification!

When he has all of these, *he longs for perseverance in Grace*. He thirsts to be *kept* right. If he has overcome one bad habit, he thirsts to put down all others. If he has acquired one virtue, he thirsts to acquire more. If God has given him much Grace, he thirsts for more. And if he is, in some respects, like his Master, he perceives his defects and mourns over them—and goes on to thirst to be still more like Jesus. He is always hungering and thirsting to be made right and to be kept right. So he

prays for final perseverance and for perfection. He feels that he has such a hunger and thirst after righteousness that he will never be satisfied until he wakes up in the image of his Lord, that he will never be content until the last sin within him is subdued and he shall have no more propensity to evil, but be out of gunshot of temptation!

And such a man, Beloved, *honestly desires to see righteousness promoted among his fellow men*. He wishes that all men would do as they would be done by, and he tries, by his own example, to teach them to do so. He wishes that there were no fraud, no false witness, no perjury, no theft, no lasciviousness. He wishes that right ruled in the whole world. He would account it a happy day if every person could be blessed and if there were no need of punishment for offenses because they had ceased. He longs to hear that oppression has come to an end. He wants to see right government in every land. He longs for wars to cease and that the rules and principles of right, and not force and the sharp edge of the sword, may govern all mankind. His daily prayer is, "Lord, let Your Kingdom come, for Your Kingdom is righteousness and peace." When he sees any wrong done, he grieves over it. If he cannot alter it, he grieves all the more! And he labors as much as lies in him to bear a protest against wrong of every sort. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness. He does not hunger and thirst that his own political party may get into power, but he does hunger and thirst that righteousness may be done in the land. He does not hunger and thirst that his own opinions may come to the front, and that his own sect or denomination may increase in numbers and influence, but he does desire that righteousness may come to the fore. He does not crave for himself that he may be able to sway his fellow men according to his own desires, but he does wish that he could influence his fellow men for that which is right and true, for his soul is all on fire with this one desire—righteousness—righteousness for himself, righteousness before God, righteousness between man and man! This he longs to see and for this he hungers and thirsts—and therein Jesus says that he is blessed.

II. Now NOTICE THE DESIRE ITSELF.

It is said that he hungers and thirsts after righteousness—a double description of his ardent desire for it. Surely it would have been enough for the man to hunger for it, but he thirsts as well. All the appetites, desires and cravings of his spiritual nature go out towards what he wants above everything else, namely, righteousness. He feels that he has not attained to it himself and, therefore, he hungers and thirsts for it. And he also laments that others have not attained to it and, therefore, he hungers and thirsts for them—that they, too, may have it.

We may say of this passion, first, *that, it is real*. Hungering and thirsting are matters of fact, not fancy. Suppose that you meet a man who tells you that he is so hungry that he is almost starving, and you say to him, "Nonsense, my dear fellow, just forget all about it! It is a mere whim of yours, for you can live very well without food if you like"? Why, he knows that you are mocking him! And if you could surprise some poor wretch

who had been floating in a boat cast away at sea, and had not been able for days to moisten his mouth except with the briny water which had only increased his thirst—and if you were to say to him, “Thirst? It is only your fancy, you are nervous, that is all, you need no drink”—the man would soon tell you that he knows better than that, for he must drink or die! There is nothing in this world that is more real than hunger and thirst—and the truly blessed man has such a real passion, desire and craving after righteousness that it can only be likened to hunger and thirst. He *must* have his sins pardoned, he *must* be clothed in the righteousness of Christ, he *must* be sanctified! And he feels that it will break his heart if he cannot get rid of sin. He pines, he longs, he prays to be made holy! He cannot be satisfied without this righteousness—and his hungering and thirsting for it is a very real thing.

And not only is it real, *it is also most natural*. It is natural to men who need bread to hunger. You do not have to tell them when to hunger or when to thirst. If they have not bread and water, they hunger and thirst naturally. So, when the Spirit of God has changed our nature, that new nature hungers and thirsts after righteousness. The old nature never did, never could and never would—it hungers after the husks that the swine eat—but the new nature hungers after righteousness. It must do so, it cannot help itself. You do not need to say to the quickened man, “Desire holiness.” Why, he would give his eyes to possess it! You need not say to a man who is under conviction of sin, “Desire the righteousness of Christ.” He would be willing to lay down his life if he could but obtain it! He hungers and thirsts after righteousness from the very necessities of his nature.

And this desire is described in such terms that we perceive that *it is intense*. What is more intense than hunger? When a man cannot find any nourishment, his hunger seems to eat him up—his yearnings after bread are terrible. I have heard it said that in the Bread Riots, the cry of the men and women for bread was something far more terrible to hear than the cry of, “Fire!” when some great city has been on a blaze. “Bread! Bread!” He that has it not feels that he must have it—but the cravings of thirst are even more intense. It is said that you may palliate the pangs of hunger, but that thirst makes life, itself, a burden—the man must drink or die. Well now, such is the intense longing after righteousness of a man whom God has blessed! He wants it so urgently that he says in the anguish of his heart that he cannot live without it. The Psalmist, says, “My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.”

There is no other desire that is quite like the desire of a quickened man after righteousness and, therefore, *this desire often becomes very painful*. Hunger and thirst endured up to a certain point, involve the very keenest of pangs, and a man who is seeking the righteousness of Christ is full of unutterable woe until he finds it. And the Christian warring against his corruptions is led to cry, “O wretched man that I am!” until he learns that Christ has won the victory for him. And the servant of Christ desiring to reclaim the nations and to bring his fellow men to fol-

low that which is right and good, is often the subject of unutterable pangs. He bears the burden of the Lord and goes about his work like a man who has too heavy a burden to carry! Painful, indeed, is it to the soul to be made to hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The expressions in our text also indicate that *this is a most energetic desire*. What will not a man who is hungry be driven to do? We have an old proverb that “hunger breaks through stone walls” and, certainly, a man hungry and thirsty after righteousness will break through anything to get it! Have we not known the sincere penitent travelling many miles in order to get where he could hear the Gospel? Has he not often lost his night’s rest and brought himself almost to death’s door by his persistency in pleading with God for pardon? And as to the man who is saved and who desires to see others saved, how often, in his desire to lead them in the right way, will he surrender home comforts to go to a distant land? How often will he bring upon himself the scorn and contempt of the ungodly because zeal for righteousness works mightily within his spirit? I would like to see many of these hungry and thirsty ones as members of our Churches, preaching in our pulpits, toiling in our Sunday schools and mission stations—men and women who feel that they *must* see Christ’s Kingdom come or they will hardly be able to live! This holy craving after righteousness, which the Holy Spirit implants in a Christian’s soul, becomes imperious—it is not merely energetic, but it dominates his entire being! For this he puts all other wishes and desires aside. He can be a loser, but he must be righteous! He can be ridiculed, but he must hold fast his integrity! He can endure scorn, but he must declare the Truth of God! “Righteousness” he must have! His spirit demands it by an appetite that lords it over all other passions and propensities! And truly “blessed” is the man in whom this is the case.

For, mark you, *to hunger after righteousness is a sign of spiritual life*. Nobody who was spiritually dead ever did this. In all the catacombs there has never yet been found a dead man hungering or thirsting—and there never will be. If you hunger and thirst after righteousness, you are spiritually alive! And *it is also a proof of spiritual health*. Physicians will tell you that they regard a good appetite as being one of the signs that a man’s body is in a healthy state—and it is the same with the soul. Oh, to have a ravenous appetite after Christ! Oh, to be greedy after the best things! Oh, to be covetous after holiness—in fact, to hunger and thirst after everything that is right, good, pure, lovely and of good repute. May the Lord send us more of this intense hunger and thirst! It is the very opposite condition to that of the self-satisfied and the self-righteous. Pharisees never hunger and thirst after righteousness—they have all the righteousness they need and they even think that they have some to spare for that poor publican over yonder who cries, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” If a man thinks that he is perfect, what can he know about hungering and thirsting? He is already filled with all that he needs and he, too, thinks that he could give of his redundant riches to his poor Brother who is sighing over his imperfections! For my part, I am quite

content to still have the blessing of hungering and thirsting, for that blessing stands side by side with another experience, namely, that of being filled—and when one is in one sense filled, yet in another sense one still hungers for more—this makes up the complete Beatitude! “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”

III. Having thus described the objective and the desire of the truly blessed man, I must now proceed, in the third place, to speak of THE BLESSING ITSELF, the benediction which Christ pronounces over those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. “They shall be filled.”

This is a *unique blessing*. No one else ever gets “filled.” A man desires meat—he eats it and is filled for a little while—but he is soon hungry again. A man desires drink. And he has it, but he is soon thirsty again. But a man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness shall be so “filled” that he shall never again thirst as he thirsted before! Many hunger and thirst after gold, but nobody ever yet filled his soul with gold—it cannot be done. The richest man who ever lived was never quite as rich as he would have liked to be. Men have tried to fill their souls with worldly possessions. They have added field to field, farm to farm, street to street and town to town till it seemed as if they would be left alone in the land—but no man ever yet could fill his soul with an estate, however vast it might be! A few more acres were needed to round off that corner or to join that farm to the main body of his territory—or if he could only have had a little more upland he might have been satisfied—but he did not get it, so he was still discontented. Alexander conquered the world, but it would not fill his soul—he wanted more worlds to conquer! And if you and I could own a dozen worlds, were we possessors of all the stars and if we could call all space our own, we would not find enough to fill our immortal spirits. We would only be magnificently poor, a company of imperial paupers! God has so made man’s heart that nothing can ever fill it but God, Himself. There is such a hungering and thirsting put into the quickened man that he discerns his necessity and he knows that only Christ can supply that necessity. When a man is saved, he has obtained all that he needs. When he gets Christ, he is satisfied. I recollect a foolish woman asking me, some years ago, to let her tell my fortune. I said to her, “I can tell you yours, but I don’t want to know mine—mine is already made, for I have everything that I need.” “But,” she said, “can’t I promise you something for years to come?” “No,” I answered, “I don’t need anything. I have everything that I need—I am perfectly satisfied and perfectly contented.” And I can say the same tonight! I do not know anything that anybody could offer to me that would increase my satisfaction. If God will but bless the souls of men and save them, and get to Himself Glory, I am filled with contentment—I need nothing more. I do not believe that any man can honestly say as much as that unless he has found Christ. If he has by faith laid hold upon the Savior, then he has grasped that which always brings the blessing with it. “He shall be filled.” It is a unique blessing!

And *the blessing is most appropriate* as well as unique. A man is hungry and thirsty. How can you take away his hunger without filling him with food? And how can you remove his thirst without filling him with drink, at least in sufficient quantity to satisfy him? So Christ's promise concerning the man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness is, "He shall be filled." He wants righteousness—he shall have righteousness! He wants God—he shall have God! He wants a new heart—he shall have a new heart. He wants to be kept from sin—he shall be kept from sin. He wants to be made perfect—he shall be made perfect. He wants to live where there are none that sin—he shall be taken away to dwell where there shall be no sinners forever and ever!

In addition to being unique and appropriate, *this blessing is very large and abundant*. Christ said, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall"—have a sup by the way? Oh, no! "For they shall"—have a little comfort every now and then? Oh, no! "For they shall be filled"—*filled*. And the Greek word might even better be rendered, "they shall be satiated." "They shall have all they need, enough and to spare! They who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled—filled to the brim. How true this is! Here is a man who says, "I am condemned in the sight of God. I feel and know that no actions of mine can ever make me righteous before Him. I have given up all hope of self-justification." Listen, O Man, will you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and take Him to stand before God as your Substitute and Representative? "I will," he says, "I do trust in Him, and in Him alone." Well, then, O Man, know that you have received from Christ a righteousness which may well satisfy you! All that God could rightly ask of you was the perfect righteousness of a man, for being a man, that is all the righteousness that you could be expected to present to God. But in the righteousness of Christ you have perfect righteousness of a man and more than that—you also have the righteousness of God! Think of that! Father Adam, in his perfection, wore the righteousness of man and it was lovely to look upon as long as it lasted. But if you trust in Jesus, you are wearing the righteousness of God, for Christ was God as well as Man. Now, when a man attains to that experience, and knows that having believed in Jesus, God looks upon him as if the righteousness of Jesus were his own righteousness—and in fact imputes to him the Divine Righteousness which is Christ's—that man is filled! Yes, he is more than filled, he is satiated! All that his soul could possibly desire, he already possesses in Christ Jesus!

I told you that the man also wanted a new nature. He said, "O God, I long to get rid of these evil propensities. I need to have this defiled body of mine made to be a temple meet for You. I want to be made like my Lord and Savior, so that I may be able to walk with Him in Heaven forever and ever." Listen, O Man! If you believe in Jesus Christ, this is what has been done to you! You have received into your nature, by the Word of God, an incorruptible Seed, "which lives and abides forever." That is already in you if you are a Believer in Jesus and it can no more die than

God, Himself, can die, for it is a Divine Nature. “The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away; but the Word of the Lord”—that Word which you have received if you have believed in Jesus—“endures forever.” The water which Christ has given you shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life! In the moment of our regeneration, a new Nature is imparted to us, of which the Apostle Peter says, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away.” And the same Apostle also says that Believers are “partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Is not that a blessed beginning for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness?

But listen further. God the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, condescends to come and dwell in all Believers! Paul writes to the Church of God at Corinth, “Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?” God dwells in you, my Brother or Sister in Christ! Does not this Truth astonish you? Sin dwells in you, but the Holy Spirit has also come to dwell in you and to drive sin out of you. The devil assails you and tries to capture your spirit and to make it like those in his own infernal den—but lo, the Eternal has Himself come down and enshrined Himself within you! The Holy Spirit is dwelling within your heart if you are a Believer in Jesus! Christ Himself is “in you the hope of Glory.” If you really want righteousness, dear Soul, surely you have it *here*—the nature changed and made like the Nature of God. The ruling principle altered, sin dethroned and the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwelling within you as your Lord and Master! Why, I think that however much you may hunger and thirst after righteousness, you must count yourself well filled since you have these immeasurable blessings!

And listen yet, again, my Brother or Sister in Christ. You shall be kept and preserved even to the end! He who has begun to cleanse you will never leave the work until He has made you without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He never begins a work which He cannot or will not complete! He never failed in anything that He has undertaken and He never will fail! Your corruptions have their heads already broken and though your sins still rebel, it is but a struggling gasp for life. The weapons of victorious Grace shall slay them all and end the strife forever. The sins that trouble you today shall be like those Egyptians that pursued the children of Israel into the Red Sea—you shall see them no more forever. “The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” And as surely as you have believed in Christ, poor imperfect worm of the dust as you are, you shall walk with Him in white on yonder golden streets in that city within whose gates there shall never enter anything that defiles, “but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” Yes, Believer, you shall be near and like your God! Do you hear this? You hunger and thirsts after righteousness—you shall have it without stint, for you shall be one of the “partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” You shall be able to gaze upon God in His ineffable Glory and to

dwell with the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings of His unsullied purity! You shall be able to see the God who is a consuming fire and yet not be afraid, for there shall be nothing in you to be consumed! You shall be spotless, innocent, pure, immortal as your God Himself—will not this satisfy you?

“Ah,” you say, “it satisfies me for myself, but I would like to see my children righteous too.” Then commend them to that God who loves their father and their mother and ask Him to bless your children as He blessed Isaac for Abraham’s sake, and blessed Jacob for Isaac’s sake. “Oh,” you say, “but I also want to see my neighbors saved.” Then hunger after their souls! Thirst after their souls as you have hungered and thirsted after your own! And God will teach you how to talk to them and probably, as you are hungering and thirsting for their souls, He will make you the means of their conversion!

There is also this Truth of God to solace you—there will be righteousness all over this world one day. Millions still reject Christ, but He has a people who will not reject Him. The masses of mankind at present fly from Him, but “the Lord knows them that are His.” As many as the Father gave to Christ shall surely come to Him. Christ shall not be disappointed—His Cross shall not have been set up in vain. “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” Well may you groan because of the idols that do not fall, the oppressions that do not come to an end, the wailing of the widows, the weeping of the orphans and the sighing of those that sit in darkness and see no light. But there will be an end of all this. Brighter days than these are coming—either the Gospel will cover the earth, or else Christ Himself will personally come. Whichever it is, it is not for me to decide, but somehow or other, the day shall come when God shall reign without a rival over all the earth, you can be sure of that! The hour shall come when the great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, shall say, “Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

If we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we are on the winning side! The battle may go against us just now. Priestcraft may be pushing us sorely and evils which our forefathers routed may come back with superior strength and cunning and, for a little while, the courage of the saints may be dampened and their armies may waver—but the Lord still lives and as the Lord lives, righteousness alone shall triumph—and all iniquity and every false way must be trampled underfoot! Fight on, for you must ultimately be victors. You cannot be beaten unless the Eternal, Himself, should be overthrown—and that can never be. Blessed is the man who knows that the cause that he has espoused is a righteous one, for he may know that in the final Chapter of the world’s history, its triumph must be recorded! He may be dead and gone. He may only sow the seed, but his sons shall reap the harvest and men shall speak of him with grave respect as of a man who lived before his time and who de-

serves honor of those that follow him! Stand up for the right! Hold fast to your principles, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ! Follow after holiness and righteousness in every shape and form. Let no one bribe or turn you away from this blessed Book and its immortal tenets! Follow after that which is true, not that which is patronized by the great. That which is just, not that which sits in the seat of human authority. And follow after this with a hunger and a thirst that are insatiable and you shall yet be “filled.”

Would you like to be up there in the day when the Prince of Truth and Right shall review His armies? Would you like to be up there when the jubilant shout shall rend the heavens, “The King of kings and Lord of lords has conquered all His foes and the devil and all his hosts are put to flight”? Would you like to be up there, I say, when all His trophies of victory are displayed and the Lamb that was slain shall be the reigning Monarch of all the nations, gathering sheaves of scepters beneath His arms and treading on the crowns of princes as worn out and worthless? Would you like to be *there* then? Then be *here* now—*here* where the fight rages! Here where the King’s standard is unfurled—and say unto your God, “O Lord, since I have found righteousness in Christ, and am myself saved, I am pledged to stand for the right and for the Truth so long as I live! So keep me faithful even unto death.”

As I close my discourse, I pronounce over all of you who are trusting in Jesus the fourth benediction spoken by Christ on the Mount of Beatitude, “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 5:43-48; 6:1-4.**

Matthew 5:43. *You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.* In this case a command of Scripture had a human antithesis fitted on to it by depraved minds—and this human addition was mischievous. This is a common method—to append to the teaching of Scripture a something which seems to grow out of it, or to be a natural inference from it—which something may be false and wicked. This is a sad crime against the Word of the Lord. The Holy Spirit will only father His own Words. He owns the precept, “*You shall love your neighbor,*” but He hates the parasitical growth of, “*hate your enemy.*” This last sentence is destructive of that out of which it appears legitimately to grow, since those who are here styled enemies are, in fact, neighbors! Love is now the universal Law of God and our King, who has commanded it, is Himself the Pattern of it. He will not see it narrowed down and placed in a setting of hate. May Grace prevent any of us from falling into this error!

44, 45. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the*

good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. [See Sermon #1414, Volume 24—NO DIFFERENCE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Ours it is to persist in loving, even if men persist in enmity. We are to render blessing for cursing, prayers for persecutions. Even in the cases of cruel enemies, we are to “*do good to them, and pray for them.*” We are no longer enemies to any, but friends to all. We do not merely cease to hate and then abide in a cold neutrality, but we love where hatred seemed inevitable. We bless where our old nature bids us curse and we are active in doing good to those who deserve to receive evil from us. Where this is practically carried out, men wonder, respect and admire the followers of Jesus! The *theory* may be ridiculed, but the *practice* is revered and is counted so surprising that men attribute it to some Godlike quality in Christians, and admit that they are *the children of the Father who is in Heaven*. Indeed, he is a child of God who can bless the unthankful and the evil, for in daily Providence the Lord is doing this on a great scale—and none but His children will imitate Him. To do good for the sake of the good done, and not because of the character of the person benefited, is a noble imitation of God. If the Lord only sent the fertilizing shower upon the land of the saintly, drought would deprive whole leagues of land of all hope of a harvest. We also must do good to the evil, or we shall have a narrow sphere—our hearts will grow contracted and our sonship towards the good God will be rendered doubtful.

46. *For if you love them which love you, what reward have you, do not even the publicans do the same?* Any common sort of man will love those who love him. Even tax gatherers and the scum of the earth can rise to this poor, starveling virtue. Saints cannot be content with such a groveling style of things. “Love for love is manlike,” but “love for hate” is Christlike. Shall we not desire to act up to our high calling?

47. *And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more than others?* [See Sermon #1029, Volume 18—A CALL TO HOLY LIVING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Do not even the publicans do so?* On a journey, or in the streets, or in the house, we are not to confine our friendly greetings to those who are near and dear to us. Courtesy should be wide and none the less sincere because general. We should speak kindly to all and treat every man as a brother. Anyone will shake hands with an old friend, but we are to be cordially courteous towards every being in the form of man. If not, we shall reach no higher level than mere outcasts. Even a dog will salute a dog.

48. *Be you, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* Or, “*You shall be perfect.*” We should reach after completeness in love—fullness of love to all around us. Love is the bond of perfectness and if we have perfect love, it will form in us a perfect character. Here is that which we aim at—perfection like that of God. Here is the manner of obtaining it—namely, by abounding in love. And this suggests the question of how far we have proceeded in this heavenly direction, and also the reason why we should persevere in it even to the end—because as children we ought to resemble our Father. Scriptural perfection is attainable, it dies rather in proportion than in degree. A man’s character may be

perfect and entire, lacking nothing—and yet such a man will be the very first to admit that the Grace which is in him is, at best, in its infancy—and though perfect as a child in all its parts, it has not yet attained to the perfection of full-grown manhood. What a mark is set before us by our Perfect King who, speaking from His mountain Throne, said, “*Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect!*” Lord, give what You command—then both the Grace and the Glory will be Yours alone.

Matthew 6:1. *Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward from your Father which is in Heaven.* “You cannot expect to be paid twice. If, therefore, you take your reward in the applause of men, who give you a high character for generosity, you cannot expect to have any reward from God.” We ought to have a single eye to God’s accepting what we give and to have little or no thought of what man may say concerning our charitable gifts!

2. *Therefore when you do your charitable deeds, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.* And they will have no more! There is, in their case, no laying up of any store of good works before God. Whatever they may have done, they have taken full credit for it in the praise of men.

3. *But when you do charitable deeds, let not your left hand know what your right hand does.* “Do it so by stealth as scarcely to know it yourself—think so little of it with regard to yourself that you shall scarcely know that you have done it. Do it unto God—let Him know it.”

4. *That your charitable deeds may be in secret: and your Father which sees in secret, Himself, shall reward you openly.* There is a blessed emphasis upon that word, “Himself,” for if God shall reward us, what a reward it will be! Any praise from His lips, any reward from His hands will be of priceless value! Oh, to live with an eye to that alone!

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

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THE FIFTH BEATITUDE

NO. 3158

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 19, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 21, 1873.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”
Matthew 5:7.

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called “a series of sententious homilies” on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, seven Sermons upon the Beatitudes which have already been published—See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED; #3155, Volume 55—THE BEATITUDES; #3156, Volume 55—THE FIRST BEATITUDE and #3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE; #3157, Volume 55—THE FOURTH BEATITUDE—and this one—

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I MUST take for granted the fact that you have heard the previous discourses upon the Beatitudes. If you have not done so, I cannot now repeat all that I have said, but I may remind you that I have compared the Beatitudes to a ladder of light, and I have remarked that every one of them rises above and out of those which preceded it. So you will notice that the character mentioned here is higher than those which had been given before—higher than that of the man who is poor in spirit, or who mourns. Those things concern himself. He is yet feeble and out of that weakness grows meekness of spirit which makes him endure wrongs from others. But to be merciful is more than that, for the man now not merely endures wrongs, but he confers benefits. The Beatitude before this one concerns hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but here the man has got beyond mere righteousness—he has risen beyond the seeking of that which is right into the seeking of that which is good, kind, generous and the doing of kindly things towards his fellow man. The whole ladder rests upon Divine Grace, and Grace puts every stave into its place. And it is Grace which, in this place, has taught the man to be merciful, has blessed him and given him the promise that he shall obtain mercy. It would be wrong to take any one of these benedictions by itself and to say that every merciful man shall obtain mercy, or to misquote any other one in the same way, for that would be to wrest the Savior's Words and to give them a meaning which He never intended them to convey. Reading these Beatitudes as a whole, we see that this mercifulness, of which I am about to speak, is a characteristic which has grown

out of the rest—it has sprung from all the previous works of Grace. And the man is not merely merciful in the human sense—with a humanity which ought to be common to all mankind—but he is merciful in a higher and better sense with a mercy which only the Spirit of God can ever teach to the soul of man!

Having noticed the rising of this Beatitude above the rest, we will now come to look at it more closely. It is necessary that we should be very guarded while speaking upon it and in order to be so, we will ask, first, *who are these blessed people?* Secondly, *what is their peculiar virtue?* And thirdly, *what is their special blessing?*

I. WHO ARE THESE BLESSED PEOPLE—THE MERCIFUL THAT OBTAIN MERCY?

You remember that at the commencement of our homilies upon this Sermon on the Mount, we noticed that our Lord's subject was not *how* we are to be saved, but *who* are saved. He is not here describing the way of salvation at all. That He does in many other places, but He here gives us the signs and evidences of the work of Grace in the soul. We would greatly err if we should say that we must be merciful in order to obtain mercy and that we must only hope to get the mercy of God through first of all being merciful ourselves. Now, in order to put aside any such legal notion—which would be clean contrary to the entire current of Scripture and directly opposed to the fundamental Doctrine of Justification by Faith in Christ—I ask you to notice that these persons are already blessed and have obtained mercy! Long before they became merciful, God was merciful to them. And before the full promise was given them, as in our text, that they should obtain yet further mercy, they had already obtained the great mercy of a renewed heart which had made them merciful! That is clear from the context of the text.

For, first, *they were poor in spirit*, and it is no mean mercy to be emptied of our pride, to be brought to see how undeserving we are in the sight of God and to be made to feel our personal weakness and need of everything that might make us fit for the Presence of God! I could ask for some men whom I know no greater mercy than that they might be blessed with spiritual poverty—that they might be made to feel how poor they are—for they will never know Christ and they will never rise to be practically merciful till first they have seen their own true condition and have obtained mercy enough to lie down at the foot of the Cross—and there, with a broken heart, to confess that they are empty and poor!

The connection also shows that these persons *had obtained mercy enough to mourn*. They had mourned over their past sins with bitter repentance. They had mourned over the condition of practical alienation from God into which sin had brought them—and they had mourned over the fact of their ingratitude to their Redeemer and their rebellion against His Holy Spirit. They mourned because they could not mourn more. And they wept because their eyes could not weep as they ought concerning sin. They had—

“Learned to weep for nothing but sin,

And after none but Christ.

And it is no small blessing to have the mourning, the broken, the contrite heart, for this the Lord will not despise.

They had also obtained the Grace of meekness and had become gentle, humble, contented, weaned from the world, submissive to the Lord's will, ready to overlook the offenses of others, having learned to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors"—no small blessing this! They had indeed obtained mercy when their proud heart was brought low, their haughty spirit was bowed down and they had become meek and lowly, in measure like their Lord.

They had obtained yet further Grace, for *they had been taught to hunger and thirst after righteousness*. They had a spiritual appetite for the righteousness which is of God by faith. They had also a sad hunger for the practical inwrought righteousness which is the work of the Spirit of God. They loved that which was right and they hungered to do it. They hungered to see others do right, they hungered to see the Kingdom of Righteousness established and the Truth of God prevailing over all the earth. Was not this, indeed, to obtain mercy? And if out of this grew the character of being merciful, it was not to be ascribed to anything in themselves, or regarded as a natural outgrowth of their own disposition, but as another gift of Divine Grace, another fruit which grew out of special fruits which had already been given! Was it not already said of these people, "There's is the Kingdom of Heaven"? Had they not obtained mercy? Was it not said of them, "They shall be comforted"? Who dares say they had not obtained mercy? Had it not been said of them, "They shall inherit the earth"? What do you call this but mercy? Had not the voice of Christ declared, "They shall be filled"? Was not this mercy to the fullest? And therefore I say that the people our text speaks of were a people who had *already obtained mercy*, who were themselves singular trophies of mercy! And the fact that they displayed mercy to others was inevitable as a result of what had been done for them and worked in them by the ever-blessed Spirit of God! They were not merciful because they were naturally tender-hearted, but merciful because God had made them poor in spirit! They were not merciful because they had generous ancestors, but merciful because they themselves had mourned and been comforted! They were not merciful because they sought the esteem of their fellow men but because they were themselves meek and lowly and were inheriting the earth—and wished that others could enjoy, as they did, the blessing of Heaven! They were not merciful because they could not help it and felt bound to be so from some constraint from which they would gladly escape—but they were joyfully merciful—for they had hungered and thirsted after righteousness and they had been filled!

II. Now, secondly, WHAT IS THE PECULIAR VIRTUE WHICH IS HERE ASCRIBED TO THESE BLESSED ONES? They were merciful.

To be merciful would include, first of all, *kindness to the sons of need and the daughters of penury*. No merciful man could forget the poor. He who passed by their ills without sympathy and saw their suffering with-

out relieving them, might prate as he would about inward Grace, but Divine Grace in his heart there could not be! The Lord does not acknowledge as of His family one who can see his brother has needs and shuts up “his heart of compassion from him.” The Apostle John rightly asks, “How dwells the love of God in him?” No, the truly merciful are considerate of those who are poor. They think of them. Their own comforts make them think of them. At other times, their own discomforts will. When they are sick and they are surrounded with many alleviations, they wonder how those fare who are sick and in poverty. When the cold is keen about them and their garments are warm, they think with pity of those who shiver in the same cold, but are scantily covered with rags. Their sufferings and their joys alike help them to consider the poor. And they consider them practically. They do not merely say that they sympathize and hope others will help, but they give of their substance according to their ability, joyfully and cheerfully, that the poor may not lack—and in dealing with them, they are not harsh. They will remit, as far as they can justly do so, anything they may have demanded of them and will not persecute them to the utmost extremity, and pinch and cheat them, as those do who seek to skin a flint and to obtain the last morsel and the uttermost farthing from the poorest of the poor. No, where God has given a man a new heart and a right spirit, there is great tenderness to all the poor—and especially great love to the poor saints—for, while every saint is an image of Christ, the poor saint is a picture of Christ set in the same frame in which Christ’s picture must always be set—the frame of humble poverty. I see in a rich saint much that is like his Master, but I do not see how he could truthfully say, “I have not where to lay my head.” Nor do I wish him to say it. But when I see poverty, as well as everything else that is like Christ, I think I am bound to feel my heart specially going forth there. This is how we can still wash Christ’s feet by caring for the poorest of His people. This is how honorable women can still minister to Him of their substance. This is how we can still make a great feast to which we may invite Him, when we call together the poor, the lame, the halt and the blind who cannot recompense us—and we are content to do it for Jesus Christ’s sake. It is said of Chrysostom that he so continually preached the Doctrine of almsgiving in the Christian Church that they called him the Preacher of Alms—and I think it was not a bad title for a man to wear.

In these days, it has almost become a crime to relieve the poor. In fact, I do not know whether there are not some statutes which might almost render us liable to prosecution for it. I can only say that the spirit of the times may be wise under some aspects, but it does not seem to me to be very clearly the spirit of the New Testament. The poor will never cease out of the land and the poor will never cease out of the Church of Christ. They are Christ’s legacy to us! It is quite certain that the Good Samaritan got more out of the poor man whom he found between Jerusalem and Jericho than the poor man got out of him! He had a little oil and wine, and twopence, the expenses at the inn—but the Samaritan got his name in

the Bible and there it has been handed down to posterity—a wonderfully cheap investment! And in everything that we give, the blessing comes to those who give it, for you know the Words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Blessed are they who are merciful to the poor!

Next, *the merciful man has an eager eye, a weeping eye for mourners who are round about him.* The worst ill in the world is not poverty—the worst of ills is a depressed spirit. At least I scarcely know anything that can be worse than this, and there are even among the excellent of the earth some who seldom have a bright day in the whole year. December seems to rule the whole twelve months. By reason of heaviness, they are, all their life, subject to bondage! If they march to Heaven, it is on crutches as Mr. Ready-to-Halt did. And they water the way with tears as Miss Much-Afraid did. They are sometimes afraid that they were never converted. At another time, that they have fallen from Grace. At another time, that they have sinned the unpardonable sin! At another time, that Christ has gone from them and they will never see His face again. They are full of all manner of troubles—“they reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are often at their wit’s end.” There are many Christian people who always get out of the way of such folks as these—or if they come across them, they say, “It is enough to give anybody the miseries. Who wants to talk with such people? They ought not to be so sad. They really ought to be more cheerful, but they are giving way to nervousness,” and so on. That may be quite true, but it is always a pity to say it! You might as well tell a man when he has a headache that he is giving way to headache, or when he has the chills or the fever that he is giving way to the chills or the fever! The fact is, there is nothing more real than some of those diseases which are traceable to the imagination, for they are real in their pain, though perhaps as to their causes we could not reason about them.

The merciful man is always merciful to these people. He puts up with their whims. He knows very often that they are very foolish, but he understands that he would be foolish, too, if he were to tell them so, for it would make them more foolish than they are! He does not consult his own comfort and say, “I want to get comfort from this person”—he desires to *bestow* comfort. He remembers that it is written, “Strengthen you the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees,” and he knows that command, “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem.” He understands that as His Lord and Master sought after that which was wounded, bound up that which was broken, healed that which was sick and brought again that which was driven away, even so ought all His servants to imitate their Master by looking with the greatest interest after those who are in the saddest plight. O children of God, if ever you are hardhearted towards any sorrowful persons, you are not what you ought to be! You are not like your Master! You are not like yourselves when you are in your right state, for when you are in your right state, you are tender, full of pity and full of com-

passion, for you have learned from the Lord Jesus that the merciful are blessed, and that they shall obtain mercy! Possibly when you, too, come to be depressed, as you may—you may remember those jeering words and those unkind expressions which you used concerning others. When we get very big, it may be that the Lord will take us down and we shall be glad of any little mouse hole to hide our head. Some of us have known what it is to be glad of the very least promise if we could but get a hold of it. And we have run with eagerness to the very texts we used to point poor sinners to—and felt they were the very texts we needed. Dr. Guthrie, when he was very ill and about to die, said he liked to hear children's hymns, the little children's hymns. And the strongest men in the family of Christ often want the children's texts and the children's promises. Even the little children's promises suit big men when they are in that sad state. Be you merciful, even as your heavenly Father is merciful towards those who are cast down.

This mercy extends itself, next, to the full forgiveness of all personal offenses against ourselves. “Blessed are the merciful,” that is, those persons who do not take to heart any injuries that are done them, any insults, intended or unintended. A certain governor of Georgia, in Mr. Wesley's day, said that he would have his servant on board his vessel flogged for drinking his wine. And when Mr. Wesley entreated that the man might be pardoned on that occasion, the governor said, “It is no use, Mr. Wesley, you know, Sir, I never forgive.” “Well, then, Sir,” said Mr. Wesley, “I hope you know that you will never be forgiven, or else I hope that you have never sinned.” So, until we leave off sinning, we must never talk of not forgiving other people, for we shall need forgiveness for ourselves! You will notice in many families that quarrels arise even between brothers and sisters, but let us always be ready to put aside anything that will make a scene or cause ill-feeling, for a Christian is the last person who should harbor unkind thoughts. I have occasionally noticed great severity towards servants who are sometimes thrown out of situations and exposed to many temptations, for a fault that might be cured if it were forgiven and if some kindly word were used. It is not right for any of us to say, “I will have everybody acting straight towards me, and I will let all know it. I am determined to tolerate no nonsense, not I—I mean to have the right thing done by all men towards me—and if not, I will set them straight.”

Ah, dear Friends, God never talked so to you! And let me also say, if that is the way you talk, it is not the language of a child of God at all! A child of God feels that he is imperfect and that he lives with imperfect people. When they act improperly towards him, he feels it, but at the same time he also feels, “I have been far worse to my God than they have been to me, so I will let it go.” I recommend you, dear Brothers and Sisters, always to have one blind eye and one deaf ear. I have always tried to have them and my blind eye is the best eye I have, and my deaf ear is the best ear I have! There is many a speech that you may hear even from your best friends that would cause you much grief and produce much

ill—so do not listen to it. They will probably be sorry that they spoke so unkindly if you never mention it, and let the whole thing die. But if you say something about it and bring it up again and again, and fret and worry over it, and magnify it, and tell somebody else about it, and bring half-a-dozen people into the quarrel—that is the way family disagreements have been made, Christian Churches broken up, the devil magnified and God dishonored! Oh, do not let it be so with us, but let us feel if there is any offense against us, “Blessed are the merciful,” and such we mean to be.

But this mercifulness goes much further. *There must and will be great mercy in the Christian’s heart towards those who are outwardly sinful.* The Pharisee had no mercy upon the man who was a publican. “Well,” he said, “if he has gone down so low as to collect the Roman tax from his fellow subjects, he is a disgraceful fellow! He may get as far as ever he can from my dignified self.” And as for the harlot, it mattered not though she might be ready to shed enough tears to wash her Savior’s feet, yet she was a polluted thing! And Christ, Himself, was looked upon as being polluted because He allowed a woman who had been a sinner to thus show her repentance and her love. Simon and the other Pharisees felt, “Such people have put themselves out of the pale of society, and there let them stay. If they have gone astray like that, let them suffer for it.” There is still much of that spirit in this hypocritical world, for a great part of the world is a mass of the most awful hypocrisy that one can imagine! There are men that are living in vile sin, they know they are, and yet they go into society and are received as if they were the most respectable persons in the world! But should it so happen that some poor woman is led astray, oh dear, dear, dear! She is much too vile for these gentlemen to know anything about her existence! The scoundrels—to have an affectation of virtue while they are themselves indulging in the grossest vice! Yet so it is and there is a prudery about society which says at once, “Oh, we hold up our hands in horror at anybody who has done anything at all wrong against society, or the laws of the land.”

Now a Christian thinks far harsher things of sin than the worldling does. He judges sin by a much sterner rule than other men do, but he always thinks kindly of the sinner. And if he could, he would lay down his life to reclaim him, as his Master did before him! He does not say, “Stand by yourself! Come not near me, for I am holier than you!” But he reckons it to be his chief concern on earth to cry to sinners, “Behold the Lamb of God which took away the sin of the world.” So the merciful Christian is not one who shuts anybody out. He is not one who thinks anyone beneath his notice. He would be glad if he could bring to Jesus the most fallen and the most depraved! And those dear Brothers and Sisters who are the most completely occupied in this holy work we honor, for the lower they have to go, the greater is their honor, in the sight of God, in being permitted thus to rake the very kennels of sin to find jewels for Christ, for surely, the brightest gems in His crown will come out of the darkest and foulest places where they have been lost! “Blessed are

the merciful” who care for the fallen, for those that have gone astray—“for they shall obtain mercy.”

But *a genuine Christian has mercy on the souls of all men*. He cares not merely for the extremely fallen class, so called by the men of the world, but he regards the whole race as fallen! He knows that all men have gone astray from God and that all are shut up in sin and unbelief till eternal mercy comes to their deliverance. Therefore his pity goes forth towards the respectable, the rich, the great and he often pities princes and kings because they have so few to tell them the Truth of God. He pities the poor rich, for while there are efforts made for the reclaiming of the working classes, how few efforts are ever made for the reclaiming of peers and duchesses—and bringing such big sinners as the “Right Honorables” to know Jesus Christ? He feels pity for them and he feels pity for all nations—the nations that sit in heathen darkness and those that are locked up in Popery. He longs that Grace should come to all and that the Truths of the Gospel should be proclaimed in every street, and Jesus made known to every son and daughter of Adam! He has a love for them all. And I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, never to trifle with this true instinct of the new-born nature!

The great Doctrine of Election is very precious to us and we hold it most firmly. But there are some, (and it must not be denied), who allow that Doctrine to chill their love towards their fellow men. They do not seem to have much zeal for their conversion and are quite content to sit down, or stand idle and believe that the decrees and purposes of God will be fulfilled. So they will, Brothers and Sisters, but it will be through warm-hearted Christians who bring others to Jesus! The Lord Jesus will see of the travail of His soul, but it will be by one who is saved telling of salvation to another, and that other to a third, and so on till the sacred fire spreads until the earth shall be girdled with its flame! The Christian is merciful to all and anxiously longs that they may be brought to know the Savior! And he makes efforts to reach them—to the utmost of his ability, he tries to win souls to Jesus! He also prays for them. If he is really a child of God, he takes time to plead with God for sinners and he gives what he can to help others to spend their time in telling sinners the way of salvation and pleading with them as ambassadors for Christ. The Christian makes this one of his great delights, if by any means he may turn a sinner, by the power of the Spirit, from the error of his ways and so may save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins!

I have many more things to say about this mercifulness. It is so wide a subject that I cannot give all its details. It certainly means a love to God at bottom, which shows itself by *merciful desires for the good of God’s creatures*. The merciful man is merciful to his beast. I do not believe in the piety of a man who is cruel to a horse. There is sometimes need of the whip, but the man who uses it cruelly surely cannot be a converted man! There are sometimes sights to be seen in our streets which may well provoke the God of Heaven to come down in indignation and punish the cruelty of brutal persons to brute beasts. But where the Grace of God

is in our heart, we would not cause unnecessary pain to a fly! And if, in the course of the necessities of mankind, pain must be given to the inferior animals, the Christian heart is pained and will try to devise all possible means to prevent any unnecessary pain from being endured by a single creature that God's hands have made. There is some Truth of God in that saying of the ancient mariner, "He prays well who loves well both man and bird and beast." There is a touch, if it is not always of Grace, of something like Grace in the kindness of heart which every Christian should feel towards all the living things that God has made.

Further, the merciful man shows his mercy to his fellow men in many ways of this kind. *He is merciful to their characters*, merciful in not believing a great many reports he hears about reputed good men! He is told some astonishing story very derogatory to the character of a Christian Brother and he says, "Now, if that Brother were told this story about me, I would not like him to believe it of me unless he searched it out and was quite sure of it. And I won't believe it of him unless I am forced to do so." It is a delightful thing for Christians to have confidence in one another's characters. Wherever that rules in a Church, it will prevent a world of sorrow. Brother, I have more confidence in you than I can ever have in myself! And as I can truly say that, you should be able to say the same of your fellow Christians, too. Do not be ready to receive such reports—there is as much wickedness in believing a lie as in telling it, if we are always ready to believe it. There would be no slanderers if there were no receivers and believers of slander, for when there is no demand for an article, there are no producers of it! And if we will not believe evil reports, the tale-bearer will be discouraged and leave off his evil trade. But suppose we are compelled to believe it? Then the merciful man shows his mercy by not repeating it. "Alas!" he says, "it is true and I am very sorry, but why should I publish it abroad?" If there happened to be a traitor in a regiment, I do not think the other soldiers would go and publish it everywhere and say, "Our regiment has been dishonored by one of our comrades." "It is an ill bird that fouls its own nest," and it is an ill professor who uses his tongue to tell the faults and failures of his brethren! Then suppose we have heard of such a thing—the merciful man feels it his duty not to repeat it! Many a man has been ruined for life through some fault which he committed when young, which has been severely dealt with. A young man has misappropriated a sum of money and has been brought before the magistrates and put in jail—and so made a thief for life. Forgiveness for the first action, with prayer and kindly rebuke, might have won him to a life of virtue, or (who knows?) to a life of piety. It is for the Christian, at any rate, not to expose, unless it is absolutely necessary, as sometimes it is—but to always deal towards the erring in the gentlest manner possible.

And, Brothers and Sisters, we should be merciful to one another in seeking never to look at the worst side of a Brother's character. Oh, how quick some are to spy out other people's faults! They hear that Mr. So-and-So is very useful in the Church, and they say, "Yes, he is, but he has

a very curious way of going to work, has he not? And he is so eccentric.” Well, did you ever know a good man who was very successful, who was not a little eccentric? Some people are a deal too smooth to ever do much—it is the odd knots about us that are the force of our character! But why be so quick to point out all our flaws? No, you go out, when the sun is shining brightly, and say, “Yes, this sun is a very good illuminator, but I remark that it has spots.” If you do, you had better keep your remark to yourself, for it gives more light than you do, whatever spots you may have or may not have! And many excellent persons in the world have spots, but yet they do good service to God and to their age, so let us not always be the spot-finders, but let us look at the bright side of the Brother’s or Sister’s character rather than the dark one, and feel that we rise in repute when other Christians rise in repute and that as they have honor through their holiness, our Lord is the glory of it, and we share in some of the comfort of it. And let us never join in the loud outcries that are sometimes raised against men who may have committed very small offenses. Many and many a time we have heard men cry, their voices sounding like the baying of a pack of hounds against some man for a mistaken judgment, or what was little more, “Down with him, down with him!” And if he happens to get into some pecuniary trouble at the same time, then he must surely be a worthless fellow—for lack of gold is with some men a clear proof of the lack of virtue, and lack of success in business is regarded by some as the most damning of all vices! From such outcries against good men who make mistakes, may we be delivered! And may our mercy always take the shape of being willing to restore to our love and to our society any who may have erred, but who, nevertheless, show hearty and true repentance and a desire to henceforth adorn the Doctrine of God their Savior in all things! You who are merciful will be ready to receive your prodigal Brother when he comes back to his Father’s house. Do not be like the elder brother and when you hear the music and the dancing, ask, “What do these things mean?” but count it right that all should be glad when he who was lost is found, he who was dead is made alive again!

I can only throw out hints that may suit one or another of you. My Brothers and Sisters, we ought to be merciful in the sense of *not allowing others to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear*. You know that there is such a thing as exposing our young people to temptation. Parents will sometimes allow their boys to start in life in houses where there is a chance of rising, but where there is a greater chance of falling into great sin. They do not esteem the moral risks which they sometimes run in putting their sons into large houses where there is no regard to morals and where there are a thousand nets of Satan spread to take unwary birds. Be merciful to your children—let them not be exposed to evils which were, perhaps, too strong for you in *your* youth, and which will be too powerful for them! Let your mercy consider them and do not put them in that position.

And as to your clerks, and servants, we sometimes, when we have dishonest people about us, are about as guilty as they are! We did not lock up our money and take proper care of it. If we had done so, they could not have stolen it. We sometimes leave things about and through our carelessness the suggestion may often come, “May I not take this and take that?” And so we may be partakers in their sins through our own lack of care. Remember, they are but men and women—sometimes they are but boys and girls—so do not put baits before them, do not play cat’s paw for Satan, but keep temptation from them as much as lies in you.

And let us be merciful, too, to people *in not expecting too much from them*. I believe there are persons who expect those who work for them to toil 24 hours a day, or thereabouts. No matter how hard the task, it never strikes them that their servants’ heads ache, or that their legs grow weary. “What were they made for but to slave for us?” That is the kind of notion some have, but that is not the notion of a true Christian! He feels that he desires his servants and his dependants to do their duty and he is grieved to find that many of them cannot, but when he sees them diligently trying, he often feels for them even more than they feel for themselves, for he is considerate and gentle. Who likes to drive a horse that extra mile that makes him feel ready to drop? Who would wish to get out of his fellow man that extra hour of work which is just that which makes him wretched? Putting all that I have said into one sentence, let us, dear Friends, be tender, considerate, kind and gentle to all.

“Oh,” says one, “if we were to go about the world acting like that, we would get imposed upon, we would be badly treated,” and so on. Well, try it, Brother! Try it, Sister! And you shall find that any misery that comes to you through being too tenderhearted, too gentle and too merciful, will be so light an affliction that it will not be worthy to be compared with the peace of mind that it will bring you, and the constant wellspring of joy which it will put into your own bosom as well as into the bosoms of others!

III. I shall close by briefly noticing THE BLESSING WHICH IS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO ARE MERCIFUL.

It is said of them that “they shall obtain mercy.” I cannot help believing that this means in this present life as well as in the life to come. Surely this is David’s meaning in the 41st Psalm—“Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble...He shall be blessed upon the earth.” Is that text gone altogether under the new dispensation? Are those promises only meant for the old legal times? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we have the sun, but remember that when the sun shines, the stars are also shining—we do not see them by reason of the greater brightness, but every star is shining in the day as well as in the night—and increasing the light! And so, though the greater promises of the Gospel do sometimes make us forget the promises of the old dispensation, yet they are not cancelled! They are still there and they are confirmed—and they are made yes and Amen in Christ Jesus, unto the Glory of God by us! I firmly believe that when a man is in trouble, if he

has been enabled, through Divine Grace, to be kind and generous towards others, he may look to God in prayer and say, "Lord, there is Your promise. I claim no merit for it, but Your Grace has enabled me, when I saw others in the same condition as I am, to help them. Lord, raise me up a helper!" Job seemed to get some comfort out of that fact. It is not our grandest comfort or our best. As I have said, it is not the sun, it is only one of the stars. At the same time, we do not despise the starlight. I believe that God will full often help and bless in temporal matters those persons whom He has blessed with a merciful spirit towards others.

And often it is true in another sense that those who have been merciful obtain mercy, for *they obtain mercy from others*. Our Savior said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measured to you again." There will be this sort of general feeling. If a man was sternly just and no more, when he comes down in the world, few pity him. But that other man, whose earnest endeavor it was to be the helper of others, when he is found in trouble, all say, "We are so sorry for him."

But the full meaning of the text, no doubt, relates to that day of which Paul wrote concerning his friend, Onesiphorus, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord *in that day*." Do not think that I am preaching up mercy as a meritorious work—I did my best at the outset to put all that aside. But, as an *evidence of Grace*, mercifulness is a very prominent and distinguishing mark. And if you need proof of that, let me remind you that our Savior's own description of the Day of Judgment runs thus, "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me food: I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you clothed Me: I was sick, and you visited Me: I was in prison, and you came unto Me." This, therefore, is *evidence* that they were blessed of the Father!

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

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

THE SIXTH BEATITUDE

NO. 3159

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 26, 1909.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 27, 1873.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”
Matthew 5:8.

[In the year 1873, Mr. Spurgeon delivered what he called “a series of sententious homilies” on the Beatitudes. After an introductory discourse upon the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes as a whole, he intended to preach upon each one separately, but either illness or some other special reason prevented him from fully carrying out this purpose. There are, however, eight Sermons upon the Beatitudes—

See Sermons #422, Volume 7—THE PEACEMAKER; #2103, Volume 35—

THE HUNGER AND THIRST WHICH ARE BLESSED; #3155,

Volume 55—THE BEATITUDES; #3156, Volume 55—THE FIRST BEATITUDE;

#3065, Volume 53—THE THIRD BEATITUDE; #3157, Volume 55—

THE FOURTH BEATITUDE; #3158, Volume 55—THE FIFTH BEATITUDE—

and this one—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

IT was a peculiarity of the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, that His teaching was continually aimed at the hearts of men. Other teachers had been content with outward moral reformation, but He sought the source of all the evil, that He might cleanse the spring from which all sinful thoughts, words and actions come. He insisted over and over again that until the heart was pure, the life would never be clean. The memorable Sermon upon the Mount, from which our text is taken, begins with the benediction, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” for Christ was dealing with men’s spirits—with their inner and spiritual nature. He did this more or less in all the Beatitudes and this one strikes the very center of the target as He says not, “Blessed are the pure in language, or the pure in action,” much less, “Blessed are the pure in ceremonies, or in raiment, or in food,” but “Blessed are the pure *in heart*.” O Beloved, whatever so-called “religion” may recognize as its adherent, a man whose heart is impure, the religion of Jesus Christ will not do so! His message to all men is still, “You must be born-again.” That is to say, the inner nature must be Divinely renewed or else you cannot enter or even see that Kingdom of God which Christ came to set up in this world. If your actions should appear to be pure, yet if the motive at the back of those actions should be impure, that will nullify them all! If your language should be chaste, yet if your heart is reveling in fowl imaginations, you stand before God not according to your words, but according to your desires—according to the set of the current of your affections, your real inward likes and dislikes—you shall be judged by Him. *External* purity is all that man asks at our

hands, “for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart”—and the promises and blessings of the Covenant of Grace belong to those who are made pure in *heart*—and to no one else.

In speaking upon our text, I want to show you, first, that *impurity of heart is the cause of spiritual blindness*. And secondly, that *the purification of the heart admits us to a most glorious sight*—“the pure in heart shall see God.” Then I shall have to show you, in the third place, that *the purification of the heart is a Divine operation* which cannot be performed by ourselves, or by any human method—it must be worked by Him who is the thrice-holy Lord God of Sabaoth!

I. First, then, I have to remark that IMPURITY OF HEART IS THE CAUSE OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS—the cause of a very large part, if not of all of it.

A man who is intoxicated cannot see clearly. His vision is often distorted or doubled. But there are other cups, besides those which intoxicate, which prevent the mental eyes from having clear sight. And he who has once drunk deeply of those cups will become spiritually blind, and others, in proportion as they imbibe the noxious draughts, will be unable to see afar off.

There are moral beauties and immoral horrors which certain men cannot see because they are impure in heart. Take, for instance, the covetous man, and you will soon see that there is no other dust that blinds so completely as gold dust. There is a trade which many regard as bad from top to bottom, but if it pays the man who is engaged in it, and he is of a grasping disposition, it will be almost impossible to convince him that it is an evil trade! You will usually find that the covetous man sees no charm in generosity. He thinks that the liberal man, if he is not actually a fool, is so near akin to one that he might very easily be mistaken for one. He himself admires that which can be most easily grasped—and the more of it that he can secure, the better is he pleased. The skinning of flints and the oppression of the poor are occupations in which he takes delight! If he has performed a dirty trick in which he has sacrificed every principle of honor, yet if it has turned out to his own advantage, he says to himself, “That was a clever stroke!” And if he should meet with another of his own kind, he and his fellow would chuckle over the transaction and say how beautifully they had done it. It would be useless for me to attempt to reason with an avaricious man—to show him the beauty of liberality—but, on the other hand, I would not think of wasting my time in trying to get a fair opinion from him as to the justice of anything which he knew to be remunerative. You know that some years ago there was a great fight in the United States over the question of slavery. Who were the gentlemen in England who took the side of the slave-owners? Why, mostly Liverpool men who did so because slavery paid them! If it had not done so, they would have condemned it. And I daresay that those of us who condemned it, did so the more readily because it did not pay us! Men can see very clearly where there is nothing to be lost either way, but if it comes to the a matter of *gain*, the heart being impure, the eyes can-

not see straight! There are innumerable things that a man cannot see if he holds a sovereign over each of his eyes—he cannot even see the sun then—and if he keeps the gold over his eyes, he will become blind. The pure in heart can see. But when covetousness gets into the heart, it makes the eyes dim or blind.

Take another sin—the sin of oppression. There are men who tell us that in their opinion, the persons who are in the highest positions in life are the very beauty and glory of the nation—and that poor people ought to be kept in their proper places because they were created on purpose so that “the nobility” might be sustained in their exalted position, and that other highly respectable persons might also gather to themselves any quantity of wealth. As to the idea of men needing more money for their services, it ought not to be encouraged for a single moment, so these gentlemen say! And if the poor needlewoman toils and starves on the few pence she can earn, you must not say a word about it—there are “the laws of political economy” that govern all such cases—so she must be ground between the wheels that abound in this age of machinery and nobody ought to interfere in the matter. Of course, an oppressor cannot or will not see the evil of oppression. If you put before him a case of injustice which is as plain as the nose on his face, he cannot see it because he has always been under the delusion that he was sent into the world with a whip in his hand to drive other people about, for he is the one great somebody and other people are poor nobodies, only fit to creep under his huge legs and humbly ask his leave to live. In this way, oppression, if it gets into the heart, completely blinds the eyes and perverts the judgment of the oppressor.

The same remark is true concerning lasciviousness. I have often noticed, when men have railed at religion and reviled the holy Word of God, that their lives have been impure. Seldom, if ever, have I met with a case in which my judgment has deceived me with regard to the lives of men who have spoken against holy things. I remember preaching, once, in a country town just about harvest time—and in commenting on the fact that some farmers would not let the poor have any gleanings from their fields—I said I thought there were some who were so mean that if they could rake their fields with a small tooth comb they would do so. Thereupon a farmer marched noisily out of the place in anger—and when he was asked why he was so wrathful, he answered, with the greatest simplicity, “Because I always rake my fields twice.” Of course, he could not perceive any particular pleasure in caring for the poor and neither could he submit with a good conscience to the rebuke that came home to him so pointedly! And when men speak against the Gospel, it is almost always because the Gospel speaks against them. The Gospel has found them out—it has charged them with the guilt of their sins and has arrested them! It has come to them like a policeman with his dark lantern and turned the bull’s eye full upon their iniquity and, therefore, it is that they are so indignant. They would not be living as they are if they could see themselves as God sees them—they would not be able to continue in

their filthiness, corrupting others as well as ruining themselves if they could really see! And as these evil things get into the heart, they are certain to blind the eyes.

The same thing may be said with regard to spiritual Truth as well as moral Truth. We frequently meet with persons who say that they cannot understand the Gospel of Christ. At the bottom, in nine cases out of ten, I believe that it is their sin which prevents their understanding it. For instance, last Lord's-Day evening, [See Sermon #3154, Volume 55—CONCERNING THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] I tried to preach to you upon the claims of God and sought to show you what right He has to us. There may have been some of my hearers who said, "We do not recognize the claims of God to us." If any one of you talks like that, it is because your heart is not right in the sight of God, for if you were able to judge righteously, you would see that the highest claims in all the world are those of the Creator upon His creatures and you would at once say, "I recognize that He who has created has the right to govern—that He should be Master and Lord who is both greatest and best—and that He should be Lawgiver who is Infallibly wise and just, and always kind and good." When men practically say, "We would not cheat or rob our fellow men, but as for God, what does it matter how we treat Him?" The reason is that they are unjust in heart and their so called justice to their fellow men is only because their motto is, "honesty is *the best policy*," and they are not really just in heart, or else they would at once admit the just claims of the Most High.

The great central Doctrine of the Atonement can never be fully appreciated until a man's heart is rectified. You have probably often heard such remarks as these, "I don't see why there should be any recompense made to God for sin. Why could He not forgive transgression at once and have done with it? What need is there of a substitutionary Sacrifice?" Ah, Sir! If you had ever felt the weight of sin upon your conscience. If you had ever learned to loathe the very thought of evil. If you had been brokenhearted because you have been so terribly defiled by sin, you would feel that the Atonement was not only required by God, but that it was also required by your own sense of justice! And instead of rebelling against the Doctrine of Vicarious Sacrifice, you would open your heart to it and cry, "That is precisely what I need!" The purest-hearted people who have ever lived are those who have rejoiced to see God's righteous Law vindicated and magnified by Christ's death upon the Cross as the Substitute for all who believe in Him, so that while God's mercy is displayed in matchless majesty, intense satisfaction is felt that there could be a way of reconciliation by which every attribute of God should derive honor and glory—and yet poor lost sinners should be lifted up into the high and honorable position of children of God! The pure in heart see no difficulty in the Atonement—all the difficulties concerning it arise from the lack of purity there.

The same may be said of the equally important Truth of Regeneration. The impure in heart cannot see any need of being born-again. They say,

“We admit that we are not quite all that we should be, but we can easily be made all right. As to the talk about a new creation, we do not see any need of that. We have made a few mistakes which will be rectified by experience. And there have been some errors of life which we trust may be condoned by future watchfulness and care.” But if the unrenewed man’s heart were pure, he would see that his nature has been an evil thing from the beginning and he would realize that thoughts of evil as naturally rise in us as sparks do from a fire! And he would feel that it would be a dreadful thing that such a nature as that should remain unchanged. He would see within his heart jealousies, murders, rebellions and evils of every kind—and his heart would cry out to be delivered from itself. But just because his heart is impure, he does not see his own impurity and does not and will not confess his need to be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. But as for you who are pure in heart, what do you now think of your old nature? Is it not the heavy burden that you continually carry about with you? Is not the plague of your own heart the worst plague under Heaven? Do you not feel that the very tendency to sin is a constant grief to you and that if you could but get rid of it altogether, your Heaven would have begun below? So it is the pure in heart who see the Doctrine of Regeneration—and those who see it not, see it not because they are *impure* in heart.

The same remark is true concerning the glorious Character of our blessed Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Who has ever found fault with that except men with bat’s eyes? There have been unconverted men who have been struck with the beauty and purity of Christ’s life, but the pure in heart are enamored of it. They feel that it is more than a human life, that it is Divine and that God Himself is revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ, His Son. If any man does not see the Lord Jesus Christ to be thus superlatively lovely, it is because he is, himself, not purified in heart, for if he were, he would recognize in Him the mirror of all perfection and would rejoice to do reverence to Him. But, alas, it is still true that, as it is with moral matters, so is it with that which is spiritual and, therefore, the great Truths of the Gospel cannot be perceived by those whose heart is impure!

There is one form of impurity which, beyond all others, seems to blind the eyes to spiritual Truth, and that is duplicity of heart. A man who is simple-minded, honest, sincere, childlike, is the man who enters the Kingdom of Heaven when its door is opened to him. The things of the Kingdom are hidden from the double-minded and the deceitful, but they are plainly revealed to the babes in Grace—the simple-hearted, transparent people who wear their heart upon their sleeve. It is quite certain that the hypocrite will never see God while he continues in his hypocrisy. In fact, he is so blind that he cannot see anything, and certainly cannot see himself as he really is in God’s sight! The man who is quite satisfied with the name of a Christian, without the life of a Christian will never see God nor anything at all until his eyes are Divinely opened. What does it matter to anybody else what his opinion is upon any subject whatever? We

would not care to have praise from the man who is double-minded and who is practically a liar, for while he is one thing in his heart, he endeavors to pass himself off for another thing in his life.

Formalism, too, will never see God, for formalism always looks to the shell and never gets to the kernel. Formalism licks the bone, but never gets to the marrow. It heaps to itself ceremonies, mostly of its own invention, and when it has attended to these, it flatters itself that all is well, though the heart itself still lusts after sin. The widow's house is being devoured even at the very time when the Pharisee is making long prayers in the synagogue or at the corners of the streets. Such a man cannot see God! There is a kind of reading of the Scriptures which will never lead a man to see God. He opens the Bible, not to see what is there, but to see what he can find to back up his own views and opinions. If the texts he needs are not there, he will twist others round till he, somehow or other, gets them on his side. But he will only believe as much as agrees with his own preconceived notions! He would like to mold the Bible, like a cake of wax, to any shape he pleases, so, of course, he cannot see the Truth and he does not want to see it.

The crafty man, too, never sees God. I am afraid for no man as much as for the crafty, the man whose guiding star is "policy." I have seen rough sailors converted to God and blasphemers, harlots and great sinners of almost all kinds brought to the Savior and saved by His Grace. And very often they have told the honest truth about their sins and have blurted out the sad truth in every outspoken fashion. And when they have been converted, I have often thought that they were like the good ground of which our Savior spoke—with an honest and good heart in spite of all their badness. But as for the men of snake-like nature, who say to you, when you talk to them about religion, "Yes, yes," but do not mean it at all—the men who are never to be trusted—Mr. Smooth-Tongue, Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, Mr. By-Ends, Mr. Fair-Speech and all that class of people—God Himself never seems to do anything but let them alone! And as far as my observation goes, His Grace seldom seems to come to these double-minded men and women who are unstable in all their ways. These are the people who never see God.

It has been remarked by a very excellent writer, that our Lord probably alluded to this fact in the verse which forms our text. In Oriental countries the king is seldom to be seen. He lives in retirement and to get an interview with him is a matter of great difficulty. And there are all sorts of plots and plans, and intrigues and, perhaps, the use of backstairs influence. But in that way a man may at last get to see the king. But Jesus Christ says, in effect, "That is not the way to see God." No. No one ever gets to Him by craftiness, by plotting, planning and scheming—but the simple-minded man who goes humbly to Him, just as he is, and says, "My God, I desire to see You. I am guilty and I confess my sin, and plead with You for Your dear Son's sake, to forgive me." He it is who sees God.

I think there are some Christians who never see God as well as others do—I mean some Brothers and Sisters who, from their peculiar constitution, seem naturally of a questioning spirit. They are generally puzzled about some doctrinal point or other and their time is mostly taken up with answering objections and removing doubts. Perhaps some poor humble country woman who sits in the aisle and who knows, as Cowper says, nothing more than that her Bible is true, and that God always keep His promises, sees a great deal more of God than the learned and quibbling Brother who vexes himself about foolish questions to no profit.

I remember telling you of a minister, who, calling on a sick woman, desired to leave a text with her for her private meditation. So, opening her old Bible, he turned to a certain passage which he found that she had marked with the letter P. “What does that P mean, my Sister?” he asked. “That means *precious*, Sir. I found that text very precious to my soul on more than one special occasion.” He looked for another promise, and against this he found in the margin T and P. “And what do these letters mean, my good Sister?” They mean *tried and proved*, Sir, for I tried that promise in my greatest distress and proved it to be true. And then I put that mark against it so that the next time I was in trouble, I might be sure that that promise was still true.” The Bible is scored all over with those Ts and Ps by generation after generation of Believers who have tested the promises of God and proved them to be true!. May you and I, Beloved, be among those who have thus tried and proved this precious Book!

II. Our second remark was that THE PURIFICATION OF THE HEART ADMITS US TO A MOST GLORIOUS SIGHT—“The pure in heart *shall see God.*”

What does that mean? It means many things. I will briefly mention some of them. First, *the man whose heart is pure, will be able to see God in Nature.* When his heart is clean, he will hear God’s footfall everywhere in the garden of the earth in the cool of the day. He will hear God’s voice in the tempest, sounding in peal on peal from the tops of the mountains. He will behold the Lord walking on the great and mighty waters, or see Him in every leaf that trembles in the breeze. Once get the heart right and then God can be seen everywhere! To an impure heart, God cannot be seen anywhere, but to a pure heart God is to be seen everywhere—in the deepest caverns of the sea, in the lonely desert, in every star that gems the brow of midnight!

Further, *the pure in heart see God in the Scriptures.* Impure minds cannot see any trace of God in them. They see reasons for doubting whether Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, they doubt the canonicity of the Gospel according to John—and that is about all that they ever see in the Bible. But the pure in heart see God on every page of this blessed Book. As they read it devoutly and prayerfully, they bless the Lord that He has been so graciously pleased to reveal Himself to them by His Spirit and that He has given them the opportunity and the desire to enjoy the Revelation of His holy will.

Besides that, *the pure in heart see God in His Church*. The impure in heart cannot see Him there at all. To them, the Church of God is nothing but conglomeration of divided sects. And looking upon these sects, they can see nothing but faults, failures and imperfections. It should always be remembered that every man sees that which is according to his own nature. When the vulture soars in the sky, he sees the carrion wherever it may be. And when the dove on silver wings mounts up to the azure, she sees the clean winnowed corn wherever it may be. The lion sees his prey in the forest and the lamb sees its food in the grassy meadow. Unclean hearts see little or nothing of good among God's people, but the pure in heart see God in His Church and rejoice to meet Him there!

But seeing God means much more than perceiving traces of Him in Nature, in the Scriptures and in His Church—it means that *the pure in heart begin to discern something of God's true Character*. Any man who is caught in a thunderstorm and who hears the crash of the thunder and sees what havoc the lightning flashes work, perceives that God is mighty. If he is not so foolish as to be an atheist, he says, "How terrible is this God of the lightning and the thunder!" But to perceive that God is eternally just and yet infinitely tender—and that He is sternly severe and yet immeasurably gracious, and to see the various attributes of the Deity all blending into one another as the colors of the rainbow make one harmonious and beautiful whole—this is reserved for the man whose eyes have been first washed in the blood of Jesus, and then anointed with heavenly eye salve by the Holy Spirit! It is only such a man who sees that God is always and altogether good and who admires Him under every aspect, seeing that all His attributes are beautifully blended and balanced, and that each one sheds additional splendor upon all the rest. The pure in heart shall in that sense see God, for they shall appreciate His attributes and understand His Character as the ungodly never can.

But, more than that, *they shall be admitted into His fellowship*. When you hear some people talk about there being no God and no spiritual things, and so on, you need not be at all concerned at what they say, for they are not in a position to warrant them in speaking about the matter! For instance, an ungodly man says, "I do not believe there is a God, for I never saw Him." I do not doubt the truth of what you say, but when I tell you that I *have* seen Him, you have no more right to doubt my word than I have to doubt yours! One day at an hotel dinner table, I was talking with a Brother minister about certain spiritual things, when a gentleman who sat opposite to us, and who had a table napkin tucked under his chin, and a face that indicated his fondness for wine, made this remark, "I have been in this world for 60 years and I have never yet been conscious of anything spiritual." We did not say what we thought, but we thought it was very likely that what he said was perfectly true—and there are a great many more people in the world who might say the same as he did! But that only proved that *he* was not conscious of anything spiritual—not that others were not conscious of it! There are plenty of other people who can say, "We are conscious of spiritual things. We have been,

by God's Presence among us, moved, bowed, carried forward and cast down, and then lifted up into joy and happiness, and peace—and our experiences are as true phenomena, at least to us, as any phenomena under Heaven! And we are not to be beaten out of our beliefs, for they are supported by innumerable undoubted experiences." "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." "But there is no such secret place," one says, "and no such shadow." How do you know that? If someone else comes and says, "Ah, but I am dwelling in that secret place and abiding under that shadow," what will you say to him? You may call him a fool if you like, but that does not prove that he is one—though it may prove that *you* are one, for he is as honest a man as you are—and as worthy to be believed as you are.

Some years ago, a lawyer in America attended a religious meeting where he heard about a dozen persons relating their Christian experience. He sat with his pencil in his hand and jotted down their evidence as they gave it. At last he said to himself, "If I had a case in court, I should like to have these persons in the witness box, for I should feel that if I had their evidence on my side, I should gain the case." Then he thought, "Well, I have ridiculed these people as fanatics, yet I would like their evidence in court upon other matters. They have nothing to gain by what they have been saying, so I ought to believe that what they have said is true." And the lawyer was simple enough, or rather, wise enough—and pure enough in heart—to look at the matter rightly! And so he also came to see the Truth of God and to see God. Many of us could testify, if this were the time to do so, that there is such a thing as fellowship with God even here on earth, but men can enjoy it only in proportion as they give up their love of sin. They cannot talk with God after they have been talking filthiness. They cannot speak with God as a man speaks with his friend if they are accustomed to meet companions in the alehouse and delight to mingle with the ungodly who gather there. The pure in heart may see God and do see Him—not with the natural eyes, and far from us is such a carnal idea as that—but with their inner spiritual eyes they see the great God who is Spirit! And they have spiritual, but very real communion with the Most High.

The expression, "They shall see God," may mean something else. As I have already said, those who saw Oriental monarchs were generally considered to be highly-privileged persons. There were certain ministers of State who had the right to go in and see the king whenever they chose to do so. And the pure in heart have just such a right given to them to go in and see their King at all times. In Christ Jesus they have boldness and access with confidence in coming to the Throne of the heavenly Grace. Being cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus, they have become the ministers, that is, the *servants* of God, and He employs them as His ambassadors and sends them on high and honorable errands for Him—and they may see Him whenever their business for Him entitles them to an audience with Him!

And, lastly, *the time shall come when those who have thus seen God on earth shall see Him face to face in Heaven.* Oh, the splendor of that vision! It is useless for me to attempt to talk about it. Possibly within a week some of us will know more about it than all the divines on earth could tell us. 'Tis but a thin veil that parts us from Glory! It may be rent asunder at any moment and then at once—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in”—***

the pure in heart shall fully understand what it is to *see God!* May that be your portion, Beloved, and mine, also, forever and ever!

III. Now, lastly, and very briefly, I have to remind you that THIS PURIFICATION OF THE HEART IS A DIVINE WORK.

And believe me when I tell you that *it is never an unnecessary work.* No man (except the Man, Christ Jesus), was ever born with a pure heart. All have sinned, all need to be cleansed—there is none good—no, not one!

Let me also assure you that *this work was never performed by any ceremony.* Men may say what they please, but no application of water ever made a man's heart any better! Some tell us that in baptism, by which they mean baby sprinkling, as a rule, they regenerate and make members of Christ, children of God and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven! But those who are sprinkled are no better than other people. They grow up in just the same way as others. The whole ceremony is useless and worse than that, for it is clean contrary to the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ! No aqueous applications, no outward ceremonies can ever affect the heart!

Neither can the heart be purified *by any process of outward reformation.* The attempt has often been made to work from the outside to the inside, but it cannot be done—you might as well try to give a living heart to a marble statue by working upon the outside of it with a mallet and chisel! To make a sinner pure in heart is as great a miracle as if God were to make that marble statue live and breathe and walk!

The heart can only be purified by God's Holy Spirit. He must come upon us and overshadow us. And when He thus comes to us, then is our heart changed, but never before that. When the Spirit of God thus comes to us, He cleanses the soul. To follow the line of our Savior's teaching in the Chapter before us—by showing us our spiritual poverty—“Blessed are the poor in spirit.” That is the first work of God's Grace—to make us feel that we are poor, that we are nothing, that we are undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners! As the Spirit of God proceeds with His work, the next thing that He does is to make us mourn—“Blessed are they that mourn.” We mourn to think that we should have sinned as we have done. We mourn after our God. We mourn after pardon. And then the great process that effectually cleanses the heart is the application of the water and the blood which flowed from the pierced side of Christ upon the Cross. Here it is, O Sinners, that you will find a double cure from the guilt and from the power of sin! When faith looks to the bleeding

Savior, it sees in Him not merely pardon for the past, but the putting away of the sinfulness of the present! The angel said to Joseph, before Christ was born, “You shall call His name, Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.”

The whole process of salvation may be briefly explained thus. The Spirit of God finds us with foul heart and He comes and throws a Divine Light into us so that we see that we are foul. Then He shows us that being sinners, we deserve to endure God’s wrath and we realize that we do. Then He says to us, “But that wrath was borne by Jesus Christ for you.” He opens our eyes and we see that “Christ died for us”—in our place! We look to Him, we believe that He died as our Substitute and we trust ourselves with Him. Then we know that our sins are forgiven us for His name’s sake and the cry of pardoned sin goes through us with such a thrill as we never felt before! And the next moment the forgiven sinner cries, “Now that I am saved, now that I am pardoned, my Lord Jesus Christ, I will be Your servant forever! I will put to death the sins that put You to death and if You will give me the strength to do so, I will serve You as long as I live!” The current of the man’s soul ran before towards evil, but the moment that he finds that Jesus Christ died for him and that his sins are forgiven him for Christ’s sake, the whole stream of his soul rushes in the other direction towards that which is right! And though he still has a struggle against his old nature, yet from that day forth the man is pure in heart—that is to say, his heart loves purity, his heart seeks after holiness, his heart pines after perfection.

Now he is the man who sees God, loves God, delights in God, longs to be like God and eagerly anticipates the time when he shall be with God and see Him face to face. That is the process of purification—may you all enjoy it through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit! If you are willing to have it, it is freely proclaimed to you. If you truly desire the new heart and the right spirit, they will be graciously given to you! There is no need for you to try to fit yourselves to receive them. God is able to work them in you this very hour! He who will wake the dead with one blast of the resurrection trumpet can change your nature with the mere volition of His gracious mind! He can, while you sit in this house, create in you a new heart, renew a right spirit within you and send you out as different a man from what you were when you came in as if you were a new-born child! The power of the Holy Spirit to renew the human heart is boundless! “Oh,” says one, “would that He would renew my heart, that He would change my nature!” If that is your heart’s desire, send up that prayer to Heaven right now! Let not the wish die in your soul, but turn it into a prayer and then breathe it out unto God and listen to what God has to say to you. It is this—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Or this—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved”—saved from your love of sin, saved from your old habits and so completely saved that you shall become one of the pure in heart who see God!

But perhaps you ask, "What is it to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" It is to *trust* Him, to rely upon Him. Oh, that we could all rely upon Jesus Christ now! Oh, that that troubled young man over there could come and trust in Jesus! You will never get rid of your troubles till you do! But, dear Friend, you may be rid of them this very moment if you will but believe in Jesus! Yes, though you have struggled in vain against your evil habits, though you have wrestled with them sternly and resolved, and re-resolved, only to be defeated by your giant sins and your horrible passions, there is One who can conquer all your sins for you! There is One who is stronger than Hercules, who can strangle the hydra of your lust, kill the lion of your passions and cleanse the Augean stable of your evil nature by turning the great rivers of blood and water of His atoning Sacrifice right through your soul! He can make and keep you pure within! Oh, look to Him! He hung upon the Cross, accursed of men, and God made Him to be sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He was condemned to die as our Sin-Offering that we might live forever in the love of God. Trust Him, trust Him! He has risen from the dead and gone up into His Glory, and He is at the right hand of God pleading for transgressors. Trust Him! You can never perish if you trust Him, but you shall live with ten thousand times ten thousand more who have all been saved by Grace, to sing of a mighty Savior able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him!

God grant that you may all be thus saved, that so you may be among the pure in heart who shall see God and never leave off seeing Him. And He shall have all the Glory! Amen and Amen!

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

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

THE PEACEMAKER

NO. 422

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 8, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall
be called the children of God.”
Matthew 5:9.*

THIS is the seventh of the beatitudes. There is a mystery always connected with the number seven. It was the number of perfection among the Hebrews and it seems as if the Savior had put the peacemaker there—as if He were nearly approaching to the perfect man in Christ Jesus. He who would have perfect blessedness, so far as it can be enjoyed on earth, must labor to attain to this seventh benediction and become a peacemaker. There is a significance also in the position of the text, if you regard the context. The verse which precedes it speaks of the blessedness of “the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” It is well that we should understand this.

We are to be “first pure, then peaceable.” Our peaceableness is never to be a compact with sin, or an alliance with that which is evil. We must set our faces like flint against everything which is contrary to God and His holiness. That being in our souls a settled matter we can go on to peaceableness towards men. No less does the verse that follows my text seem to have been put there on purpose. However peaceable we may be in this world, yet we shall be misrepresented and misunderstood and no marvel, for even the Prince of Peace, by His very peacefulness, brought fire upon the earth.

He Himself, though He loved mankind and did no ill, was “despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrow and acquainted with grief.” Lest, therefore, the peaceable in heart should be surprised when they meet with enemies, it is added in the following verse, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.” Thus the peacemakers are not only pronounced to be blessed, but they are compassed about with blessings. Lord, give us grace to climb to this seventh beatitude! Purify our minds that we may be “first pure, then peaceable.” Fortify our souls, that our peaceableness may not lead us into surprise and despair, when for Your sake we are persecuted among men.

Now let us endeavor to enter into the meaning of our text. Thus would we handle it this morning, as God shall help us. First, let us *describe the peacemaker*. Secondly let us *proclaim his blessedness*. Thirdly, let us *set him to work*. And then, fourthly, *let the preacher become a peacemaker himself*.

I. First, LET US DESCRIBE THE PEACEMAKER.

The peacemaker, while distinguished by his character, has the outward position and condition of other men. He stands in all relations of life just as other men do. Thus the peacemaker is a *citizen* and though he is a Christian, he remembers that Christianity does not require him to forego his citizenship, but to use and to improve it for Christ’s glory. The peace-

maker, then, as a citizen, loves peace. If he lives in this land, he knows that he lives among a people who are very sensitive of their honor and are speedily and easily provoked—a people who are so fierce in their character that the very mention of war stirs their blood and they feel as if they would go at it at once with all their force.

The peacemaker remembers the war with Russia and he recollects what fools we were that we should have meddled there—to bring to ourselves great losses both in trade and money—and no advantage whatever that is perceptible. He knows that this nation has often been drifted into war for political purposes and that usually the pressure and burden of it comes upon the poor working man—upon such as have to earn their living by the sweat of their face. Therefore, though he, like other men, feels hot blood—and being an Englishman, feels the blood of the old sea kings often in his veins—yet he represses it and says to himself, “I must not strive, for the servant of God must be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient.”

So he puts his back against the current and when he hears everywhere the noise of war—and sees many that are hot for it—he does his best to administer a cooling draught. He says, “Be patient, let it alone, if the thing is evil, yet war is worse than any other evil. There was never a bad peace yet and never a good war,” says he. “And whatever loss we may sustain by being too quiet, we shall certainly lose a hundred times as much by being too fierce.”

And then in the present case he thinks how ill it would be for two Christian nations to go to war—two nations sprung of the same blood—two countries which really have a closer relation than any other two countries upon the face of the earth. Rivals in their liberal institutions—coadjutors in propagating the Gospel of Christ—two nations that have within their midst more of the elect of God and more of the true followers of Christ than any other nations under Heaven. Yes, he thinks within himself, it were ill that the bones of our sons and daughters should go again to make manure for our fields, as they have done.

He remembers that the farmers of Yorkshire brought home the mold from Waterloo with which to manure their own fields—the blood and bones of their own sons and daughters—and he thinks it not meet that the prairies of America should be enriched with the blood and bones of his children. And on the other hand he thinks that he would not smite another man but would sooner be smitten of him and that blood would be to him an awful sight. So he says, “What I would not do myself, I would not have others do for me and if I would not be a killer, neither would I have others killed for me.”

He walks in vision over a field of battle. He hears the shrieks of the dying and the groans of the wounded. He knows that even conquerors themselves have said that all the enthusiasm of victory has not been able to remove the horror of the dreadful scene after the fight and so he says, “No, peace, peace!” If he has any influence in the commonwealth, if he is a member of the House of Parliament, if he is a writer in a newspaper, or if he speaks from the platform, he says, “Let us look well to it before we hurry into this strife. We must preserve our country’s honor. We must maintain our right to entertain those who flee from their oppressors.

“We must maintain that England shall ever be the safe home of every rebel who flies from his king, a place from which the oppressed shall

never be dragged by force of alms. Yet, still," he says, "cannot this be and yet no blood?" And he bids the law officers look well to it and see if they cannot find that perhaps there may have been an oversight committed which may be pardoned and condoned without the shedding of blood—without the plucking of the sword from its scabbard. Well, he says of war that it is a monster, that at its best it is a fiend, that of all scourges it is the worst.

And he looks upon soldiers as the red twigs of the bloody rod and he begs God not to smite a guilty nation thus, but to put up the sword awhile that we be not cast into trouble, overwhelmed with sorrow and exposed to cruelty which may bring thousands to the grave and multitudes to poverty. Thus the peacemaker acts and he feels that while he does so, his conscience justifies him. And he is blessed and men shall one day acknowledge that he was one of the children of God.

But the peacemaker is not only a citizen, but a *man*. If sometimes he lets general politics alone, yet as a man he thinks that the politics of his own person must always be those of peace. There, if his honor is stained, he stands not up for it—he counts that it were a greater stain to his honor for him to be angry with his fellow than for him to bear an insult. He hears others say, "If you tread upon a worm it will turn," but he says, "I am not a worm, but a Christian and therefore I do not turn except to bless the hand that smites and to pray for those that despitefully use me."

He has his temper, for the peacemaker can be angry and woe to the man who cannot be—he is like Jacob halting on his thigh—for anger is one of the holy feet of the soul when it goes in the right direction. But while he can be angry, he learns to "be angry and sin not," and "he suffers not the sun to go down upon his wrath." When he is at home, the peacemaker seeks to be quiet with his servants and with his household. He puts up with many things sooner than he will speak one uncomely word and if he rebukes, it is ever with gentleness, saying, "Why do you do this?—Why do you do this!"—Not with the severity of a judge, but with the tenderness of a father.

The peacemaker may learn a lesson perhaps, from a story which I met with last week in reading the life of Mr. John Wesley. Going across in a ship to America with Mr. Oglethorpe, who was to be the governor of Savannah, he one day heard a great noise in the governor's cabin. So Mr. Wesley went there and the governor said, "I dare say you want to know what this noise is about, Sir. I have good occasion for it. You know, Sir," said he, "that the only wine I drink is Cyprus wine and it is necessary for me. I put it on board and this rascal, my servant, this Grimaldi, has drunk all of it.

"I will have him beaten on the deck and the first ship of war that comes by, he shall be taken by press and enlisted in His Majesty's service and a hard time he shall have of it, for I will let him know that I never forgive." "Your honor," said Mr. Wesley, "then I hope you never sin." The rebuke was so well put, so pointed and so needed, that the governor replied in a moment, "Alas, Sir, I do sin and I have sinned in what I have said. For your sake he shall be forgiven. I trust he will not do the like again." So the peacemaker always thinks that it is best for him, as he is a sinner himself and responsible to his own Master, not to be too hard a master on his servants, lest when he is provoking them he may be also provoking his

The peacemaker *goes abroad* also and when he is in company he sometimes meets with slurs and even with insults—but he learns to bear these—for he remembers that Christ endured much contradiction of sinners against Himself. Holy Cotton Mather, a great Puritan Divine of America, had received a number of anonymous letters in which he was greatly abused. Having read them and preserved them, he put a piece of paper round them and wrote upon the paper when he put them on a shelf, “Libels—Father forgive them!” So does the peacemaker do. He says of all these things, “They are libels—Father, forgive them!” And he does not rush to defend himself, knowing that He whom he serves will take care that his good name will be preserved, if only he himself be careful how he walks among men.

He goes into business and it sometimes happens to the peacemaker that circumstances occur in which he is greatly tempted to go to the law. But he never does this, unless he is compelled to it, for he knows that law-work is playing with edged tools and that they who know how to use the tools yet cut their own fingers. The peacemaker remembers that the law is most profitable to those who carry it on. He knows, too, that where men will give sixpence to the ministry for the good of their souls and where they pay a guinea to their physician for the good of their bodies, they will spend a hundred pounds, or five hundred as a refresher to their counsel in the Court of Chancery.

So he says, “No, better that I be wronged by my adversary and he get some advantage, than that both of us should lose our all.” So he lets some of these things go by and he finds that on the whole he is none the loser by sometimes giving up his rights. There are times when he is constrained to defend himself but even then he is ready for every compromise, willing to give way at any time and at any season. He has learned the old adage, that “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.” And so he takes heed to it—to agree with his adversary quickly while he is yet in the way—letting strife alone before it is meddled with. Or when it is meddled with, seeking to end it as quickly as may be, as in the sight of God.

And then the peacemaker is *a neighbor* and though he never seeks to meddle with his neighbor’s disputes, more especially if it is a dispute between his neighbor and his wife, for well he knows that if they two disagree, yet they will both agree very soon to disagree with him, if he meddles between them. If he is called in when there is a dispute between two neighbors, he never excites them to animosity, but he says to them, “You do not well, my Brethren. Why do you strive with one another?” And though he takes not the wrong side but seeks ever to do justice, yet he tempers ever his justice with mercy and says unto the one who is wronged, “Can not you have the nobility to forgive?”

And he sometimes puts himself between the two, when they are very angry and takes the blows from both sides. For he knows that Jesus did so—who took the blows from His Father and from us also—that so by suffering in our place, peace might be made between God and man. Thus the peacemaker acts whenever he is called to do his good offices and more especially if his station enables him to do it with authority. He endeavors, if he sits upon the judgment seat, not to bring a case to a trial if it can be arranged otherwise. If he is a minister and there is a difference among his people, he enters not into the details, for well he knows that there is much

idle tittle-tattle, but he says, "Peace" to the billows and "Hush" to the winds. And so he bids men live.

They have so little while, he thinks, to dwell together, that it were meet they should live in harmony. And so he says, "How good and pleasant a thing it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity!" But once again the peacemaker has for his highest title, that he is *a Christian*. Being a Christian, he unites himself with some Christian Church—and here, as a peacemaker, he is as an angel of God. Even among Churches there are those that are bowed down with infirmities and these infirmities cause Christian men and Christian women to differ at times. So the peacemaker says, "This is unseemly, my Brother. Let us be at peace."

And he remembers what Paul says, "I beseech Euodias and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." And he thinks that if these two were thus besought by Paul to be of the same mind, unity must be a blessed thing and he labors for it. And sometimes the peacemaker, when he sees differences likely to arise between his denomination and others, turns to the history of Abram. and he reads how the herdsman of Abram did strive with the herdsman of Lot. And he notes that in the same verse it is said, "And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled in the land." So he thinks it was a shame that where there were Perizzites to look on, followers of the true God should disagree.

He says to Christians, "Do not do this, for we make the devil sport. We dishonor God. We damage our own cause. We ruin the souls of men." And he says, "Put up your swords into your scabbards. Be at peace and fight not one with another." They who are not peacemakers, when received into a Church, will fight upon the smallest notion—will differ about the minutest point. We have known Churches rent in pieces and schisms committed in Christian bodies through things so foolish that a wise man could not perceive the occasion. Things so ridiculous that a reasonable man must have overlooked them.

The peacemaker says, "Follow peace with all men." Specially he prays that the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of peace, might rest upon the Church at all times. Banding believers together in one—that they being one in Christ, the world may know that the Father has sent His Son into the world, heralded as His mission was with an angelic song—"Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men."

Now I trust in the description which I have given of the peacemaker, I may have described some of you. But I fear the most of us would have to say, "Well, in many things I come short." However, this much I would add—if there are two Christian men here present who are at variance with each other, I would be a peacemaker and bid them be peacemakers, too. Two Spartans had quarreled with each other and the Spartan king, Aris, bade them both meet him in a temple. When they were both there he heard their differences and he said to the priest, "Lock the doors of the temple, these two shall never go forth till they be at one," and there, within the temple, he said, "It is unmeet to differ."

So they compounded at once their differences and went away. If this were done in an idol temple, much more let it be done in the house of God and if the Spartan heathen did this, much more let the Christian, the believer in Christ do it. This very day, put aside from you all bitterness and all malice and say one to another, "If in anything you have offended me, it

is forgiven. And if in anything I have offended you, I confess my error, let the breach be healed and as children of God, let us be in union with one another." Blessed are they who can do this, for "blessed are the peacemakers!"

II. Having thus described the peacemaker, I shall go on to DECLARE HIS BLESSEDNESS. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." A three-fold commendation is implied.

First, he is *blessed*. That is, God blesses him and I know that he whom God blesses is blessed. And he whom God curses, is cursed. God blesses him from the highest heavens. God blesses him in a god-like manner. God blesses him with the abundant blessings which are treasured up in Christ. And while he is blessed of God, the blessedness is diffused through his own soul. His conscience bears witness that as in the sight of God through the Holy Spirit, he has sought to honor Christ among men. More especially is he most blessed when he has been most assailed with curses. For then the assurance greets him, "So persecuted they the Prophets that were before you."

And whereas he has a command to rejoice at all times, yet he finds a special command to be exceedingly glad when he is ill-treated. Therefore he takes it well, if for well-doing he is called to suffer and he rejoices thus to bear a part of the Savior's Cross. He goes to his bed, no dreams of enmity disturb his sleep. He rises and goes to his business and he fears not the face of any man, for he can say, "I have not in my heart anything but friendship towards all." Or if he is attacked with slander and his enemies have forged a lie against him, he can nevertheless say—

***"He that forged and he that threw the dart,
Has each a brother's interest in my heart."***

Loving all, he is thus peaceful in his own soul and he is blessed as one that inherits the blessing of the Most High.

And not infrequently it comes to pass that he is even blessed by the wicked. For though they would withhold a good word from him, they cannot. Overcoming evil with good, he heaps coals of fire upon their heads and melts the coldness of their enmity till even they say, "He is a good man." And when he dies, those whom he has made at peace with one another, say over his tomb, "It were well if the world should see many of his like, there were not half the strife, nor half the sin in it if there were many like he."

Secondly, you will observe that the text not only says he is blessed, but it adds, that *he is one of the children of God*. This he is by adoption and grace—but peacemaking is a sweet evidence of the work of the peaceful Spirit within. As the child of God, moreover, he has a likeness to his Father who is in Heaven. God is peaceful, longsuffering and tender, full of loving kindness, pity and compassion. So is this peacemaker. Being like God, he bears his Father's image. Thus does he testify to men that he is one of God's children. As one of God's children, the peacemaker has access to his Father.

He goes to Him with confidence, saying, "Our Father which are in Heaven," which he dare not say unless he could plead with a clear conscience. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." He feels the tie of brotherhood with man and therefore he feels that he may rejoice in the Fatherhood of God. He comes with confidence and with intense delight to

his Father who is in Heaven, for he is one of the children of the Highest, who does good both to the unthankful and to the evil.

And still, there is a third word of commendation in the text. "They shall be *called* the children of God." They not only are so, but they shall be called so. That is, even their enemies shall call them so, even the world shall say, "Ah, that man is a child of God." Perhaps, Beloved, there is nothing that so strikes the ungodly as the peaceful behavior of a Christian under insult. There was a soldier in India, a big fellow, who had been, before he enlisted, a prizefighter and afterwards had performed many deeds of valor. When he had been converted through the preaching of a missionary all his mess-mates made a laughingstock of him. They counted it impossible that such a man as he had been should become a peaceful Christian.

So one day when they were at mess, one of them wantonly threw into his face and bosom a whole basinful of scalding soup. The poor man tore his clothes open to wipe away the scalding liquid and yet self-possessed amidst his excitement, he said, "I am a Christian, I must expect this," and smiled at them. The one who did it said, "If I had thought you would have taken it in that way, I would never have done it. I am very sorry I ever did so." His patience rebuked their malice and they all said he was a Christian. Thus he was *called* a child of God. They saw in him all evidence that was to them the more striking, because they knew that they could not have done the same.

When Mr. Kilpin, of Exeter, was one day walking along the streets, an evil man pushed him from the pavement into the ditch and as he fell into the ditch, the man said, "Lay there, John Bunyan—that is good enough for you." Mr. Kilpin got up and went on his way and when afterwards this man wanted to know how he took the insult, he was surprised that all Mr. Kilpin said was that he had done him more honor than dishonor, for he thought that being called John Bunyan was worth being rolled in the ditch a thousand times. Then he who had done this said that he was a good man.

So that they who are peacemakers are "*called* the children of God." They demonstrate to the world in such a way that the very blind must see and the very deaf must hear that God is in them. O that we had grace enough to win this blessed commendation! If God has brought you far enough, my Hearer, to hunger and thirst after righteousness, I pray you never cease your hunger till He has brought you so far as to be a peacemaker, that you may be called a child of God.

III. But now, in the third place, I am to try and GET THE PEACEMAKER TO WORK.

You have much work to do, I doubt not, in your own households and your own circles of acquaintance. Go and do it. You remember well that text in Job—"Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?"—by which Job would have us know that unsavory things must have something else with them, or else they will not well be pleasant for food. Now, our religion is an unsavory thing to men—we must put salt with it and this salt must be our quietness and peace-making disposition. Then they who would have eschewed our religion alone, will say of it, when they see the salt with it, "This is good," and they will find some relish in this "white of an egg."

If you would commend your godliness to the sons of men—in your own houses make clear and clean work, purging out the old leaven—that you may offer sacrifices to God of a godly and heavenly sort. If you have any strifes among you, or any divisions, I pray you, even as God, for Christ's sake forgave you, so also do you. By the bloody sweat of Him who prayed for you and by the agonies of Him who died for you and in dying said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," forgive your enemies. "Pray for them that despitefully use you and bless them that curse you." Let it be always said of you, as a Christian, "That man is meek and lowly in heart and would sooner bear injury himself than cause an injury to another."

But the chief work I want to set you about is this. Jesus Christ was the greatest of all peacemakers. "He is our Peace." He came to make peace with Jew and Gentile, "for He has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us." He came to make peace between all striving nationalities, for we are "no more Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is All in All." He came to make peace between His Father's justice and our offending souls and He has made peace for us through the blood of His Cross. Now, you who are the sons of peace, endeavor as instruments in His hands to make peace between God and men.

For your children's soul, let your earnest prayers go up to Heaven. For the souls of all your acquaintance and kinsfolk let your supplications never cease. Pray for the salvation of your perishing fellow creatures. Thus will you be peacemakers. And when you have prayed, use all the means within your power. Preach, if God has given you the ability—preach with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven—the reconciling Word of Life.

Teach, if you cannot preach. Teach the Word. "Be instant in season and out of season." "Sow beside all waters." For the Gospel "speaks better things than the blood of Abel," and cries peace to the sons of men. Write to your friends of Christ and if you cannot speak much, speak a little for Him. But oh, make it the object of your life to win others for Christ. Never be satisfied with going to Heaven alone. Ask the Lord that you may be the spiritual father of many children and that God may bless you to the ingathering of much of the Redeemer's harvest.

I thank God that there are so many among you who are alive to the love of souls. It makes my heart glad to hear of conversions and to receive the converts. But I feel most glad when many of you, converted by my own instrumentality, under God, are made the means of the conversion of others. There are Brothers and Sisters here who bring me constantly those who have been brought first to this house by them, over whom they watched and prayed and at last have brought them to the minister, that he may hear their confession of faith.

Blessed are such peacemakers! You have "saved a soul from death and hidden a multitude of sins." "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever." They, indeed, in Heaven itself "shall be called the children of God." The genealogy of that Book, in which the names of all the Lord's people are written, shall record that through God the Holy Spirit they have brought souls into the bond of peace through Jesus Christ.

IV. The minister has now, in the last place, TO PRACTICE HIS OWN TEXT, AND ENDEAVOR THROUGH GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT TO BE A PEACEMAKER THIS MORNING.

I speak to many a score of persons this morning who know nothing of peace. For “there is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.” “The wicked is like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” I speak not to you with any desire of making a false peace with your souls. Woe to the prophets who say, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace!” Rather let me, first of all, that we may make sound work in this matter, expose the peaceless, the warring state of your soul.

O Soul! You are this morning at war with your conscience. You have tried to quiet it, but it *will* prick you. You have shut up this recorder of the town of Mansoul in a dark place and you have built a wall before his door. But still, when his fits are on him, your conscience will thunder at you and say, “This is not right. This is the path that leads unto Hell, this is the road of destruction.” Oh, there are some of you to whom conscience is as a ghost, haunting you by day and night. You know the good, though you choose the evil. You prick your fingers with the thorns of conscience when you try to pluck the rose of sin. To you the downward path is not an easy one. It is hedged up and ditched up and there are many bars and gates and chains on the road but you climb over them, determined to ruin your own souls.

Oh, there is war between you and conscience. Conscience says, “Turn,” but you say, “I will not.” Conscience says, “Close your shop on Sunday,” conscience says, “Alter this system of trade, it is cheating.” Conscience says, “Lie not one to another, for the Judge is at the door.” Conscience says, “Away with that drinking cup, it makes the man into something worse than a brute.” Conscience says, “Rend yourself from that unchaste connection—have done with that evil—bolt your door against lust.” But you say, “I will drink the sweet though it damn me, I will go still to my cups and to my haunts though I perish in my sins.”

There is war between you and your conscience! Still your conscience is God’s vice-regent in your soul. Let conscience speak a moment or two this morning. Fear him not, he is a good friend to you. And though he speak roughly, the day will come when you will know that there is more music in the very roaring of conscience than in all the sweet and siren tones which lust adopts to cheat you to your ruin. Let your conscience speak.

But more, there is war between you and God’s Law. The Ten Commandments are against you this morning. The first one comes forward and says, “Let him be cursed, for he denies Me. He has another God besides Me, his God is his belly, he yields homage to his lust.” All the Ten Commandments, like ten great pieces of cannon are pointed at you today for you have broken all God’s statutes and lived in the daily neglect of all His commands. Soul, you will find it a hard thing to go to war with the Law. When the Law came in peace, Sinai was altogether on a smoke and even Moses said, “I do exceedingly fear and quake.”

What will you do when the Law comes in terror? When the trumpet of the archangel shall tear you from your grave? When the eyes of God shall burn their way into your guilty soul? When the great books shall be opened and all your sin and shame shall be published? Can you stand against an angry Law in that day? When the officers of the Law shall come

forth to devour you up to the tormentors and cast you away forever from peace and happiness, Sinner, what will you do? Can you dwell with everlasting fires? Can you abide the eternal burning?

O Man, "agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him—lest at any time the adversary deliver you to the judge and the judge deliver you to the officer and you be cast into prison. Verily I say unto you, you shall by no means come out from there till you have paid the uttermost farthing."

But, Sinner, do you know that you are this morning at war with God? He that made you and was your best Friend you have forgotten and neglected. He has fed you and you have used your strength against Him. He has clothed you—the clothes you have upon your back today are the livery of His goodness—yet, instead of being the servant of Him whose livery you wear, you are the slave of His greatest enemy. The very breath in your nostrils is the loan of His charity and yet you use that breath perhaps to curse Him, or at the best, in lasciviousness or loose conversation, to do dishonor to His Laws.

He that made you has become your enemy through your sin and you are still today hating Him and despising His Word. You say, "I do not hate Him." Soul, I charge you then, "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." "No," you say, "I cannot, I will not do that!" Then you hate Him. If you loved Him, you would keep this, His great command. "His commandment is not grievous," it is sweet and easy. You would believe in His Son if you did love the Father, for "he that loves the Father loves Him also that is begotten of Him." Are you thus at war with God? Surely this is a sorry plight for you to be in. Can you meet Him that comes against you with ten thousand? Can you stand against Him who is Almighty, who makes Heaven shake at His reproof and breaks the crooked serpent with a word?

Do you hope to hide from Him? "Can any hide in secret places, that I shall not see him?" says the Lord. Though you dig in Carmel, yet will He pluck you from there. Though you dive into the caverns of the sea, there shall He command the crooked serpent and it shall bite you. If you make your bed in Hell, He will find you out. If you climb to Heaven, He is there. Creation is your prison and He can find you when He will. Or do you think you can endure His fury? Are your ribs of iron? Are your bones brass? If they are so, yet shall they melt like wax before the coming of the Lord God of Hosts, for He is mighty and as a lion shall He tear in pieces His prey and as a fire shall He devour His adversary, "for our God is a consuming fire."

This, then, is the state of every unconverted man and woman in this place this morning. You are at war with conscience, at war with God's Law and at war with God Himself. And, now, then, as God's ambassador, I come to treat of peace. I beseech you give heed. "As though God did beseech you by me, I pray you, in Christ's place, be you reconciled to God." "In Christ's place." Let the preacher vanish for a moment. Look and listen. It is Christ speaking to you now. Methinks I hear Him speak to some of you. This is the way He speaks, "Soul, I love you. I love you from My heart, I would not have you at enmity with My Father." The tear proves the Truth of what He states, while He cries, "How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but you would not."

“Yet,” says He “I come to treat with you of peace. Come, now and let us reason together. I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Sinner,” says He, “you are bid now to hear God’s note of peace to your soul, for thus it runs—‘You are guilty and condemned. Will you confess this? Are you willing to throw down your weapons now and say, Great God, I yield, I yield, I would no longer be Your foe?’” If so, peace is proclaimed to you. “Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him turn unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Pardon is finely presented to every soul that unfeignedly repents of its sin. But that pardon must come to you through *faith*. So Jesus stands here this morning, points to the wounds upon His breast and spreads His bleeding hands and says, “Sin, or trust in Me and live!” God proclaims to you no longer His fiery Law, but His sweet, His simple Gospel—believe and live. “He that believes on the Son is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

O Soul, does the spirit of God move in you this morning? Do you say, “Lord, I would be at peace with You?” Are you willing to take Christ on His own terms and they are no terms at all—they are simply that you should make no terms in the matter—but give yourself up, body, soul and spirit, to be saved of Him? Now, if my Master were here visibly, I think He would plead with you in such a way that many of you would say, “Lord, I believe, I would be at peace with You.”

But even Christ Himself never converted a soul apart from the Holy Spirit and even He as a preacher won not many to Him, for they were hard of heart. If the Holy Spirit is here, He may as much bless you when I plead in Christ’s stead as though He pleaded Himself. Soul, will you have Christ or not? Young men, young women, you may never hear this word preached in your ears again. Will you die at enmity against God? You that are sitting here, still unconverted, your last hour may come, before another Sabbath’s sun shall dawn. The morrow you may never see.

Would you go into eternity “enemies to God by wicked works?” Soul, will you have Christ or not? Say “No,” if you mean it. Say “No, Christ, I never will be saved by You.” Say it. Look the matter in the face. But I pray you do not say, “I will make no answer.” Come, give some answer this morning—yes, this morning. Thank God you can give an answer. Thank God that you are not in Hell. Thank God that your sentence has not been pronounced—that you have not received your due deserts. God help you to give the right answer! Will you have Christ or not?

“I am not fit.” There is no question of fitness. It is, will you have Him? “I am black with sin.” He will come into your black heart and clean it. “Oh, but I am hard-hearted.” He will come into your hard heart and soften it. Will you have Him?—you can have Him if you will. When God makes a soul willing, it is a clear proof that He means to give that soul Christ. And if you are willing He is not unwilling. If He has made you willing, you may have Him. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot think that I might have Christ.” Soul, you may have Him now. Mary, He calls you! John, He calls you! Sinner,

whoever you may be out of this great throng, if there is in your soul this morning a holy willingness towards Christ, yes, or if there is even a faint desire towards Him, He calls you, He calls you!

O tarry not, but come and trust in Him. Oh, if I had such a Gospel as this to preach to lost souls in Hell, what an effect it would have upon them! Surely, surely, if they could once more have the Gospel preached in their ears, methinks the tears would bedew their poor cheeks and they would say, "Great God, if we may but escape from Your wrath we will lay hold on Christ." But here it is preached among *you*, preached every day, till I fear it is listened to as an old, old story. Perhaps it is my poor way of telling it. But God knows if I knew how to tell it better, I would do so.

O my Master! Send a better ambassador to these men, if that will woo them. Send a more earnest pleader and a more tender heart if that will bring them to Yourself! But oh, bring them, bring them! Our heart longs to see them brought. Sinner, will you have Christ or not? I know this morning is the day of God's power to some of your souls. The Holy Spirit is striving with some of you. Lord, will them! Conquer them! Overcome them! Do you say, "Yes, happy day! I would be led in triumph, captive to my Lord's great love?"

Soul, if so, it is done if you believe. Trust Christ and your many sins are all forgiven you—cast yourself before His dear Cross and say—

***"A guilty, weak and helpless worm,
Into Your arms I fall;
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my All."***

And if He rejects you, come tell me of it. If He refuses you, let me hear about it. There was never such a case yet. He always has received those that come. He always will. He is an open-handed and an open-hearted Savior. O Sinner! May God bring you to put your trust in Him once and for all!

Spirits above! Tune your harps anew. There is a sinner born to God this morning! Lead the song, O Saul of Tarsus! And follow the sinner with sweetest music, O Mary! Let music roll up before the Throne today! For there are heirs of glory born and prodigals *have* returned! To God be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

NO. 1109

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 27, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“You are the light of the world.”
Matthew 5:14.*

THIS title had been given by the Jews to certain of their eminent Rabbis. With great pomposity they spoke of Rabbi Judah, or Rabbi Jochanan, as the lamps of the universe, the lights of the world. It must have sounded strange in the ears of the Scribes and Pharisees, to hear that same title, in all soberness, applied to a few bronzed-faced and rough-handed peasants and fishermen who had become disciples of Jesus. Jesus, in effect, said—not the Rabbis, not the Scribes, not the assembled Sanhedrim, but you, My humble followers, *you* are the light of the world! He gave them this title, not after He had educated them for three years, but at almost the outset of His ministry. From this I gather that the title was given them, not so much on account of what they knew, as on account of what they were. Not their knowledge, but their character made them the light of the world.

They were not yet fully trained in His spiritual school and yet He says to them, “You are the light of the world,” the fact being that wherever there is faith in Christ there is light, for our Lord has said, “I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not walk in darkness.” “The entrance of Your Word gives light.” Genuine faith in Christ turns a man from darkness to marvelous light and transforms him into “light in the Lord”—his aims and objects, his desires, his speech, his actions become full of Divine light which illuminates all the chambers of his soul—and then pours forth from the windows so as to be seen of men. The Believer is appointed to be a lighthouse to others, a cheering lamp, a guiding star.

It is true that his light will be increased as he learns more of Christ. He will be able to impart more instruction to others when he has received more, but even while he is yet a beginner, his faith in Jesus is, in itself, a light—men see his good works even before they discover his knowledge. The man of faith who aims at holiness is a light of the world, even though his knowledge may be very limited and his experience that of a babe. I mention this at the outset in order that every Christian may see the application of the text to *himself*. It is not spoken to the Apostles, or to ministers, exclusively, but to the *entire body* of the faithful—“You are the light of the world.” You humble men and women whose usefulness will be confined to your cottages, or to your workshops. You whose voices will never be heard in the streets, whose speech will only be eloquent in the ears of those who gather by your firesides—you, even you, noiseless and unobserved as your lives will be—you are the true light of the world!

Not alone the men whose learned volumes load our shelves. Not alone the men whose thundering tones startle the nations, or who, with busy care for God's Glory, compass sea and land to find subjects for the kingdom of Jesus, but you, each one of you who are humbly resting upon the Savior and lovingly carrying out your high vocation as the children of God and followers of his dear Son! Let us never forget that light must first be imparted *to us*, or it can never go forth *from us*. We are not lights of the world by nature—at best we are but lamps unlit until the Spirit of God comes. Enquire, therefore, my Hearer, of yourself whether God has ever kindled you by the flame of His Spirit.

Have you been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into light? Has the immortal flame of the Divine Life touched you? If so, you have light in yourself and light towards others—and your light will work effectually in many ways. It will reveal the darkness of those who are round about you. Your light will show the darkness how dark it is. Even as Christ's life judged upon the men of His age, so does the faith of Christians expose the evils of unbelief. And the holiness of Believers reveals the wickedness of sin. Our light also reproveth the deeds of darkness and condemns them. Even though we were never to use a severe word, a godly life would be a stern rebuke of sin.

Therefore it comes to pass that we must expect to be opposed, for "he that does evil fears the light." The world does not understand us, "for the light shines in darkness, and the darkness understands it not." And, therefore, it misrepresents us and rages against us. In a certain sense the saints are, day by day, the judges of mankind. They avoid all censoriousness, for they know who has said, "judge not, that you be not judged," but unconsciously to themselves their godly, holy and devout lives accuse and condemn the wicked. And the Spirit of God, through them, full often convicts the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The Believer's light makes manifest great and important Truths of God. We are light-bearers by bearing testimony to the Lord Jesus and His Divine Gospel.

"You are My witnesses says the Lord." We have believed and therefore speak—we have felt the healing power of the Gospel and therefore we proclaim it. It is the great object of our lives to make known the Gospel of Christ in every place, holding forth the Word of God in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves and laboring to enlighten every man as to the things which make for his peace. In this way we become instruments of comfort, for as light chases away gloom and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, so are Believers the gladders of the world. The wilderness and the solitary place are glad for them. Believers are to those who sit in the region of the shadow of death, a light. When they come to the dying sons of men in the power of the Spirit their feet are beautiful upon the mountains, for they publish salvation.

Saints are sons of consolation, lamps which cheer the night. Their light is a guiding light which leads wanderers to the place of rest and a saving light, for it manifests Jesus to sinners. See your calling, my Brethren! Admire it, be humbled that you have not fulfilled it better and ask for

Grace that, as the lights in the world, you may be all that such a figure signifies. Many wide subjects are opening up before us, but I will not venture upon the open sea, for a narrow strait is before me through which I would steer your meditations with a practical purpose. The channel which your thoughts should follow is the enquiry—why is it that God has been pleased to make His people the lights of the world? He might have been the light of the world Himself without instrumentalities.

Or, if He must use agents, flaming seraphim would surely have been majestic golden lamps with which to illuminate the nations! For what purpose has Christ been pleased to make His disciples the light of the world? Why has He put this honor upon His Church, and upon each one of His followers? That is the question we will talk of, but as even this is too wide a subject, we must narrow it down to one line of thought. God has purposes with regard to Himself to be answered by using men as His agents—these we will not touch upon. We will only think of those reasons which have reference to *ourselves*. We look at the question manward. Why does God make men to be lights to other men?

There are three answers. First, it averts from the light-givers themselves many evils. Secondly, it bestows upon them many benefits. And, thirdly, it has an encouraging aspect towards the light-receivers—those who are, meanwhile, sitting in darkness and needing the light.

I. At the outset we observe that, for God to make His people light-givers is THE MEANS OF AVERTING FROM THEM MANY EVILS. You will see this in a moment. In the first place it purges true godliness from the taint of selfishness. The very first thing we want a man to feel is a deep concern for his own personal salvation—we would have him think of his own sins and repent of them—think of Jesus and personally believe on Him. Men love to hide in crowds, but Grace brings them to be units—men are satisfied to condemn sin in the gross, but true conviction makes each man condemn sin in *himself*.

God's minister aims to come home to the conscience with the words of Nathan, "You are the man." More and more we want to see our careless hearers anxious that they themselves should be saved, for what will it profit them to hear the Gospel if they are only hearers? What will it profit them if their neighbors are converted and they remain unregenerate? Of what value is a national religion if we have not a *personal* religion? It is necessary that men think about their own souls. Now this necessary anxiety might degenerate into selfishness and a man might come to ask with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Observe, then, how the truth of our text counteracts this tendency to selfishness. It shows that our personal salvation operates at once upon others. The lighted candle shines upon all comers. You get light—it is necessary to yourself—but you cannot have that light at all without its becoming immediately useful to those around you, for light is essentially diffusive and shines not for itself. If light could be kept to itself it would cease to be light. Grace which you can keep under a bushel or under a

bed, is not a candle of the Lord's lighting. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved, and your house," is the full Gospel.

The salvation which comes to the man personally affects his house, also, and he is to look at it as a treasure with which he is put in trust for the benefit of those about him. If the Believer grows in Grace, his obtaining more light involves the *giving* of more light. If yonder light on the tower of the House of Commons could be made ten times more brilliant tomorrow, it would be brilliant for us and we should share in its radiance. When the moon is at her fullest, her fullness is for us rather than for herself. Increase the light of even a penny candle and you have increased the light which everybody enjoys who looks at the candle. Strengthen the illuminating power of the gas—it is not to itself, alone, that it is so strengthened, but to all the eyes which are enlightened by it. It must be so.

If a man should advance to the highest stage of Christian holiness, it is inevitable that his progress should be an increase to the means of enlightenment for others. Holy example in the world lifts the standard of morality. Holy example in the Church raises the platform of spirituality. Good men even unconsciously do much towards illuminating others, even as the watchman's lantern shines while the watchman sleeps. But above this, the better a man is the more he longs and labors to benefit his fellow men. Therefore there is no selfishness in a man's desiring to be holy, for intertwined with his own personal holiness, so as to be inseparable, is his usefulness to those among whom he lives.

To do good we must be good. The warp and woof cannot be separated here. To confer good you must possess good. If a man were divested of the last rag of selfishness and lived alone for others, it would be his highest wisdom to look well to his own personal condition before God—he must himself see or he will be a sorry guide—he must himself be strong or he will be a feeble helper. The using of the saints, therefore, as lights of the world is a most effectual remedy for selfishness.

A second evil thus averted is this, it prevents the personality of religion from becoming isolation. It is very important that religion should be a personal thing. On one of the foremost banners of our host is written this word, "Personality in religion." We as Baptists bear that testimony by our very peculiarity. We do not believe a person should be baptized unless it is by his own wish and request. We consider all religion by proxy to be an unmitigated farce, if not worse. The man must do it himself—it must be his *personal* repentance, his *personal* faith, his *personal* Baptism, his *personal* everything, or else it is good for nothing. The tendency of that principle, if exaggerated, is towards isolation so that a man forgets that he has any connection with other people.

Now, our Lord says, "You cannot live alone, you are the light of the world." From that fact arises connections which look backwards, for we ourselves were brought into the family of light through the light of others. To most of us it is a spiritual father. To many of us a nursing mother. We came into the Church not as orphans into an asylum, to find no relative there, but we found in the Church brethren and fathers, true helpers of

our weakness and instructors of our ignorance. We are linked to other Christians by the good which we frequently receive from them, for lights as we are ourselves, we also rejoice in the light of our Brothers and Sisters who are more bright than we are.

Today we have also other links which bind us to our Brethren in Jesus, for many of us have given light to others. We look with loving eyes upon those who are our spiritual children and they look back to us with affectionate esteem, as having received great benefit by our means. Throughout the Church this process is going on—men and women, by teaching in the Sunday school, by preaching in the street—and in a thousand other ways are putting forth their light and finding others who become members of the illuminated family. And so the use of the members of the Church by God, the one for the ingathering of the other, prevents each man from being a separate stone by himself and aids in building us up together a spiritual house for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Therefore blessed be the Savior for making us lights in the world, since though we now maintain each man for himself, his personality before his God, yet we are linked in sacred brotherhood by the common service which our Lord has appointed us.

In the next place this preserves our separateness from the world from souring into mistrust. As Christians we are essentially Nonconformists. The radical precept of our conversation is, “Be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed by the renewing of your minds.” We are in the world, but we are not of it. In a certain sense we love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If we loved the world, the love of the Father would not be in us. Now, one might soon misunderstand this position and by degrees look down from a Pharisaic elevation, and say, “I do not belong to this world, I am superior to it and utterly despise it. I take no interest in its welfare, it is too base a thing for me to care about.”

We should soon grow to be man-haters, and say, “The world lies in the Wicked One, therefore let it seethe in its own fat, and rot in its own corruption. If we can but hurry through its Vanity Fair and get away, it is all we desire.” I think I have seen something of this sort in certain Brethren who promulgate the theory that a few are to be rescued from the wreck which is breaking up and going to pieces on the beach—just a few may be brought to shore, and all hope that the vessel itself will ever float again is gone—all idea that it will bear at its masthead the blood red banner of the Cross is sheer delusion. We have nothing to do but to load the lifeboats with here and there a one and pull away from the wreck with all speed.

Now I do not believe in this theory, and I hope I never shall. I feel a yearning towards the blinded sons of men. I cannot take complacency in them, but I feel a love of benevolence towards them and every Christian who has realized the love of Christ must, I think, feel the same. I believe that the kingdoms of this world will yet become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. “You are the light of the world,” is a sure remedy for all man-hating, for now we feel such love to the world as that which the nurse has towards her foster child. It may be a very tiresome child, but

she is entrusted with it and because its hunger cannot be appeased except she shall feed it and its nakedness cannot be clothed except she shall wrap it up, its needs and its weaknesses appeal to her pity and she cares for it till by degrees her heart warms into an intense affection towards it.

That is the sort of feeling which our Lord would have us cultivate towards mankind. Poor world, poor world, it is dark and gropes in midnight—and it cannot get light except it receives it through us! Poor world, it is sick and none can give it healing medicine but the Lord's own people! It is dying and only through us will God say to it, "Live." Do you not feel an interest in sinners when you know that the way in which sinners are saved is by a saved sinner going after a lost sinner and bringing him to Jesus? When you feel that the Holy Spirit works by you to the salvation of men, will you not love them? I am sure some of us would give up preaching if we did not feel that God, in some way or other, has made our ministry necessary to the calling out of His chosen.

He has given His Son power over all flesh and He has divided, as it were, that all flesh into parts and made us princes over a portion of it. And thus He has given to me power over some flesh and He has given to my Brother minister power over another portion, that, through us, eternal life may be given to as many as God has given to His Son. This forbids us to look out upon mankind with the proud feeling of disgust, or the miserable feeling of despair. No, as the stars look down upon the night and cheer it, so we look upon our benighted race. As the disciples of Jesus looked on the hungry thousands who were to be fed by their hands, so we look on the masses around us. How can we frown on them, for we are lights to them! God means to bless them through us, therefore are they dear to us. Thus have we learned how to be separate from sinners as light is separate from darkness, and yet to be their best friends even as the moon is the best benefactor of the night.

Again, this arrangement delivers our confidence in God's purposes from sinking into the indolence of fatalism. We firmly believe that God will save His own elect—that Christ will never lose one whom His Father gave Him—and that the purposes of God will all be accomplished. No fatalist can go further than I will go in the full and distinct averment that God's decrees shall be fulfilled! There are, however, persons who argue from this that therefore we may sit down and do nothing as to the salvation of others. Such persons are very foolish, because they must be aware that the same logic which would drive them to do nothing *spiritually* would require them to do nothing in other matters, so that they would neither eat, nor drink, nor think, nor breathe—do nothing, in fact, but lie like logs, passive under fate's iron sway!

This is too absurd to need an answer. Believers are cured of that tendency by the belief that they are the lights of the world! God will effect His purposes and give light to men, but we are the light of the world. He will effect His purposes of Grace through His Church. He will enlighten the Gentiles, He will give sight to the blind eyes, but He intends to do it through those whom He has already saved. Therefore, with the calm cour-

age which a reliance upon eternal purposes has given to us, we mingle a stern determination to be active in season and out of season, because we are predestinated by the eternal God to be the light of the sons of men. The tendency of the one doctrine, if looked at exclusively, might have been dangerous if it had not been balanced by the second doctrine!

Once more, the natural longing of the Believer to be with Christ is prevented from running to extremes by the truth now before us. There is not a Christian here who has not in high, holy, and happy times sung with Dr. Watts—

***“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode;
I’d leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your seat, my God.”***

As a holy man of old was known to count each year of his life a year of banishment from Christ, so have we reckoned that every hour we linger here is so much taken from our heavenly rest and sometimes we have said, “Woe is me that I dwell in Mesech and tabernacle in the tents of Kedar.” But when we have heard the Master say, “You are the light of the world,” ah, then we have understood it all. And we have felt content to stay if there is darkness which needs enlightenment by our means. Let us talk, good Master—we do not wish to be gone if You have need of us here, for this is so honorable a position that we do not envy the angels their celestial seats while we have the privilege of enlightening the benighted sons of men. If you, O Lord, can do anything good through us, extend our banishment and make our 70 years into 70 centuries, if so it please You!

Our Heaven is where we can best glorify our God. I believe that the hope of usefulness is often a very effectual stay to the longings of Believers, so that cheerfully they are enabled to wait their appointed time in this land of the dying. So you see a great many evils are averted through the use which Christ makes of His people in setting them in their places as the light of the world.

II. Now, secondly, and concisely—IT BESTOWS MANY BLESSINGS UPON THE WORKERS THEMSELVES. For, first, to be a light to others keeps us constantly in mind of the benefits which we have received. We see sinners in darkness and we remember when we were in darkness, too. We hear their penitential cries and we remember when we wept and mourned before the Lord. We note their struggles and observe their doubts and fears, suspicions and misgivings—and we see as in a glass our own early history reproduced. When at last we are enabled to point them to the Savior and they can say, “Christ is mine,” we feel our youth renewed in them! We live over again our early days and the love of our espousals is restored.

Just as many a grandparent grows young again as his grandchildren climb his knee, so do we remember the joys of our youth in those dear ones who are begotten unto God, by His Grace, through our labor of love. We are made to see ourselves in them and so to return to those dear banquets of love which marked the dawning of our life in Christ. The sight of new-born babes warms our cold blood!—

“Blessed be the love that saved me!

Blessed be the love that washed me!

Blessed be the love that renewed me!”

Thus we cry when we see others saved, washed, and renewed. Working for others makes us tenaciously hold to the Gospel. I have frequently remarked that the inventors of heresies are mostly editors of newspapers, essayists, writers for magazines and other theorists who do very little or nothing of practical work among the fallen and degraded.

It is the rarest thing in the world to find city missionaries, Evangelists, or working pastors up to their necks in work among the poor and sinful, who have any sympathy with modern intellectualism. Find a man who is pleading with sinners—really practically engaged in the work and is bringing souls to Jesus Christ—and I will guarantee you that he will be orthodox! He believes in the doctrine of human depravity, for he sees it to be a fact! He believes in the work of the Holy Spirit, for he often sees his own work to be good for nothing! He believes in Sovereign Grace, for he often observes that some are saved whom he least expected to see—and those whom he looked for are left behind! There is nothing like work to keep a man soundly evangelical!

When a fellow has nothing to do, the devil puts it into his head to write an essay against the orthodox faith. The man is a practical ignoramus and, therefore, he is wiser than seven men that can render a reason. His hands are unemployed and, therefore, he wanders about in Christ’s halls, whittling the doctrines of the Truth of God and inventing new notions to please his fancy. Get to work and you will be healthy! If God makes you a light to others you will be bright yourself. As you are giving the light your shining will burn off the spots and blots. When iron is red hot the blackness disappears. Streams, as they run, let fall their impurities and filter themselves—and so the working Christian is enabled, by God’s Spirit, to purge himself from errors. He does God’s will and therefore he knows his doctrine.

To work for Jesus also arouses all a man’s faculties. Nobody knows what is in him till he is fired with a lofty ambition and moved by a glorious impulse. Many servants of God think they have but one talent but they would soon discover 10 if they would but bestir themselves. No man knows in business, or in trade, or in any department of science, what he is capable of till he has commenced the pursuit. When he has commenced he finds that what was difficult becomes easy, that what was impossible becomes only a little difficult, and by-and-by is achieved. And so the Christian calls forth all his mental and spiritual faculties by diligently working for his Lord. Marvelous is the manner in which men will develop when they fall in love with souls! When a great passion seizes us, we are carried beyond ourselves.

Look at those great bounds and mighty springs which yonder hound makes while in hot pursuit of the stag. He ran not thus at the first, but now that you would expect him to drop from very weariness, he is more impetuous than ever! Every muscle and sinew are in full play. His eager-

ness makes him alive with an intensity which you had not guessed before. So, in pursuing souls, men are marvelously quickened and filled with energy. They seemed dull in ordinary conversation—you could not imagine that they would have spoken so. Who dreamed that there was such fire in these flints? They are arguing for Jesus and they do it well. Their wits are all awake. They give the right answer to an objection. They are so intensely worked up that they seem more than they ever were before and they are so, indeed, for the Spirit makes all of us what we never could have been apart from His Divine influences!

And so, in serving others, we rise to the fullness of manhood ourselves. Giving light to others also develops and matures all our Divine Graces. If some of you had to preach every Sunday morning, it would exercise your faith. You would get, sometimes, to Saturday and say, "What shall be the subject? How shall I again go before that mass of people? How shall I win their interested attention once again?" You would find that you have preached upon the easiest of the texts, and if, as in my case, you have had your sermons printed, you will say, "Where's the new subject to come from?" And you will look up, and say, "My God, Your message I have received before, and I shall receive it again, but help me, I pray you."

Every kind of service for Christ exercises and strengthens faith. I only mention preaching as an instance of a general truth. Christian work also tries patience, love, hope, zeal and all our Graces, and in trying them, it perfects them. I do not know a worse thing that could happen to a Christian than to have nothing to do. It is enough to kill a man to be doomed to inaction. Many a man, in retiring from business, has retired into misery. He had better to have still gone to the shop, even if he had not taken a penny out of its earnings. I have heard of men who have given up all their avocations and have, afterwards, desired to hire themselves out to their successors in order to have some occupation for their minds.

A man cannot do better than retire from his business when he can, if he will then make it his business to serve Christ with all his might. But if he has nothing at all to do, not only will Satan lead him into mischief, but he will be quite sure to make a great deal of misery for himself. Faculties rust and Graces wither in indolence. God has made us on purpose for service and we must bow our neck to the yoke, or the Load will be in our flanks. Though the candle is consumed by shining, yet its shining is its truest life—all the light which lies concealed in it is fetched out and manifested by the process of light-giving. To be the light of the world surrounds life with the most stupendous responsibilities and so invests it with the most solemn dignity.

Hear this, you humble men and women, you who have made no figure in society, you are the light of the world! If you burn dimly, dim is the world's light and dense its darkness. How wretched is a city at night if the lamps are unlit! How cheerless is a room when the candle is blown out! What would earth be without the sun? Shall we deny the lamp of life to men? Shall the world be left in darkness through our idleness? You are the lights not merely of your own households and your own neighbor-

hoods, but collectively you make up the entire light of the whole wide world. To you the present age must look, and upon you even future ages depend.

For good or ill every man among us will affect all time. If any one man knows a Truth of God and does not tell it to his fellows, there will be so much less light in the world and consequences little dreamed of may follow his traitorous silence. If any Christian man here is not living consistently, his follies will lessen the brightness of the Church and the operation of that mischief may never be stayed. We are links of an endless chain—each man affects all the rest. If there is one man within my reach from whom I withhold instruction, and upon whom I exercise no holy influence, the loss may be far more than I imagine—for he in his turn might have taught others—and so on without end. I may shine afterwards, but all the shining which should have come from me during the period in which I was dim is a dead loss—an irretrievable loss to the world—so much less light *forever* through my *neglect* for immortal souls.

I will not enlarge upon illustrations so hackneyed as those which might be gathered from the lighthouse-keeper who must keep his lantern trimmed or vessels will be wrecked. Nor would I do more than remind you of the Cornish wreckers whose false lights have lured so many to destruction, but pray remember that you are practically the lighthouse-keepers of the world, or else you are wreckers of the souls of men! You are either your brother's keeper or your brother's murderer. Your failure to be lights will not end with you—it will endlessly curse others. A solemn sermon earnestly preached may affect not merely the people who hear it, but through them their children, and their children's children. A good thought dropped into a child's heart may change the child's entire career and that boy may afterwards influence a *nation* for good.

You never know how far a spark of holy fire will burn. The responsibilities and the possibilities of the most humble among us are incalculable. Since we are the lights of the world, to this world we are more important than cherubim or seraphim. I reckon that the responsibilities of emperors, kings, members of Parliament and judges are trifling compared with the responsibilities of Christians, for these great ones are not the lights of the world—they do but sweep its house and arrange its furniture—but ours is the light without which men cannot truly live! Ours is light for immortality and for Heaven—without it men fall into judgment and Hell. Therefore responsibilities press upon us which are beyond all measure.

Furthermore, out of this it arises that the light-giver, feeling his responsibility, flies to the Lord Jesus Christ for help and anything that drives us to Jesus is a great blessing to us. The tremendous need which the Christian's position puts upon him makes him cry out to the Strong for strength, saying, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And by that very cry a blessing comes into his soul. But more, the desire to win souls to Christ drives men to self-denial, for they feel that if the world is to be blessed by them they can do anything in order to accomplish the purpose—they can put up with rough usage, with misrepresentations, with

slanders, with ingratitude, with malice, yes, and endure imprisonment and death, itself, if they can but fulfill their destiny and be lights to the world.

By such self-denials and abounding love they are educated into the likeness of Christ. They are called lights of the world and that name is all His own. You have seen the marvelous picture by Holman Hunt, and noted its masterly teachings—he calls it, “The light of the world.” It is the Master who stands there and that same sorrowful king bearing the mystic lantern speaks to us now, and says, “You are this lantern, you are the light of the world.” O take care, Beloved, since such an honor is put upon you, that you discharge your mission aright! And if you live for that end it will create in you all those qualities which make the saints like the great Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.

III. I had much more to say, but there is no time, therefore I must close with the last reflection, that for God to use men to give light to other men has AN ASPECT OF ENCOURAGEMENT FOR SINNERS. Beloved Hearers, you who know not Christ, it ought to encourage you to believe that God means well towards you, since He sends your fellow men to say to you, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Ambassadors are not usually chosen from the offending side. A great king will generally send one of his own friends, not one of the rebel race, to negotiate peace. But God has chosen us, who were rebels, ourselves, and has sent us to *you*, who were our fellow rebels, and we say, “Turn unto the Lord and live.” Does it not look as if He meant love and kindness and tenderness to you?

Note, also, that every Christian who speaks to you about Jesus is, himself, an example of God’s power as well as His love. He can save you from your sins, for He has saved these men and women. Those who speak to you about the Savior bear witness that they were lost in sin as you are—as little able to shake off the chains of sin as you are—yet are they set free! Yet are they turned from darkness unto light! And He who has saved them thus gives you a pledge that He can save you! If He does this to one, why can He not do it to another?

It shows His tenderness with you. He thought that if He sent an angel to preach to you, you might be afraid. Perhaps as you saw the glitter of his countenance you might have started back with alarm. When the face of Moses shone, the Israelites could not bear to look upon it—therefore are there no glories upon the face of ministers now—and those who talk to you about your souls are just like yourselves, that they may give you confidence and win your hearts. We cry to you, “Come with us to the Cross! Come with us to the great Father! Come with us and say, “Father, I have sinned.” It was a tender thoughtfulness of God that there should be nothing to scare His sheep away, but that the shepherds who seek them should come in humble, tender guise to them.

Frequently there is a special suitableness in the light-bearers whom God sends to men. For instance, your mother has pleaded with you. Your father has spoken to you about your soul. Will you reject such an em-

bassy? If my God chooses my father to plead with me to be reconciled to Him, I will think of the message for my father's sake as well as for the sake of my God. Some of you have lately received letters of entreaty from your sisters—you have been earnestly pressed by converted brothers—and other kind friends not related to you have shown very special desire for your conversion. Now that these good people should so disinterestedly care about you, ought it not to affect your mind? It will not deprive them of Heaven if you are lost. If you are saved, I do not know that one of the trials of their life will be softened to them, yet they love your soul.

Give them a patient hearing. Think over what they have to say. Do not treat them harshly. I think it could not be in the heart of a true man to act unkindly towards one who meant him well, even if he reckoned that the friend was mistaken. Remember, if your counselors are God's people and are living by faith in Jesus, there is a sacred authority about the poorest and meanest of them—and in rejecting their message you may be rejecting Christ. I claim no priesthood, neither would I tolerate it in any man, save only this, that every Christian is a priest before God. Listen to the priests of God, then, as they speak to you! God, by them, would draw you to Himself. By their hands He would cast around you the bands of love and the cords of a man.

Lastly, remember if God speaks to you by honest, earnest hearts which care for your soul and, if you put the message of salvation far from you, you will be without excuse, both now and at the last day. And among the witnesses at your judgment whom you will most blush to see, will be the men and women who earnestly sought your good. I see your mother coming, and if she is asked, "Did this son of yours know the Gospel? Did he sin against light and knowledge?" What can she say but, Amen, to your condemnation? Against many of you I fear I shall be forced to be a swift witness at the last. I have told you the Gospel in words as plain as I could find. I have often flung away a metaphor and given up a period which might have sounded well because I thought it would not have been understood, or would have missed your consciences.

I have tried to keep to the greatest plainness of speech that none might misunderstand me. I have kept back no unpalatable Truth of God from you. I have not hesitated to speak with great boldness. I have told you that if you believe in Jesus you shall live—if you will not believe in Him you must be lost. If you will not trust in my Lord Jesus Christ, your blood is on your own heads. I am clear of you. In the last day this shall be a terrible part of your reflections, that not only God will be clear and Christ will be clear, but even your fellow men who loved you best will have to admit that you deserved your doom. God grant it may never be so, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 5:1-32.

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THE CANDLE

NO. 1594

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.”
Matthew 5:15, 16.***

OUR Savior was speaking of the influence of His disciples upon their fellow men and He, first of all, mentioned that secret but powerful influence which He describes under the figure of salt—“You are the salt of the earth.” No sooner is a man born unto God than he begins to influence men with an influence which is rather felt than seen. The very existence of a Believer operates upon unbelievers. He is like a handful of salt cast upon flesh—he has a savor in himself and this penetrate those who are in contact with him. The unobserved, almost unconscious influence, of a holy life is most effectual to serving society and the prevention of moral putrefaction. May there be salt in every one of us, for, “salt is good.” Have salt in yourselves and then you will become a blessing to all around you.

But there is about every true Christian a manifest and visible trait which he is bound to exercise and this our Lord sets forth under the figure of light—“You are the light of the world. A city that is on a hill cannot be hid.” In any case the genuine Christian will manifest the silent and unseen salting influence upon those who come into immediate contact with him, but let him also labor to possess the second, or illuminating influence, which covers a far larger area and deals more with real life—for salt is for dead flesh and light for living men. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.”

Saltiness and light are the power of a Christian! I do not believe that any man gives forth light if he has not, first, received salt and yet some have an abundance of salt who are none too liberal with their light. May God grant us Grace to balance the inward and the outward. May we have serving salt and the diffusive light! Our thoughts will now run on giving light and I pray that I may be helped to move the more and less active among us to exert their influence upon others to this extent—to crown the silent testimonies of their humble faith by an outspoken witness-bearing for their Lord and Savior.

All who have salt will now be urged to show their light. The figure which our Savior uses is a homely one, borrowed from the eastern tent and house. He speaks of a candle, or, more accurately, of a *lamp*. We should read the passage—“Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light unto all that are in the house.” I shall use the figure both in its eastern and in its western dress

and sometimes we will make a lamp of it and sometimes a candle. Perhaps we shall see all the better with both a lamp and a candle and, though we may confuse the metaphor, we shall not confuse anybody's mind upon the important Truth of God which it sets forth.

Three things are in the text. The first is the lighting, the second is the placing and the third is the shining. The first two are both intended to produce the third. May He who alone can *create* light, illuminate our minds while we dwell on His Word.

I. First let us consider THE LIGHTING. "Neither do men light a candle." What is this lighting up of the souls of men? They are without light by nature, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them." What, then, is this lighting? It is, first of all, a Divine work. God began His creating work of old by saying, "Let there be light" and there was light. And as in the old creation, so in the new—the first thing that God works in the heart of man is light—"the entrance of Your Word gives light." Well said David, "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

The Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding so that the man perceives the desperateness of his own condition and his inability to win salvation by his own works. The Lord pours light into the soul so that Christ is seen by faith and, at the sight of Him, the heart catches fire and light takes hold upon the inner man so that he not only *sees* light but *has* light. The light not only shines *upon* the heart but *from* the heart. "You were sometime darkness"—not only *in* the dark, but *darkness!* "But now you are light in the Lord"—not only have you light from the Lord, but you *are* light—your souls having caught the flame.

The Holy Spirit, alone, can accomplish this work. No human being will ever have light within himself till God who spoke the fiat at Creation shall, by the same Word, create light in the soul. The Apostle Paul says of all the saints, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This lighting is a separating work. When this Light of God comes, it separates a man from those around him who are as darkness. It does not take him away from his surroundings. It does not shut him up in a monastery, but the separation is complete, for to set a division between a candle and the darkness all that is needed is to light it. The tiniest spark will, by its very existence, be distinguished from the darkness.

There is no need to label light to prevent its being confused with darkness and there is no need for it to sound a trumpet before itself, saying, "Here I am." What fellowship has light with darkness? No sooner comes the light into a man's heart than he is separate from those who are round about him—he is called, by the Grace of God, to a vocation which at once sets a difference between the called ones and the rest of the sons of men. The darkness could not have created the light, for it does not even comprehend it, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not."

Those that are round about the Christian man cannot make him out, for his life is hid with Christ in God. At his conversion they perceive that a

strange alteration has come over him and, as Dr. Watts says, they gaze and admire and *hate* the change, but they know no more about it than owls do of the sun! At first they set the change down to melancholy, until the man's experience flashes into delight and then they call it fanaticism or a kind of madness—a sort of twist of the mind. Oh, blessed twist! Would God that those who know it not could be twisted after the same fashion! It is the kindling of the candle, so that where all was darkness before, there may now be the heavenly Light of God!

The darkness, though it does not understand or love the light, is, nevertheless, compelled to yield to it, for the battle between light and darkness is short and decisive. Up to the measure of the light is the measure of its conquest. Though only a few beams should irradiate the eastern sky, yet so far the arrows of the sun have pierced the heart of the night and as that light shall glow into high noon, all traces of darkness must fly before it. Beloved, if God has given light to us, He has put within us a principle that shall go forth conquering and to conquer! Let the darkness be as dense as that which plagued the Egyptians, yet must it yield to light.

A conflict is to be expected, but a conquest is guaranteed. We must not dream that the darkness will put forth its black arms to embrace our light, nor may we imagine that it will come cowering at the foot of our candlestick and ask to make a league with us. Light cannot dwell side by side with the darkness, making a covenant, for it is written, "God divided the light from the darkness, and God called the light day, and the darkness He called night"—thus giving to each its own distinguishing name—that none might confuse them. No man shall ever be able to mingle the two—they are and must be forever distinct. To the end of time there shall be two seeds—the heirs of light and the children of darkness—and these two cannot be one.

The light shall war with the darkness till the eternal light has fully risen and reached its zenith—and then the earth shall be filled with the light of the Glory of God! Till then, you children of light, see to it that you have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. This lighting up of the candle takes place at regeneration and you perceive it in enlightenment, conviction, conversion. The question is, have you ever been lit, dear Friend? Have you ever received that Divine Light of God? Have you ever felt the touch of the heavenly torch of the Word of God by which the Light has come to you and now dwells within you, so that you have become a light and are shining to the Glory of God?

Furthermore, this light giving is a personal work to every man who is the subject of it. The text says, "Let your light so shine before men." When a man lights a candle, the light does not belong to the candle, at first. But when once the candle has accepted the flame, the light becomes the candle's own light and the candle begins to shine by its own light. So, Beloved, the Grace of God, the Light from Heaven, must come to each one of us individually from the Divine hand and we must personally receive it. Light is not inherent in any one of us and, therefore, it must be bestowed. Its bestowal necessitates a *personal* acceptance.

It is not bestowed upon us as part of a nation or family. In its enlightening operations, Divine Grace does not deal with men in the gross, but

with each man by himself. Sin is personal and so must Grace be. We are *individually* in the darkness and must be *individually* kindled into light. One by one, each man must accept the Light of God, permitting it, as it were, to kindle upon him, so that the very wick of his being, that innermost life which goes through the very center of his nature shall embrace the flame and begin to burn with it! There must be an individual appropriation of the light so that to each one of you it becomes your own. "Let YOUR light so shine before men."

Do not deceive yourselves with the notion of *national* Christianity or *hereditary* Christianity—the only true religion is *personal* godliness. We cannot light these candles by the pound at a time, nor heap up lamps in a pile and light them in a mass. We have, nowadays, wonderful lights which can be all lit in an instant by a single touch of electricity—but even then each one of the lights has to receive a flame for itself—which becomes all its own. There is no way by which individuality can be destroyed and men saved en masse. In each man the light is peculiar and distinct. The light that burns in one true minister of Christ is the same which shines forth from another and yet one star differs from another star in Glory—Peter is not John, Paul is not James, Whitefield is not Wesley.

You shall examine the whole range of God's lamps and candlesticks and you shall not find two exactly alike. Many artists exhaust themselves and then repeat themselves, but God is inexhaustibly original—no two touches of His pencil are the same. Light is one and its glory is one—and yet there is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon and another glory of the stars. There is a difference in the lights of various oils and gases and so there is in your light, my Brothers and Sisters, and my light. It is very possible that you would like to put my candle in order—you may do so if you can—but do not snuff me out!

Your own light is, however, your main concern and you had better ask for special Grace that it may not fail. Your light is distinct from mine—as distinct as your life is from mine—though, in another sense, it is true that your spiritual light is one with all the light that ever shone in this world. There is in the lighting, a personal appropriation of the Divine flame and afterwards a personal and distinct sending forth of the sacred Light in the individual's own way. Look you well to this, lest you be mistaken and suppose yourselves to be lighted from Heaven when you are the mere will-o'-the-wisps of delusion.

I like our translator's reading the word candle—"Neither do men light a candle," for nowadays a candle is the smallest of all lights. We almost despise a candle in these days of the electric light, yet small lights are useful and tiny lamps have their sphere. God has many small lights. In His great house He has candles as well as stars and He would not have even a small light wasted. Even the most twinkling ray of light is of God's kindling—think of that, you who cannot do more than talk to a child or give away a tract for love of His dear name. You are a little light, but if the Lord has given you even a *spark* of the sacred fire, He means that you should shine!

In this world there are many lights, but none too many. We could not spare the sun and it would be a calamity if the smallest star were

quenched. We cannot spare those modern inventions which so cheer us by turning our city's night into day, but I know we should miss even the glowworm from its dewy haunt in the quiet lane! We cannot afford to lose a ray of light in this misty, foggy, all-beclouded sky of ours. The Church and the world need all the light that has been provided and much more. I, therefore, would press upon all my Brothers and Sisters here who may happen to have but one talent, the necessity of their putting it out to interest! Your light, my Friend, may be but a farthing rushlight, but you must not hide it, for all lights are of God and are sent with a kind and gracious purpose by the great Father of Lights.

Note further that lighting is a work which needs sustaining. While lighting is a process performed in a moment, it is also, as a matter of fact, prolonged, for the lamp needs to be trimmed and it would be worthless to light a lamp and leave it to itself. The lamp must have fresh oil, from time to time, since by shining it consumes its fuel. Do *not*, any of you, think, therefore, if you can fix upon a certain time and say, "I was converted then," that you may live as you like afterwards. God forbid! The saints *prove* their conversion by their perseverance—and that perseverance comes from a continual supply of Divine Grace to their souls. Judge, then, yourselves by this—not so much whether on a certain special occasion you were turned from darkness to light—but are you *still*, "light in the Lord"?

Have you oil in your vessel with your lamp? Are you looking unto Jesus? It was well that you looked, but are you *looking*? That is the great thing! Remember, it is a *present* business, this looking. It is well that you came to Jesus, but that is merely the beginning—it is "to whom coming," coming *continually* as unto a living stone. Our lungs must have, as we all know, fresh supplies of air. It will avail me nothing that I breathed yesterday. I am dead unless I breathe *today*. We must have constant food—you ate yesterday—but could you, without hunger and weakness, go without food today? We continually need to be built up as to our bodies and it is just the same with our souls! And if we neglect this—if we fancy that something done 20 years ago is all that is needed—we shall make a great mistake. There must be the frequent trimming of the lamp, which is, in effect, a continuation of the lighting.

Once again, let me say that this work of lighting is a work which, when it is done upon a man, consecrates him entirely to the service of giving light. A candle once lit, if it continues alight, will be all consumed in giving light. It is what it was made for, not to be laid by in a glass case and looked at, but to be burned away. Blessed is the man who can say, "My zeal has consumed me." You will say that in the case of the lamp—the lamp itself is not consumed. No, but it is consecrated to the one purpose of lighting the house and it contains the supply of oil by which the flame is fed. The whole of the lamp, whether it is of gold or silver or clay, or whatever it may be—is dedicated to the one purpose of giving light—and if God ever comes and lights you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are, from now on, separated from all other purpose and appointed to the one calling.

You may be a great many other things according to your *human* calling, but these must be subordinate. I wish that some men kept earthly things much more subordinate than they do. The first thing in a Christian is his Christianity. The chief business of one whom God has called is that he should live as the elect of God. Look at Christ Jesus—He was a carpenter, but I confess I seldom think of Him as such. It is as the *Savior of men* and, the *Servant of God* that He comes before my mind. And thus a Christian man ought to live so, if he is a carpenter, the Christian swallows up the carpenter! And if he is a businessman, or a man of letters, or an orator, he ought so to live that the most conspicuous fact about him is that he is a Christian!

He is a lamp and his one business is to shine. You may use a candle for many purposes. I saw a man grease a saw with one the other day and another made his boots fit for walking in the snow in like manner. But still, these are not the objectives for which a candle is designed—it has missed the purpose of its existence if it does not give light. I suppose, on occasions, you might use a lamp for a weight, or for some other purposes, but it would not be, then, a fit instrument for any purpose except that of giving light. Everything is best when fulfilling its proper purpose. Have you ever seen a swan out of water? How ungainly is its walk! What an unwieldy bird it seems!

But look at him on the water. What a fine model for a ship! What Grace! What beauty! So is it with the Christian! His beauty is best seen in its proper element. Give him any other aim and he is awkward and uncomely. When seeking to instruct and save his fellow man, he is where God would have him and then all the lines of creating wisdom and all the beauties of Divine Grace are manifested in him. Let us take care, then, about this lighting—that it is lighting from above, that it is a lighting such as makes the light our own and that it is a lighting which takes possession of us and consecrates us entirely—and is perpetually sustained by the visitation of the Spirit of God. So much on the first point.

II. We will now, in the second place, consider THE PLACING. “No man lights a candle and puts it under a bushel.” It is a great point, this placing of a man—it may hide his light or send it further afield. The chief matter is the lighting him and getting him to have light to give. But the next most important thing is where to put him when he is alight. For some men, when they first find Christ, are in the wrong place altogether. How can a lamp shine if it is dropped into a river? After the conversion of certain persons their removal becomes necessary. It is significant that when God called Abraham He did not let him stop in Ur of the Chaldees—the place for Abraham to shine was not even in Haran, but he must get in to the chosen country and wander as a shepherd prince—for only there and in that character could Abraham shine to the Glory of God.

Most men will be wise to stay where they are and shine, but others must undergo a great change of position before they will be able to scatter their light to the extent which the Lord intends for them. That may account, my Friend, for your having more trouble since you were converted than you ever had before. You have been left to lie still till now, but you are needed and so you are fetched out from your hiding place. It did not

matter where you were when you gave no light—you were just as well behind a box or in a closet as anywhere else! But now that you are lighted you must be put on a lamp stand and, therefore, you are undergoing processes of Providence that are somewhat painful to you. Our placing, whether it has necessitated removal or not, is largely done by the Providence of God—one man is placed here and another there—and it is well for us to look at our position from this point of view.

God puts us where we can best serve His cause and bless our age. If you had your choice, perhaps, if you had to be a street lamp, you would like to be a lamp in Hyde Park to shine upon the nobles who pass that way. But the poor souls need lights far more down that blind alley; down that den of a court where wild Irish are quarrelling, or drunks murdering their wives. He that loves God, if he had his choice, might sooner choose to shine in the worse place than in the better. “Oh that I lived in the midst of a warm-hearted Church!” one says. If you are an earnest, thorough-going man or woman, I am glad that you are placed in that dreary village where the people are pretty nearly starved for spiritual life!

“What?” cries one, “are you glad that I have to suffer so much?” No, not for *that*, but because if you are a strong man, you will not suffer, but you will make other people suffer—that is to say—make it hard for the minister, the deacons and the Church to remain in their wretched condition of lukewarmness! I hope you will be the means of awakening them and bringing them nearer to Christ. How often a place which appears undesirable will become desirable if we regard it in this light. Providence puts us where we can give the most light and if our lamp is set up in the midst of darkness, where else should it be?

This Tabernacle reminds me of those frames on wheels, filled with lamps, which are used at our railway stations—here we have scores of lamps all burning together—and when first one and then another is dropped through the roof into a carriage and whisked away along the line, though it is to Australia, or America, or India, I am sorry to lose you, but I am glad that you are going where you will do more good than you will do here. Why should you not be scattered abroad like the first Believers? Why should not the candles be carried where the darkness is? Why should we keep up an everlasting illumination upon this particular spot just to gladden our own eyes instead of lending light to all the world?

It is ours to say to others, “Here is a candle, let it shine in your houses.” Or, “Here is a lamp, set it up in your tents, that God may bless you.” But though I have thus spoken of Providence, a good deal of our placing is in our own hands. There are ways of placing yourselves—for instance, that mentioned in the text, which may be as ruinous to our influence as if a candle were placed under a bushel! Or you can put yourself in a place of advantage, as when a lamp is set upon a lamp stand. First, note the word in the negative—“Neither do men place it under a bushel.” A bushel is a good and useful article. In almost every eastern house there was a corn-measure, here called a bushel, though it did not generally measure much more than a peck.

This measure was commonly in every house because they ground their own corn and so were generally dealing with the neighbors. That useful

corn-measure, to me, represents the pursuits of ordinary life—the proper and natural avocations of the household. Many men and women hide the candle that God has lit under the bushel of business and domestic cares. But you ask, “Is not a housewife to be a housewife?” Certainly, but not so a housewife as to conceal her godliness! Is not the laboring man to work with his hands? Certainly, but not so to work for the bread that he perishes as to miss Eternal Life. Is not the man of business to give his best attention to his business? Of course he is, but he must see to it that he does not lose his soul, or injure the souls of others.

Take care of your bushel—nobody asks you to burn it—but keep it in its place. Subordinate all worldly things to the Glory of God. Suffer not your possessions or your desires, your pleasures or your cares to act as a bushel hiding His Light. This happens with a great many. I must ask Conscience to be so kind as to preach for me for a minute or two. Will you look at home, dear Friends, and see where you place your business and your religion? Which is uppermost? Which is foremost? Is religion your business, or is business your religion? Does your candle shine on the bushel, or does the bushel hide the candle? I will not dwell upon the question because it will be well for you to answer it in quiet, each man for himself.

I know how a minister can put his light under a bushel. He can be a mere official and perform services, being nothing more than a performer. The worst thing to do with the Gospel is to *parsonificate* it. As soon as we preach as mere officials, we have lost all power—we must speak as men to men! A brother minister said to me one day, “The moment I shut the pulpit door, I shut out my natural self.” This will never do! A man must be all there when He is serving God and if ever he is himself, it must be in preaching. We can also cover the candle by using difficult words—words which are not difficult to educated people, but to the bulk of our hearers.

We can also use technical creed words, such as we might use in the class room or in the discussion hall and these may conceal our meaning from the people. I know some Christians who put their light under a bushel by being excessively bashful and shamefaced. They are not so dreadfully retiring when five-pound notes are to be made, but if anything is to be said for Christ, then they blush and stammer! Oh that they could overcome this hindrance! Others put their light under a bushel by inconsistency—they do not act as Christians should act—and when people see their bad works they do not glorify God. God forbid that our darkness in the house should be more conspicuous than our light!

Some, I fear, cover their light under the bushel of indifference—they do not seem to care how things go with the cause and Kingdom of Christ. They look well to the state of their flocks and herds, but for the House of the Lord they have small concern. I pray you, dear Friends, do not hide your light in any way! Let not your lawful callings, your relationships, your sicknesses, your literary pursuits, or your personal sorrows become so exaggerated as to conceal the Divine Light within your soul.

The text is, however, positive. Put yourself on a candlestick or on a lamp stand. What must that be? A candlestick is an appropriate exhibitor of the light and each man should make an appropriate confession of his

faith. The best way is prescribed in God's Word. It is written, "He that believes and is *baptized* shall be saved." Take care that when you have faith, you declare it in the ordained manner, for he that with his heart believes and with his mouth makes confession of Him shall be saved. O Lamp, do not say, "I will shine, but I will lie upon the floor and do it." No, your place is on the stand which is provided!

Dear Christian Friend, join the Church that you may be placed where you will be in order with the arrangements of the Divine household. A lamp stand should also be something which makes the lamp sufficiently visible. If you do not come out and exhibit your light willingly and cheerfully, it is very likely the Master of the house will fetch you out. Providence will arrange that the light shall not be hidden. See what the Lord did for His Church years ago—He allowed her to be persecuted into publicity! What a lamp stand was found for Christianity in the martyrdoms of the Coliseum, in the public burnings by pagans and papists and in all the other modes by which Believers in Christ were forced into fame!

When there was no printing press; when there were scanty opportunities of making the Gospel public compared with those of today, the Lord caused His witnesses to stand before rulers and kings and there publish, in the most public places the Word of His salvation. Persecution built the lighthouse and Divine Love set aloft the burning and shining Light of the sacred Truth of God! You may find that God will make such a candlestick for you. You shall be forced into testimony in your family by the opposition of those about you unless you take other and happier methods. We ought to be valiant for the Truth of God and speak of it with all prudence and without limit! I long for the day when the precepts of the Christian religion shall be the rule among all classes of men, in all transactions!

I often hear it said, "Do not bring religion into politics." This is precisely where it ought to be brought and set there in the face of all men as on a candlestick! I would have the Cabinet and the Members of Parliament do the work of the nation as before the Lord and I would have the nation, either in making war or peace, consider the matter by the light of righteousness. We are to deal with other nations about this or that upon the principles of the New Testament. I thank God that I have lived to see the attempt made in one or two instances and I pray that the principle may become dominant and permanent! We have had enough of clever men without consciences—let us now see what honest, God-fearing men will do!

But we are told that we must study, "British interests," as if it were not always to a nation's truest interest to do right! "But we must follow out our policy." I say, No! Let the policies which are founded on wrong be cast like idols to the moles and to the bats! Stand to that most admirable of policies—"As you would that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise." Whether we are kings, or queens, or prime ministers, or members of Parliament, or crossing sweepers, this is our rule if we are Christians! Yes, and bring religion into your business and let the Light of God shine in the factory and in the counting-house! Then we shall not have quite so much China clay in the calicoes with which to cheat the foreigner—nor shall we see cheap and nasty articles described as of best

quality, nor any other of the dodges in trade that everybody seems to practice nowadays.

You trades people and manufacturers are very much one like the other in this—there are tricks in all trades and one sees it everywhere. I believe everybody to be honest in all England, Scotland and Ireland until he is found out. But whether there are any so incorruptible that they will never be found wanting, this witness says not, for I am not a judge. Do not put your candle under a bushel, but let it shine, for it was intended that it should be seen. Religion ought to be as much seen at our own table as at the Lord's Table. Godliness should as much influence the House of Commons as the Assembly of Divines. God grant that the day may come when the mischievous division between secular and religious things shall no more be heard of, for in all things Christians are to glorify God, according to the precept, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the Glory of God."

III. Our time has gone, but I must detain you a little while I speak upon the SHINING—"Let your light so shine before men." When a candle shines, it is because it cannot help it. Shining is the natural result of possessing light and I want you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to exert a holy influence upon others because the Grace of God is really in you. Some men made desperate attempts to *appear* good—they would be far more successful if they would seek to *be* good. Grace must be in a man as a living fountain and then rivers of Living Water will flow from him. The natural result of a renewed *heart* is a renewed *life* and the natural result of a renewed life is that men see it and *glorify God*.

Shining, however, is not altogether a thing of necessity so as to forbid our attention to it, for the text demands care of us. "Let your light so shine." I must ask the printer to put the two letters—"s, o"—in very large capitals. "Let your light SO shine—let it SO shine that men may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." You will not shine in the best manner though you may have Grace in your heart unless you abound in prayerful, watchful, earnest care. You must guard heart and lips and hands or your light will not so shine before men as could be desired. Your light will need trimming. Neglect it not.

The shining which comes from the Christian is here described as, "good works." Good talk is very well, but it takes a great deal of talk to light a room! Good *works* are the splendor of the Light of God. What works are good works? I would answer—upright actions, honest dealings, sincere behavior. When a man is scrupulously true and sternly faithful, all right-minded persons admit that His works are good works. Good works are works of love, unselfish works, works done for the benefit of others and the Glory of God. Deeds of charity, kindness and brotherly love are good works. As also careful attendance to duty and all service honestly done, together with all courses which promote the moral and spiritual good of our fellow men.

Works of devotion in which you prove that you love God and His Christ, that you love the Gospel, that you desire to spread the Kingdom of Christ—these may not be so highly valued by ordinary people—but are eminently good works. Let these good and true things abound in you and

shine out from you! Do them not out of flamboyance, but still, without shame. Good works, like the shining of a candle, have good effects. A candle cheers the gloom. What a comfort it is when you have long been wandering in the dark, to spy out a twinkling candle in a cottage window! A candle directs and guides men and by its illumination it instructs them. In its light they see, discern, and discover. He who acts teaches. The man who lives Christianity preaches it. He is the true evangelist whose life brings Glory to God and goodwill to men.

But note, it is said, "it gives light to all that are in the house," so that when we are lit from on High, we are first to shine at *home*. It is not only abroad that we should make our Christianity known, but chiefly at the fireside to those who are in the house. Some have a very little house—they live in a couple of rooms with a small family—let them take care that they have Grace enough to make a few thoroughly happy, which is not always the easiest thing in the world. Others have a large family—may they have Grace enough to influence the whole. A few have large workshops and employ many hands—and these ought to exercise a holy influence over all their employees.

Some of us are preachers of the Gospel and have a large house in which to shine—we shall need more of the oil of Grace than others, that we may give light to the whole of our house—and that Grace is to be had. The whole world is a house in which the Church is the candle and, therefore, the members of the Church should so shine, each one in his place, that the whole world shall be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of God! The text says that the candle gives light to all that are in the house.

Some professors give light only to a part of the house. I have known women very good to all but their husbands and these they nag from morning to night so that they give no light to them! I have known husbands so often out at meetings that they neglect home and thus their wives miss the Light of God. I have known employers who are utterly indifferent about their employees and mistresses who quite forget to seek the good of their maids. If our light is in good order, it will illuminate the parlor and the kitchen, the drawing room and the pantry—shining upon all that are in the house!

Candles do not shed all their light either that way or this, but they shine in all directions. A Christian should be an "all-around man," blessing all, both great and small, who come in contact with him. The objective of our shining is not that men may see how good *we* are, nor even see *us* at all—but that they may see God's Grace in us and God in us and cry, "What a Father these people must have!" Is not this the first time in the New Testament that God is called our Father? Is it not amazing that the first time it peeps out should be when men are seeing the good works of His children?

The Fatherhood of God is best seen in the holiness of saints. When men see that the Light of God is good, they bless the Source of that Light and, seeing that it comes from the Father of Lights, they glorify His name! I have had to hasten over all this, but I pray God to make it, none the less, effectual for the stirring up of every Christian here to use all the Light he has. It is a dark world and it seems to get darker, for the emissaries of Sa-

tan are going about thirsting to quench every light. Look well to your lamps—look well to your lamps, you virgin souls! Trim well the flame and go forth even into the black night to meet the Bridegroom. Lift high your torches into the very face of darkness and make men see that God the Father is still in the midst of His people!

The venerable Bede, when he was interpreting this text, said that Christ Jesus brought the light of Deity into the poor lantern of our humanity and then set it upon the candlestick of His Church that the whole house of the world might be lit thereby. So, indeed, it is! The reason why there is light in the Church is that those who are in the dark may see. Churches do not exist for themselves, but for the world at large. Have you thought of this, Brothers and Sisters? You are blessed that you may be a blessing! Take heed that you behave aright. You go to Christ's wedding feast and you are glad to hear that He turns water into wine and you are ready to bless Him that He has kept the best wine until now. But oh, servants of God, remember what is said, "Draw out now and bear."

These are your orders. There is the God-made wine—"Draw out now and bear." Receive from Christ's fullness and distribute to others! Neglect not your duty as servitors at your Lord's great feast. Your Master has taken the bread and has blessed and broken it and then He has given it to you. Is that the end of the process? Do you stand there and munch your own personal morsel with a miserable self-satisfaction? No, if you are, indeed, disciples of Christ, you will remember that the next words, in another like incident, are, "and the disciples to the multitude, and they did eat." Break, then, your bread among the hungry that surround you! Take the whole loaf of Christ and rightly divide and distribute it—and you shall have as much left as at the first—yes, more! You shall gather of the fragments many baskets full.

Only see to it that you freely give what you have freely received, lest hoarded manna breeds corruption! Lest a canker come upon your hoarded gold and silver! And lest your very souls grow moldy even to reeking rottenness before God because you have not drawn out your souls unto the hungry, nor sought to teach those who are perishing for lack of knowledge!

The Baptist Missionary Society will enable you to teach the heathen. Take a share in it. There, make the collection! Do your best!

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THE PERPETUITY OF THE LAW OF GOD NO. 1660

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 21, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all is fulfilled.”
Matthew 5:18.*

IT has been said that he who understands the two Covenants is a theologian and this is, no doubt, true. I may also say that the man who knows the relative positions of the Law and of the Gospel has the keys of the situation in the matter of doctrine. The relationship of the Law to myself and how it condemns me—the relationship of the Gospel to myself and how, if I am a Believer, it justifies me—these are two points which every Christian man should clearly understand. He should not “see men as trees walking” in this department, or else he may cause himself great sorrow and fall into errors which will be grievous to his heart and injurious to his life. To form a mangle-mangle of Law and Gospel is to teach that which is neither Law nor Gospel, but the opposite of both. May the Spirit of God be our teacher and the Word of God be our lesson book—and then we shall not err.

Very great mistakes have been made about the Law. Not long ago there were those about us who affirmed that the Law is utterly abrogated and abolished. They openly taught that Believers were not bound to make the moral Law the rule of their lives. What would have been sin in other men they counted not to be sin in themselves. From such Antinomianism as that, may God deliver us! We are not under the Law as the method of *salvation*, but we delight to see the Law in the hand of Christ and desire to obey the Lord in all things. Others have been met with who have taught that Jesus mitigated and softened down the Law and they have, in effect, said that the perfect Law of God was too hard for imperfect beings and, therefore, God has given us a milder and easier rule. These tread dangerously upon the verge of terrible error, although we believe that they are little aware of it.

Alas, we have met with authors who have gone much further than this and have railed at the Law. Oh, the hard words that I have sometimes read against the holy Law of God! How very unlike those which the Apostle used when he said, “The Law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” How different from the reverent spirit which made him say—“I delight in the Law of God after the inward man.” You know how David loved the Law of God and sang its praises all through the longest of the Psalms. The heart of every real Christian is most reverent towards the Law of the Lord. It is perfect, no, it is *perfection* itself! We believe that we shall never have reached perfection till we are perfectly conformed to it. A sanctification which stops short of perfect conformity to the Law cannot

truthfully be called perfect sanctification, for every lack of exact conformity to the perfect Law is sin.

May the Spirit of God help us while, in imitation of our Lord Jesus, we endeavor to magnify the Law. I gather from our text two things upon which I shall speak at this time. The first is that the Law of God is perpetual—"Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law." The meaning is that even in the least point it must abide till it is all fulfilled. Secondly, we perceive that the Law of God must be fulfilled—Not "one jot or one tittle shall pass from the Law, till all IS fulfilled." He who came to bring in the Gospel dispensation here asserts that He has not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it.

I. First—THE LAW OF GOD MUST BE PERPETUAL. There is no abrogation of it, nor amendment of it. It is not to be toned down or adjusted to our fallen condition, but every one of the Lord's righteous judgments abides forever. I would urge three reasons which will establish this teaching. In the first place our Lord Jesus declares that He did not come to abolish it. His words are most exact—"Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." And Paul tells us with regard to the Gospel, "Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yes, we establish the Law" (Rom. 3:31). The Gospel is the means of the firm establishment and vindication of the Law of God. Jesus did not come to change the Law, but He came to explain it, and that very fact shows that it remains, for there is no need to explain that which is abrogated.

Upon one particular point in which there happened to be a little ceremonialism involved, namely, the keeping of the Sabbath, our Lord enlarged and showed that the Jewish idea was not the true one. The Pharisees forbade even the doing of works of necessity and mercy, such as rubbing ears of corn to satisfy hunger and healing the sick. Our Lord Jesus showed that it was not at all according to the mind of God to forbid these things. In straining over the letter and carrying an outward observance to excess, they had missed the spirit of the Sabbath Law, which suggested works of piety such as truly hallow the day. He showed that Sabbatic rest was not mere inaction, and He said, "My Father works hitherto, and I work." He pointed to the priests who labored hard at offering sacrifices and said of them, "the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless." They were doing Divine service and were within the Law.

To meet the popular error, He took care to do some of His greatest miracles upon the Sabbath—and though this excited great wrath against Him, as though He were a Law-breaker, yet He did it on purpose that they might see that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath—and that it is meant to be a day for doing that which honors God and blesses men! O that men knew how to keep the spiritual Sabbath by an easing from all servile work and from all work done for self! The rest of faith is the true Sabbath and the service of God is the most acceptable hallowing of the day. Oh that the day were wholly spent in serving God and doing good!

The sum of our Lord's teaching was that works of necessity, works of mercy and works of piety are lawful on the Sabbath. He explained the Law in that point and in others, yet that explanation did not alter the command, but only removed the rust of *tradition* which had settled upon it. By thus explaining the Law, He confirmed it! He could not have meant to abolish it or He would not have needed to expound it. In addition to explaining it, the Master went further—He pointed out its *spiritual* character. This the Jews had not observed. They thought, for instance, that the command "You shall not kill" simply forbade murder and manslaughter. But the Savior showed that *anger* without cause violates the Law of God and that hard words and cursing—and all other displays of enmity and malice—are forbidden by the Commandment.

They knew that they might not commit adultery, but it did not enter into their minds that a lascivious desire would be an offense against the precept till the Savior said, "He that looks upon a woman to lust after her commits adultery with her already in his heart." He showed that the *thought* of evil is sin; that an unclean imagination pollutes the heart; that a wanton wish is guilt in the eyes of the Most High! Assuredly this was no abrogation of the Law of God—it was a wonderful exhibition of its far-reaching sovereignty and of its searching character! The Pharisees fancied that if they kept their hands, their feet and their tongues, all was done. But Jesus showed that thought, imagination, desire, memory—*everything*—must be brought into subjection to the will of God or else the Law was not fulfilled.

What a searching and humbling doctrine is this! If the Law of the Lord reaches to the *inward* parts, who among us can, by nature, abide its judgment? Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults! The Ten Commandments are full of meaning—meaning which many seem to ignore. For instance, many a man will allow in and around his house inattention to the rules of health and sanitary precaution, but it does not occur to him that he is trampling on the commandments—"You shall not kill." Yet this rule forbids our doing anything which may cause injury to our neighbor's health and so deprive him of life. Many a deadly manufactured article; many an ill-ventilated shop; many a business with hours of excessive length is a standing breach of this Commandment!

Shall I say less of drinks, which lead so speedily to disease and death and crowd our cemeteries with untimely graves? So, too, in reference to another precept—some persons will repeat songs and stories which are suggestive of uncleanness—I wish that this were not so common as it is. Do they not know that an unchaste word, a double meaning, a sly hint of lust all come under the Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery"? It is so according to the teaching of our Lord Jesus! Oh, talk not to me about our Lord's having brought in a milder Law because man could not keep the Decalogue, for He has done nothing of the kind! "His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." "Who may abide the day of His coming? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap."

Let us not *dare* to dream that God had given us a perfect Law which we poor creatures could not keep and that, therefore, He has corrected His

legislature and sent His Son to put us under a relaxed discipline! Nothing of the sort! The Lord Jesus Christ has, on the contrary, shown how intimately the Law of God surrounds and enters into our inward parts, so as to convict us of sin within even if we seem clean on the outside. Ah me, this Law is high! I cannot attain to it! It surrounds me everywhere; it tracks me to my bed and my board; it follows my steps and marks my ways wherever I may be! No moment does it cease to govern and demand obedience. O God, I am everywhere condemned, for everywhere Your Law reveals to me my serious deviations from the way of righteousness and shows me how far short I come of Your Glory. Have pity on Your servant, for I fly to the Gospel which has done for me what the Law could never do—

***“To see the Law by Christ fulfilled,
And hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.”***

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in addition to explaining the Law and pointing out its spiritual character, also unveiled its living *essence*, for when one asked Him “Which is the great Commandment in the Law?” He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like unto it; You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the prophets.” In other words, He has told us, “All the Law is fulfilled in this—you shall love.” There is the pith and marrow of it! Does any man say to me, “You see, then, instead of the Ten Commandments, we have received the two commandments and these are much easier.” I answer that this reading of the Law of God is not in the least easier!

Such a remark implies a lack of thought and experience. Those two precepts comprehend the 10 at their fullest extent and cannot be regarded as the erasure of a jot or tittle of them. Whatever difficulties surround the Ten Commandments, are equally found in the two, which are their sum and substance. If you love God with all your heart, you must keep the first table—and if you love your neighbor as yourself you must keep the second table. If any suppose that the Law of Love is an adaptation of the moral Law to man’s fallen condition, they greatly err. I can only say that the supposed adaptation is no more adapted to us than the original Law. If there could be conceived to be any difference in difficulty, it might be easier to keep the 10 than the two, for if we go no deeper than the letter, the two are the more exacting, since they deal with the heart, soul and mind.

The Ten Commandments mean all that the two express. But if we forget this and only look at the wording of them, I say, it is harder for a man to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, with all his strength and his neighbor as himself than it would be merely to abstain from killing, stealing and false witness. Christ has not, therefore, abrogated or at all moderated the Law to meet our helplessness. He has left it in all its sublime perfection, as it always must be left—and He has pointed out how deep are its foundations, how elevated are its heights, how meas-

ureless are its length and breadth! Like the laws of the Medes and Persians, God's commands cannot be altered!

We are saved by another method. To show that He never meant to abrogate the Law, our Lord Jesus has embodied all its Commandments in His own life. In His own Person there was a nature which was perfectly conformed to the Law of God—and as was His nature, such was His life. He could say, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" And again, "I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." I may not say that He was scrupulously careful to keep the Law of God—I will not put it so, for there was no tendency in Him to do otherwise—He was so perfect and pure; so infinitely good and so complete in His agreement and communion with the Father, that He, in all things, carried out the Father's will.

The Father said of Him, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear you Him." Point out, if you possibly can, any way in which Christ has violated the Law or left it unfulfilled! There was never an unclean thought or rebellious desire in His soul. He had nothing to regret or to retract—it could not be that He should err. He was thrice tempted in the wilderness and the enemy had the impertinence, even, to suggest idolatry, but He instantly overthrew the adversary. The prince of this world came to Him, but he found nothing in Him—

***"My dear Redeemer and my Lord,
I read my duty in Your Word.
But in Your life the Law appears
Drawn out in living characters."***

Now, if that Law had been too high and too hard, Christ would not have exhibited it in His life. But as our Exemplar He would have set forth that milder form of Law which is supposed by some theologians. He came to introduce. Inasmuch as our Leader and Exemplar has exhibited to us in His life a perfect obedience to the sacred Commandments in their undiminished grandeur, I gather that He means it to be the model of our conversation.

Our Lord has not taken off a single point or pinnacle from that up-towering alp of perfection. He said at the first, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me. I delight to do Your will, O My God; yes, Your Law is within My heart." And well has He justified the writing of the volume of the Book. "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law" and, being for our sakes under the Law, He obeyed it to the fullest, so that now, "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes."

Once more, that the Master did not come to alter the Law of God is clear because after having embodied it in His life, He willingly gave Himself up to bear its penalty, though He had never broken it, bearing the penalty for us, even as it is written, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us." "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, everyone, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." If the Law had demanded more of us than it ought to have done, would the Lord Jesus have rendered to it the penalty which resulted from its too severe demands? I am sure He would not! But because the Law asked only what it ought to ask—namely perfect obedi-

ence and exacted of the transgressor only what it ought to exact, namely, death, as the penalty for sin—death under Divine wrath, therefore the Savior went to the Cross and there bore our sins and purged them once and for all.

He was crushed beneath the load of our guilt and cried, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death,” and at last, when He had borne—

**“All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough, but none to spare,”**

He bowed His head and said, “It is finished.” Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a greater vindication to the Law of God by dying, because it had been broken, than all the lost in Hell can ever give by their miseries, for their suffering is never complete, their debt is never paid! But He has borne all that was due from His people and the Law is defrauded of nothing. By His death He has vindicated the honor of God’s moral government and made it just for Him to be merciful! When the Lawgiver, Himself, submits to the Law; when the Sovereign, Himself, bears the extreme penalty of that Law—then is the justice of God set upon such a glorious high throne that all admiring worlds must wonder at it! If, therefore, it is clearly proven that Jesus was obedient to the Law of God, even to the extent of death, He certainly did not come to abolish or abrogate it! And if He did not remove it, who can do so? If He declares that He came to *establish* it, who shall overthrow it?

But, secondly, the Law of God must be perpetual from its very nature, for does it not strike you, the moment you think of it, that right must always be right, truth must always be true, and purity must always be pure? Before the Ten Commandments were published at Sinai, there was still that same Law of right and wrong laid upon men by the necessity of their being God’s creatures. Right was always right before a single command had been committed to words! When Adam was in the garden it was always right that he should love his Maker and it would always have been wrong that he should have been at cross-purposes with his God. And it does not matter what happens in this world, or what changes take place in the universe, it never can be right to lie, or to commit adultery, or murder, or steal, or to worship an idol god. I will not say that the principles of right and wrong are as absolutely self-existent as God, but I do say that I cannot grasp the idea of God, Himself, as existing apart from His being always holy and always true—so that the very idea of right and wrong seems to me to be necessarily permanent and cannot possibly be shifted.

You cannot bring right down to a lower level! It must be where it always is—right is right *eternally*—and cannot be wrong. You cannot lift up wrong and make it somewhat right—it must be wrong while the world stands. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not the smallest letter or accent of the moral Law can possibly change. In spirit the Law is eternal. Suppose for a moment that it were possible to temper and tone down the Law of God, where would it be? I confess I do not know and cannot imagine! If it is perfectly holy, how can it be altered except by being made imperfect? Would you wish for that? Could you worship the God of an imperfect Law? Can it ever be true that God, by way of favoring us, has put us under an imperfect Law? Would that be a blessing or a curse?

It is said by some that man cannot keep a perfect Law and God does not demand that he should. Certain modern theologians have taught this, I hope, by inadvertence. Has God issued an imperfect Law? It is the first imperfect thing I ever heard of His making! Does it come to this that, after all, the Gospel is a proclamation that God is going to be satisfied with obedience to a mutilated Law? God forbid! I say, better that *we* perish than that His perfect Law perish! Terrible as it is, it lies at the foundation of the peace of the universe and must be honored at all hazards. That gone, all goes! When the power of the Holy Spirit convinced me of sin, I felt such a solemn awe of the Law of God that I remember well, when I lay crashed beneath it as a condemned sinner, I yet admired and glorified it. I could not have wished that perfect Law to be altered for me.

Rather did I feel that if my soul were sent to the lowest Hell, yet God was to be extolled for His Justice and His Law held in honor for its perfectness. I would not have had it altered even to save my soul! Brethren, the Law of the Lord must stand, for it is perfect and, therefore, has in it no element of decay or change. The Law of God is no more than God might most righteously ask of us. If God were about to give us a more tolerant Law, it would be an admission, on His part, that He asked too much at first. Can that be supposed? Was there, after all, some justification for the statement of the wicked and slothful servant when he said, "I feared you, because you are an austere man"? It cannot be! For God to alter His Law would be an admission that He made a mistake! That He put poor imperfect man (we are often hearing *that* said) under too rigorous a regime and, therefore, He is now prepared to abate His claims and make them more reasonable.

It has been said that man's moral inability to keep the perfect Law exempts him from the duty of doing so. This is very specious, but it is utterly false! Man's inability is not of the kind which removes responsibility—it is *moral*, not physical! Never fall into the error that moral inability will be an excuse for sin! What? When a man becomes such a liar that he cannot speak the truth—is he, therefore, exempted from the duty of truthfulness? If your servant owes you a day's labor, is he free from the duty because he has made himself so drunk that he cannot serve you? Is a man freed from a debt by the fact that he has squandered the money and, therefore, cannot pay it? Is a lustful man free to indulge his passions because he cannot understand the beauty of chastity? This is dangerous doctrine! The Law is a just one and man is bound by it though his sin has rendered him incapable of doing so.

The Law, moreover, demands no more than is good for us. There is not a single Commandment of God's Law but what is meant to be a kind of danger signal such as we put up upon the ice when it is too thin to bear. Each Commandment does, as it were, say to us, "Dangerous!" It is never for a man's good to do what God forbids him! It is never for man's real and ultimate happiness to leave undone anything that God commands him. The wisest directions for spiritual health and for the avoidance of evil are those directions which are given us concerning right and wrong in the Law of God! Therefore it is not possible that there should be any altera-

tion, for it would not be for our good. I should like to say to any Brother who thinks that God has put us under an altered rule—"Which particular part of the Law is it that God has relaxed?" Which precept do you feel free to break?

Are you delivered from the Commandment which forbids stealing? My dear Sir, you may be a capital theologian, but I should lock up my spoons when you call at my house! Is it the Commandment about adultery which you think is removed? Then I could not recommend your being admitted into any decent society! Is the Law as to killing softened down? Then I had rather have your room than your company. From which Law is it that God has exempted you? That Law of worshipping Him, only? Do you propose to have another god? Do you intend to make engraved images? The fact is, that when we come to details, we cannot afford to lose a single link of this wonderful golden chain which is perfect in every part as well as perfect as a whole! The Law is absolutely complete and you can neither add to it nor take from it. "Whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you have become a transgressor of the Law." If, then, no part of it can be taken down, it must stand and stand forever!

A third reason I will give why the Law must be perpetual is that to suppose it altered is most dangerous. To take away from the Law its perpetuity is, first of all, to take away from it its power to convict of sin. Is it so, that I, being an imperfect creature, am not expected to keep a perfect Law? Then it follows that I do not sin when I break the Law! And if all that is required of me is that I am to do according to the best of my knowledge and ability, then I have a very convenient rule, indeed—and most men will take care to adjust it so as to give themselves as much latitude as possible! By removing the Law you have done away with sin, for sin is the *transgression* of the Law! And where there is no Law, there is no transgression! When you have done away with *sin*, you may as well have done away with the Savior and with salvation—for they are by no means necessary!

When you have reduced sin to a minimum, what need is there of that great and glorious salvation which Jesus Christ has come to bring into the world? Brothers and Sisters, we must have none of this! It is evidently a way of mischief. By lowering the Law, you weaken its power in the hands of God as a Convincer of sin. "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." It is the looking glass which shows us our spots—and that is a most useful thing—though nothing but the Gospel can wash them away—

***"My hopes of Heaven were firm and bright,
But since the precept came
With a convincing power and light,
I find how vile I am.
My guilt appeared but small before,
Till terribly I saw
How perfect, holy, just and pure
Was Your eternal Law.
Then felt my soul the heavy load,
My sins revived again,***

***I had provoked a dreadful God,
And all my hopes were slain.”***

It is only a pure and perfect Law that the Holy Spirit can use in order to show us our depravity and sinfulness. Lower the Law and you dim the Law of God by which man perceives his guilt! This is a very serious loss to the sinner rather than a gain, for it lessens the likelihood of his conviction and conversion.

You have also taken away from the Law its power to shut us up to the faith of Christ. What is the Law of God for? For us to keep in order to be saved by it? Not at all! It is sent in order to show us that we cannot be saved by works and to shut us up to be saved by Grace! But if you make out that the Law is altered so that a man can keep it, you have left him his old legal hope and he is sure to cling to it! You need a perfect Law that shuts man right up to hopelessness apart from Jesus—puts him into an iron cage and locks him up—and offers him no escape but by faith in Jesus! Then he begins to cry, “Lord, save me by Grace, for I perceive that I cannot be saved by my own works.”

This is how Paul describes it to the Galatians—“The Scripture has concluded all are under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Therefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” I say you have deprived the Gospel of its most able auxiliary when you have set aside the Law! You have taken away from it the schoolmaster that is to bring men to Christ. No, it must stand and stand in all its terrors to drive men away from self-righteousness and constrain them to fly to Christ! They will never accept Grace till they tremble before a just and holy Law! Therefore the Law serves a most necessary and blessed purpose and it must not be removed from its place.

To alter the Law is to leave us without any Law at all. A sliding scale of duty is an immoral invention, fatal to the principles of law. If each man is to be accepted because he does his best, we are *all* doing our best. Is there anybody that is not? If we take their words for it, all our fellow men are doing as well as they can, considering their imperfect natures. Even the harlot in the streets has some righteousness— she is not quite so far gone as others. Have you ever heard of the bandit who committed many murders, but who felt that he had been doing his best because he never killed anybody on a Friday? Self-righteousness builds itself a nest, even in the worst character! This is the man’s talk— “Really, if you knew me, you would say I have been a good fellow to do as well as I have. Consider what a poor, fallen creature I am! Consider what strong passions were born in me! Consider what temptations to vice beset me and you will not blame me so much! After all, I dare say God is as satisfied with me as with many who are a great deal better because I had so few advantages.”

Yes, you have shifted the standard and every man will now do that which is right in his own eyes and claim to be doing his best! If you shift the standard pound weight or the bushel measure, you will certainly never get full weight or measurement again! There will be no standard to go by and each man will do his best with his own pounds and bushels. If

the standard is tampered with, you have taken away the foundation upon which trade is conducted and it is the same in soul matters—abolish the best rule that ever can be, even God’s own Law—and there is no rule left worthy of the name! What a fine opening this leaves for vain-glory! No wonder that men talk of perfect sanctification if the Law has been lowered! There is nothing at all remarkable in our getting up to the rule if it is conveniently lowered for us! I believe I shall be perfectly sanctified when I keep God’s Law without omission or transgression, but not till then!

If any man says that he is perfectly sanctified because he has come up to a modified law of his own, I am glad to know what he means, for I have, no longer, any discussion with him! I see nothing wonderful in his attainment. Sin is my need of conformity to the Law of God—and until we are *perfectly* conformed to that Law of God in all its spiritual length and breadth—it is idle for us to talk about perfect sanctification! No man is perfectly clean till he accepts absolute purity as the standard by which he is to be judged. So long as there is in us any coming short of the perfect Law, we are not perfect! What a humbling Truth of God this is! The Law shall not pass away, but it must be fulfilled! This Truth must be maintained, for if it goes, our tackling is loose; we cannot well strengthen the mast; the ship goes all to pieces; she becomes a total wreck!

The Gospel itself would be destroyed could you destroy the Law of God! To tamper with the Law is to trifle with the Gospel. “Till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all is fulfilled.”

II. I come to show, secondly, that THE LAW MUST BE FULFILLED. I hope there are some in this place who are saying, “We cannot fulfill it.” That is exactly where I want to bring you! Salvation by the works of the Law must be felt to be impossible by every man who would be saved! We must learn that salvation is of Grace through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord—not by our own doings or feelings. But this is a doctrine no one will receive till he has learned the previous Truth of God—that salvation by the works of the Law can never come to any man born of woman!

Yet the Law must be fulfilled. Many will say with Nicodemus, “How can these things be?” I answer, the Law is fulfilled *in Christ* and, by faith, we receive the fruit thereof. First, as I have already said, the Law is fulfilled in the matchless Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If a man has broken a Law, what does the Law do with him? It says, “I must be honored. You have broken my command which was sanctioned by the penalty of death. Inasmuch as you did not honor me by obedience, but dishonored me by transgression, you must die.” Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the great Covenant Representative of His people, their second Adam, stood forward on the behalf of all who are in Him and presented Himself as a victim to Divine Justice.

Since His people were guilty of death, He, as their Covenant Head, came under death in their place! It was a glorious thing that such representative death was possible—and it was only so because of the original constitution of the race as springing from a common father and placed under a single head. Inasmuch as our fall was by one Adam, it was possible for us to be raised by another Adam! “As in Adam all died, even so in

Christ shall all be made alive.” It became possible for God, upon the principle of *representation*, to allow *substitution*. Our first fall was not by our personal fault, but through the failure of our representative—and now in comes our second and grander Representative—the Son of God, and He sets us free, not by *our* honoring the Law, but by His doing so!

He came under the Law by His birth. And being found as a Man loaded with the guilt of all His people, He was visited with its penalty! The Law lifts its bloody axe and it smites our glorious Head that we may go free! It is the Son of God that keeps the Law by dying, the Just for the unjust. “The soul that sins, it shall die”—there is death *demanded*—and in Christ death is presented! Life for life is rendered! An infinitely precious Life instead of the poor lives of men! Jesus has died and so the Law has been fulfilled by the endurance of its penalty. And being fulfilled, its power to condemn and punish the Believer has passed away.

Secondly, the Law has been fulfilled, again, for us by Christ in His life. I have already gone over this, but I want to establish you in it. Jesus Christ as our Head and Representative, came into the world for the double purpose of bearing the penalty and, at the same time, keeping the Law. One of His main designs in coming to earth was “to bring in perfect righteousness.” “As by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners, so by the righteousness of one, shall many be made righteous.” The Law requires a perfect life and he that believes in Jesus Christ presents to the Law a perfect life which he has made his own by faith. It is not his own life, but Christ is made of God unto us, righteousness, even to us who are one with Him. “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes.”

That which Jesus did is counted as though we did it! And because He was righteous, God sees us in Him and counts us righteous upon the principle of substitution and representation. Oh, how blessed it is to put on this robe and to wear it! And to stand before the Most High in a better righteousness than His Law demanded—for that demanded the perfect righteousness of a *creature*—but we put on the absolute righteousness of the Creator Himself! And what can the Law ask more? It is written, “In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is the name with which He shall be called—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” “The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake: He will magnify the Law and make it honorable.”

Yes, but that is not all. The Law has to be fulfilled in us *personally* in a spiritual and Gospel sense. “Well,” you say, “but how can that be?” I reply in the words of our Apostle—“What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,” Christ has done and is doing by the Holy Spirit, “that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” Regeneration is a work by which the Law is fulfilled, for when a man is born again there is placed in him a new nature which loves the Law of God and is perfectly conformed to it. The new nature which God implants in every Believer at the time he is born again is incapable of sin—it *cannot* sin, for it is born of God! That new na-

ture is the offspring of the eternal Father—and the Spirit of God dwells in it, with it and strengthens it!

It is light, it is purity, it is, according to the Scripture, the “living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever.” If incorruptible, it is sinless, for sin is corruption and corrupts everything that it touches. The Apostle Paul, when describing his inward conflicts, showed that he himself, his real and best self, *did* keep the Law, for he says, “So then with the mind I, myself, serve the Law of God” (Rom. 7:25). He consented to the Law that it was good, which showed that he was on the side of the Law. And though *sin* that dwelt *in his members* led him into transgression, yet his new nature did not allow it, but hated and loathed it, and cried out against it as one in bondage! The newborn soul delights in the Law of the Lord and there is within it a quenchless life which aspires after absolute perfection! It will never rest till it pays to God perfect obedience and comes to be like God, Himself!

This which is begun in regeneration is continued and grows till it ultimately arrives at absolute perfection. That will be seen in the world to come and oh, what a fulfillment of the Law will be there! The Law will admit no man to Heaven till he is perfectly conformed to it—but every Believer shall be in that perfect condition! Our nature shall be refined from all its dross and be as pure gold! It will be our delight in Heaven to be holy. There will be nothing about us, then, to kick against a single Commandment of God! We shall know, there, in our own hearts the Glory and excellency of the Divine will and our will shall run in the same channel. We shall not imagine that the precepts are rigorous—they will be our own will as truly as they are God’s will!

Then nothing which God has commanded, however much of self-denial it requires, now, will require any self-denial from us! Holiness will be our element, our delight! Our nature will be entirely conformed to the Nature and mind of God as to holiness and goodness—and then the Law will be fulfilled in us and we shall stand before God, having washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! And, at the same time, being ourselves without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! Then shall the Law of the Lord have eternal honor from our immortal being. Oh, how we shall rejoice in it! We delight in it after the inward man, now, but *then* we shall delight in it as to our risen bodies which shall be charmed to be instruments of righteousness unto God forever and ever! No appetite of those risen bodies, no want and no necessity of them shall then lead the soul astray, but our whole body, soul and spirit shall be perfectly conformed unto the Divine mind!

Let us long and pant for this! We shall never attain it except by believing in Jesus. Perfect holiness will never be reached by the works of the Law, for works cannot change the nature. But by faith in Jesus and the blessed work of His Holy Spirit, we shall have it and then, I believe, it will be among our songs of Glory that Heaven and earth pass away, but the Word of God and the Law of God shall stand fast forever and ever. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

NO DIFFERENCE

NO. 1414

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 12, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*[On this night the Tabernacle was free to all comers,
the regular congregation having vacated their seats.]*

***“He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good and
sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”
Matthew 5:45.***

You see our Lord Jesus Christ's philosophy of Nature. He believed in the immediate Presence and working of God. As the great Son of God, He had a very sensitive perception of the Presence of His Father in all the scenes around Him and, therefore, He calls the sun, God's sun—"He makes *His* sun to rise." He does not speak of the daybreak as a thing which happens of itself as a matter of course, but He traces the morning light to His Father and declares, "He makes His sun to rise." As for the rain, our great Lord and Master does not speak of the laws of condensation causing the vapor to become fluid and fall to the earth in a beneficial shower, but He says of His Father, "He sends rain upon the just and upon the unjust."

Jesus knew far better than any of us all the laws by which the great Creator governs the world of matter and yet He never speaks of these laws as though they operated without the Divine power making them to be effective. In Christ's philosophy, the Lord God Himself was everywhere present, working all things—yes, even numbering the hairs upon the heads of His chosen—and marking the falling of a sparrow to the ground. Let such be your philosophy and mine, for it is the true one! Dr. Watts taught us to sing when we were children—

***“My God, who makes the sun to know
His proper hour to rise,
And to give light to all below,
Does send him round the skies.”***

So our mothers taught us and they taught us the truth. But the very wise men of this proudly enlightened age seem to be spinning all sorts of theories to get rid of God, to turn our Benefactor out of His own world and put man's best Friend as far away as possible.

I am sometimes reminded by these schools of philosophy and science of Tom Hood's, "I remember, I remember." Here is a verse of it—

***“I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky.
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy***

***To know I'm farther off from Heaven
Than when I was a boy."***

It were a good thing for our skeptical teachers who have banished God out of His own universe if they could go back to their mothers' knees and learn to talk simply and naturally after the fashion of the wisest man that ever lived, namely, our Lord and Master. Then would they also confess that our heavenly Father "makes His sun to rise and He sends the rain," for so it is. Laws of Nature can do nothing without a power at the back of the laws. What is Nature, about which many infidels speak so very plentifully? Ask them to tell you what Nature is and they will reply, "Why, it is Nature." Well, but what is that? And they can only say, "Why Nature, you know, you know, you know, Nature is Nature."

Some such sensible reply was given to certain of our friends on Kennington Common by one who was there reviling his Maker. Now, if men did but understand Nature, they would know that Nature is simply God's creation, workshop, laboratory, storehouse and banqueting hall. In Nature, what God has made and what God is doing are made visible before our eyes. God is among us still, blessed be His name! Believing this, we at once perceive that the Lord has been talking with us during the last few days very sweetly and delightfully. The merciful Father speaks to us with charming eloquence on such a day as this, of which George Herbert would have said—

***"Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky."***

Coming just in the middle of this fair season of hope and promise, concerning which he sang—

***"Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,"***

it has a still small voice which all should wish to hear.

What a blessing to have enjoyed such a May day as this has been! We have had God speaking to us according to the exact style of our text—He has made His sun to shine, and He has us sent rain. Our days, for some little time, have been made up of sunshine and shower with, every now and then, that wondrous masterpiece of glory in the sky which we call the rainbow, of which God has said, "I, even I, do set My bow in the cloud," "whose warp is the raindrop of earth and whose woof is the sunbeam of Heaven!" Glorious symbol of His Grace and faithfulness, who hung it in the clouds! Now what does God say to us in the sunshine and the shower which come, the one after the other, in such pleasant alternation, making the grass so green and causing flowers to deck both tree and herb? What does He say in all this?

There is a voice full of the music of love, to which we shall do well to listen. There is one instruction in it and only one that I shall be able to expound tonight. It is the fact brought out in the text, "He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." One of the most considerable heights anywhere near London is Leith Hill, near Dorking. And if you have ever stood there, as I often have done with delight, you may, perhaps, have thought over our text. You see far around the distant lands, pasture, parks, woods, with here and there

the laughing water. And beyond the blue hills the distant sea. Up comes a gleam of sunlight, where all was cloud before. By-and-by the sun bursts out in full beauty.

Do you notice how impartial it is? Men have mapped out the country—so far is allotted to this squire, so far to that—with here and there an insignificant patch pilfered from the wayside or the common which may belong to some industrious peasant. But the sun shines on all, glances into the halls, peeps into the cottages, gleams from the white spires of the churches and flashes from the tavern signboards swinging in the breeze. It shines on the wayside and floods the green with its golden light where the children are at play—it sweeps over all, in fact. Now that farm over yonder belongs to a fool who is sure to rake his stubble after the harvest, lest the poor should glean an ear or two—a man who fights and quarrels with his neighbors, yet the sun shines on his selfish heritage!

Yonder farm belongs to one who would, if he could, rob the orphan and fatherless and the widow—a heartless wretch unworthy to gather a sour apple from the sharpest crab—yet the sun shines on his wheat and barley just the same as on that portion of land which belongs to the generous-hearted and the free, to the gracious and the godly. There is no distinction made between the meadows of the righteous and the pastures of the wicked! As you see the sunlight bathe the whole of the scene before you, the entire landscape smiles with universal joy. While you are watching, that cloud which all day long you had suspected would turn to a shower, comes rushing up with the wind—the Great Father blowing with His breath this traveling fountain of the sky!

Then it begins to pour. We seek the shelter of the lofty tower of Leith without a murmur, for we know that the rain is seasonable. The land needs it. It has been dry and parched for weeks. Down comes the blessed shower that shall fill our barns with plenty. Yes, yes, the Lord is pouring forth a shower of food-creating moisture and, look, it is raining on the fool's piece of land just as much as on his liberal neighbor's! It is watering the farm of the man who would rob the fatherless of his shoes if the law permitted him. It is making his broad acres teem with plenty just as surely as it is fattening the poor man's patch, or falling upon the widow's scanty plot, or on the farm of the gracious godly man.

As though He did not regard human character at all, God bids His sun shine on good and bad. As though He did not know that any men were vile, He bids the shower descend on just and unjust. Yet He *does* know, for He is no blind God! He does know and He knows when His sun shines on yonder miser's acres that it is bringing forth a harvest for a fool. He does it deliberately. When the rain is falling upon yonder oppressor's crops, He knows that the oppressor will be the richer for it and means that He should be. He is doing nothing by mistake and nothing without a purpose. It is of His own will that He thus scatters sunlight with both His hands and pours the bounteous shower on all things that grow. He knows what He is doing, blessed be His name! He sends forth, on purpose, sunshine and shower on the evil and on the good—and that is the one lesson we want to bring out tonight.

What is the meaning of this boundless generosity? Why this impartial bounty, this indiscriminate liberality? What does God say to us when He acts thus? I believe that He says this—"This is the day of free Grace. This is the time of mercy." The hour for judgment is not yet, when He will separate between the good and the bad, when He will mount the Judgment Seat and award different portions to the righteous and to the wicked. Sheep and goats, as yet, feed together and He gives to them all their fodder. Wheat and tares grow in the same field and He ripens both for the harvest. This is not the Day of Justice, but the period of mercy—free, rich mercy—mercy to the undeserving, Divine Grace to the worthless, sunlight of love for the evil and showers of blessings for the unjust!

That is the teaching of the great Father to us tonight and, in trying to bring it out, I shall first show how forcible it is made to appear by its being placed as an example. Secondly, I shall dwell upon the act, itself, drawing inferences from the impartiality of sunshine and shower to encourage all who long to receive Grace at the great Father's hand. And, lastly, I shall let the plants and grass and trees talk to you a little.

I. First, then, this which is spoken concerning God's causing His sunshine to fall on the evil as well as on the good is set before us as AN EXAMPLE AND HENCE THE EMPHASIS OF ITS MEANING. We are, according to the verses which precede our text, to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us because, if we do, we shall be like our Father in Heaven who blesses with sunshine and showers the bad as well as the good. It must mean, then, that He, in causing His sun to shine upon the bad, is rendering good for evil, is wishing well to those who treat Him ill, is intending favor to those that despitefully use Him and persecute His cause.

That is what the text means. God would not command us to do what He will not do, Himself, if placed in similar circumstances! He bids us forgive because His sunshine and showers teach us that He is ready to forgive. He bids us do good to those who do us ill, because in sunshine and showers He is doing good to those who hate Him and despitefully use Him. Now suppose, my Brethren, that we were all enabled, by Divine Grace, to follow out the precept which is set before us? Our conduct would be regarded by most men as being very extraordinary—for most people say, "Well, I will do good to a man if he is a deserving character, but you cannot expect me to help the undeserving. I will cheerfully render a measure of assistance to a person who is grateful, but to the ungrateful and the evil you do not expect me to be kind? Yes, I will be kind to my neighbor, but that man who the other day was so contemptuous in his behavior as to treat me worse than a dog and seemed as if he would tread me under his feet like dirt—would you have me do him kindness?"

Now, suppose that you are able to rise to the example which is put before you and that you persistently do good and only good even to the worst of men? And when you are treated with evil, let us suppose you are able to do only more good and thus heap coals of fire upon the offender's head by being more generous to him than ever—that will be very extraordinary

conduct, don't you think? You think so, I know, for you feel the proposal to be too hard for flesh and blood to carry out and so, indeed, it is! And if you are enabled to rise to so great a height, you will astonish all around you and become a wonder to many! Admire, then, with all your hearts, the marvelous conduct of your God!

He is prepared to put away all the offenses of the past and He is ready to forgive and to do good to those who have been doing ill all their days. Yes, to take into His very heart of love and make into His children the very persons who have hated Him and spoken evil against Him! Will it not be extraordinary if He does that to you, dear Friend, if such has been your character? Know, then, that the Lord loves to do extraordinary things! "Who is a God like unto You, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin?" "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above our ways, and His thoughts above our thoughts." God is prepared to save extraordinary sinners by an extraordinary act of love, wiping out the past and causing them to begin a new life in which they shall be enriched with His favor and preserved by His love.

Again, if a *man* should carry out what I have tried to set forth—the continuous rendering of good to the undeserving—he would be regarded by all thinking persons whose judgment is worth taking, to be very noble. When a man has been abused, misrepresented and slandered, and he simply smiles and says, "If you knew me better you would not treat me so." And, if the first time he finds an opportunity, he helps the man who injured him and still gets no gratitude, but, on the contrary, worse treatment than before, and he is still able to persevere in doing good—most of you would say, "What a noble fellow he is!" Even the man who does not praise him is obliged to feel his greatness. There is about such a man a superiority which covers him with honor in the consciences of those who observe his gentle spirit!

Now, listen, you that are conscious of great sin against God! If the Lord were, tonight, to put all your sins behind His back and would take you into His family, as He took the poor returning prodigal and make a great feast for you as He did when His son that was lost was found, would it not be noble of Him? Would you not feel that His thoughts are far above your thoughts? Of course you would! Yes, but my God does noble deeds such as make the harps of Heaven ring with ecstatic music as the cherubim and seraphim behold His Grace. O thrice noble God, there is none like You, so ready to pardon and to receive each returning penitent and restore him to Your favor! To pardon *you*, my sinful Brother, would be extraordinary and honorable to the last degree, but God is prepared to act after that noble fashion! Will you not accept such boundless love and be at peace with such a Lord?

Do you not all feel that if you could act in so noble a style it would be very pleasurable to you? No doubt there is some pleasure in knocking a fellow down who insults you, but it cannot last long. When the fire of passion goes out, a man begins to think whether it was a good thing to do, after all—but *not* to do it, to turn the other cheek when you have been struck, to do good instead of evil—have you ever tried that? If you have

done so, you have heard music in your heart at midnight at the remembrance of your forbearance! When you have been lying awake, you have thought it over and you have said to yourself, "It makes me happy to think that I did not reply to that angry man in an angry tone—to think that I did not, after all, give him a smart blow when he gave me one—but that I showed patience and good temper and endured ill treatment for Christ's sake." It is a pleasure as deep as it is noble! To be Christ-like is to enjoy a Heaven within your breast!

And even so, it is a pleasure to God to have mercy upon sinners. He delights in mercy! Nothing gives God greater delight than to save those who have offended Him. He is always ready for a gracious deed and freely, of His own will, He meets those who seek His face. He does not want you to melt His heart with tears in order to win His love and He does not require the laceration of your body by penance, nor a long period of agonizing doubt before He grants full and effectual pardon. It is His joy to pardon! He meets returning sinners when they are yet a great way off and kisses them. So rejoiced is He to receive them that if they are glad to be received, yet He is the more glad of the two! Joyous is the great Father's heart when He presses His Ephraims to His bosom!

Did I hear somebody say, "But this that you are talking about is not justice"? Listen—it is not *unjust*. Look at the conduct which our Lord commands us and see if *that* would be unjust. If a man has insulted me and I forgive him, am I unjust? If a man has slandered me and I overlook it, am I unjust? If a man has done me an injury and I refuse to take any revenge except that of doing good to him, am I unjust? Certainly I am not acting according to the laws of justice, but then I am not the judge—and not being the judge—why should I undertake an office to which I am not called? God is the Judge of all by necessity of His Nature, but He will not fully display that Character till the day when in the Person of His Son He shall come with all His holy angels to summon men to His bar. For the present He does not deal with living men after the rule of justice, but He deals with them according to His Grace.

If anyone should question why He should give His Grace to the undeserving, here is a sufficient answer for them—"May I not do as I will with My own? Is your eye evil because Mine is good?" If you choose to show kindness to those who do not deserve it, who shall say to you, "no"? May not a man be as generous and forbearing as he pleases? What Law, human or Divine, forbids him? And if God, with infinite sovereignty of mercy, chooses to dispense His favors even to those who deserve nothing at His hands, let Him be adored forever, but let Him not be questioned for so doing! At any rate, it ill becomes the undeserving, themselves, to raise such a question—rather let them eagerly accept the bounty of the pardoning God!

And then note this thought—that to do good to the evil is, after all, promotive of righteousness. To be good to the unjust is to help on the cause of right, for goodness to the evil is one of the most wooing things in the world, wooing them, I mean, to repent and do good in return! Let me give you an anecdote. There was a farmer who lived in one of the new set-

lements of America. We will call him Mr. Wrath, for he was a man of a horrible temper and everybody who lived near him was made to know it. He had an excellent Christian man living near him—a gentle, good, easy-tempered soul—and on one occasion this good man's hogs strayed into the bad man's wheat and caused damage. Mr. Wrath came down in a tearing rage and said what he would do and what he would not do.

The other offered to pay for the damage and said that he was very sorry for his neglect and would do his best that it should not happen again. However, it did happen again, and the owner of the wheat was in a great passion. He caught the swine and killed them all, put their bodies on a cart and took them back to his neighbor. "Your hogs," he said, "got into my wheat—here they are." And sure enough there they were, all dead. Of course, the owner of the hogs might have gone to the authorities against Mr. Wrath and obtained damages at more or less the cost of trouble and temper, but he merely said that he was exceedingly sorry that his hogs had transgressed again and there ended the matter.

Some time after, it came to pass that Mr. Wrath's pigs went astray, as pigs will do, and they damaged the Christian's wheat. What did he do? He had not sought a legal remedy against his adversary—would not it have been fair and straightforward to butcher Mr. Wrath's hogs on the principle of tit for tat, as the proverb puts it? Of course it would have been, but a Christian does not act upon that worn-out legal principle! Instead of killing the creatures, he caught them all, tied their legs, put them on a cart, drove up to the door and said, "Friend Wrath, your hogs got into my wheat. I have brought them to you. Here they are"—the very words that Mr. Wrath had used to him.

Mr. Wrath went to the cart, of course expecting to find his swine all dead. But there they were, all right enough, grunting in proof of their continued existence. "There," the neighbor said, "hogs are always troublesome. I dare say you could not help their getting into my wheat." Mr. Wrath's temper was changed from that very day. How could he behave badly to such a neighbor who had vanquished him by forgiving him the injury that he had done him? Now, just as men can win upon men by their kindness, so does God win upon the hearts of men by His love when the Holy Spirit leads them to see and feel that He acts graciously towards them. There is no power to win a man like the power of love! If you have ever been converted, dear Friends, I think that you have felt that you could say—

***"I yield, by Sovereign Love subdued—
Who can resist its charms?"***

The thunderbolts of God might have broken you down, but they could not have forced love into your terrified soul! Yet, when Jesus came in love and mercy, you were compelled to yield and that most gladly and heartily!

So God's goodness to the unjust is aiding and assisting the cause of righteousness and justice and who, therefore, shall say a word against it? "Ah," says somebody, "but it is very liable to be abused. If you go and help the bad and benefit the unjust, you will find that they will take your charity and spend it wrongly, or perhaps they will turn, again, and harm you."

This is very true, but still, the Master says, "Love your enemies and pray for them that despitefully use you." He does not insert a clause to the effect that we are only to do this where we are sure that it will not be abused. No, it is absolute! If they make bad use of it, that is no business of ours. Your heavenly Father knows that the fool, when he reaps his harvest, will simply spend it on himself, yet He sends him the sunlight and the shower. He knows that yonder oppressive wretch will, with his wealth, go on to grind the poor, but He sends his crops the warm, genial sun and the refreshing rain, notwithstanding it.

But, dear Friends, there is this thing to be said about Divine Grace, that if God gives it to you, you cannot misuse it, for Grace will change your heart and renew your nature! And if He is so ready to give to men those benefits which they can and do abuse, much more will He bestow that Grace which is liable to no such ill usage. Let me add, however, if anybody *does* abuse God's mercy, just as if any man abuses your practical kindness, it involves him in great guilt. Men cannot do despite to goodness without becoming exceedingly vile. You will soon see this if I mention one anecdote. In Holland, in the days when the Baptists were persecuted, it happened that the canals were frozen over and one poor despised Baptist escaped from a person who was seeking to drag him before the magistrates to get blood money for his head. He ran across the river, which was wide and frozen. The ice was strong enough to bear him and he got safely to the other shore.

The person who was seeking his life was a heavier man and he slipped through the ice and went into the water. And what did this poor hunted Christian man do? He turned round and at the peril of his own life he helped his persecutor out and landed him on the bank. And what did the wretch do but seize him and drag him before the magistrates—and he was burnt as the result of his own act of generosity! There is not a man in the world who does not feel that the wretch deserves universal condemnation! Everybody denounces him at once. So if, after God's mercy to the unjust and the bad, they still go on to sin against Him I will leave the universal conscience of mankind to cry them down!

I heard, the other day, an instance of a dog's returning good for evil and this places the matter in an equally strong light. A man had taken a dog with the intention of drowning him—a large Newfoundland dog. He went into a boat with a big stone intending to throw the dog out of the boat into the stream with the stone about his neck. Somehow or other, before he had securely tied the stone, the dog had become free and in some little scuffle between them the boat was upset and dog and man were both in the water. The man sank and was nearly drowned, but the dog, noble creature, swam up and seized hold of the man and drew him safely to shore.

Now suppose he had drowned the dog after that! Did I hear some indignant person say, "Let him be drowned himself"? He would not deserve to live, surely. I would take such a dog as that home and say, "While I have a crust, there shall be a bit for you, good dog who saved my life when I was destroying yours." Now, if even a dog, when it renders good for evil, gets a

claim upon us, what shall I say of the great God who, with generous liberality, continues to feed and keep in life and health the undeserving sons of men? And who, more than this, has given His own Son to die and sent a message of amazing love to mankind, in which He says, "Come to Me: I am ready to forgive you. Come and accept My love and mercy. Let us be friends, for I delight to forgive sin"? Is it not clear that to abuse such love is black-hearted baseness? I beseech you, be not guilty of it!

II. Now, secondly, we may gather fresh hope and encouragement from THE FACT ITSELF. When the sunlight comes upon a wicked man's field and the rain descends upon the farm of a blaspheming atheist, the man has done nothing to deserve either shower or sun, but yet they favor him. And, blessed be God, He gives His Grace to those who have done nothing to deserve it! If all your life long you cannot think of one good action you have ever performed, nevertheless the Grace of God is free to you if you will have it. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved" is preached to you—deserving and merit are out of the question! God gives freely even to the evil and the unjust!

Showers and sunlight from Heaven come to those who have not sought them at the Lord's hands. That fool, there, never prayed for the sunlight. He does not believe in praying—not he! And that oppressor over yonder, that we spoke of, never asked God to send the rain—he said it was a matter of chance and he did not see the good of praying about it. Yet it came. And oh, what a wonder it is that God is often found of them that sought Him not! Persons have come into this Tabernacle and the last thing they thought of was that they would be saved that night—and yet they have been! God's infinite mercy sometimes comes to those who do not ask for it, according to the text, "I am found of them that sought Me not."

Look at Colonel Gardiner. He had made a commitment and was about to perpetrate a gross act of vice, but the person whom he expected to meet had not come and, therefore, he had to wait an hour or two. While he waited he saw or thought he saw, a vision of the Savior who said to him, "I did all this for you, what have you done for Me?" That question, with the sight of the Lord Jesus Christ, by Divine Grace, changed his heart! He never kept that appointment but, as most of you know, he became one of the most devout Christians in the world! Oh, tell it the wide world over that as the rain tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men, but comes according to the good favor of God, so often does His Grace visit those who knew not God and sought not after Him! Let Him be praised and extolled forever and ever because of this.

Now, if Grace sometimes comes to those who have not asked, do you not think that it will come to you who *are* asking for it? Oh you that are groaning for it, sighing for it and longing for it—do you think it will be denied to you? God forbid! He will be sure to bless you. Believe in the Lord Jesus and it is yours at once! The rain comes to those who do not even acknowledge the *existence* of God. It waters the atheist's fields and refreshes the pastures of the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God." Even so, I have known the Grace of God descend on those who have loudly denied His very existence. In our Church there is one, at least, who

not long ago was a loud spokesman against God, but upon his dropping into this house, the Word came with power to his soul and again, and again, and again it described his case, till at last he said, "There is a God, for He has found me out. The preacher seems to know my case and character." Every time he came, something was said which so accurately described himself that he could not understand and interpret it in any other way than that God had spoken to his soul!

Now, if God calls by His effectual Grace some that even doubt His existence, how much more will He look on you who have been made to tremble before Him and who desire to be reconciled to Him? Surely He will hear the cry of the humble and grant your penitent request! The Lord sends the rain to some that never thank Him for it. "A heavy shower, William," says the fool. "Yes, Sir," says his pious servant, "God be thanked for it." "I do not know much about *that*, William. I dare say the wind had a good deal to do with it. I knew it would come, for the glass was down." So he ends that talk. Yes, but, dear Friend, if God sends temporal blessings to those who do not thank Him, will He not give His Grace to those of you who feel that you would bless Him forever if He would but save you?

A good woman said, when she sought the Lord, "If He saves me He shall never hear the last of it, for I will praise Him as long as ever I live and then to all eternity." Well, now, you may reckon quite surely that when a soul feels after that manner the Lord will not deny it the sun of His love, or the rain of His Grace! He gives rain even to those whom He knows will remain thankless—will He not give His Spirit to those who will become His grateful children? Remember, too, dear Friends, that God gives this rain and this sunshine year after year! If I were very kind to a man and he treated me unthankfully I should think that I had a good deal of Grace if I kept on being kind to him for a *year*. And supposing I kept on *seven* years, I fancy that I should think that I had endured a long enough trial of him and should get a little tired of being grieved by him—wouldn't you?

Yet, look, God has sent sunshine and showers upon the fields of the wicked all their lives long! He has continued to be kind to them and He has not grown weary. Perhaps some of you are 50 years old and yet have never yielded to the love of God. Ah, you have been hearing sermons these 50 years. Perhaps you are getting on for 70 now. Why, you have heard tender words of love that went further than your ears and touched your conscience—but you have still held out against God! Oh, the patience of God to have borne with you from day to day! Now, if He has suffered you so long, and if tonight you turn to Him with purpose of heart and say, "I have had enough of this rebellion. Lord, I would be at peace with You," do you think that He will refuse you? Far from it! For His mercy endures forever!

One more remark on this. The sunshine which you saw today, I do not doubt, was as bright a sunlight as that which Joshua saw when he bade the sun stand still. And the showers that fell the other day, especially as it fell in these quarters and at Brixton, I should say were quite as plentiful as any downpour which our grandsires can remember. It is evident that

the sun's fire is not burnt out and that the clouds are not exhausted. Well, it is so in *heavenly* things, for there the eternal fullness dwells! God has as much love as ever and as much Grace as ever—and as a thousand years ago He poured forth His Grace to convert the bad and the unjust—He is just as able to pour them out *now* upon the most guilty and the most worthless.

His Grace in conversion, pardon, adoption and preservation is as large as ever! Glory be to His blessed name, He still rains His bounties on the unjust! And that Christ who, when we were dead in sins, died for us, and who, while we were yet sinners, manifested His great love to us—that Christ who came into the world to save sinners—still abounds in power to save and bless! And if you will go to Him (and oh, may His Grace make you) you shall find it to be so!

III. Lest I should weary you, I will finish with the last head, under which I should like to MAKE THE EARTH, THE FLOWERS AND THE TREES WHICH HAVE BEEN WATERED AND WARMED, SPEAK TO YOU A LITTLE. And, first, I will suppose, dear Friend, that you are here tonight and feel that you cannot pray—feel as if you could not come to God, could not do *anything*. The flowers say, “We are cheered by the sun and refreshed by the rain. We do *nothing* to deserve these blessings, but we do long for them.” The little flowers say, “We do long for the rain.” Look at them—they droop their heads during a long drought. See the grass, how brown it gets! See the leaves, how dry they are! See the earth, how chapped it is after a dry season.

Now, Soul, do you long for the mercy of God? Do you pine for it, sigh for it, cry for it? God help you to do that! To be forgiven, to get the love of God shed abroad in your hearts—is not that worth having? Do pant for it, I say, as the flowers sigh for the rain and the sun! And next, the flowers seem to say, “Do turn to it.” If you keep a plant in your window, see how it grows the way the sun comes! Notice the trees, how they put out their branches sunward. See the sunflower how it turns its head in the direction of the sun. The flowers love the sun! If you cannot do anything to get Divine Grace, at least turn your head that way! Look that way! Long that way! Grow that way! You will receive it—it will not be denied. It will come to you. It has *already* come to you if you have begun to turn to it with longing gaze!

And then the flowers seem to say, “Drink it in when it does come.” In January there was the crocus just peeping up from the soil and the sun shone on it and in gratitude it brought up from the deeps—from its cellar somewhere—a gold cup and set it out to catch the sunbeams till the sun smiled and graciously filled it to the brim! And have you noticed when the soft April showers fall, how the flowers seem, each, to have a cup to hold a share of Heaven's bounty? And certainly beneath the soil each flower has its little traveling rootlets sucking up each drop of moisture they can find. Now, dear Hearers, when Grace comes specially near to you, drink it in! Is the sermon blest to you? Do not go away and lose its influence! Do you feel some tender movements in your conscience? Yield to them! Is there an invitation? Accept it! Is there a threat? Tremble at it! Open your bosom

and say, "Come in, my Savior, come in and reign and save my soul from the wrath to come."

But then the flowers say, once more, "Do thank God for it." The last two or three days I have seemed to live in a temple! When I go into my garden I have a choir around me in the trees. They do not wear surplices, for their song is not artificial and official. Some of them are clothed in glossy black, but they sing like little angels! They sing the sun up and wake me at break of day. And they warble on till the last red ray of the sun has departed, still singing out from bush and tree the praises of their God! And all the flowers—the primroses that are almost gone—these bring into my heart deep meanings concerning God till the last one shuts his eyes. And now the forget-me-nots and the wallflowers and the lilacs and the guilder roses and a host of sweet beauties are pouring out their incense of perfume, as if they said, "Thank the God that made us! Blessed be His name! The earth is full of His goodness!"

Now, dear Hearers, if you get the Lord's Grace, thank Him for it. Grow by it, blossom with it, be fragrant with it. If you only receive a little Grace, be very grateful for it, for a little Grace is worth a great deal. If God gives you Grace enough to be called starlight, thank Him for it and He will give you moonlight! And when you get moonlight Grace, thank Him for it and He will give you sunlight! And when you have obtained sunlight Grace, thank Him for it and He will give you the light of Heaven which is as the light of seven days!

Lastly—and this the flowers cannot teach you, because the flowers cannot do it—*pray* for Grace. It will come. It will come! Do you remember George Herbert's pretty verse. With that I will finish. He says—

***"The dew does every morning fall—
And shall the dew outstrip Your Dove?
The dew for which grass cannot call—
Drops from above."***

See his point? The dew comes every morning. The grass cannot ask for it, but it comes. And shall the dew be more free and swift than the Holy Spirit? No, says the poet—I can pray for that holy Dove—will He not come to me, who prays, since the dew comes to the grass which cannot call for it? Behold He visits the earth and waters it with the river of God which is full of water and flings back the curtains of the sky and bids the sun shine out with genial face upon the poor dead soil! And if He does all this for the fields that cannot pray and for flowers that cannot speak, how much more will He do it for you who seek His face through Jesus Christ?!

Come, then, to Him! He will gladly welcome you. Come and trust His Son. Come and rest in the merit of Jesus' blood and you shall find eternal life! May God bless you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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A CALL TO HOLY LIVING

NO. 1029

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 14, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“What do you do more than others?”
Matthew 5:47.***

IT is a very great fault in any ministry if the doctrine of justification by faith alone is not most clearly taught. I will go further and add that it is not only a great fault, but a *fatal* one, for souls will never find their way to Heaven by a ministry that is indistinct upon the most fundamental of Gospel truths. We are justified by faith, and not by the works of the Law. The merit by which a soul enters Heaven is not its own—it is the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am quite sure that you will all hold me guiltless of ever having spoken about this great doctrine in any other than unmistakable language. If I have erred it is not in that direction. At the same time, it is a dangerous state of things if doctrine is made to drive out *precept*, and faith is held up as making holiness a superfluity.

Sanctification must not be forgotten or overlaid by justification. We must teach plainly that the faith which saves the soul is not a dead faith, but a faith which operates with purifying effect upon our entire nature and produces in us *fruits* of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. It is not by personal holiness that a man shall enter Heaven, but yet without holiness shall no man see the Lord. It is not by good works that we are justified, but if a man shall continue to live an ungodly life his faith will not justify him—for it is not the faith of God's elect—since that faith is worked by the Holy Spirit and conforms men to the image of Christ.

We must learn to place the precepts in their right position. They are not the base of the column—they are the capital of it. Precepts are not given to us as a *way* to obtain life, but as the way in which to *exhibit* life. The commands of Christ are not upon the legal tenor of, “do this and live,” but upon the Gospel system of, “live and do this.” We are not to be attentive to the precepts in order to be saved but *because* we are saved. Our master motive is gratitude to Him who has saved us with a great salvation. I am sure that every renewed heart here will feel no opposition to the most holy precepts of our Lord. However severely pure that Law may seem to be which we have just now read from this fifth chapter of Matthew, our hearts agree with it and we ask that we may be so renewed that our lives may be conformed to it.

The regenerate never rebel against any precept, saying, “This is too pure.” On the contrary, our new-born nature is enamored of its holiness and we cry, “Your Word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it. O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes.” Even though we find that when we would do good, evil is present with us, yet our inmost soul

longs after holiness and pines to be delivered from every evil way. At any rate, dear Friends, if it is not so with you, you may well question whether you are, indeed, the children of God. My desire, this morning, is to insist upon the precepts which tend to holiness, and I pray the Holy Spirit to excite desires after a high degree of purity in all believing hearts.

Too many persons judge themselves by others and if upon the whole they discover that they are no worse than the mass of mankind they give themselves a mark of special commendation. They strike a sort of average among their neighbors and if they cannot pretend to be the very best, yet, if they are not the very worst they are pretty comfortable. There are certain scribes and Pharisees among their acquaintance who fast three times a week and pay tithes of all they possess—and they look upon these as very superior persons whom they would not attempt to compete with. But they thank God that they are far above those horrible publicans and those dreadful sinners who are put outside the pale of society! They therefore feel quite easy in their minds and go to their places of worship as if they were saints.

They bear the name of Christian as if it belonged to them! They share in Christian privileges and sit with God's people as if they were truly of the family—their marks and evidences being just these—that they do about as much upon the whole as other people and if they are not first they are not altogether last. The nests of such people ought to be grievously disturbed when they read the chapter before us, for there the Master insists upon a higher standard than the world's highest and tells us that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees we cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

In our text the great Master asks of those who are professors of His faith that they should not only do as much as others to prove their title, but that they should do *more* than others. And He makes this a test question concerning their being really His followers—"What do you do more than others?" I shall try, this morning, first, to show that there are grounds for expecting more from Christians than from others. Secondly, I shall try to indicate the matters in which we naturally expect more from them than from others. And, thirdly, I shall give some reasons why it should be the aim of every saved soul to do more than others.

I. We will consider the GROUNDS FOR EXPECTING MORE FROM CHRISTIANS THAN FROM OTHERS. There are legitimate reasons why the world, the Church, and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself may expect more from Christians than from the rest of mankind. And the first is, because they profess more. Professions should always be supported by facts, or else they are deceits, fakes, and hypocrisies. A Christian professes himself to be a renewed man—he has learned the evil of sin—repented of it and fled from it to Christ Jesus. He professes to have been pardoned and to have received a new heart and a right spirit. He professes, also, to be a child of God and an heir of Heaven. Other men do not profess this. Some, who make no profession, wish that they could hope that these things belonged to them. Others of them altogether despise these things. But in neither case do they profess to be what the Christian is.

Now, Christian, if you profess this, your life must prove it! If your life gives the lie to your religious pretensions, you stand convicted of a flagrant falsehood—a fraud against men and a felony against God. It is a high crime and misdemeanor for a man to assume the name of a son of God when he is utterly devoid of the Divine nature and lives in unholiness! In proportion as the privilege and the honor of a child of God is great, the sin of false pretensions to Grace is increased. If you say you are regenerated, renewed, and sanctified—then *be* all that this means—or else cease your boasting! Vainly do they boast of scholarship who cannot read a letter, and idle is that vaunting of valor which leaves a man afraid of his shadow.

You remember the ancient story of the traveler who, upon his return to his native city, boasted of the extraordinary feats which he had performed, and how, in particular, he had astonished all by his amazing leaps. I forget how many paces he had cleared, but something very wonderful, indeed. Those who stood round opened their mouths in amazement as they heard the marvel, but one sage was less believing, and, therefore, marked out the exact length on the ground and said, “If you leaped as far as that abroad, perhaps you will do the same here, and then we will believe you.” The world, in these times, will be sure to ask for proofs—the age for mere assertion is over. Men will say to you, “You claim to have experienced this, and to be that—now, just act accordingly and we will believe you.”

And if you do not give them a fair and honest reply, they will not mutter it in secret places, but they will make it plain to your face that they believe you to be a pretender—but what is worse, they will blame the Christian religion of which you are so unworthy a professor! Alas, we may well blush for many of you professors! How might you blush for yourselves if you were capable of it! But it is to be feared that many are past shame and have bronze foreheads. How has Christ been dishonored, crucified afresh and put to all open shame by ungodly men who have dared to take His name upon themselves!

When one of the great painters was engaged upon the portraits of Peter and Paul, a cardinal who stood by observed that he thought the painter put too much red in their faces. “No,” said the artist, “it is to show how much the Apostles blush for the conduct of those who call themselves their successors.” You professors are the successors of the early saints, but do you not dishonor their names? In how many cases may your pastors blush for you, and weep over you because you cause the holy name to be blasphemed? Now we have all much cause for heart-searching here, but the misery is that the very men who have most cause to be anxious will refuse to search themselves. Instead of doing more than others, it is to be feared that many are not doing as much as others! Even worldly men are more honest than some professors and, I might add, more generous and more sober.

There are thousands who do not profess to be converted, who, nevertheless, are scrupulous in their dealings and exact in their mercantile transactions—while some base-born professors have fleeced

the public, have issued lying prospectuses of bubble companies and have ended in gigantic bankruptcies. If we have much of this, religion will be a scoff and a by-word throughout the land! God save us from making a profession if we have not Divine Grace to live up to it!

But, secondly, we may well expect more from Christians than others because it is a fact in the case of those who are truly Christians that they *are* more than others. It is not mere talk, it is a fact that the Believer in Christ is born again. He is not only as other men are, made by God, but he has been *twice* made, newly born, newly created in Christ Jesus. It is no fiction but a matter of truthful experience—we have passed from death unto life! We have received the Spirit of God into our souls which has implanted in us a new nature higher than the nature of other men—as much higher than the common soul of man as the soul of man is above the nature of the beast—for the children of God are partakers of the Divine Nature! God dwells in them, and the Spirit of God inhabits them as a king inhabits his palace.

They are more than other men. They are so not only because of their regeneration, but because of that eternal act of God which set them apart in the Covenant of Grace before the earth was. God has a chosen people. “I have chosen you out of the world,” says Christ. There are some upon whom everlasting love fixed its eyes of Grace before the mountains pierced the clouds or the rivers sought the sea. These are more than others, and are infinitely more indebted to God’s love than others. He has loved them with an everlasting love and because of this He has drawn them to Himself. These men, because chosen of God, have been redeemed as other men were not.

There is a sense in which the Atonement of Christ reaches to all mankind, but undoubtedly Scripture teaches us that there is a people whom Christ has “redeemed from among men.” “He laid down His life for His sheep.” “He loved His Church and gave Himself for it.” There is a particular redemption and in this every truly regenerated child of God is most certainly a partaker. Upon him is the blood mark and he is Christ’s! Of all such it may be said, “You are not your own, you are bought with a price.” They have God’s Nature in them. They have God’s election upon them. They have God’s redemption emancipating them so that they are more than others. They are precious sons of God while others are heirs of wrath—they are in the light while the whole world lies in darkness. They are sheep of His pasture while the rest of the world roams upon the wild mountains of vanity.

Now, if they are more than others, they ought to produce more than others in their lives. I will not insist upon the reasoning here because I rather appeal to every Believer’s *heart* than to his head. According as you have received so will love suggest to you to render. Can any holiness be too precise in return for the infinite love which has been bestowed upon you from before the foundation of the world? Can any service be too hard to repay the suffering which your Savior bore for your redemption? Can any self-denial be too severe to prove that the Holy Spirit in you has subdued your flesh and overcome your corruptions? I say the argument

appeals to your love—I will not utter it in legal tones lest you should think you hear the whip of the Law behind me. But even the Master, Himself, I think, would put it to you thus, “Inasmuch as I have loved you thus and have redeemed you with such a price, and have begotten you unto Myself by the power of My Spirit, what manner of people ought you to be in all holy conversation?” What must be expected from those so signally distinguished by the Sovereign Grace of God?

Again, it is certain that true Christians can do more than others. “Can,” says one, “why, they can do *nothing*.” True, but through Christ that strengthens them they can do all things! And Christ does strengthen His people. I admit their weakness. I admit, no, I *mourn* and experimentally *lament* in my own person their feebleness! But, for all that, they are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Jesus Christ lends to them His conquering energy, and, as His blood has overcome the enemy, they overcome through the blood of the Lamb. God has given them His Son, and in the power of Jesus they can and must vanquish sin!

Moreover, what is the indwelling Spirit within us? Is He not Omnipotence itself? The Holy Spirit who has come upon us is no influence which might be limited in its efficacy—He is a Divine Person who dwells with us and shall be in us. Who shall set any limit to the power of that man in whom the Holy Spirit, Himself, dwells? All Believers must never dare to say, “That habit we cannot give up.” We can and *must* overturn all the idols in our hearts. We may never say, “That height of devotion I can never reach.” Brethren, Omnipotence does gird us! God gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord! We are never to sit down and say, “I must be a sinner up to such-and-such a point. I cannot get beyond that attainment.” What says the Scripture? “Be you *perfect* even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.” We are to strain after this perfection, and towards this mark of our high calling we are to press.

God who dwells in us is working in us daily to will and to do according to His own good pleasure so that we can do what the dead sinner cannot do. We can do what sinners, without the Spirit, cannot do—and, if we can, we must. Surely, it is required of a man according to what he has, and where much is given much will be required. Let us take care that we quench not the Spirit—that by our unbelief we restrain not His Divine energies—but let us strive, God striving in us, after the highest conceivable standard of holiness and of separation from the world. O Spirit of God, help us that we may be sanctified by Your Grace—spirit, soul, and body!

Yet further, more is to be expected of Christians than others because they have more. “But they are poor,” says one. True, but the poorest Christian possesses more than the richest unbeliever. You shall set before me, now, the pauper who is a Believer and the emperor who has no faith in Christ. I am persuaded that the poor, aged pauper would not exchange her lot though the imperial purple should be offered her. She would refuse to leave her Savior though the world were offered to her. I think she would quote Dr. Watts and say—

“Go you that boast in all your stores,

***And tell how bright they shine.
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
But my Redeemer's mine."***

While the poor Believer feels that his God is his portion he despises, rather than covets, the glories of the world.

Brethren in Christ, you know right well that you possess the Covenant of Grace, a covenant rich beyond comparison. When Moses looked from the top of Nebo and saw the land from Lebanon even to the river of Egypt, no such prospect gladdened his gaze as that which rises before the eye of your faith when you survey the Covenant ordered in all things and sure. More than that, you have Christ in the Covenant, and Christ is All in All! All the glories of His immaculate Manhood and His infinite Godhead—all His merits, all His conquests, all His glories—all are yours, seeing you are His! And what is most of all, God is yours. "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people."

And having God to be your God, Providence is yours—all things work together for your good! Life's goods are yours and so are its ills. This world is yours and worlds beyond the river. Time and eternity—things present and things to come, life and death—all are yours! And yet no good thing was yours by natural inheritance. No good was yours by purchase from your own earnings or procurement of your own labor—they are all the gifts of the Sovereign Grace of God.

Brethren, we all debtors—who knows how much we owe? If I said to any of you, "Take your pen and sit down quickly and write how much you owe to your Lord," if you had to sit there till you completed the wondrous tale, you certainly would never leave those seats! Depths of mercy, that I, a sinner, should ever have a hope of Heaven, but oh, heights of mercy that I should be adopted into the family of God, and made a joint heir with Christ Jesus of all the heritage of the Firstborn of God! To have all that God is, and all that God has to be the portion of my cup—this is Grace indeed! My cup runs over!

Bless the Lord, O my Soul! And now, after all this, ought you not to do more than others? Shall the servant who has but his daily pay love the master better than the child who has the father's heart? Shall the stranger who comes into the house, occasionally, love the master of the house better than his spouse who is beloved of his soul? Oh, by the favors you have received, countless and immense—by the precious fountainhead of mercy from which all those favors come—by the many years in which goodness and mercy have followed you all your days, if you are not, indeed, insensible, and your hearts changed to adamant, I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, do more than others! Serve your Lord with an intensity which others cannot reach and live for Him with an ardor of which they cannot conceive. I think there is a good argument here! It will be powerful reasoning if you feel it to be so. Do you feel it, Brothers and Sisters? And feeling it, will you try to live it?

Believers ought to do more than others, in the next place, because they are looking for more than others. The ungodly man's lookout is dark and dreary. When he dares open the window and look, what does he see?

Come here, come here, ungodly man, I must take you to the battlements of your house and bid you look abroad. What do you see? Ah, he closes his eye and refuses to look, for he sees a river, the name of which is Death! And he sees that the waves are black and foaming with the wrath of God. Look, Sir, look, I pray you, for to close your eyes upon it will not dry it up. And do you see what is beyond that river? Ah, he dares not think, for after death to him comes Hell and the wrath of God! O Man, look, I beseech you, look! For it will be your portion unless you relent and fly to Christ for mercy! But no, he covers his eyes and gets back to his gaities, for he cannot bear to look at what will surely be his portion.

But come, Christian, you who have washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—what do *you* see? Suppose it should be your lot to die before the Master comes in the Second Advent—what do you see? “I see,” he says, “but a couch where I recline and close my eyes on earth to open them in Heaven! I see angels waiting round that bed, and the Master, the Lord of Life, ready to receive my spirit.” “What next do you see?” “No, I cannot tell you, for my eyes are dazzled with the Glory, and my tongue is not able to describe what God reveals to His children by His Spirit—but there is the never-ending Glory forever with the Lord—the rest that knows no fear, the Sabbath without end.”

Oh, the Glory, the Glory that lasts on forever in the Presence of the Master whom we have served, and the Father who has loved us of old! This is your prospect now! And Brothers and Sisters, as your prospect is so bright, I beseech you to do more than others!

II. This is a very large field but we must leave it because our time fails us, and we must call your attention to those MATTERS IN WHICH WE MAY NATURALLY LOOK FOR THE CHRISTIAN TO DO MORE THAN OTHERS. I thought I would not utter my own ideas this morning, but to fortify myself would go back to the Master’s own language. So I must refer you again to this fifth chapter of Matthew, and you will see, in looking from the 13th to the 16th verses, that our Lord expects His people to set a more godly example than others do. Observe they are to be the salt of the earth. They are to be the light of the world. They are to be as a city set on a hill, and therefore seen of all.

If you were not a professor, my Friend, you would certainly have some influence and be under responsibilities for it. But as a Christian your place in this world is peculiarly that of influence. You are not like a stone, affected by the atmosphere, or overgrown by moss—a merely passive thing. No! You are active, and are to affect others as the salt which operates and seasons. You are not an unlit candle which can exist without affecting others—you are a lighted candle, and you cannot be so lit without scattering light around. You are made on purpose to exert influence and your Master warns you that if your influence is not salutary and good you are a hopelessly *useless* person—for when the salt has lost its savor it is good for nothing but to be trampled under foot.

You are expected, therefore, to influence others for good. You are an employer? Let your influence be felt by your servants. You are a child at home? Let influence be felt around the social hearth. You are, perhaps, a

domestic servant. Then take care that, like the little maid who waited on Naaman's wife, you seek the good of the household. Your influence must act quietly and unostentatiously, like the influence of salt which is not noisy but yet potent. You cannot get through this world rightly by saying, "If I do no good, at least I do no hurt." That might be the plea of a stone or a brick, but it cannot be an apology for savorless salt—for if when the salt is rubbed into the meat it does not season and preserve it—it is bad salt and has not performed its work. It has caused loss to the owner and left the meat to become putrid. And if you in this world, according to your capacity and means, do not affect other people for good, you have convicted yourself of being a useless, worthless cumberer of the ground!

The Master expects, as He has put the pungent influence of His Grace into you, that you should be as salt! As He has put the burning light of His Grace upon you, He expects that you should be as a lamp and scatter light all round. Take good heed of that. It is no saying of *mine*—it is the saying of Him whom you call Master and Lord! Pretend you hear *Him* speaking it from those dear lips which are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh, and instead of seeing my hands lifted up in warning, pretend you see the print of the nails in His hands and let the words come home with force to your soul!

Next, if I read from the 17th to the 20th verses, I am taught that our Lord expects from His people a more exact performance of the Divine will than even the Pharisees pretend to give. Observe He speaks here about jots and tittles never passing away, and about those who break the least of His Commandments and teach men so. And I gather that He would have us observe the very least of His words and treasure up His Commandments. Do you think, dear Brothers and Sisters, there would be so many sects among Christians if all Believers honestly wanted to know the Truth of God and to know Christ's will? I do not think there would be. I cannot think our Lord has written a Book so doubtful and ambiguous in its expressions that men need differ in interpreting it upon plain points.

I am afraid we bring prejudice to it—the prejudice of our constitutional temperament, or of our parents, or of the Church with which we are associated—and we pay reverence to somebody else's book, perhaps a catechism, perhaps the book of Common Prayer, over and beyond the Bible itself! Now, this is all wrong and we must purge ourselves of it and come to the Word of God itself! And when we come to this Book, it must be candidly and humbly, with this feeling, "I desire now to unlearn the most precious doctrine or practice I have ever learned if the Lord will show me that it is inconsistent with His will. And I desire to learn that Truth which will bring me most into derision, or that ordinance which will submit me to the greatest inconvenience, if it is His will, for I am His servant. And I desire nothing to support my own opinion or to be my own rule."

I think we shall all get pretty near together, if, in the Spirit of God, we begin reading our Bibles in this way. Surely the Lord expects this of us! I do not think He expects this of some professors, for certainly He will never get it. They are quite satisfied to say, "I attend my parish Church, and

that is the faith of our Church.” Or, “My grandmother joined the Dissenters, and, therefore I keep to them, besides, after all, you know there are no sects in Heaven.” That last assertion is one of the most shallow pretences ever designed on earth to excuse men from being scrupulously obedient to every word of their Lord and Master! I do not doubt, O Disciple, but what you will reach Heaven, even though you mistake some of the Master’s teaching, but I do doubt your ever reaching there if you willfully despise His words or decline to learn what He came to teach!

Our Lord has said unto us, “Go you, therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” and therefore if you will not become disciples and learn of Christ, we have not even begun with you—neither can you be baptized or bear the name of the Triune God. Jesus will have you obey His will, as well as trust His Grace. Mind that, Beloved. This demand for exact obedience is no word of mine, but of the Master. Look again, from the 21st to the 26th verses, and though I do not pretend to expound every word, I remark that Christ would have His people excel all others in gentleness. Others will retaliate on those who vex them, and call them hard names and will even go the length of saying, “fool,” and, perhaps, go still further—even come to cursing and imprecating terrible judgments.

A quarrelsome man, when he is in a quarrel with another, rather takes pleasure in it. He does not care how many hate him or how many he hates—his religion is quite consistent with the worst temper. He can say his prayers, or he can offer his gifts to his God, and yet be as malicious as he likes. But with the Christian it is not so, and must not be so. We are to bear a great deal of wrong before we make any reply whatever. And when we do give an answer, we must, if we would be like our Master, give a gentle one! Heaping coals of fire upon the head of our enemy by returning abundant kindness is the right revenge for a Christian—and all other revenge is denied to him! He is not to stand upon his rights. He is rather to say, “I know it is my right, but I will yield it sooner than I will contend. I know this man does me an injustice, but I will bear it sooner than my temper shall be ruffled, or my spirit shall be defiled by an evil thought.”

“Oh,” says one, “this is a hard measure.” Do you think it so? Are you a Christian, then? For while in my soul I feel it is difficult, my heart feels I *desire* to do it and I love it, and aspire after it. And I think every real Christian, though by reason of infirmity he often breaks this blessed rule, yet sees the beauty of it and does not think it hard. No, rather the hard point to him is that he should fall so short of the gentle, loving Nature of his dear Lord and Master!

But I must pass on, for the next point in which the Christian is to excel is in purity. Read from the 27th to the 32nd verse—I do not go into particulars, but purity is earnestly commanded. The ungodly man says, “Well, I do not commit any act of fornication. You do not hear *me* sing a lascivious song,” and saying that, he feels content. But the Christian’s Master expects us to carry the point a great deal farther. An unchaste *look* is a crime to us, and an evil *thought* is a sin. Oh, it shocks me beyond

measure when I hear of professedly Christian people who fall into the commission of immodest actions—not such as are called criminal in common society—but loose, fleshly, and full of lasciviousness. I beseech you, all of you, in your conversation with one other avoid anything which has the appearance of impurity in this respect!

Looks and gestures, step by step, lead on to fouler things and sport which begins in folly ends in lewdness. Be chaste as the driven snow—let not an immodest glance defile you. We do not like to say much about these things, they are so delicate, and we tremble lest we should suggest what we would prevent, but, oh, by the tears of Jesus! By the wounds of Jesus! By the death of Jesus, hate even the garment spotted by the flesh! And avoid everything that savors of unchastity. Flee youthful lusts as Joseph did! Run any risk sooner than fall into uncleanness, for it is a deep ditch and the abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein. Strong temptations lie in wait for the young in a great city like this, but let the young man learn of God to cleanse his way by taking heed according to His Word. May you all be kept from falling and be presented faultless before the Presence of God with exceedingly great joy! You are not to be commonly chaste—you are to be much *more* than that—the very look and thought of impurity are to be hateful to you. Help us, O Spirit of God!

The Christian, next, is to be more than others in truthfulness. Read on from the 33rd to the 37th verses, and the gist of all is that whereas another man utters the truth because he swears, you are to speak the truth because you cannot do otherwise. Your ordinary word is to be as true as the extraordinary oath of the man who stands in the witness box in the court of justice. You are to avoid those evasions and modes of concealing truth which are common enough in trade. You are to avoid those exaggerations, those lies which are a common nuisance. Why, our advertisements swarm with lies! Our shop windows are daubed with them—such as, “tremendous sacrifices”—when the only sacrificed person is the customer! All the world sees through puffery, and yet even professors go on puffing and exaggerating.

Shun it, Christian! If you tell a man you sell him an article under cost, let it be under cost or do not say so. There are other modes of commending your wares which will be quite as effectual as falsehood. Scorn to earn a farthing by uttering that which is not true! And what you might allow in your next door neighbor, and say, “Well, he is under a different rule than I”—do not for a moment tolerate in yourself! The strict literal truth in all things should be the law of the child of God. Let your “yes,” be, “yes,” and your “no, no.” We have already touched upon the point which our Savior mentions from the 38th to the 42nd verses, namely, that the Christian should excel in forbearance. He should be ready to suffer wrong again and again sooner than be provoked to resistance, much less retaliation. That, I have already spoken of, but may we excel in it.

And lastly, from the 42nd to the 48th verse, our Savior shows that He expects us to excel in love to all mankind, and in the practical fruit of it in trying to do them good. We ought to be, above all others, the most loving

people and the most good-doing people. The man who buttons himself up within himself and says—"Well, let every man see to himself, that is what I say. Every man for himself and God for us all." The man who goes through the world paying his way with strict justice, but all the while having no heart to feel for the sick and the poor and the needy—the man with no care about anybody else's soul, his whole heart enclosed within his own ribs all buttoned up in his own broadcloth—such a man is very much like the devil. He is certainly not like Christ!

Our Lord Jesus Christ's heart was expansive and unselfish. He gave Himself for His *enemies* and died breathing a prayer over them! He never lived for Himself. You could not put your finger on one point of His life and say, "Here He lived for Himself alone." Neither His prayers nor His preaching, His miracles or His sufferings, His woes or His glories were with an eye to Himself. He saved others but Himself He would not save. His followers must in this follow Him closely. Selfishness is as foreign to Christianity as darkness to light! The true Christian *lives* to do good! He looks abroad to see whom he may serve, and with his eyes he looks upon the wicked, upon the fallen and the outcasts, seeking to reclaim them.

Yes, he looks upon his personal enemies in the same way and aims at winning them by repeated kindnesses. No nationality must confine his goodwill, no sect or clan monopolize his benevolence. No depravity of character or poverty of condition must sicken his loving kindness, for Jesus received sinners and ate with them. Our love must embrace those who lie hard by the gates of Hell and we must endeavor with words of truth and deeds of love to bring them to Christ who can lift them up to Heaven. Oh that you may all be gentle, quiet, meek in spirit, but full of an ardent, burning affection towards your fellow men! So shall you be known to be Christ's disciples.

"Oh," you say, "these are great things." Yes, but you have a great Spirit to help you, and you owe a great deal to your precious Lord and Master! Did I hear one say, "I will avoid sin by being very retired. I will find out a quiet place where I shall not be tempted and where I shall have few calls upon me." Pretty soldier you are, who, when your Captain says, "Win the victory," reply, "I will keep clear of the fight." No, Christian, go about your trade! Go into the busy mart—attend to your business, attend to your family, attend to those matters which God has allotted to you—and glorify God in the battle of life by doing more than others! May God enable you to do so.

III. Now, into about two minutes we must condense what ought to have occupied at least a quarter-of an-hour. The last head was to deal with REASONS FOR OUR DOING MORE THAN OTHERS. They are just these. First, by our fruits we are known. Men will never know us by our *faith*, for that is *within* us. They know us by our *works* which are visible to them. Bring forth, therefore, the fruits of Divine Grace that the world may know you have been with Jesus!

Remember, also, that works are to be evidence at the last. It is consistent with the Gospel of Grace, no doubt, for it is a Truth of God clearly revealed, that we shall be judged according to the deeds done in

the body, whether they are good or whether they are evil. And you know that when the Lord gave us the description of the judgment, He did not say to His disciples, “You believed in Me,” or, “You loved Me”—these were *secret* matters. No, He said, “I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was sick and in prison, and you visited Me.” It is by your *works* you will be judged.

O Believers, may Grace enable you to abound in them! It is by such works that the mouths of gainsayers are to be stopped. One holy action is a better argument against blasphemers than a thousand eloquent discourses. You are our replies to skeptics—you, having been rescued from sin, maintain a life of holiness. When they see the men that are healed, standing with Peter and John, they can say nothing against them. Oh, by your works confuse gainsayers! These works, too, bring glory to God. “That they, seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in Heaven.” And these works also ensure peace to your own conscience and have much to do with your close communion with God. “How can two walk together except they are agreed?”

If you walk contrary to Him, He will walk contrary to you. Your sins will separate you and your God, but the Holy Spirit, where He maintains holiness, maintains peace and communion in the soul. “If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” “If you keep My commandments,” says the Savior, “You shall abide in My love”—shall abide in the conscious fellowship of that love and in the enjoyment of it! May God help you, may God help you, for His name’s sake!

Look here, you who say you believe in Christ but are living in sin—what does this make of your boasting? Look here, you that say, “I have only to believe by-and-by, and I may live as I like, and yet be saved.” Is it so? Is it so? “If the righteous scarcely are saved, where will the ungodly and the wicked appear?” As for those whose ungodly lives stare them in the face—so far from being saved by their pretended faith—they are trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots! If they say they continue in sin that Grace may abound, their damnation is just! The salvation of Christ is not a salvation *in* sin, but a salvation *from* sin.

They who would be saved by Him must come and trust Him just as they are, and He will enable them to forsake their sin. But while they continue to say, “We will take pleasure in sin,” there is no salvation possible for them. God bring us to Christ and nail our sins to His Cross, and give us life in our Savior’s life. Amen.

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THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

NO. 213

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Our Father which are in Heaven.”
Matthew 6:9.***

I THINK there is room for very great doubt, whether our Savior intended the prayer, of which our text forms a part, to be used in the manner in which it is commonly employed among professing Christians. It is the custom of many persons to repeat it as their morning prayer and they think that when they have repeated these sacred words they have done enough. I believe that this prayer was never intended for universal use. Jesus Christ taught it not to all men, but to His disciples, and it is a prayer adapted only to those who are the possessors of grace and are truly converted. In the lips of an ungodly man it is entirely out of place. Does not one say, “You are of your father the devil, for his works you do?” Why, then, should you mock God by saying, “Our Father which are in Heaven?”

For how can He be your Father? Have you two Fathers? And if He is a Father, where is His honor? Where is His love? You neither honor nor love Him and yet you presumptuously and blasphemously approach Him and say, “Our Father,” when your heart is attached still to sin and your life is opposed to His Law and you therefore prove yourself to be an heir of wrath and not a child of grace! Oh, I beseech you, leave off sacrilegiously employing these sacred words. And until you can in sincerity and truth say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” and in your lives seek to honor His holy name, do not offer to Him the language of the hypocrite—which is an abomination to Him.

I very much question also, whether this prayer was intended to be used by Christ’s own disciples as a constant form of prayer. It seems to me that Christ gave it as a model, whereby we are to fashion all our prayers and I think we may use it to edification and with great sincerity and earnestness only at certain times and seasons. I have seen an architect form the model of a building he intends to erect of plaster or wood. But I never had an idea that it was intended for me to live in. I have seen an artist trace on a piece of brown paper, perhaps, a design which he intended afterwards to work out on more costly stuff. But I never imagined the design to be the thing itself. This prayer of Christ is a great chart, as it were. But I cannot cross the sea on a chart. It is a map. But a man is not a traveler

because he puts his fingers across a map. And so a man may use this form of prayer and yet be a total stranger to the great design of Christ in teaching it to His disciples.

I feel that I cannot use this prayer to the omission of others. Great as it is, it does not express all I desire to say to my Father which is in Heaven. There are many sins which I must confess separately and distinctly. And the various other petitions which this prayer contains require, I feel, to be expanded when I come before God in private. And I must pour out my heart in the language which His Spirit gives me. And more than that, I must trust in the Spirit to speak the unutterable groans of my spirit, when my lips cannot actually express all the emotions of my heart. Let none despise this prayer. It is matchless and if we must have *forms* of prayer, let us have this first, foremost and chief. But let none think that Christ would tie His disciples to the constant and only use of this. Let us rather draw near to the Throne of heavenly Grace with boldness, as children coming to a father and let us tell forth our wants and our sorrows in the language which the Holy Spirit teaches us.

And now, coming to the text, there are several things we have to notice here. And first, I shall dwell for a few minutes upon *the double relationship mentioned*—"Our Father which are in Heaven." There is *sonship*—"Father." There is *brotherhood*, for it says, "*Our Father.*" And if He is the common father of us, then we must be brothers. For there are two relationships, sonship and brotherhood. In the next place, I shall utter a few words upon the spirit which is necessary to help us before we are able to utter this—"The spirit of adoption," whereby we can cry, "Our Father which are in Heaven." And then, thirdly, I shall conclude with *the double argument* of the text, for it is really an argument upon which the rest of the prayer is based. "Our Father which are in Heaven," is, as it were, a strong argument used before supplication itself is presented.

I. First, THE DOUBLE RELATIONSHIP IMPLIED IN THE TEXT.

We take the first one. Here is *sonship*—"Our Father which are in Heaven." How are we to understand this and in what sense are we the sons and daughters of God? Some say that the Fatherhood of God is universal and that every man, from the fact of his being created by God, is necessarily God's son. They say, therefore, every man has a right to approach the Throne of God and say, "Our Father which are in Heaven." To that I must disagree. I believe that in this prayer we are to come before God, looking upon Him not as our Father through creation, but as our Father through *adoption* and the new birth. I will very briefly state my reasons for this.

I have never been able to see that creation necessarily implies fatherhood. I believe God has made many things that are not His children. Has

He not made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the fullness thereof? And are they His children? You say these are not rational and intelligent beings. But He made the angels who stand in an eminently high and holy position—are they His children? “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, you are My son?” I do not find, as a rule, that angels are called the children of God. And I must disagree with the idea that mere creation brings God necessarily into the relationship of a Father with us.

Does not the potter make vessels of clay? But is the potter the father of the vase, or of the bottle? No, Beloved, it needs something beyond creation to constitute the *relationship* and those who can say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” are something more than God’s creatures—they have been *adopted* into His family. He has taken them out of the old sin family in which they were born. He has washed them and cleansed them and given them a new name and a new spirit and made them “Heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” And all this of His own free, sovereign, unmerited, distinguishing grace.

And having adopted them to be His children, He has in the next place, *regenerated them by the Spirit of the living God*. He has “begotten them again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” And no man has a right to claim God as his Father unless he feels in his soul and believes, solemnly, through the faith of God’s election, that he has been adopted into the one family of which is in Heaven and earth and that he has been regenerated or born again.

This relationship also involves *love*. If God is my Father, He loves me. And oh, how He loves me! When God is a Husband He is the best of husbands. Widows, somehow or other, are always well cared for. When God is a Friend, He is the best of friends and sticks closer than a brother. And when He is a Father He is the best of fathers. O Fathers, perhaps you do not know how much you love your children! When they are sick you know, for you stand by their couches and you pity them, as their little frames are writhing in pain. Well, “like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” You know how you love your children, too, when they grieve you by their sin. Anger arises and you are ready to chasten them, but no sooner is the tear in their eye than your hand is heavy and you feel that you had rather smite yourself than smite them. And every time you smite them you seem to cry, “Oh that I should have thus to afflict my child for his sin! Oh that I could suffer in his place!” And God, even our Father, “does not afflict willingly.” Is not that a sweet thing? He is, as it were, *compelled* to it. Even the eternal arm is not *willing* to do it. It is only His great love and deep wisdom that brings down the blow.

But if you want to know your love to your children, you will know it most if they die. David knew that he loved his son Absalom, but he never

knew how much he loved him till he heard that he had been slain and that he had been buried by Joshua. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." He knows, then, how deep and pure is the love that death can never sever and the terrors of eternity never can unbind. But, Parents, although you love your children much and you know it, you do not know and you cannot tell how deep is the unfathomable abyss of the love of God to you. Go out at midnight and consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained. And I am sure you will say, "What is man, that You should be mindful of him?" But, more than all, you will wonder, not at your loving Him, but that while He has all these treasures, He should set His heart upon so insignificant a creature as man. And the sonship that God has given us is not a mere *name*. There is all our Father's great heart given to us in the moment when He claims us as His sons.

But if this sonship involves the love of God to us, it involves also, the duty of *love to God*. Oh, Heir of Heaven, if you are God's child, will you not love your Father? What son is there that loves not his father? Is he not less than human if he loves not his sire? Let his name be blotted from the book of remembrance that loves not the woman that brought him forth and the father that begat him. And we, the chosen favorites of Heaven, adopted and regenerated, shall not we love Him? Shall we not say, "Whom have I in Heaven but You and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with You? My Father, I will give You my heart. You shall be the guide of my youth. You do love me and the little heart that I have shall be all Yours forever"?

Furthermore, if we say, "Our Father which are in Heaven," we must remember that our being sons involves the duty of *obedience to God*. When I say "My Father," it is not for me to rise up and go in rebellion against His wishes. If He is my Father let me note His commands and let me reverentially obey. If He has said, "Do this," let me do it, not because I dread Him, but because I love Him. And if He forbids me to do anything, let me avoid it. There are some persons in the world who have not the spirit of adoption and they can never be brought to do a thing unless they see some advantage to themselves in it. But with the child of God, there is no motive at all. He can boldly say, "I have never done a right thing since I have followed Christ because I asked to get to Heaven by it, nor have I ever avoided a wrong thing because I was afraid of being damned."

The child of God knows his good works do not make him acceptable to God, for he was acceptable to God by Jesus Christ long before he had any good works. And the fear of Hell does not affect him, for he knows that he is delivered from that and shall never come into condemnation, having passed from death unto life. He acts from pure love and gratitude and un-

til we come to that state of mind, I do not think there is such a thing as virtue. For if a man has done what is called a virtuous action because he asked to get to Heaven or to avoid Hell by it, whom has he served? Has he not served himself? And what is that but selfishness? But the man who has no Hell to fear and no Heaven to gain, because Heaven is his own and Hell he never can enter—that man is capable of virtue. For he says—

***“Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss.
I pour contempt on all my shame,
And nail my glory to His Cross”—***

to His Cross who loved and lived and died for me who loved Him not, but who desires *now* to love Him with all my heart and soul and strength.

And now permit me to draw your attention to one encouraging thought that may help to cheer the downcast and Satan-tempted child of God. *Sonship is a thing which all the infirmities of our flesh and all the sins into which we are hurried by temptation can never violate or weaken.* A man has a child—that child on a sudden is bereaved of its senses. It becomes an idiot. What a grief that is to a father, for a child to become a lunatic or an idiot and to exist only as an animal, apparently without a soul! But the idiot child is a child and the lunatic child is a child still. And if we are the fathers of such children they are ours and all the idiocy and all the lunacy that can possibly befall them can never shake the fact that they are our sons. Oh, what a mercy, when we transfer this to God’s case and ours! How foolish we are sometimes—how worse than foolish! We may say as David did, “I was as a beast before You.” God brings before us the Truths of His kingdom. We cannot see their beauty, we cannot appreciate them. We seem to be as if we were totally demented, ignorant, unstable, weary and apt to slide.

But, thanks be unto God, we are His children still! And if there is anything worse that can happen to a father than his child becoming a lunatic or an idiot, it is when he grows up to be wicked. It is well said, “Children are doubtful blessings.” I remember to have heard one say and, as I thought, not very kindly, to a mother with an infant at her breast—“Woman, you may be suckling a viper there!” It stung the mother to the quick and it was not needful to have said it. But how often is it the fact, that the child that has hung upon its mother’s breast, when it grows up, brings that mother’s gray hairs with sorrow to the grave!—

***“Oh! Sharper than a serpents tooth
To have a thankless child!”—
Ungodly, vile, debauched—a blasphemer!”***

But mark, Brethren—if he is a child he cannot lose his child-ship, nor we our fatherhood, be he who or what he may. Let him be transported beyond the seas, he is still our son. Let us deny him the house because his

conversation might lead others of our children into sin—yet our son he is and must be and when the sod shall cover his head and ours—“father and son” shall still be on the tombstone. The relationship never can be severed as long as time shall last. The prodigal was his father’s son—when he was among the harlots and when he was feeding swine. And God’s children are God’s children anywhere and everywhere and shall be even unto the end. Nothing can sever that sacred tie, or divide us from His heart.

There is yet another thought that may cheer the Little-Faiths and Feeble-Minds. *The fatherhood of God is common to all His children.* Ah, Little-Faith, you have often looked up to Mr. Great-Heart and you have said, “Oh that I had the courage of Great-Heart, that I could wield his sword and cut old giant Grim in pieces! Oh that I could fight the dragons and that I could overcome the lions! But I am stumbling at every straw and a shadow makes me afraid.” Listen, Little-Faith. Great-Heart is God’s child and you are God’s child, too. And Great-Heart is not a whit more God’s child than you are. David was the son of God, but not more the son of God than you. Peter and Paul, the highly-favored Apostles, were of the family of the Most High. And so are you. You have children yourselves—one is a son grown up and out in business, perhaps, and you have another, a little thing still in arms. Which is more your child, the little one or the big one? “Both alike,” you say. “This little one is my child near my heart and the big one is my child, too.”

And so the little Christian is as much a child of God as the great one—

***“This covenant stands secure,
Though earth’s old pillars bow.
The strong, the feeble and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now”***

and they are one in the family of God and no one is ahead of the other. One may have more grace than another, but God does not love one more than another. One may be an older child than another, but he is not more a child. One may do more mighty works and may bring more glory to his Father, but he whose name is the least in the kingdom of Heaven is as much the child of God as he who stands among the king’s mighty men. Let this cheer and comfort us, when we draw near to God and say, “Our Father which are in Heaven.”

I will make but one more remark before I leave this point, namely this—that *our being the children of God brings with it innumerable privileges.* Time would fail me if I were to attempt to read the long roll of the Christian’s joyous privileges. I am God’s child—if so, He will clothe me. My shoes shall be iron and brass. He will array me with the robe of my Savior’s righteousness, for He has said, “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” And He has also said that He will put a crown of pure gold upon

my head and inasmuch as I am a king's son, I shall have a royal crown. Am I His child? Then He will feed me. My bread shall be given me and my water shall be sure. He that feeds the ravens will never let His children starve. If a good husbandman feeds the barn-door fowl and the sheep and the bullocks, certainly God's children shall not starve.

Does my Father deck the lily and shall I go naked? Does He feed the fowls that sow not, neither do they reap and shall I feel necessity? God forbid! My Father knows what things I have need of before I ask Him and He will give me all I need. If I am His child, then I have a portion in His heart here and I shall have a portion in His house above, for "if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." "If we suffer with Him we shall be also glorified together." And oh, Brethren, what a prospect this opens up! The fact of our being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ proves that all things are ours—the gift of God, the purchase of a Savior's blood—

***"This world is ours and worlds to come;
Earth is our lodge and Heaven our home."***

Are there crowns? They are mine if I am an heir. Are there thrones? Are there dominions? Are there harps, palm branches, white robes? Are there glories that eye has not seen? And is there music that ear has not heard? All these are mine, if I am a child of God. "And it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He is, for we shall see Him as He is." Talk of princes and kings and potentates—their inheritance is but a pitiful foot of land across which the bird's wing can soon direct its flight. But the broad acres of the Christian cannot be measured by eternity. He is rich, without a limit to his wealth. He is blessed, without a boundary to his bliss. All this and more than I can enumerate is involved in our being able to say, "Our Father which are in Heaven."

The second tie of the text is *brotherhood*. It does not say *my* Father, but *our* Father. Then it seems there are a great many in the family. I will be very brief on this point. "Our Father." When you pray that prayer, remember you have a good many brothers and sisters that do not know their Father yet and you must include them all. For all God's elect ones, though they are uncalled as yet, are still His children, though they know it not. In one of Krummacher's beautiful little parables there is a story like this—"Abraham sat one day in the grove at Mamre, leaning his head on his hand and sorrowing. Then his son, Isaac, came to him and said, 'My father, why do you mourn? What ails you?' Abraham answered and said, 'My soul mourns for the people of Canaan, that they know not the Lord, but walk in their own ways, in darkness and foolishness.' 'Oh, my father,'

answered the son, is it only this? Let not your heart be sorrowful. For are not these their own ways?’

“Then the Patriarch rose up from his seat and said, ‘Come now, follow me.’ And he led the youth to a hut and said to him, ‘Behold.’ There was a child which was an imbecile and the mother sat weeping by it. Abraham asked her, ‘Why do you weep?’ Then the mother said, ‘Alas, this my son eats and drinks and we minister unto him. But he knows not the face of his father, nor of his mother. Thus his life is lost and this source of joy is sealed to him.’ ”

Is not that a sweet little parable, to teach us how we ought to pray for the many sheep that are not yet of the fold, but which must be brought in? We ought to pray for them, because they do not know their Father. Christ has bought them and they do not know Christ. The Father has loved them from before the foundation of the world and yet they know not the face of their Father. When you say “Our Father,” think of the many of your brothers and sisters that are in the back streets of London, that are in the dens and caves of Satan. Think of your poor brother that is intoxicated with the spirit of the devil. Think of him led astray to infamy and lust and perhaps to murder and in your prayer pray for them who know not the Lord.

“Our Father.” That includes those of God’s children who differ from us in their doctrine. Ah, there are some that differ from us as wide as the poles. But yet they are God’s children. Come, Mr. Bigot, do not kneel down and say, “My Father,” but “Our Father.” “If you please, I cannot put in Sir So-and-So, for I think he is a heretic.” Put him in, Sir. God has put him in and you must put him in, too, and say, “Our Father.”

Is it not remarkable how very much alike all God’s people are upon their knees? Some time ago at a Prayer Meeting I called upon two brothers in Christ to pray one after another—the one a Wesleyan and the other a strong Calvinist. And the Wesleyan prayed the most Calvinistic prayer of the two, I do believe—at least, I could not tell which was which. I listened to see if I could not discern some peculiarity even in their phraseology, but there was none. “Saints in prayer appear as one.” For when they get on their knees, they are all compelled to say, “Our Father,” and all their language afterwards is of the same sort.

When you pray to God put in the poor. For is he not the Father of many of the poor, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, though they are poor in this world? Come, my Sister, if you bow your knee amid the rustling of silk and satin, yet remember the cotton and the print. My Brother, is there wealth in your hand? Remember your Brethren of the rough hand and the dusty brow. Remember those who could not wear what you wear, nor eat what you eat, but are as Lazarus compared with you, while you

are as Dives. Pray for them. Put them all in the same prayer and say, "Our Father."

And pray for those that are divided from us by the sea—those that are in heathen lands, scattered like precious salt in the midst of this world's putrefaction. Pray for all that name the name of Jesus and let your prayer be a great and comprehensive one. "Our Father, which are in Heaven." And after you have prayed that, rise up and act it. Say not "Our Father," and then look upon your Brethren with a sneer or a frown. I beseech you, live like a Brother and act like a Brother. Help the needy. Cheer the sick. Comfort the faint-hearted. Go about doing good, minister unto the suffering people of God wherever you find them. Let the world take notice of you—that you are when on your feet what you are upon your knees—that you are a Brother unto all the brotherhood of Christ, a Brother born for adversity, like your Master Himself.

II. Having thus expounded the double relationship, I have left myself but little time for a very important part of the subject, namely, THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION.

I am extremely puzzled and bewildered how to explain to the ungodly what is the spirit with which we must be filled before we can pray this prayer. If I had a foundling here, one who had never seen either father or mother, I think I should have a very great difficulty in trying to make him understand what are the feelings of a child towards its father. Poor little thing, he has been under tutors and governors. He has learned to respect them for their kindness, or to fear them for their austerity, but there never can be in that child's heart that love towards tutor or governor, however kind he may be, that there is in the heart of another child towards his own mother or father.

There is a nameless charm there—we cannot describe or understand it—it is a sacred touch of nature, a throb in the breast that God has put there and cannot be taken away. The fatherhood is recognized by the child-ship of the child. And what is that spirit of a child—that sweet spirit that makes him recognize and love his father? I cannot tell you unless you are a child yourself and then you will know. And what is "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father?" I cannot tell you. But if you have felt it you will know it. It is a sweet compound of faith that knows God to be my Father, love that loves Him as my Father, joy that rejoices in Him as my Father, fear that trembles to disobey Him because He is my Father and a confident affection and trustfulness that relies upon Him and casts itself wholly upon Him, because it knows by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit, that Jehovah, the God of earth and Heaven, is the Father of my heart.

Oh, have you ever felt the spirit of adoption? There is nothing like it beneath the sky! Save Heaven itself there is nothing more blissful than to enjoy that spirit of adoption. Oh, when the wind of trouble is blowing and waves of adversity are rising and the ship is reeling to the rock—how sweet, then, to say, “My Father”—and to believe that His strong hand is on the helm! What joy when the bones are aching and when the loins are filled with pain and when the cup is brimming with wormwood and gall, to say, “My Father,” and seeing that Father’s hand holding the cup to the lip, to drink it steadily to the very dregs because we can say, “My Father, not my will, but Yours be done.” Martin Luther says, in his Exposition of Galatians, “there is more eloquence in that word, ‘Abba, Father,’ than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero put together.” “My Father!” Oh, there is music there. There is eloquence there. There is the very essence of Heaven’s own bliss in that word, “My Father,” when applied to God and when said by us with an unfaltering tongue through the inspiration of the Spirit of the living God.

My Hearers, have you the spirit of adoption? If not, you are miserable men. May God Himself bring you to know Him! May He teach you your need of Him! May He lead you to the Cross of Christ and help you to look to your dying Brother! May He bathe you in the blood that flowed from His open wounds and then, accepted in the Beloved, may you rejoice that you have the honor to be one of that sacred family.

III. And now, in the last place, I said that there was in the title, A DOUBLE ARGUMENT. “Our Father.” That is, “Lord, hear what I have got to say. You are my Father.” If I come before a judge I have no right to expect that he shall hear me at any particular season in anything that I have to say. If I came merely to crave for some prize or benefit to myself, if the law were on my side, then I could demand an audience at his hands. But when I come as a law-breaker and only come to crave for mercy, or for favors I deserve not, I have no right to expect to be heard. But a child, even though he is erring, always expects his father will hear what he has to say.

“Lord, if I call You King You will say, ‘You are a rebellious subject, get you gone.’ If I call You Judge You will say, ‘Be still, or out of your own mouth will I condemn you.’ If I call You Creator You will say unto me, ‘It grieves Me that I made man upon the earth.’ If I call You my Preserver You will say unto me, ‘I have preserved you, but you have rebelled against Me.’ But if I call You Father, all my sinfulness does not invalidate my claim. If You are my Father, then You love me. If I am Your child, then You will regard me and poor, though my language is, you will not despise it.”

If a child were called upon to speak in the presence of a number of persons, how very much alarmed he would be lest he should not use right

language. I may sometimes fear when I have to address a mighty auditory, lest I should not select choice words, full-well knowing that if I were to preach as I never shall, like the mightiest of orators I should always have enough of carping critics to rail at me. But if I had my Father here and if you could all stand in the relationship of father to me, I should not be very particular what language I used. When I talk to my Father I am not afraid He will misunderstand me. If I put my words a little out of place He understands my meaning somehow.

When we are little children we only prattle—still our father understands us. Our children talk a great deal more like Dutchmen than Englishmen when they begin to talk and strangers come in and say, “Dear me, what is the child talking about?” But we know what it is and though in what they say there may not be an intelligible sound that anyone could print and a reader make it out, we know they have got certain little wants and having a way of expressing their desires we can understand them.

So when we come to God, our prayers are little broken things. We cannot put them together but our Father, He will hear us. Oh, what a beginning is “Our Father,” to a prayer full of faults and a foolish prayer perhaps, a prayer in which we are going to ask what we ought not to ask for! “Father, forgive the language! Forgive the matter!”

As one dear Brother said the other day at the Prayer Meeting, he could not get on in prayer and he finished up on a sudden by saying, “Lord, I cannot pray tonight as I should wish. I cannot put the words together. Lord, take the meaning, take the meaning,” and sat down. That is just what David said once, “Lo, all my desire is before You”—not my words, but my *desire* and God could read it. We should say, “Our Father,” because that is a reason why God should hear what we have to say.

But there is another argument. “Our Father.” “Lord, give me what I need.” If I come to a stranger, I have no right to expect he will give it to me. He may out of his charity. But if I come to a *father*, I have a claim, a sacred claim. My Father, I shall have no need to use arguments to move Your bosom. I shall not have to speak to You as the beggar who cries in the street. For because You *are* my Father You know my needs and You are willing to relieve me. It is Your business to relieve me. I can come confidently to You, knowing You will give me all I need.

If we ask our father for anything when we are little children, we are under an obligation certainly. But it is an obligation we never feel. If you were hungry and your father fed you, would you feel an obligation like you would if you went into the house of a stranger? You go into a stranger’s house trembling and you tell him you are hungry. Will he feed you? He says yes, he will give you something. But if you go to your father’s table, almost without asking, you sit down as a matter of course and feast to

your full and you rise and go and feel you are indebted to him. But there is not a grievous sense of obligation.

Now, we are all deeply under obligation to God, but it is a child's obligation—an obligation which impels us to gratitude, but which does not constrain us to feel that we have been demeaned by it. Oh, if He were not my Father, how could I expect that He would relieve my needs? But since He is my Father, He will, He must hear, my prayers and answer the voice of my crying and supply all my needs out of the riches of His fullness in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Has your father treated you badly lately? I have this word to you, then. Your father loves you quite as much when he treats you roughly as when he treats you kindly. There is often more love in an angry father's heart than there is in the heart of a father who is too kind. I will suppose a case. Suppose there were two fathers and their two sons went away to some remote part of the earth where idolatry is still practiced. Suppose these two sons were decoyed and deluded into idolatry. The news comes to England and the first father is very angry. His son, his own son, has forsaken the religion of Christ and become an idolater.

The second father says, "Well, if it will help him in trade I don't care. If he gets on the better by it, all well and good." Now, which loves more, the angry father, or the father who treats the matter with complacency? Why, the angry father is the better. He loves his son—therefore he cannot give away his son's soul for gold. Give me a father that is angry with my sins and that seeks to bring me back, even though it be by chastisement. Thank God you have got a Father that can be angry, but that loves you as much when He is angry as when He smiles upon you.

Go away with that upon your mind and rejoice. But if you love not God and fear Him not, go home, I beseech you, to confess your sins and to seek mercy through the blood of Christ. And may this sermon be made useful in bringing you into the family of Christ though you have strayed from Him long. And though His love has followed you long in vain, may it now find you and bring you to His house rejoicing!

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A HEAVENLY PATTERN FOR OUR EARTHLY LIFE NO. 1778

**A SERMON PREACHED ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, APRIL 30, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT EXETER HALL,
BEING THE ANNUAL SERMON OF THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.**

***“Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.”
Matthew 6:10.***

OUR Father’s will shall certainly be done, for the Lord “does according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” Let us adoringly consent that it shall be so, desiring no alteration therein. That “will” may cost us dearly, yet let it never cross *our* wills—let our minds be wholly subjugated to the mind of God. That “will” may bring us bereavement, sickness and loss, but let us learn to say, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him.” We should not only yield to the Divine will, but acquiesce in it so as to rejoice in the tribulation which it ordains. This is a high attainment, but we set ourselves to reach it. He that taught us this prayer used it, Himself, in the most unrestricted sense. When the bloody sweat stood on His face and all the fear and trembling of a man in anguish were upon Him, He did not dispute the decree of the Father, but bowed His head and cried. “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

When we are called to suffer bereavements personally, or when, as a holy brotherhood, we see our best men taken away, let us know that it is well and say most sincerely, “The will of the Lord be done.” God knows what will best minister to His gracious designs. To us it seems a sad waste of human life that man after man should go to a malarious region and perish in the attempt to save the heathen. But Infinite Wisdom may view the matter very differently. We ask why the Lord does not work a miracle and cover the heads of His messengers from the death shaft? No reason is revealed to us, but there *is* a reason, for the will of the great Father is the sum of wisdom. Reasons are not made known to us, else were there no scope for our faith—and the Lord loves that this noble Grace should have ample room and enough space. Our God wastes no consecrated life—He has made nothing in vain—He ordains all things according to the counsel of His will and that counsel never errs.

Could the Lord endow us with His own Omniscience, we would not only consent to the deaths of His servants, but should deprecate their longer life. The same would be true of our own living or dying. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” and, therefore, we are sure that He does not afflict us with bereavement without a necessity of love. We must still see one missionary after another cut down in his prime, for there are arguments with God, as convincing with Him as they are ob-

scure to us, which require that by heroic sacrifice the foundations of the African Church should be laid. Lord, we do not ask You to explain Your reasons to us. You can screen us from a great temptation by hiding Yourself, for if even now we sin by asking reasons, we might soon go further and sorely provoke You by contending against Your reasons.

He who demands a reason of God is not in a fit state to receive one. In the case of the honored men whom the Lord has removed from us this year, there is assuredly no loss to the great cause as it is viewed by the eyes of God. See the great stones and costly stones laboriously brought from the quarry to the edge of the sea! Can it be possible that these are deliberately thrown into the deep? It swallows them up! Why is so much labor thrown away? These living stones might surely have been built into a temple for the Lord—why should the waves of death engulf them? Yet more are sought for and still more—will the hungry abyss never cease to devour? Alas, that so much precious material should be lost! It is not lost! No, not a stone of it! Thus the Lord lays the foundation of His harbor of refuge among the people. “Mercy shall be built up forever.”

In due time massive walls shall rise out of the deep and we shall no longer ask the reason for the losses of early days. Peace be to the memories of the heroic dead! Men die that the cause may live. “Father, Your will be done.” With this prayer upon our lips, let us bend low in child-like submission to the will of the great Jehovah, and then gird up our loins anew to dauntless perseverance in our holy service. Though more should be taken away next year and the next, yet we must pray on, “Your will be done in earth as it is in Heaven.” My heart is grieved for the death of the beloved Hartley and those noble men who preceded him to “the white man’s grave.” I had seen *him* especially, for it had been a joy to assist him for three years in preparing for missionary service. Alas, the preparation led to small visible results! He left us, he landed and he died.

Surely the Lord means to make further use of him. If He did not make him a preacher to the natives, he must intend that he should preach to us. I may say of each fallen missionary, “He, being dead, yet speaks.” “Faithful unto death,” they inspire us by their example! Dying without regret in the cause of such a Master, they remind us of our own indebtedness to Him! Their spirits rising to His throne are links between this Society and the glorified assembly above. Let not our thoughts go downward to their graves, but rise upward to their thrones! Does not our text point with a finger of flame from earth to Heaven? Do not the dear departed ones mark a line of light between the two worlds? If the prayer of our text had not been dictated by the Lord Jesus, Himself, we might think it too bold. Can it ever be that this earth, a mere drop in a bucket, should touch the great sea of life and light above and not be lost in it? Can it remain earth and yet be made like to Heaven? Will it not lose its individuality in the process?

This earth is subject to vanity, dimmed with ignorance, defiled with sin, furrowed with sorrow—can holiness dwell in it as in Heaven? Our Divine Instructor would not teach us to pray for impossibilities! He puts such petitions into our mouths as can be heard and answered. Yet certainly this is a great prayer—it has the hue of the infinite about it. Can earth be tuned to the harmonies of Heaven? Has not this poor planet drifted too far

away to be reduced to order and made to keep rank with Heaven? Is it not swathed in mist too dense to be removed? Can its grave clothes be loosed? Can Your will, O God, be done in earth as it is in Heaven?

It can be and it *must* be, for a prayer worked in the soul by the Holy Spirit is always the shadow of a coming blessing, and He that taught us to pray after this manner did not mock us with vain words! It is a brave prayer, which only a Heaven-born faith can utter, yet it is not the offspring of presumption, for presumption never longs for the will of the Lord to be perfectly performed!

I. May the Holy Spirit be with us, while I first lead you to observe that THE COMPARISON IS NOT FAR-FETCHED. That our present obedience to God should be like that of holy ones above is not a strained and fanatical notion. It is not far-fetched, *for earth and Heaven were called into being by the same Creator*. The empire of the Maker comprehends the upper and the lower regions. “The Heaven, even the heavens are the Lord’s” and, “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” He sustains all things by the word of His power both in Heaven above and in the earth beneath. Jesus reigns both among angels and men, for He is Lord of all! If, then, Heaven and earth were created by the same God, are sustained by the same power and governed from the same throne, we believe that the same end will be subserved by each of them, and that both Heaven and earth shall tell out the glory of God!

They are two bells of the same chime and this is the music that peals forth from them—“The Lord shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!” If earth were of the devil and Heaven were of God—and two self-existent powers were contending for the mastery—we might question whether earth would ever be as pure as Heaven. But as our ears have twice heard the Divine declaration, “Power belongs unto God,” we expect to see that power triumphant and the dragon cast out from earth as well as Heaven! Why should not every part of the great Creator’s handiwork become equally radiant with His Glory? He that made can remake! The curse which fell upon the ground was not eternal—thorns and thistles pass away. God will bless the earth for Christ’s sake even as once He cursed it for man’s sake.

“Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.” *It was so once*. Perfect obedience to the heavenly will upon this earth will only be a return to the good old times which ended at the gate of Eden. There was a day when no gulf was dug between earth and Heaven—there was scarcely a boundary line, for the God of Heaven walked in Paradise with Adam. All things on earth were then pure, true and happy. It was the Garden of the Lord. Alas, that the trail of the serpent has now defiled everything! Then earth’s morning song was heard in Heaven and Heaven’s hallelujahs floated down to earth at eventide. Those who desire to set up the Kingdom of God are not instituting a new order of things! They are *restoring*, not inventing! Earth will drop into the old groove again. The Lord is King and He has never left the Throne. As it was in the beginning shall it be yet, again. History shall, in the most Divine sense, repeat itself. The temple of the Lord shall be among men and the Lord God shall dwell among them! “Truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from Heaven.”

“Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.” *It will be so at the last.* I shall not venture far into prophecy. Some Brothers are quite at home where I would lose myself. I have scarcely yet been able to get out of the Gospels and the Epistles—and that deep Book of Revelation, with its waters to swim in—I must leave to better instructed minds. “Blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of that book.” To that blessing I would aspire, but I cannot yet make claim to interpret it. This much, however, seems plain—there is to be “a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” This creation, which now “groans and travails in pain,” in sympathy with man, is to be brought forth from its bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Blessed be the Lord Christ, when He brought His people out of their bondage, He did not redeem their *souls*, only, but also their bodies and, therefore, their material part is the Lord’s as well as their spiritual nature! And, therefore, this very earth which we inhabit shall be lifted up in connection with us! The creation, itself, shall be delivered! Materialism, out of which there has been once made a vesture for the Godhead in the Person of Christ, shall become a fit temple for the Lord of Hosts. The New Jerusalem shall come down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a bride is prepared for her husband. We are sure of this. Therefore unto this consummation let us strive mightily, always praying, “Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.”

Meanwhile, remember, also, that *there is an analogy between earth and Heaven*, so that the one is the type of the other. You could not describe Heaven except by borrowing the things of earth to symbolize it—and this shows that there is a real likeness between them. What is Heaven? It is Paradise, or a garden. Walk amid your fragrant flowers and think of Heaven’s bed of spices. Heaven is a kingdom—thrones, crowns and palms are the earthly emblems of the heavenlies. Heaven is a city and there, again, you fetch your metaphor from the dwelling places of men. It is a place of “many mansions”—the homes of the glorified. Houses are of earth, yet is God our dwelling place. Heaven is a wedding feast and even, such, is this present dispensation. The tables are spread here, as well as there, and it is our privilege to go forth and bring in the hedge birds and the highwaymen, that the banqueting hall may be filled. While the saints above eat bread in the marriage supper of the Lamb, we do the same below in another sense.

Between earth and Heaven there is but a thin partition. The home country is much nearer than we think. I question if “the land that is very far off” is a true name for Heaven. Was it not an extended kingdom on earth which was intended by the Prophet rather than the celestial home? Heaven is by no means the far country, for it is the Father’s house. Are we not taught to say, “Our Father which are in Heaven”? Where the Father is, the true spirit of adoption counts itself near. Our Lord would have us mingle Heaven with earth by naming it twice in this short prayer. See how He makes us familiar with Heaven by mentioning it next to our food, making the next petition to be, “Give us this day our daily bread.” This does not look as if it should be thought of as a remote region.

Heaven is, at any rate, so near that in a moment we can speak with Him that is King of the place and He will answer our call! Yes, before the

clock shall tick again, you and I may be there! Can that be a far-off country which we can reach so soon? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, we are within hearing of the shining ones! We are well-near Home! A little while and we shall see our Lord. Perhaps another day's march will bring us within the city gate. But what if another 50 years of life on earth should remain? What is it but the twinkling of an eye? Clear enough is it that the comparison between the obedience of earth and that of Heaven is not far-fetched. If Heaven and Heaven's God are, in truth, so near to us, our Lord has set before us a homely model taken from our heavenly dwelling place. The petition only means—let all the children of the one Father be alike in doing His will.

II. Secondly, THIS COMPARISON IS EMINENTLY INSTRUCTIVE. Does it not teach us that *what* we do for God is not everything, but *how* we do it is also to be considered? The Lord Jesus Christ would not only have us do the Father's will, but do it after a certain model. And what an elevated model it is! Yet is it none too elevated, for we would not wish to render to our heavenly Father service of an inferior kind. If none of us dare say that we are perfect, we are yet resolved that we will never rest until we are. If none of us dare hope that even our holy things are without flaw, yet none of us will be satisfied while a spot remains upon them. We would give to our God the utmost conceivable glory. Let the mark be as high as possible. If we do not, as yet, reach it, we will aim higher and yet higher. We do not desire that our pattern should be lowered, but that our imitation should be raised!

"Your will *be done* in earth, as it is in Heaven." Mark the words "*be done*," for they touch a vital point of the text. God's will *is done* in Heaven. How very practical! On earth His will is often forgotten and His rule ignored. In the Church of the present age, there is a desire to be doing something for God, but few enquire what He wills them to do. Many things are done for the evangelizing of the people which were never commanded by the great Head of the Church and cannot be approved of by Him. Can we expect that He will accept or bless that which He has never commanded? Will-worship is as sin in His sight. We are to do *His* will, in the first place, and then to expect a blessing upon the doing of that will. My Brothers and Sisters, I am afraid that Christ's will on earth is very much more *discussed* than done. I have heard of Brothers spending days in disputing upon a precept which their dispute was breaking.

In Heaven they have no disputes, but they do the will of God without discord. We are best employed when we are actually doing something for this fallen world and for the glory of our Lord. "Your will be done"—we must come to actual works of faith and labors of love. Too often we are satisfied with having approved of that will, or with having spoken of it in words of commendation. But we must not stay in thought, resolve, or word—the prayer is practical and business-like, "Your will be *done* in earth, as it is in Heaven." An idle man stretched himself on his bed when the sun had risen high in Heaven and as he rolled over, he muttered to himself that he wished this were hard work, for he could do any quantity of it with pleasure!

Many might wish that to think and to speak were to *do* the will of God, for then they would have effected it very thoroughly. Up yonder there is no

playing with sacred things—they do His Commandments, listening unto the voice of His Word. Would God His will were not only preached and sung below, but actually done as it is in Heaven! In Heaven the will of God is done *in spirit*, for they are spirits there. It is done *in truth* with undivided heart and unquestioned desire. On earth, too often, it is done and yet not done—for a dull formality mocks real obedience. Here obedience often shades off into dreary routine. We sing with the lips, but our hearts are silent. We pray as if the mere utterance of words were prayer. We sometimes preach the living Truth of God with dead lips. It must no longer be so! Would God we had the fire and fervor of those burning ones who behold the face of God!

We pray in that sense, “Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.” I hope there is a revival of spiritual life among us and that, to a large extent, our brotherhood is instinct with fervor—but there is room for far more zeal. You that know how to pray, go down on your knees and with the warm breath of prayer awaken the spark of spiritual life until it becomes a flame! With all the powers of our innermost being—with the whole life of God within us let us be stirred up to do the will of the Lord on earth as it is done in Heaven! In Heaven they do God’s will *constantly, without failure*. Would God it could be so here! We are awakened today, but we fall asleep tomorrow. We are diligent for one hour, but sluggish the next.

This must not be, dear Friends. We must be steadfast, unmovable—always abounding in the work of the Lord. We need to pray for sacred perseverance, that we may imitate the days of Heaven upon the earth by doing the Lord’s will without a break. They do God’s will in Heaven *universally, without making a selection*. Here men pick and choose—take this Commandment to be obeyed—and lay that Commandment by as non-essential. We are, I fear, all tinctured, more or less, with this odious gall. A certain part of obedience is hard and, therefore, we try to forget it. It must no longer be so! Whatever Jesus says unto us we must do. Partial obedience is actual disobedience! The loyal subject respects the whole Law of God. If anything is the will of the Lord, we have no choice in the matter—the choice is made by our Lord. Let us pray that we may neither misunderstand the Lord’s will, nor forget it, nor violate it.

Perhaps we are, as a company of Believers, ignorantly omitting a part of the Lord’s will—and this may have been hindering our work these many years. Possibly there is something written by the pen of Inspiration which we have not read, or something read that we have not practiced—and this may hold back the arm of the Lord from working. We should often make diligent search and go through our Churches to see wherein we differ from the Divine pattern. Some goodly Babylonian garment or wedge of gold may be as an accursed thing in the camp, bringing disaster to the Lord’s armies. Let us not neglect anything which our God commands lest He withhold His blessing!

His will is done in Heaven *instantly and without hesitation*. We, I fear, are given to delays. We plead that we must look around the thing. “Second thoughts are best,” we say, whereas the first thoughts of eager love are the prime production of our being. I would that we were obedient at all costs, for therein lies the truest safety. Oh, to do what God bids us, as God bids

us, on the spot and at the moment! It is not ours to debate, but to perform! Let us dedicate ourselves as perfectly as Esther consecrated herself when she espoused the cause of her people, and said, "If I perish, I perish." We must not consult with flesh and blood, or make a reserve for our own selfishness, but at once and most vigorously, follow the Divine command!

Let us pray the Lord that we may do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven—that is, *joyfully, without the slightest weariness*. When our hearts are right, it is a glad thing to serve God, though it is only to untie the laces of our Master's shoes. To be employed by Jesus in service which will bring us no repute, but much reproach, should be our delight! If we were altogether as we should be, sorrow for Christ's sake would be joy—yes, we would have joy in all situations—in dark nights as well as in bright days! Even as they are glad in Heaven, with a happiness born of the Presence of the Lord, so should we be glad and find our strength in the joy of the Lord.

In Heaven the will of the Lord is done *right humbly*. There perfect purity is set in a frame of lowliness. Too often we fall into self-congratulation and it defiles our best deeds. We whisper to ourselves, "I did that very well." We flatter ourselves that there was no self in our conduct, but while we are laying that flattering unction to our souls, we are *lying*, as our self-contentment proves! God might have allowed us to do 10 times as much, had He not known that it would not be safe. He cannot set us upon the pinnacle, because our heads are weak and we would grow dizzy with pride! We must not be permitted to be rulers over many things, for we should become tyrants if we had the opportunity! Brother, pray the Lord to keep you low at His feet, for in no other place can you be largely used of Him.

The comparison being thus instructive, I pray that we may be the better for our meditation upon it. I do not find it an easy thing to describe the model, but if we essay to copy it—"this is the work; this is the difficulty." Unless we are girded with Divine Strength, we shall never do the will of God as it is done in Heaven. Here is a greater labor than those of Hercules, bringing with it victories nobler than those of Alexander! To this the unaided wisdom of Solomon could not attain—the Holy Spirit must transform us—and lead the earthly in us captive to the heavenly.

III. Thirdly, I beg you to notice, dear Friends, that THIS COMPARISON of holy service on earth to that which is in Heaven IS BASED UPON FACTS. The facts will both comfort and stimulate us. Two places are mentioned in the text which seem very dissimilar and yet the likeness exceeds the unlikeness—earth and Heaven.

Why should not saints do the will of the Lord on earth as their Brethren do in Heaven? What is Heaven but the Father's house, wherein there are many mansions? Do we not abide in that house even now? The Psalmist said, "Blessed are they that dwell in Your house, they will be still praising You." Have we not often said of our Bethels, "This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven"? The spirit of adoption causes us to be at home with God even while we sojourn here below! Let us, therefore, do the will of God at once. We have the same fare on earth as the saints in Heaven, for, "the Lamb in the midst of the throne does

feed them.” He is the Shepherd of His flock below and daily feeds us upon Himself! His flesh is meat, indeed. His blood is drink, indeed.

From where come the refreshing draughts of the immortals? The Lamb does lead them to living fountains of waters! And does He not say to us here below, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink”? The same river of the Water of Life which makes glad the city of our God above, also waters the Garden of the Lord below. Brothers and Sisters, we are in the same company below as they enjoy above! Up there they are with Christ and here He is with *us*, for He has said—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” There is a difference as to the brightness of His Presence but not as to the *reality* of it.

Thus you see we are partakers of the same privileges as the shining ones within the city gates. The Church below is a chamber of the one great house and the partition which separates it from the Church above is a mere veil of inconceivable thinness! Why should we not do the Lord’s will on earth as it is done in Heaven? “But Heaven is a place of peace,” says one—“there they rest from their labors.” Beloved, our estate here is not without its peace and rest. “Alas,” cries one, “I find it far otherwise!” I know. But why do wars and fighting come but from our fretfulness and unbelief? “We who have believed do enter into rest.” That is not, in all respects, a fair allegory which represents us as crossing the Jordan of death to enter into Canaan. No, my Brethren, Believers are in Canaan *now*—how else could we say that the Canaanite is still in the land? We have entered upon the promised heritage and we are warring for the full possession of it! We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

I, for one, do not feel like a lone dove flying over dark waters, seeking rest for the sole of her feet. No, I have found my Noah—Jesus has given me rest! There is a difference between the best estate of earth and the glory of Heaven, but the rest which every soul may have that learns to conquer its will, is most deep and real. Brethren, having rest, already, and being participators of the joy of the Lord, why should we not serve God on earth as they do in Heaven? “But we have not their victory,” cries one, “for they are more than conquerors!” Yes, and, “our warfare is accomplished.” We have prophetic testimony to that fact. Moreover, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” In the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord gives us the victory and makes us to triumph in every place! We are warring, but we are of good cheer, for Jesus has overcome the world and we, also, overcome by His blood! Our war cry is always, “Victory! Victory!” The Lord will tread Satan under our feet shortly. Why should we not do the Lord’s will on earth as it is done in Heaven?

Heaven is the place of fellowship with God and this is a blessed feature in its joy. And in this we are now participators, for, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” The fellowship of the Holy Spirit is with us all—it is our joy and our delight. Having communion with the triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—we are uplifted and sanctified and it is becoming that by us the will of the Lord should be done on earth as it is in Heaven. “Up there,” says a Brother, “they are all accepted, but here we are in a state of probation.” Did you read that in the Bible? I never did! A Believer is in no state of probation! He has passed from death unto life and shall never come into condemnation. We are *al-*

ready, “accepted in the Beloved,” and that acceptance is so given as never to be reversed. The Redeemer brought us up out of the horrible pit of probation and He has set our feet on the rock of salvation—and there He has established our goings! “The righteous shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.”

Why should we not, as the accepted of the Lord, do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven? “Yes,” says one, “but Heaven is the place of perfect service, for His servants shall serve Him.” But is not *this* the place, in some respects, of a more extensive service? Are there not many things which perfect saints above and holy angels cannot do? If we had a choice of a sphere in which we could serve God with the widest range, we should choose not Heaven but earth! There are no slums and overcrowded rooms in Heaven to which we can go with help—but there are plenty of them here. There are no jungles and regions of malaria where missionaries may prove their unreserved consecration by preaching the Gospel at the expense of their lives! In some respects this world has a preference beyond the heavenly state as to the extent of doing the will of God. Oh, that we were better men, and then the saints above might almost envy us! If we did but live as we should live, we might make Gabriel stoop from his throne and cry, “I wish I were a man!” It is ours to lead the van in daily conflict with sin and Satan and, at the same time, ours to bring up the rear, battling with the pursuing foe! God help us, since we are honored with so rare a sphere to do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven!

“Yes,” you say, “but Heaven is the place of overflowing joy.” Yes, and have you no joy even now? A saint who lives near to God is so truly blessed that he will not be much astonished when he enters Heaven! He will be surprised to behold its glories more clearly, but he will have the same reason for delight as he possesses today. We live below the same life which we shall live above, for we are quickened by the same Spirit, are looking to the same Lord and rejoicing in the same security. Joy! Do you not know it? Your Lord says, “That My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” You will be larger vessels in Heaven, but you will not be fuller! You will be brighter, doubtless, but you will not be cleaner than you are when the Lord has washed you and made you white in His own blood! Do not be impatient to go to Heaven. No, do not have a wish about it. Do not place too high a value on the things of earth, yet count it a great privilege to have a long life in which to *serve the Lord* on earth!

Our mortal life is but a brief interval between the two eternities and if we judged unselfishly and saw the needs of earth, we might almost say, “Give us back the antediluvian periods of human life, that through a millennium we might serve the Lord in suffering and in reproach as we cannot do in Glory.” This life is the vestibule of Glory! Array yourselves in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for this is the court dress of earth and Heaven! Manifest at once the spirit of saints, or else you will never live with them. *Now* begin the song which your lips shall carol in Paradise, or else you will never be admitted to the heavenly choirs—none can unite in the music but those who have rehearsed it here below!

IV. Lastly, THIS COMPARISON, which I feel I can only feebly bring out—of doing the will of God on earth as it is done in Heaven—OUGHT TO BE BORNE OUT BY HOLY DEEDS. Here is the urgency of the missionary

enterprise. God's will can never be intelligently done where it is not known. Therefore, in the first place, *it becomes us, as followers of Jesus, to see to it that the will of the Lord is made known* by heralds of peace sent forth from among us. Why has it not been already published in every land? We cannot blame the great Father, nor impute the fault to the Lord Jesus. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, nor the mercy of God restrained.

Is it not probably true that the selfishness of Christians is the main reason for the slow progress of Christianity? If Christianity is never to spread in the world at a more speedy rate than the present, it will not even keep pace with the growth of the population! If we are going to give to Christ's Kingdom no larger a percentage than we have usually given, I suppose it will require about an eternity-and-a-half to convert the world, or, in other words, it will *never be done!* The progress made is so slow that it threatens to be like that of the crab which is always described in the fable as going backward! What do we *give*, Brothers and Sisters? What do we *do*?

A friend exhorts me to say that the Baptist Missionary Society ought to raise a million a year. I have my doubts about *that*, but he proposes that we should, at least, try to do so for one year. There is nothing like having a high mark to aim at. A million a year seems hugely too much by the general consent of you all and yet, I am not so sure. What amount of property is now held by Baptists? The probable estimate of money now in the hands of baptized Believers in the United Kingdom might make us ashamed that a million is not put down at once! Far *more* than that is spent by a similar number of Englishmen upon strong drink! We do not know how much wealth lies in the custody of God's stewards—and some of them are not likely to let us know until we read it in the papers! And then we shall discover that they died worth so many hundreds of thousands. The world counts men to be worth what they hoard, but in truth, they were not worth much, or else they would not have kept back so much from the work of the Lord when it was needed for the spread of the Gospel!

As a denomination we are improving a little. We are improving a *little*. I was obliged to repeat that sentence and place the emphasis in the right place. We may not congratulate ourselves—considerable room for improvement yet remains. The income of the Society might be doubled and no one oppressed in the process. It is not for us to say, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," but, "Lord, You have many ways and means of accomplishing that will, I pray You do it, but let me not be asked to help in the work." No, when I utter this prayer, if I am sincere, I shall be searching my stores to see what I can give to make known the Truth of God! I shall be enquiring whether I cannot *personally* speak the saving Word of God! I shall not decline to give because the times are hard. Neither shall I fail to speak because I am of a retiring disposition. An opportunity is a golden gift! Now, do not offer the prayer of the text if you do not mean it. Better omit the petition than play the hypocrite with it. You who fail to support missions when it is in your power to do so should *never* say, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done," but leave out that petition for fear of mocking God!

Our text, dear Friends, leads me to say that, as God's will must be known that it may be done, *it must be God's will that we should make it known* because God is Love and the Law under which He has placed us is that we love. What love of God dwells in that man who denies to a unenlightened heathen that Light without which he will be lost? Love is a grand word to talk of, but it is nobler as a *principle* to be *obeyed!* Can there be love of God in that man's heart who will not help to send the Gospel to those who are without it? We want to bless the world! We have a thousand schemes by which to bless it, but if ever God's will is done in earth as it is done in Heaven, it will be an unmixed and comprehensive blessing!

Join the Peace Society, by all means, and be forgiving and peaceable, yourself, but there is no way of establishing peace on the earth except by God's will being done in it—and that can only be done through the renewing of men's hearts by the Gospel of Jesus Christ! By all manner of means let us endeavor to control politics, as Christian men, that oppression shall not remain in the earth, but, after all, there *will* be oppression unless the Gospel is spread. This is the one balm for all earth's wounds! They will still bleed until Christ shall come to bind them up. Oh, let us, then, since this is the best thing that can be, show our love to God and man by spreading His saving Truth!

The text says, "Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven." Suppose one of you had come from Heaven. It is but a supposition, but let it stand for a minute! Suppose that a man has come here fresh from Heaven. Some would be curious to see what his bodily form would be like. They would expect to be dazzled by the radiance of his countenance. However, we will let that pass. We need to see how he would *live*. Coming newly from Heaven, how would he act? Of, Sirs, if he came here to do the same as all men do on earth, only after a *heavenly* sort, what a father he would be! What a husband! What a brother, what a friend! I would sit down and let *him* preach, this morning, most assuredly! And when he had done preaching, I would go home with him and have a chat.

I would be careful to observe what he would do with his substance. His first thought would be, if he had a shilling, to lay it out for God's Glory. "But," says one, "I have to go to shop with my shilling." Be it so, but when you go, say, "Oh Lord, help me to lay it out to Your Glory!" There should be as much piety in buying your necessities as in going to a place of worship! I do not think this man, coming fresh from Heaven, would say, "I must have this luxury. I must have this goodly coat. I must have this grand horse." But he would say, "How much can I save for the God of Heaven? How much can I invest in the country I came from?" I am sure he would be pinching and scrimping to save money to serve God with and he, himself, as he went about the streets and mingled with ungodly men and women, would be sure to find out ways of getting at their consciences and hearts! He would always be trying to bring others to the happiness he had enjoyed!

Think that over, and live so—so as He did, who really did come down from Heaven! For, after all, the best rule of life is—*what would Jesus do* if He were here, today, and the world was still lying in the Wicked One? If Jesus were in your business. If He had your money, how would He spend

it? For that is how *you* ought to spend it! Now think, my Brothers and Sisters, you will be in Heaven very soon. Since last year a great number have gone Home—before next year many more will have ascended to Glory. Sitting up in those celestial seats, how shall we wish that we had lived below? It will not give any man in Heaven even a moment's joy to think that he gratified himself while here. It will give him no reflections suitable to the place to remember how much he amassed—how much he left behind to be quarreled over after he was gone. He will say to himself, "I wish I had saved more of my capital by sending it on before me, for what I saved on earth was lost, but what I spent for God was really laid up where thieves do not break through and steal."

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us live as we shall wish we had lived when life is over! Let us fashion a life which will bear the eternal light! Is it life to live otherwise? Is it not a sort of fainting fit, a coma, out of which life may not quite have gone, but all that is worth calling life has oozed away? Unless we are striving mightily to honor Jesus and bring home His banished, we are dead while we live! Let us aim at a life which will outlast the fires which shall try every man's work!

If I may have moved any person here to resolve, "I will so live," I have not spoken in vain. I have at least stirred myself with the intense desire to cast off the mere outsides and husks of life and to ripen the real kernel of my being. Your will by me be done on earth, as yet, my Lord, I hope to do it in the skies! May I begin, here, a life worthy to be perpetuated in eternity! God bless you, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION”

NO. 1402

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

***“Lead us not into temptation.”
Matthew 6:13.***

LOOKING over a book of addresses to young people the other day, I met with the outline of a discourse which struck me as being a perfect gem. I will give it to you. The text is the Lord's prayer and the exposition is divided into most instructive heads. “Our Father which are in Heaven”—a child away from home. “Hallowed be Your name”—a worshipper. “Your kingdom come”—a subject. “Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven”—a servant. “Give us this day our daily bread”—a beggar. “And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”—a sinner. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil”—a sinner in danger of being a still greater sinner.

The titles are, in every case, most appropriate and truthfully condense the petition. Now if you will remember the outline you will notice that the prayer is like a ladder. The petitions begin at the top and go downward. “Our Father which are in Heaven”—a child, a child of the heavenly Father. Now to be a child of God is the highest possible position of man. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” This is what Christ is—the Son of God—and “Our Father” is but a plural form of the very term which He uses in addressing God, for Jesus says, “Father.” It is a very high, gracious, exalted position which, by faith, we dare to occupy when we intelligently say, “Our Father which are in Heaven.”

It is a step down to the next—“Hallowed be Your name.” Here we have a worshipper adoring with lowly reverence the thrice holy God. A worshipper's place is a high one, but it attains not to the excellence of the child's position. Angels come as high as being worshippers, their incessant song hallows the name of God—but they cannot say, “Our Father,” “for unto which of the angels has He said, ‘you are My son?’” They must be content to be within one step of the highest, but they cannot reach the summit, for neither by adoption, regeneration, nor by union to Christ are they the children of God. “Abba, Father,” is for *men*, not for angels and, therefore, the worshipping sentence of the prayer is one step lower than the opening, “Our Father.”

The next petition is for us as subjects, “Your kingdom come.” The subject comes lower than the worshipper, for worship is an elevated engagement wherein man exercises a priesthood and is seen in lowly but honorable estate. The child worships and then confesses the Great Father's royalty. Descending still, the next position is that of a servant, “Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.” That is another step lower than a subject, for Her Majesty the Queen has many subjects who are not her ser-

vants. They are not bound to wait upon her in the palace with personal service though they acknowledge her as their honored sovereign. Dukes and such like are her *subjects*, but not her servants. The servant is a grade below the subject.

Everyone will admit that the next petition is lower by far, for it is that of a beggar—“Give us this day our daily bread.” A beggar for bread—an everyday beggar—one who has continually to appeal to charity, even for his livelihood. This is a fit place for us to occupy who owe our all to the charity of Heaven. But there is a step lower than the beggar’s and that is the *sinner’s* place. “Forgive” is lower than, “give.” “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” Here, too, we may, each one, take up his position, for no word better befits our unworthy lips than the prayer, “Forgive.” As long as we live and sin we ought to weep and cry, “Have mercy on us, O Lord.”

And now, at the very bottom of the ladder stands a sinner afraid of yet greater sin. He is in extreme danger and in conscious weakness, sensible of past sin and fearful of it for the future. Hear him, as with trembling lip he cries in the words of our text, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” And yet, dear Friends, though I have thus described the prayer as a going downward—downward is, in matters of Divine Grace, much the same as *upward*—as we could readily show if time permitted. At any rate the going down process of the prayer might equally well illustrate the advance of the Divine life in the soul.

The last clause of the prayer contains in it a deeper inward experience than the earlier part of it. Every Believer is a child of God, a worshipper, a subject, a servant, a beggar and a sinner. But it is not every man who perceives the allurements which beset him, or his own tendency to yield to them. It is not every child of God, even when advanced in years, who knows the full meaning of being led into temptation—for some follow an easy path and are seldom buffeted—while others are such tender babes that they hardly know their own corruptions. To fully understand our text a man should have had sharp brushes in the wars and have done battle against the enemy within his soul for many a day.

He who has escaped as by the skin of his teeth offers this prayer with an emphasis of meaning. The man who has felt the fowler’s net about him—the man who has been seized by the adversary and almost destroyed—he prays with hot eagerness, “Lead us not into temptation.” I purpose at this time, in trying to commend this prayer to you, to notice, first of all, the spirit which suggests such a petition. Secondly, the trials which such a prayer deprecates. And then, thirdly, the lessons which it teaches.

I. WHAT SUGGESTS SUCH A PRAYER AS THIS?—“Lead us not into temptation.” First, from the position of the clause, I gather, by a slight reasoning process, that it is suggested by watchfulness. This petition follows after the sentence, “Forgive us our debts.” I will suppose the petition to have been answered and the man’s sin is forgiven. What then? If you will look back upon your own lives, you will soon perceive what generally happens to a pardoned man, for “As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man.” One believing man’s inner experience is like another’s and your own feelings are the same as his.

Very speedily after the penitent has received forgiveness and has the sense of it in his soul, he is tempted of the devil, for Satan cannot bear to lose his subjects—and when he sees them cross the border and escape out of his hand, he gathers up all his forces and exercises all his cunning if, perhaps, he may slay them at once. To meet this special assault the Lord makes the heart watchful. Perceiving the ferocity and subtlety of Satan’s temptations, the new-born Believer, rejoicing in the perfect pardon he has received, cries to God, “Lead us not into temptation.” It is the fear of losing the joy of pardoned sin which thus cries out to the good Lord—“Our Father, do not suffer us to lose the salvation we have so lately obtained. Do not even subject it to jeopardy! Do not permit Satan to break our newfound peace. We have but newly escaped—do not plunge us in the deeps again!

“Swimming to shore, some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, we have come safely to land—do not let us tempt the boisterous main again. Cast us not upon the rough billows any more. O God we see the enemy advancing—he is ready, if he can, to sift us as wheat! Do not allow us to be put into his sieve, but deliver us, we pray You.” It is a prayer of watchfulness and mark you, though we have spoken of watchfulness as necessary at the commencement of the Christian life, it is equally needful even to the close! There is no hour in which a Believer can afford to slumber. Watch, I pray you, when you are alone, for temptation, like a creeping assassin, has its dagger for solitary hearts! You must bolt and bar the door well if you would keep out the devil.

Watch yourself in public, for temptations in troops cause their arrows to fly by day. The choicest companions you can select will not be without some evil influence upon you unless you are on your guard. Remember our blessed Master’s words, “What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch,” and as you watch, this prayer will often rise from your inmost heart—

***“From dark temptation’s power,
From Satan’s wiles defend.
Deliver in the evil hour,
And guide me to the end.”***

It is the prayer of watchfulness.

Next, it seems to me to be the natural prayer of holy horror at the very thought of falling into sin again. I remember the story of a pitman who, having been a gross blasphemer—a man of licentious life and everything that was bad—when converted by Divine Grace, was terribly afraid lest his old companions should lead him back again. He knew himself to be a man of strong passions and very apt to be led astray by others and, therefore, in his dread of being drawn into his old sins, he prayed most vehemently that sooner than ever he should go back to his old ways, he might die. He did die then and there. Perhaps it was the best answer to the best prayer that the poor man could have offered.

I am sure any man who has once lived an evil life, if the wondrous Grace of God has snatched him from it, will agree that the pitman’s prayer was not one whit too enthusiastic. It were better for us to die at once than to live on and return to our first estate and bring dishonor upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord! The prayer before us springs from the shrinking

of the soul at the first approach of the tempter. The footstep of the fiend falls on the startled ear of the timid penitent—he quivers like an aspen leaf and cries out—“What? Is he coming again? And is it possible that I may fall again? And may I once more defile these garments with that loathsome murderous sin which slew my Lord? O my God,” the prayer seems to say, “keep me from so dire an evil. Lead me, I pray You, where You will—yes, even through Death’s dark valley, but do not lead me into temptation, lest I fall and dishonor You.” The burnt child dreads the fire. He who has once been caught in the steel trap carries the scars in his flesh and is horribly afraid of being held, again, by its cruel teeth.

The third feeling, also, is very apparent, namely, overconfident personal strength. The man who feels himself strong enough for anything is daring and even invites the battle which will prove his power. “Oh,” he says, “I don’t care. They may gather about me who will—I am quite able to take care of myself and hold my own against any number.” He is ready to be led into conflict. He courts the fray! Not so the man who has been taught of God and has learned his own weakness! He does not want to be tried, but seeks quiet places where he may be out of harm’s way. Put him into the battle and he will play the man. Let him be tempted and you will see how steadfast he will be—but he does not *ask* for conflict, as, I think, few soldiers will, who *know* what fighting means. Surely it is only those who have never smelt gunpowder, or seen corpses heaped in bloody masses on each other, that are so eager for the shot and shell—but your veteran would rather enjoy the piping times of peace.

No experienced Believer ever desires spiritual conflict, though, perhaps, some raw recruits may challenge it. In the Christian a recollection of his previous weakness—his broken resolutions, his unkept promises—makes him pray that he may not be severely tested in the future. He does not dare to trust himself. He wants no fight with Satan or with the world—he asks that, if possible, he may be kept from those severe encounters. His prayer is, “Lead us not into temptation.” The wise Believer shows a sacred fear—no, I think I may say an utter despair of himself—and even though he knows that the power of God is strong enough for anything, yet is the sense of *his* weakness so heavy upon him that he begs to be spared too much trial. Hence the cry, “Lead us not into temptation.”

Nor have I quite exhausted, I think, the phases of the spirit which suggests this prayer, for it seems to me to arise somewhat out of charity. “Charity?” you say. “How so?” Well, the connection is always to be observed, and by reading the preceding sentence in connection with it, we get the words, “as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation.” We should not be too severe with those persons who have done wrong and have offended us, but pray, “Lord, lead us not into temptation.” Your maid servant, poor girl, did take a trifle from your property. I make no excuse for her theft, but I beseech you, pause awhile before you quite ruin her character for life. Ask yourself, “Might not I have done the same had I been in her position? Lord, lead me not into temptation.”

It is true, it was very wrong of that young man to deal so dishonestly with your goods. Still, you know, he was under great pressure from a strong hand and only yielded from compulsion. Do not be too severe. Do

not say, “I will push the matter through—I will call the law on him.” No, but wait awhile. Let Pity speak! Let Mercy’s silver voice plead with you. Remember yourself, lest you, also, be tempted, and pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” I am afraid that badly as some behave under temptation, others of us might have done *worse* if we had been there. I like, if I can, to form a kind judgment of the erring—and it helps me to do so when I imagine myself to have been subject to their trials and to have looked at things from their point of view—and to have been in their circumstances and to have nothing of the Grace of God to help me.

Would not I have fallen as badly as they have done, or even gone beyond them in evil? May not the day come, to you who show no mercy, in which you may have to ask mercy for yourselves? Did I say, may it not come to you? No, it *must* come to you. When leaving all below you will have to take a retrospective view of your life and see much to mourn over. To what can you appeal, then, but to the mercy of God? And what if He should answer you, “An appeal was made to *your* mercy and you had none. As you rendered unto others, so will I render unto you.” What answer would you have if God were to treat you so? Would not such an answer be just and right? Should not every man be paid in his own coin when he stands at the Judgment Seat? So I think that this prayer, “Lead us not into temptation,” should often spring up from the heart through a charitable feeling towards others who have erred—who are of the same flesh and blood as ourselves.

Now, whenever you see the drunkard reel through the streets, do not glory over him, but say, “Lead us not into temptation.” When you take down the papers and read that men of position have betrayed their trust for gold—condemn their conduct if you will, but do not exult in your own steadfastness—rather cry in all humility, “Lead us not into temptation.” When the poor girl seduced from the paths of virtue comes across your way, look not on her with the scorn that would give her up to destruction, but say, “Lead us not into temptation.” It would teach us milder and gentler ways with sinful men and women if this prayer were as often in our *hearts* as it is upon our lips.

Once more, do you not think that this prayer breathes the spirit of confidence—confidence in God? “Why,” says one, “I do not see that.” To me—I know not whether I shall be able to convey my thought—to me there is a degree of very tender familiarity and sacred boldness in this expression. Of course God will lead me, now that I am His child. Moreover, now that He has forgiven me, I know that He will not lead me where I can come to any harm. This my faith ought to know and believe—and yet for several reasons there rises to my mind a fear lest His Providence should conduct me where I shall be tempted.

Is that fear right or wrong? It burdens my mind. May I go with it to my God? May I express in prayer this misgiving of my soul? May I pour out this anxiety before the great, wise, loving God? Will it not be impertinent? No, it will not, for Jesus puts the words into my mouth and says, “After this manner pray.” You are afraid that He may lead you into temptation, but He will not do so. Or should He see fit to try you, He will also afford you strength to hold out to the end. He will be pleased in His infinite

mercy, to preserve you. Where He leads it will be perfectly safe for you to follow, for His Presence will make the deadliest air to become healthful! But since instinctively you have a dread lest you should be conducted where the fight will be too stern and the way too rough, tell it to your heavenly Father without reserve.

You know at home, if a child has any little complaint against his father, it is always better for him to tell it. If he thinks that his father overlooked him the other day, or half thinks that the task his father has given him is too severe, or fancies that his father is expecting too much of him—if he does not say anything at all about it, he may sulk and lose much of the loving tenderness which a child’s heart should always feel. But when the child frankly says, “Father, I do not want you to think that I do not love you or that I cannot trust you, but I have a troublous thought in my mind and I will tell it right straight out”—that is the wisest course to follow and shows a filial trust.

That is the way to keep up love and confidence. So if you have a suspicion in your soul that perhaps your Father might put you into temptation too strong for you, tell Him! Tell Him though it seems taking a great liberty. Though the fear may be the fruit of unbelief, yet make it known to your Lord and do not harbor it sullenly. Remember, the Lord’s prayer was not made for Him, but for *you* and, therefore, it reads matters from *your* standpoint and not from His. Our Lord’s prayer is not for our Lord—it is for us, His children—and children say to their fathers ever so many things which it is quite proper for them to say, but which are not wise and accurate after the measure of their parents’ knowledge. Their father knows what their hearts mean and yet there may be a good deal in what they say which is foolish or mistaken. So I look upon this prayer as exhibiting that blessed childlike confidence which tells its father a fear which grieves it whether that fear is altogether correct or not.

Beloved, we need not debate here the question whether God *does* lead into temptation or not, or whether we can fall from Grace or not. It is enough that we have a fear and are permitted to tell our Father in Heaven about it. Whenever you have a fear of any kind, hurry off with it to Him who loves His little ones and, like a father, pities them and soothes even their needless alarms. Thus have I shown that the spirit which suggests this prayer is that of watchfulness, of holy horror at the very thought of sin, of overconfidence of our own strength, of charity towards others and of confidence in God.

II. Secondly, let us ask, WHAT ARE THESE TEMPTATIONS WHICH THE PRAYER DEPRECATES? Or rather, what are these trials which are so much feared? I do not think the prayer is intended at all to ask God to spare us from being afflicted for our good, or to save us from being made to suffer as a chastisement. Of course we should be glad to escape those things, but the prayer aims at another form of trial and may be paraphrased thus—“Save me, O Lord, from such trials and sufferings as may lead me into sin. Spare me from too great trials, lest I fall by their overcoming my patience, my faith, or my steadfastness.”

Now, as briefly as I can, I will show you how men may be led into temptation by the hand of God. And the first is by the withdrawal of Divine

Grace. Suppose for a moment—it is only a supposition—suppose the Lord were to leave us altogether? We would perish speedily. But suppose—and this is not a barren supposition—that He were in *some* measure to take away His strength from us—should we not be in an evil case? Suppose He did not support our faith—what unbelief we would exhibit! Suppose He refused to support us in the time of trial so that we no longer maintained our integrity, what would become of us? Ah, the most upright man would not be upright long, nor the most holy, holy any more. Suppose, dear Friends—you who walk in the light of God’s Countenance and bear life’s yoke so easily because He sustains you—suppose His Presence were withdrawn from you—what would your portion be?

We are all so like Samson in this matter that I must bring him in as the illustration, though he has often been used for that purpose by others. So long as the locks of our head are unshorn we can do anything and everything—we can tear lions apart, carry gates of Gaza and smite the armies of the alien. It is by the Divine consecrating mark that we are strong in the power of His might. But if the Lord is once withdrawn and we attempt the work alone, then are we weak as the tiniest insect! When the Lord has departed from you, O Samson, what are you more than another man? Then the cry, “the Philistines are upon you, Samson,” is the end of all your glory. You do vainly shake those lusty limbs of yours! Now you will have your eyes put out and the Philistines will make sport of you.

In view of a like catastrophe we may well be in an agony of supplication. Pray then, “Lord, leave me not and lead me not into temptation by taking your Spirit from me.”—

***“Keep us, Lord, oh keep us ever,
Vain our hope if left by Thee!
We are yours, oh leave us never,
Till your face in Heaven we see.
There to praise you
Through a bright eternity.
All our strength at once would fail us,
If deserted, Lord, by Thee.
Nothing then could anything avail us,
Certain our defeat would be.
Those who hate us
From then on their desire would see.”***

Another set of temptations will be found in providential conditions. The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, shall be my illustration here. “Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and take the name of my God in vain.”

Some of us have never known what actual need means, but have, from our youth up, lived in social comfort. Ah, dear Friends, when we see what extreme poverty has made some men do, how do we know that we would not have behaved even worse if we had been as sorely pressed as they? We may well shudder and say, “Lord, when I see poor families crowded together in one little room where there is scarcely space to observe common decency. When I see hardly bread enough to keep the children from crying for hunger. When I see the man’s garments wearing out upon his back and by far too thin to keep out the cold, I pray You subject me not to such

trial, lest if I were in such a case I might put forth my hand and steal. Lead me not into the temptation of pining need.”

And, on the other hand, look at the temptations of money when men have more to spend than they can possibly need and there is, around them, a society which tempts them into racing, gambling, whoredom and all manner of iniquities. The young man who has a fortune before he reaches years of discretion and is surrounded by flatterers and tempters all eager to plunder him—do you wonder that he is led into vice and becomes a ruined man morally? Like a rich galleon waylaid by pirates, he is never out of danger! Is it a marvel that he never reaches the port of safety? Women tempt him, men flatter him, vile messengers of the devil fawn upon him and the young simpleton goes after them like an ox to the slaughter, or as a bird hastens to the snare and knows not that it is for his life!

You may very well thank Heaven you never knew the temptation, for if it were put in your way you would also be in sore peril. If riches and honor allure you, follow not eagerly after them, but pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Providential positions often try men. There is a man very much pushed for ready money in business—how shall he meet that heavy bill? If he does *not* meet it, there will be desolation in his family—the mercantile concern from which he now draws his living will be broken up—everybody will be ashamed of him. His children will be outcasts and he will be ruined. He has only to use a sum of trust money—he has no right to risk a penny of it, for it is not his—but still, by its temporary use he may, perhaps, tide over the difficulty. The devil tells him he can put it back in a week! If he touches that money it will be a roguish action, but then he says, “Nobody will be hurt by it and it will be a wonderful accommodation,” and so on. If he yields to the suggestion and the thing goes right, there are some who would say, “Well, after all, there was not much harm in it and it was a prudent step, for it saved him from ruin.”

But if it goes wrong and he is found out, then everybody says, “It was a shameful robbery. The man ought to be put in prison!” But, Brothers and Sisters, the action was wrong in itself and the consequences neither make it better nor worse! Do not bitterly condemn, but pray again and again, “Lead us not into temptation. Lead us not into temptation.” You see, God *does* put men into such positions in Providence at times that they are severely tried. It is for their good that they are tried—and when they can stand the trial they magnify His Grace—and they become stronger men. The test has beneficial uses when it can be borne and God, therefore, does not always screen His children from it. Our heavenly Father has never meant to cuddle us up and keep us out of temptation, for that is no part of the system which He has wisely arranged for our education.

He does not mean us to be babies in carriages all our lives. He made Adam and Eve in the garden and He did not put an iron fence round the Tree of Knowledge and say, “You cannot get at it.” No, He warned them not to touch the fruit, but they could reach the tree if they would. He meant that they should have the possibility of attaining the dignity of voluntary fidelity if they remained steadfast. But they lost it by their sin and God means, in His new creation, not to shield His people from every kind

of test and trial, for that were to breed hypocrites and to keep even the faithful weak and dwarfish! The Lord does, sometimes, put the chosen where they are tried, and we do right to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

And there are temptations arising out of physical conditions. There are some men who are very moral in character because they are in good health. And there are other men who are very bad, who, I do not doubt, if we knew all about them, should have some little leniency shown them because of the unhappy conformation of their constitution. Why, there are many people to whom to be cheerful and to be generous is no effort whatever, while there are others who need to labor hard to keep themselves from despair and misanthropy. Diseased livers, palpitating hearts and injured brains are hard things to struggle against! Does that poor old lady complain? She has only had rheumatism 30 years and yet she now and then murmurs! How would you be if you felt her pains for 30 *minutes*?

I have heard of a man who complained of everybody. When He came to die and the doctors opened his skull they found a close fitting brain-box and that the man suffered from an irritable brain. Did not that account for a great many of his hard speeches? I do not mention these matters to *excuse* sin, but to make you and myself treat such people as gently as we can, and pray, “Lord, do not give me such a brain-box and do not let me have such rheumatisms or such pains, because upon such a rack I may be much worse than they. Lead us not into temptation.”

So, again, mental conditions often furnish great temptations. When a man becomes depressed he becomes tempted. Those among us who rejoice much, often sink about as much as we rise. And when everything looks dark around us, Satan is sure to seize the occasion to suggest despondency. God forbid that we should excuse ourselves, but, dear Brother, pray that you are not led into this temptation. Perhaps if you were as much a subject of nervousness and sinking of spirit as the friend you blame for melancholy, you might be more blameworthy than he. Therefore pity rather than condemn. And, on the other hand, when the spirits are exhilarated and the heart is ready to dance for joy, it is very easy for levity to step in and for words to be spoken amiss. Pray the Lord not to let you rise so high nor sink so low as to be led into evil. “Lead us not into temptation,” must be our hourly prayer.

Further than this, there are temptations arising out of personal associations which are formed for us in the order of Providence. We are bound to shun evil company, but there are cases in which, without fault on their part, persons are made to associate with bad characters. I may bring up the pious child whose father is a swearer. And the godly woman, lately converted, whose husband remains a swearer and blasphemes the name of Christ. It is the same with workmen who have to labor in workshops where lewd fellows at every half-dozen words let fall an oath and pour forth that filthy language which shocks us each day more and more.

I think that in London our working people talk more filthily than they ever did—at least, I hear more of it as I pass along or pause in the street. Well, if persons are obliged to work in such shops, or to live in such families, there may come times when under the lash of jest and sneer and sar-

casm the heart may be a little dismayed and the tongue may refuse to speak for Christ. Such a silence and cowardice are not to be excused, yet do not censure your Brother, but say, “Lord, lead me not into temptation.” How do you know that you would be more bold? Peter quailed before a talkative maid, and you may be cowed by a woman’s tongue! The worst temptation that I know of, for a young Christian, is to live with a hypocrite—a man so sanctified and demure that the young heart, deceived by appearances, fully trusts him while the wretch is false at heart and rotten in life.

And such wretches there are who, with the pretense and affectation of sanctimoniousness, will do deeds at which we might weep tears of blood! Young people are frightfully staggered and many of them become deformed for life in their spiritual characteristics through associating with such beings as these. When you see faults caused by such common but horrible causes, say to yourself, “Lord, lead me not into temptation. I thank You for godly parents and for Christian associations and for godly examples. But what might I have been if I had been subjected to the very reverse? If evil influences had touched me when, like a vessel I was upon the wheel, I might have exhibited even grosser failings than those which I now see in others.”

Thus I might continue to urge you to pray, dear Friends, against various temptations. But let me say the Lord has, for some men, very special tests such as may be seen in the case of Abraham. He gives him a son in his old age and then says to him, “Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a burnt-offering.” You will do right to pray, “Lord, lead me not into such a temptation as that. I am not worthy to be so tried. Oh do not so test me.” I have known some Christians sit down and calculate whether they could have acted as the Patriarch did. It is very foolish, dear Brothers and Sisters. When you are called upon to do it, you will be enabled to make the same sacrifice, by the Grace of God! But if you are not called upon to do it, why should the power be given? Shall God’s Grace be left unused? Your strength shall be equal to your day, but it shall not exceed it. I would have you ask to be spared the sterner tests.

Another instance is to be seen in Job. God gave Job over to Satan within limits and you know how Satan tormented him and tried to overwhelm him. If any man were to pray, “Lord, try me like Job,” it would be a very unwise prayer. “Oh, but I could be as patient as he,” you say. You are the very man who would yield to bitterness and curse your God! The man who could best exhibit the patience of Job will be the first, according to his Lord’s bidding, fervently to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Dear Friends, we are to be prepared for trial if God wills it, but we are not to *court* it, but are rather to pray against it even as our Lord Jesus, though ready to drink the bitter cup, yet in agony, exclaimed, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.”

Trials sought after are not such as the Lord has promised to bless. No true child asks for the rod. To put my meaning in a way in which it will be clearly seen, let me tell an old story. I have read in history that two men were condemned to die as martyrs in the burning days of Queen Mary.

One of them boasted very loudly to his companion of his confidence that he should play the man at the stake. He did not mind the suffering! He was so grounded in the Gospel that he knew he should never deny it. He said that he longed for the fatal morning even as a bride for the wedding. His companion in prison in the same chamber was a poor trembling soul who could not and would not deny his Master, but, he told his companion, he was very much afraid of the fire.

He said he had always been very sensitive of suffering and he was in great dread that when he began to burn, the pain might cause him to deny his Master. He begged his friend to pray for him and he spent his time very much in weeping over his weakness and crying to God for strength. The other continually rebuked him and chided him for being so unbelieving and weak. When they both came to the stake, he who had been so bold recanted at the sight of the fire and went back, ignominiously, to an apostate's life—while the poor trembling man whose prayer had been, “Lead me not into temptation,” stood firm as a rock, praising and magnifying God as he was burnt to a cinder!

Weakness is our strength and our strength is weakness! Cry unto God that He try you not beyond your strength and in the shrinking tenderness of your conscious weakness, breathe out the prayer, “Lead us not into temptation.” Then if He does lead you into the conflict, His Holy Spirit will strengthen you and you will be brave as a lion before the adversary! Though trembling and shrinking within yourself before the Throne of God, you could confront the very devil and all the hosts of Hell without one ounce of fear! It may seem strange, but so is the case.

III. And now I conclude with the last head—THE LESSONS WHICH THIS PRAYER TEACHES. I have not time to enlarge. I will just throw them out in the rough. The first lesson from the prayer, “Lead us not into temptation,” is this—never *boast* of your own strength. Never say, “Oh, I shall never fall into such follies and sins. They may try me, but they will find more than a match in me.” Let not him that puts on his harness boast as though he were taking it off! Never indulge one thought of congratulation as to your strength. You have no power of your own. You are as weak as water. The devil has only to touch you in the right place and you will run according to his will. Only let a loose stone or two be moved and you will soon see that the feeble building of your own natural virtue will come down at a run. Never court temptation by boasting your own capacity.

The next thing is, never *desire* trial. Does anybody ever do that? Yes. I heard one say, the other day, that God had so prospered him for years that he was afraid he was not a child of God, for he found that God's children were chastised and, therefore, he almost wished to be afflicted. Dear Brothers and Sisters, do not wish for that! You will meet with trouble soon enough. If I were a little boy at home, I do not think I should say to my brother, because he had been whipped, “I am afraid I am not my father's child, and fear that he does not love me because I am not smarting under the rod. I wish he would whip me just to let me know his love.” No, no child would ever be so stupid! We must not for *any* reason desire to be afflicted or tried, but must pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

The next thought is, never *go* into temptation. The man who prays “Lead us not into temptation,” and then goes into it, is a liar before God! What a hypocrite a man must be who utters this prayer and then goes off to the theater! How false is he who offers this prayer and then stands at the bar and drinks and talks with depraved men and bedizened women! “Lead us not into temptation,” is shameful profanity when it comes from the lips of men who resort to places of amusement whose moral tone is bad. “Oh,” you say, “you should not tell us of such things.” Why not? Some of you do them and I am bold to rebuke evil wherever it is found and shall do so while this tongue can move! There is a world of cant about.

People go to Church and say, “Lead us not into temptation,” and then they know where temptation is to be found and they go straight to it! You need not ask the Lord not to lead you there—He has nothing to do with you! The devil and you, between you, will go far enough without mocking God with your hypocritical prayers! The man who goes into sin willfully with his eyes open and then bends his knees and says half-a-dozen times over in his Church on Sunday morning “Lead us not into temptation,” is a hypocrite without a mask! Let him take that home to himself and believe that I mean to be personal with him and to such barefaced hypocrites as he!

The last word is, if you pray God not to lead you into temptation, do not lead others there. Some seem to be singularly forgetful of the effect of their example, for they will do evil things in the presence of their children and those who look up to them. Now I pray you consider that by ill example you destroy others as well as yourself. Do nothing, my dear Brothers and Sisters, of which you have need to be ashamed, or which you would not wish others to imitate. Do the right thing at all times and do not let Satan make a “cat’s paw” of you to destroy the souls of others!

Do you pray, “Lead us not into temptation”? Then do not lead your children there. They are invited, during the festive season, to such-and-such a family party where there will be everything but what will benefit their spiritual growth or even their good morals—do not allow them to go. Put your foot down. Be steadfast about it. Having once prayed, “Lead us not into temptation,” be not the hypocrite by allowing your children to go into it.

God bless these words to us. May they sink into our souls and if any feel that they have sinned, oh that they may now ask forgiveness through the precious blood of Christ and find it by faith in Him! When they have obtained mercy, let their next desire be that they may be kept in the future from sinning as they did before and, therefore, let them pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” God bless you.

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“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION” NO. 509

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 17, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”
Matthew 6:13.*

Psalms are entitled “Songs of Degrees.” Certainly the prayer before us might be called a Prayer of Degrees. It begins where all true prayer must commence, with the spirit of adoption, “Our Father.” There is no acceptable prayer until we can say with the prodigal—“I will arise and go unto my Father.” This child-like spirit soon perceives the grandeur of the Father “in Heaven,” and ascends to devout adoration, “Hallowed be Your name.” The child who lisps, “Abba Father,” grows into the cherub, crying, “Holy, Holy, Holy.”

Then there is but a step from rapturous worship to the glowing missionary spirit, which is a sure outgrowth of filial love and reverent adoration—“Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” We do not commence our spiritual career with this mission spirit. We begin with “Our Father.” We go on to feel His Glory, and then the next natural desire is that others may behold His greatness, too, till we are ready to cry with the Psalmist, “Let the whole earth be filled with His Glory.”

In the process of education, which this prayer so well describes, we find the man very early conscious of his dependence upon God. For as a dependent creature he cries, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Being further illuminated by the Spirit, he discovers that he is not only dependent, but sinful, therefore he entreats for mercy. “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” and being pardoned, having the righteousness of Christ imputed, and knowing his acceptance with God, he humbly supplicates for holy perseverance, “Lead us not into temptation.”

The man who is really forgiven is anxious not to offend again. The possession of justification leads to an anxious desire for sanctification. “Forgive us our debts,” that is justification. “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” that is sanctification in its negative and positive forms. Now, it would not be the course of nature to begin a life of prayer with the supplication of this morning. This is a petition for men already pardoned, for those who know their adoption, for those who love the Lord and desire to see His kingdom come. Taught of the Spirit to know their pardon, adoption, and union to Jesus, they can cry, and they, alone—“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

I shall this morning, first of all, *anticipate an objection*. Then I shall *venture upon an exposition*. And conclude with *an exhortation*.

I. First let us ANTICIPATE AN OBJECTION. A great many persons have been troubled by that passage in James, where it is expressly said, “Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man.” It has been found very dif-

difficult to reconcile that express declaration of the Apostle with this prayer of our Savior. And some good, but very ignorant men, have gone the length of altering our Lord's words. I have heard of one who was custom always to say, “*Leave* us not in temptation”—a most unwarrantable and unjustifiable alteration of Holy Scripture.

Because sometimes a learned minister ventures, in all honesty and discretion, to give a more correct translation of the original—can this justify a foolish unlettered man in altering the original, itself, and perverting the sense of a passage? There is an end to Scripture altogether, if license is given to alter its teachings according to *our* will. To teach perfect Wisdom how to speak is too great a task to be ventured upon by any but the presumptuous and foolish. When our version is incorrect, *then* it is a duty to present the proper rendering, if one is able to find it out. But to give translations out of our whimsical heads, without having been taught in the original tongue is impertinence, indeed!

There can be no better translation of the Greek than that which we have before us. The Greek does not say, “*Leave* us not in temptation,” nor anything like it. It says, as nearly as English language can convey the meaning of the original, “Lead us not *into* temptation,” and no sort of pinching, twisting, or wresting can make this prayer convey any other sense than that which our version conveys in so many words. Let us always be afraid of attempting improvements on God's perfect Word. And when our theories will not stand with Divinely revealed Truth, let us alter our theories, but let us never attempt for one single moment to put one Word of God out of its place.

Neither can we get out of the difficulty by supposing that the word “temptation” does not mean “temptation,” but must be restricted to the sense of “trial.” Now, we grant at once that the use of the word “temptation” in our translation of Scripture is somewhat liable to mislead. The word temptation has two meanings—to try, and to entice. When we read that God did tempt Abraham, we are by no means to understand that He enticed Abraham to anything that was evil. The meaning of the word in that place, doubtless, is simply and only that God *tried* him.

But permit me to say that this interpretation will not stand with this particular text now before us. The word here used for “temptation,” is not the word constantly written when *trial* is meant. It is the very word which one would employ if temptation to sin were intended—and I cannot believe that any other translation can meet the case. Doddridge's paraphrase is a happy one—“Do not bring us into circumstances of pressing temptation lest our virtue should be vanquished, and our souls endangered by them. But if we must be thus tried, do You graciously rescue us from the power of the Evil One.”

I grant you that the word includes trial, as all temptation does, for all temptation, even if it is temptation from Satan, is, in fact, trial from God. Still there is more than trial in the text, and you must look at it just as it stands. As Alford, says, “The leading into temptation must be understood in its plain literal sense.” Take the text just as you find it. It means literally and truly, without any variance, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

“Well,” says one, “if God does not tempt men, how can it be proper to pray, “Lead us not into temptation”? Dear Brothers and Sisters, do but notice the text does not say, “Tempt us not.” If it did, then *there* would be a difficulty! It does not say, “Lord, tempt us not,” but it says, “Lead us not into temptation.” I think I shall very rapidly be able to show you that there is a vast difference between leading into temptation and actually tempting. God tempts no man. For God to tempt, in the sense of enticing to sin, would be inconsistent with His Nature and altogether contrary to His known Character.

But for God to lead us into those conflicts with evil which we call temptations, is not only possible, but usual. Full often the Great Captain of Salvation leads us by His Providence to battlefields where we must face the full array of evil—and conquer through the blood of the Lamb. This leading into temptation is by Divine Grace overruled for our good, since, by being tempted we grow strong in Grace and patience. Our God and Partner may—for wise ends, which shall ultimately serve His own Glory, and our profit—lead us into positions where Satan, the world, and the flesh may tempt us. And so the prayer is to be understood in that sense of a humble self-distrust which shrinks from the conflict.

There is courage here, for the suppliant calmly looks the temptation in the face and dreads only the evil which it may work in him. But there is also a holy fear, a sacred self-suspicion, a dread of contact with sin in any degree. The sentiment is not inconsistent with, “all joy,” when the many different temptations do come. It is akin to the Savior’s, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me,” which did not for a moment prevent His drinking the cup, even to its dregs.

Let me observe that God, in no sense, so leads men into temptation as to have any share in the blame of their sin if they fall into it. God cannot possibly, by any act of His, become partner with man in his crime. As good old Trapp well observes, “God tempts men for PROBATION, but never for PERDITION.” The devil tempts men that he may ruin them—God tries men and puts them where Satan may try them—but He leads them into temptation for probation, that the chaff may be sifted from the wheat, that the dross may be separated from the fine gold.

By these trials, hypocrites fall, being discovered in the hour of temptation, just as the rough March wind sweeps through the forest, and finding out the rotten boughs, snaps them from the tree—the fault being not in the *wind*—but in the decayed branch. James alludes to the actual solicitation to evil in which the most holy God can have no part, but our text deals with the Providential bringing about of the temptation which I think you can clearly see may be the Lord’s work without His holiness in any degree being stained.

When the Lord leads us into temptation, it is always with a design for our good. He leads us to battle, not that we may be wounded and defeated, but that we may win glorious victories which shall crown the head of our gracious Leader with many crowns, and prepare us for future deeds of valor. Temptations overcome are inestimable blessings, because they make us lie the more humbly at His feet, bind us more firmly to our Lord, and train us to help others. Tempted men can lift up the hands that hang

down, and confirm the feeble knees. They have been tempted in the same manner, and can therefore succor their Brothers and Sisters.

Yet, while the benefit which God brings out of our being led into temptation is very great, still, temptation in itself is a thing very dangerous. Trials and distress, in themselves, are so perilous, that it is right for the Christian to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Though, as Martin Luther says, “Temptation is the best school into which the Christian can enter. Yet, in itself, apart from the Grace of God, it is so doubly hazardous. This prayer should be offered every day, ‘Lead us not into temptation.’ Or if we must enter into it, ‘Lord, deliver us from evil.’”

I do not know whether I have met the objection. Perhaps, in the exposition that is to follow I may be able to make it a little more clear. I wish to say that although God does not tempt men—that is affirmed in Scripture and reason—and by God’s own Character—though all prove it to be fact, yet He may, and certainly does, lead us into positions in His Providence, where it is absolutely certain that we shall be tempted. And therefore, our consciousness of weakness should constrain us to plead for escape from the terrible contest—and deliverance out of it—if come, it must.

II. LET US NOW EXPOUND THE TEXT. Possibly we may get at the meaning of the text better by supposing that we have just risen from our beds this morning. We are about to engage in prayer. Before we do so we endeavor to prepare our hearts for that hallowed exercise. We look back upon yesterday. We remember all our follies, our mistakes and sins. We feel deeply grieved. We are conscious that we are, this morning, just as weak as we were yesterday.

We feel that if temptation assails us we shall as surely fall into sin as we did on the past day. We have gathered some experience, but we find we are still as weak as water, and that while the will to be holy is present with us, how to perform that which is good, we find not. At the same time we have an intense abhorrence of sin—we feel in our own hearts that we would sooner die than offend our God—we can contemplate sorrow with pleasure, but sin only with horror. We feel afraid to venture downstairs. We fear that temptations may await us in the family, and in business. We feel, therefore, constrained to pray.

We know that there is the temptation of the theater and the music hall, but Divine Grace has made us resolute not to go there, for we feel we could not honestly ask God to preserve us from that temptation if we ran into it ourselves. There are our besetting sins, but being aware of them, we cry to God for help against them. But the black thought comes across our mind—“You do not know what is to happen today. You cannot tell what loss you may have to suffer. You do not know what trouble you may meet with, what rough word may be spoken to you. Your ship is on the sea, but you know not what rough waves will beat against it—there are sunken rocks and hidden quicksand—what if you should be wrecked on these?”

You feel that you are about to follow the course of Divine Providence, that whatever happens to you will be according to your Father’s will, and you put up this prayer, “Lord, You are to lead me this day. I would follow close to Your footsteps as a sheep follows its shepherd. But since I know

not what is to happen to me, suffer me to ask one thing of You. Do not, I pray You, lead me away from sorrow or trouble—do as You will about that, O my Lord—but do not, I beseech You, lead me in Your Providence where I shall be tempted. For I am so feeble that, perhaps, the temptation may be too strong for me. Therefore, this day make a straight path for my feet, and suffer me not to be assailed by the Tempter.

“Or if it must be, if it is better for me to be tempted, and if You do intend this day that I should fight with old Apollyon himself, then deliver me from evil. Oh, save me from the mischief of the temptation. Let me have the temptation if so it must be, but oh, let it do me no hurt. Let me not stain my garments. Let me not slip nor slide, but may I stand fast at the end of the day. May this temptation, though it be not joyous but grievous, have so worked out in me the comfortable fruits of righteousness, that it may be a part of that grand method by which You shall ultimately deliver me from all evil and make me perfectly like Yourself in Glory everlasting.” That, I believe, is the meaning of the prayer.

Possibly we should bring it out more clearly by taking several cases in which the Lord providentially leads men into temptation. There is *poverty*. No one will deny that poverty is, in many cases, directly an infliction from God. There are some, who by their indolence and debauchery, bring themselves low, but who pities them? But there are others who by the loss of parents are left orphans. Others who can never rise from the helpless penury of their first estate. God alone knows the mass of poverty in this city. We talk about the distress in Lancashire, and to some degree, I fear, Christian liberality has been diverted from London.

But to my knowledge there is much distress in many of the streets of this huge city. Some of you ride through our fine wide streets, which are a sort of ornamental fringe upon the skirts of poverty, and you know nothing about those narrow back streets—those blind alleys and those courts inside of courts—where poverty is huddled together, and where too often sin, lust, and disease become its natural consequences. When a gracious man is brought very low in circumstances, it is God’s act, an act of God which leads that man into temptation. For poverty necessarily has its temptations which you cannot possibly dissociate from it.

Look at you poor needle girl—Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!—till the fingers are worn to the bone, till her eyes are red, and her heart weary. All that she can earn is hardly enough to keep body and soul together, while her clothes hang in rags about her. Do you know how stern is that temptation when a fallen sister whispers to her that there is money to be had so easily, and paints the gainful sin in flashing colors? What arguments can the Tempter find in that bare room, and empty cupboard, and thin slice of dry bread—and perhaps in a starving mother dying on a few rags in the corner. If throughout life we have been preserved from the contamination of vice, and feel at all inclined to exalt ourselves in our virtue, let us remember what we might have been had we been exposed to the same fierce solicitations. And let us pray for ourselves, and for all our Brothers and Sisters, “Lead us not into *that* temptation.”

Circumstances alter cases. Oh, my dear young Friends, I pray that no terrible circumstances may ever be able to alter you, but may the Lord

who tries you, deliver you from evil. Sometimes the temptations of poverty appear in another form. A man finds that his trade does not pay him. He works hard, but he gets poorer and poorer. What few goods he had in the shop are decreasing. The stock gets lower. The children are crying for bread—his wife, perhaps, is an ungodly woman—and she tells him there is trade to be had on the Sunday, and if he will but open his shop he will prosper. She says everybody else in the street does it, and all the neighbors call him a fool for putting the shutters up.

Oh, I admire that noble-heartedness which I have seen in some of you! It has made me look upon you with greater pride than ever prince did on his jewels, when you have said—“I can starve, but I cannot sin against my God.” But when, to my grief, some professors yield to the suggestion, I cannot, and do not marvel. I can only pray for the steadfast and pray for myself—“Lord, lead me not into this temptation,” for if a starving wife, wailing children, and a sickly infant are crying in our ears, who knows how soon we might betake ourselves to any means so as to satisfy their wants? Happy are they who have come through this temptation, and have been delivered from the evil of it! But happier far are they who have never been led into it. “Give me neither poverty nor riches,” was the good prayer of Agur. And you that have never known poverty, and have never understood what shortness of bread means, pray this prayer this morning for yourselves and for all your Brothers and Sisters in this Church, “Lead us not into temptation.”

The Lord frequently leads His people into *temptation from wicked men in the form of persecution*. It often happens that in the course of Providence, for the wisest possible ends, a good man is put to labor where he finds no godly associates, but where his name is the theme of laughter. God is sometimes pleased to convert the woman while her husband remains unconverted, and perhaps he is opposed to her religion and will insist upon it that his wife shall not carry out her convictions. Now, in cases like this, God has manifestly put His people in a position where they are constantly tempted with the fear of men. This temptation is inevitably connected with persecution—a temptation to be ashamed of Christ, to hide one’s face, to hold one’s tongue when one should speak, to run down one’s colors when they ought to be waved to the breeze—and like Peter, to deny our Lord.

When some young man has been, to use a common expression, chaffed day after day, day after day, these cruel ridiculings are a great deal harder to bear than a lash upon the back. Oh, it is a grand thing if a man can go through this, can endure the slow roasting alive year after year, and yet is delivered from evil. But, dear Brothers and Sisters, I think you and I may well pray, “Lead us not into temptation,” for I fear there are some of you who are like the nautilus which, when the Mediterranean is all calm and quiet, floats in a gallant fleet upon the surface. But as soon as ever the rough waves come and the Euroclydon begins to blow, every nautilus draws in its tiny sail and drops to quiet obscurity in the bottom of the sea. There are many such professors, who, while everything goes smooth, float gloriously with us—but if rough times should come, they would be all unknown and unheard of.

Many there are, I fear, who walk with Religion in her silver slippers, who might desert her if she had to go barefooted and ragged through the street, having no place to rest—her only destiny being the prison and the flames. We may pray, as we read the stories of martyrdom, or as we look upon some Brothers and Sisters in Church fellowship with us who have to be laughed at day by day, “Lord, lead us not into temptation, or if You do, be pleased to deliver us from evil.” I have merely commenced the catalogue. Have patience with me while I mention *the daily adversities to which we are heirs*.

Some of us fret and think that the Lord deals harshly with us. Let us mend our tune. What a world of mercy God gives to us compared with what others receive! I hear sometimes of a Believer who has lost a ship, or a horse, or has sustained a very serious loss with a dishonored bill, or a bad debt—or another of you is out of work for a week, or else your little ones are ill. Well, I pity you all for these trials, but after all, what little trials these are compared with what some endure! Take the case of Job—house and children, land and servants, and cattle—all swept away at a stroke—and his own body covered with sore boils. Did not the Lord lead him into temptation, and was it not a marvel, indeed, that Job did not go even further than cursing the day of his birth? Was it not a wonder that he did not yield to his wife’s suggestion and curse God and die?

Surely, Brothers and Sisters, when we see the way in which some saints have met bereavement after bereavement—the holy courage with which others have sustained loss after loss. When we have marked the heroic resignation with which some have borne all the “ills which flesh is heir to”—and suffered in head and hand, and passed through painful surgical operations which have well near brought them to the jaws of the grave. When we note all this, we may well wonder how it is that they have been delivered from the evil of so much adversity, and we may with holy trembling, exclaim, “Lead us not into temptation.” How impatient you and I might have been if we had been sorely sick, or bedridden for years.

What hard things we might have thought of our God if He had swept all our estate away. How bitterly we might have spoken of His goodness if our husband were in a consumption, or if our wife were in the tomb. Our little ones are round about us and we hear their happy and cheerful voices. But oh, what a temptation to distrust God it would have been, if He had taken them away. Lord, do not so try us! Send not such adversities upon us as to lead us into temptation. But if You do this, be pleased to hold us up in the rough road, lest we fall into evil.

To change the line of thought a moment. There are not only the temptations arising from poverty, from shame, and from trouble, but you know, Beloved, that by far, more dangerous temptations come from *prosperity*. You sometimes envy the very rich. You think of them as having more money than they can count, and broad acres, and parks, and lands so extensive that they hardly know their own boundaries. If you understood the temptations which beset their life. If you knew how hard it is to serve God and be rich—how difficult, especially, to be a courtier and at the same time a servant of the living God—you would not aspire to so lofty a station, but you would say, “Lead us not into temptation.”

Temptation must be incessant to the man who only has to wish and can enjoy what he wills. Many men are kept from sin by being poor. Their poverty is a clog to them. But when a man has strong appetites, and has no person to rebuke him—and has, moreover, all the means in his own hand of running into sin—we may well cry, "Lord, do not try me in that way." Perhaps you are very anxious to attain a prominent position in the Church. You may think, for instance, that to be a preacher, well-known and listened to by hundreds, is a very enviable position. It is about as enviable as the position of Blondin upon his high rope a hundred and fifty feet from the ground. If you knew the temptations which beset a man who lives in popularity and has constantly to preach the Word to thronging multitudes, you would say, "Lead me not into temptation, and if it is Your will that I must rise to that position, then deliver me from evil."

Let me assure you, that high places and high Grace do seldom meet together. And that even in the Church any position of eminence is counter-balanced in the pleasure which it brings by the extreme danger to which it exposes its occupant. Long not to be too prosperous! Thank God for bad winds. Bless God for a little blight and mildew—yes, and be content to bless Him even if the fig tree should not blossom—and the flocks should be cut off from the field, and the herds from the stall. For any trial in the world is better than unbroken prosperity, concerning which you may well pray, "Lead us not into that temptation."

Now you may see that the list is endless. If prosperity, honor, and esteem may breed in us worldliness, self-conceit, forgetfulness of God, reliance upon our own strength, and a departure from simple confidence in Him that made us what we are, then there must be trials everywhere. But I think I ought to add that, frequently, God leads men into temptation in *the service which He requires of them*. "Stop," you say, "how can that be? When God prescribes a duty, how can that lead man into temptation?"

I reply that to know duty is often in itself to be tempted not to do it. And that when that duty is high and stern, and demands of us severe self-denial and earnest perseverance, we may be tempted to shun the engagement. Take the instance of Jonah. He is sent to Nineveh. His prophetic soul forewarns him that the mission will not be to his honor. He objects to go and attempts to fly to Tarshish to escape the mission of his God. Now, such a temptation is not so rare as some suppose. You think, "I can never face that multitude again." You have to deal, perhaps, with cruel tongues in a Church meeting and you think, "I can never fight that battle through."

You have been preaching in the street and the whisper comes—"Never do that again. Never expose yourself to the insults of the passerby." You have been teaching in a Sunday school and you may be led into this temptation—"Give it up. It is of no use. The children will never be blessed." You may have been a tract distributor You may have attempted to go from house to house to speak for God and the temptation may have been hot upon you—"Cease from it. There's no need for you to do it." Your very duty has led you into temptation.

Brethren, pray to God against it. Ask Him that the duty required of you may always be such as your strength shall enable you to perform—that

you may go to His Throne daily and get such help that your arms may be sufficient for you. If not, even in the highest form of spiritual service you may be led into temptation. What if I add to this that God *may demand sacrifices of us* which lead us into temptation? Look at Abraham. “Take you your son, your only son Isaac, and offer him up upon the place that I will show you.” I overheard a mother say, “I love my son so much, and he is such a comfort to me, that I could not give him up.” One observed to her that she should not talk so, for the Christian ought to stand to the surrender every hour, and be willing to give up child, or husband, or friend at Christ’s bidding.

But her answer was, and it was a true one, “I could not do it. It is of no use my pretending that I could. I could not do it, and I am persuaded that if God should command me to give him up—He might take him away, and I would submit to it—but if I had to give him up voluntarily, I could not do it. It is no use in my saying I could.” Then I suggested that therefore she ought always to pray that God would not try her that way, but that He would be pleased to spare her the sacrifice which she could not make—that in fact, He would not lead her into temptation, or if He did, would give her so much Divine Grace that she would not be tempted to rebel, but might give up her son, though he were to her as her own soul.

Oh, dear Friends, there are many trials we talk about, and think we could bear! But if they were once to assail us, we might find it very difficult to do so. It is easy to be a sailor on shore, and to laugh at the winds when you are snug in your beds. It is all very well to sing of the waves and shout for—

**“The flag that braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze,”**

but the battle and the breeze are very different things from what the song would make them out to be, and we had better, I think, while we are free from the trial, unanimously pray this prayer—“Lead us not into temptation.”

I want you to notice that word “us,” for selfishness will dictate you to pray this prayer for yourselves. But we are more than two thousand strong, a great army for God united in Church fellowship. And you know there are many young added to the Church, though a large proportion of the aged also come—more, perhaps, than in any other congregation. Remember our young members, our young men and women, who are very greatly exposed. I charge you, elders of the Church. I charge you, seniors in the faith. I charge you, mothers in Israel, that you offer this prayer to-day and every day:

“Lord, lead *us* not into temptation, but deliver *us* from evil. Lord, temper the wind to the shorn lamb. Put not the little boat upon the rough billows. Send not Your little ones to stern battles. And, Lord, since we are all weak, old as well as young—since the gray locks cover no more wisdom than the child’s curls, except as You give wisdom—so keep all the Church, and lead neither pastor, nor officers, nor members into temptation. But if we must be led there, we take up the latter sentence, and pray it still more passionately, ‘Deliver us from evil.’”

I have heard of a poor pitman, who after being converted to God, had a great dread of falling into sin. One morning, after having endured much

scorn, mockery, blasphemy, swearing, and ill-treatment from his fellow colliers, before he went down into the pit, knelt down and prayed that God would sooner let him die than fall into sin. He cried, “Lord, let me die sooner than fall into sin,” and he did die there and then—happy thus to be taken up where he should no more know the annoyance of trial from without, or temptation from within.

III. We close our discourse with A BRIEF EXHORTATION. I exhort you to pray this prayer very earnestly, dear Friends, and I bid you do it for several reasons.

First, *remember your own heart*. A man who carries gunpowder about with him may well ask that he may not be led where the sparks are flying. If I have a heart like a bombshell, ready to explode at any moment, I may well pray God that I may be kept from the fire, lest my heart destroy me. Perhaps you have angry tempers, constitutionally so. Some men still remain hot and quick—some of our Welsh friends, always so. Such should pray every day that they may not be tempted by any jeering words. That they may be kept calm and quiet, and not be led into irritation. We have each besetting sins of some sort or another, and I do not know that the temptation to be hot and quick in temper is anything so bad as that to be dull and lumpy and stupid.

Generally speaking, a man who has not some temper in him, is not worth much. And those who, as we sometimes say, are as easy as an old shoe, are not often worth more than that worn out article. We may have temptations, however, of another kind, and just there we should put up our prayer with great earnestness and intense passion, exclaiming, “Lord, lead me not into that temptation.” There is a weak point in each of us. And remember, the strength of a rope is to be measured, not according to its strength in its strongest, but its weakest part. Every engineer will tell you that the strength of a ship should always be estimated, not according to her strongest, but her weakest part—for if the strain shall come on her weakest part, and that is broken, no matter how strong the rest may be, the whole ship goes down.

Now, I say there is a weak point in every man. Indeed, where is there a point where we are not weak? Show me where our strength lies. It lies, surely, nowhere *here*, but only *there in Him* who makes us strong to do exploits in His name. Therefore, because of weakness and inclination to sin, let each man pray, and pray constantly, “Lead us not into temptation.”

To use another argument, *how many have fallen who were led into temptation!* Think of them, not to congratulate yourselves, nor yet to blame *them*, but to take warning. When cases of discipline come before the Church, I have thought how gently we ought to deal, for had we been put where these Brothers and Sisters have been, our fall might have been even more desperate than theirs. I have often grieved when a Brother has lost his temper, and then I have thought, “Well, I cannot accuse, but I must not judge uncharitably. For if I had been teased one half as much as he has been, I might have been worse than he.”

When I see another man shipwrecked, I should mind that I carefully navigate my own boat. When I see another who has caught a contagious

disease, I should be careful not to go into those quarters where that disease is the most virulent, lest I catch it, too. And if I know that there is a great disinfectant, a heavenly remedy by which contagion may be stopped, how ought I to use it. That remedy is PRAYER, and the precise prayer is in the text—“Lead *me* not into temptation, but deliver *me* from evil, lest I fall as others have done and become weak and vile as they.”

Remember to pray this prayer, because *should we fall under temptation, how great will be our misery*. A certain high Antinomian said, one day, that if a Christian fell into sin, he lost nothing by it except—what do you think he said? Except his comfort, and his communion with God! I suppose he thought the Christian’s comfort and his communion with God were a drop in a bucket! But he that has once lost his comfort, and his communion with God will tell you quite another tale! Oh, to lose your comfort, to have to groan out with David, “Make the bones which you have broken to rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out mine iniquities!” Pray that Penitential Psalm over and you will soon discover that sin is the father of Sorrow, and that a saint cannot slip without much damage to himself.

I have marked, and marked carefully, those Brothers and Sisters who have backslidden and fallen into sin, and have afterwards been restored. And though I have rejoiced in their restoration, yet I never can help noticing how different they are from what they used to be. So quiet now—so sad in appearance, too. And though, perhaps, better men than ever they were, yet the joy of God is gone. The spring has gone out of their souls! They cannot dance with David before the ark now! You never find David dancing after his sin with Bathsheba. Not he. There was no dance in him after that! He limped to the day of his death. Take care, man—if you would not make for yourself a garment of sorrows, if you would not stuff the pillow of your bed with thorns, and be perpetually wearing chains—take care that you pray to God to lead you not into temptation.

Worse remains. *Recollect what mischief a Christian’s fall will do*. A thousand Believers live in holiness, and nobody says anything about them. But if one of them shall fall into sin, the whole world rings with it. I know not why it should be, but if they can but find one bad fish in our net, they hawk it all round the town in four-and-twenty hours. “See here,” they say, “here is one of the people that go to hear Spurgeon! Here is one of your professors! Here is one of your Baptists! Here is one of your Methodists!” or something of that kind. Why do they not look at the nine hundred and ninety-nine who stood fast? Why do they not talk of those who serve their Lord well, and are found faithful even to the end?

But that, indeed, would not answer their purpose. Brethren, would you fill the mouths of the daughters of Philistia? Would you make the children of Gath and Askelon rejoice? Would you see the banner of Hell floating proudly in the breeze, and the escutcheon of our glorious Christ trailing in the mire? Would you grieve the Spirit? Would you open the wounds of Christ afresh? Would you put Him and His fair Spouse, the Church, to an open shame? If you would, then be slack in your prayers. But if you would not, if you would adorn the doctrine of God your Savior in all things. If you would win jewels for Christ’s crown. If you would make men wonder

at Him, and at you, because you have been with Him, then pray this prayer—“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

I cannot tell why it is that this text should come on this particular Sunday, but it is very likely that your life this week will let you into the secret of it. Thus says the Lord unto some of you, “This week I will sift you and try you.” Pray that you enter not into temptation. Christ pleads for you, for Satan has desired to have some of you, that he may sift you as wheat. Join your prayers with Christ’s supplications that your faith fail not. I cannot tell, I am no Prophet, but I feel a call to warn you to watchfulness. There may happen something that may make us bless God for this warning note. We are forearmed because we are forewarned. We are able to put our helmet on in time, to gird on our breastplate and our shoes of brass, and to put our hand upon our sword. For the battle is coming, and the Lord has sounded the trumpet and bids us cry—“Lead us not into temptation.”

This prayer will not suit some of you. You need not be led into temptation, for you live in it already. A man might pray to be kept out of the water, but a fish cannot, for it lives in it. Even so, you whose native element is sin, cannot pray, “lead us not into temptation.” There is another prayer for you to pray before you get to this, and that is, “Forgive us our trespasses.” Pray *that* today, and then you shall pray *this* tomorrow. Your sins are accusing you before God today. Your trespasses are clamoring at the Mercy Seat. I hear their cry. They are crying “Justice! Justice! Justice! Lord, smite that man! Lord, smite that man!”

With hoarse voices they cry aloud, “Let him be lost! Let him be cast away!” While your sin clamors against you, will you not pray for mercy? Mercy is ready to hear you. The Throne of Grace is easily accessed. Come before God and say, “O Lord! I know that Jesus died and took upon Himself the sins of all those that trust Him. I trust Him. For His sake, Lord, forgive my trespasses, and let my debt be blotted out by His blood.” He will hear you, Sinner, and before you go out of yonder doors your sins may be forgiven, and you may be white in Christ’s righteousness, and spotless as the newly fallen snow. After that, then, use my text and pray to Him who is able to keep you from falling, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

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A SINGLE EYE AND SIMPLE FAITH

NO. 335

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye is single, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness.”
Matthew 6:22, 23.***

THIS sentence has in it the nature of a Proverb. It is well worthy of frequent quotation, as it is applicable to such various circumstances. It is one of the most pithy, terse utterances of our Savior. So full of meaning is it that it would be utterly impossible for us to draw out all its analogies. It is capable of adaptation to so many different things that the ablest commentators despair of being able to give you the whole of its fullness. But mark—very much of the meaning is to be discovered by the use—as the varieties of our personal experience furnish varieties of practical reflection.

For example, we may interpret the passage of conscience as the eye of the soul—conscience must be clear and simple. If the conscience, which is the candle of the Lord and which searches the secret parts of the belly, is not light but darkness, how great must the darkness be! If a man has not enough conscience to know darkness from light and light from darkness, then he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. If that power, on which seem to tremble some rays of the ancient light of manhood, is darkened—if the lighthouse is quenched, if the windows are sealed up—how great, indeed, must be the darkness of man! We cannot wonder, when once a man has a depraved and seared conscience, that he runs into iniquity willingly, commits sin with both hands and goes from step to step till he obtains the highest seat in the scale of sin.

The symbol of the eye here may also refer to the understanding, taken in a yet broader sense than as the conscience. For, I suppose, that conscience is, after all, but the understanding exercised about moral truth. If the understanding of man is dark, how dark must be man's soul! If that which judges and weighs and tests—if that which is to us the teacher, the recorder of the town of Man soul—if that is amiss, if the recorder make wrong entries, if the understanding has bad scales and uses different weights, how gross, indeed, must be the ignorance of man! What? Seal up the windows of the house? Surely the thickness of the walls will not so much keep away the light as the sealing up of the windows. Let but the understanding be enlightened and the rays will diffuse themselves and illuminate every faculty of the whole man—but, ah, if it is darkened, man is in darkness as respects all his powers.

Yet again, the term “eye” may also refer to the heart. For, in some sense, the heart is the eye of the soul. The affections turn the man in a certain direction and where the affections go the eye is turned. There is

such a connection between the heart and the eye of man that well might this text have such a reference. If the affections are pure, the man will be pure. But if the affections themselves are perverted, debased, degraded, we need not marvel that the man's whole life should be degraded, debased and filthy, too. You see the aptness of the Proverb by the numerous moral truths it may serve to illustrate. But time will only allow me to take it in more than one or two aspects and may God bless what I shall have to say to all our hearts.

I shall regard our text as having to do, first, with the eye of our faith. And, secondly, with the eye of our obedience.

I. First, with THE EYE OF OUR FAITH. Faith to the spiritual man is his eye. It is with that he looks to Christ—looks unto Him whom he has pierced and weeps for his sin. It is by faith that he walks. Not by natural sight, but by the sight which is yielded to him by his spiritual eye—his faith. It is by this faith that he sees things not as yet visible to the eye of sense—realizes the unseen and beholds the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things which the natural eye cannot discern. Faith is to the Christian an eye both quick and sharp, an eye which discovers sin, an eye which discerns the Master's will, an eye which looks forward and down a lengthy racecourse to the reward which awaits all those who so run as to receive the prize, looking unto Christ Jesus.

Faith peers across the stream of death and longs for the rest which remains for the people of God. Faith has, indeed, so sharp a vision, that it sees the glories which God has prepared for them that love Him. Faith beholds the face of the crowned Redeemer in bliss and meekly bows before Him in adoration. Faith, then, is the eye of the Believer's soul. Any disease, therefore, in our faith will bring disease into the entire man. If our faith is weak, then the light in our entire spirit will be very hazy. He who staggers at the promise, through unbelief, will stagger in other places besides his faith. He will stagger on his knees. His hands will become weak and his heart will often palpitate.

He who can see well with the eye of faith, can do all things. If our faith is the measure of our strength, he that is strong in faith is strong to do mighty exploits. By his God shall he break through a troop. In the name of his God shall he leap over a wall. But he who is afraid of the promise, staggering at its greatness, instead of adoring the greatness of the Giver—he who looks at the blessing and trembles because of his unworthiness, forgetful of the graciousness of Him who gives gifts to the undeserving—he must be a weak and sorrowful man.

Little-Faith is safe, but he is seldom happy. It is very rarely that Ready-to-Halt can dance upon his crutches. Miss Much-Afraid is usually of a sorrowful countenance. But Great-Heart is a man whose face is anointed with fresh oil and faithful is he who can look into the midst of the fires and fear not their fury. Hopeful is one that can pass through the river Jordan itself and cry, "Fear not, I feel the bottom and it is good."

Disease, I say, in our faith will bring disease into the whole spiritual man and weakness here will make us weak everywhere. If our faith also is variable, if it has its uphill and its downhill, its ebbings and its flowing, then it will in every ebb and flow affect the whole spiritual being. When

faith is in its flood-tide, the soul floats joyously above every rock—nor fears even the thought of a quicksand. But when faith is at its ebb, then—though blessed be God the tide never goes so low as to wreck the vessel—yet sometimes she seems to bump upon the sands, or the rocks grate against her keel. It is hard sailing with Little-Faith. It is difficult traveling on the road to Heaven when faith varies and is unstable as water.

That Christian cannot excel whose faith is of an inconstant character. But, my Brethren, there is one disease of faith which will not merely bring disease into the soul, but positive death. There is one sickness of our faith which is mortal—which must bring the man who labors under it inevitably to destruction—and that is a want of *singleness* in our faith, the want of simplicity in it. He who has two grounds of trust is lost. He who relies upon two salvations and cannot say of Christ, “He is all my salvation and all my desire,” that man is not only in danger of being lost, but he is condemned already. Because, in fact, he believes not on the Son of God. He is not alive to God at all, but rests partly on the Cross and then in some measure on something else. He only is the quickened and living child of God whose faith is “fixed on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.”

It is with this disease of faith I have to deal this morning. Be it so, that the light of your body is the eye of your faith, therefore when your eye is *single*, when you see but one object and look unto Jesus alone, your whole body shall be full of light. There shall be the light of peace and joy in Christ Jesus. But if your eye is evil and it must be evil if it is not single, if it is divided between two objects, know that your whole body shall be full of darkness. Doubt and despondency shall cast its thick shadows over you now, and worse, you shall be presently overtaken with the Egyptian darkness of despair, when God shall cast you away.

For hear me, you who are trusting to two things—trusting partly in Christ and partly in your good works, or in ceremonies, or in almsgiving, or in prayer, or in your experience, or your doctrinal knowledge—all or any of these as objects of confidence do but treacherously cast a slur upon the name of Jesus, the Savior of men. What, Sirs! And is not Jesus able enough to save with His own right hand, that you must come and seek some assistance for Him? Why, Man, you make Him to be less than omnipotent, for omnipotence can do all things without assistance. And yet you would intermeddle with him and think that He has not might enough to save, unless you shall supplement His strength by the addition of your own.

What would have been said to the brightest angel if he had stepped forward with impertinent audacity to assist His Maker in the creation of the world? Or, what would be said of Gabriel himself, if he should offer to bend his shoulders that he might assist the Eternal One in bearing up earth’s huge pillars and sustaining the arches of Heaven? Surely, such impertinence would be punished with the direst doom! And yet were his sin less blasphemous than yours? You that think Christ’s blood is not enough to ransom you and you must bring your own gold and silver and precious stones?

What have I said? No, you must bring your dross and dung to eke out the Savior's redemption. You say His Cross is not high enough and the transverse beam not broad enough to bear you up and lift you up to Heaven. And so you would add your puny strength to the strength of Him who is God's equal, who is the eternal God Himself, though He bear our sins in His own body on the tree! Oh, Soul, have done with such pride, I pray you. For such pride must sink you lower than the lowest Hell. It was by less pride than this that Satan fell and surely you will not escape. Christ will never let you enter Heaven while you do blot and blur and stain and smear the escutcheon of His omnipotence. Be done, then, with seeking to have two objects for your trust.

Besides, let me ask you now with whom it is that you would yoke the Son of God! Are you about to yoke Him to yourself? Shall the eternal God plow with you, a puny worm, a creature of today—one that knows nothing, that is and yet is not—that is gone before the breath of the morning gale? What? would you yoke Leviathan with a worm, or seek to put a gnat to the chariot with an elephant? If you did, the disparity would not so shut out every semblance of reason as to put yourself in conjunction with Jehovah's Christ. To yoke an angel with a fly were absurd enough, but to put yourself side by side with the Lord's Anointed—that you may do a part and He may do the rest—oh Man, be not so mad!

Let go of the absurd idea and know that Jesus is Savior alone—He will have no helper, no compeer, no assistant. He will do all, or he will do nothing, for when you put another with Him you do dishonor and degrade Him. Is your Baptism to assist His blood? Drops of water on an infant's brow to save its soul? Or a bath in which you are immersed to help you wash away sins which no mortal's blood could purge? What? And is the eating of bread and wine to be the means of saving a soul because Christ's own flesh and blood could not suffice to save? I love both of these sacred ordinances, both Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but if you bring them as part-saviors and rest on them, I say away with them! Away with them! Away with them!

An antichrist, even when made of gold, is as damnable an antichrist as when made of dross. And even God's own ordinances, if they are put as helpers to Christ, or if observed with a sense of merit, must be met with the cry, "Away with them! Away with them!" They cannot save and they may destroy. "He that eats and drinks unworthily"—and he does so who trusts to them—"eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." They may condemn. They *cannot* save, apart from Christ.

And will you add your almsgiving to Christ? What? And is your paltry dirt to buy a Heaven which Christ's blood is not enough to buy? What? And will you add your prayers? Are your prayers to have a merit in them which His strong crying and tears have not already? Pray earnestly and constantly, I beseech you. Give of your alms abundantly. But, oh, rest not in these things, for good as they are, they will certainly exclude you from Heaven, if they in any measure whatever are a part of the foundation of your hope—

***"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."***

Oh, you whose eye is not single, let me remind you of another thing. Do you not know, O Man, that your idea of mixing your merits or your doings up with Christ betrays an utter ignorance of what you are and of what your good works are? Your good works are stained with sin. Your best performances need to be washed in blood. When you have prayed you have need to ask forgiveness for your prayer. Though you should give your body to be burned and spend your whole life in the service of Christ, yet at last you will have to confess you were but an unprofitable servant. You will have to be saved by *grace*, or not at all. It is your ignorance, Man, that makes you think you can help Christ, for you are naked and poor and miserable.

You may chink your counterfeit merits in your hand and say, "I am rich and increase in goods." You may look upon your spangled cobweb robe and say, as the dew drops hang on it, "I am adorned with diamonds and clad in needlework and fine linen." But ah, Soul, it is but spider web and only your ignorance makes you think otherwise. Oh that God the Holy Spirit may enlighten you! That eye which sees anything good in the creature is a blind eye. That eye which fancies it can discern anything in man, or anything in anything he can do to win the Divine favor, is stone blind to the Truth of God as yet and needs to be lanced and cut and the cataract of pride removed from it.

Yet, again, O Sinner, you say, "My merits and my doings will help Christ." Why, Man, is not this contrary to all precedent? Who has helped Christ as yet? When He stood in the Eternal Council with His Father, who gave Him wisdom? Who was prompter to our Divine representative and put words of wisdom on His lips? With whom took He counsel and who instructed Him? Did He not ordain the Covenant alone? And when He came to build the heavens and arch the skies, were you with Him then? When He laid the pillars of earth, when He weighed the clouds in scales and the hills in balances, were any there who were His counselors?

Were you one of the king's Cabinet? Oh, you audacious Worm! To counsel Him and to help Him in redemption, when you could not help Him in the planning of redemption, nor in His creation work? Who was with Him when He routed the enemies of His people and redeemed their souls with blood? Hear Him—"I have trod the winepress *alone* and of the people there was *none*." The blood upon His garment is His own blood, not the blood of any of His fellow comrades. His disciples forsook Him and fled. He looked and there was no man—He wondered that there was no man to save. His own arm brought salvation and it is His own righteousness which upheld Him.

And do you think after He has fought the battle alone that He needs you to be His ally and save you? Does He want *your* strength to back up His eternal might? Stand back and lay your finger upon your mouth and say, "Lord I am vile! You have finished the work which Your Father gave You to do and I cannot interfere. You have done it. You have done it all and I accept Your finished righteousness, Your complete redemption. I am willing to be anything, that You may be All in All. I take Your grace as a free gift. I come to You naked to be clothed, helpless to be helped, dead to be made alive.

I come to Your merit without presence of any. I come, although without any fitness, without any qualification, with a hard heart, with a stubborn will, yet I come to You just as I am. Lord, do the work from beginning to end. Work in me to will and to do of Your good pleasure and then help me to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Sinner, with divided hope, a solemn thought I have to suggest to you on the terribleness of your delusion. Remember, if you trust in any measure to your works you are under the Law and as many as are under the Law are under the curse. Oh, what multitudes of professed Christians might be thundered at by that text. It is true they would not say that they hoped to be saved by legal works. But then they hope to be saved by certain works which they regard as being the works of the Christian dispensation. Now, remember, we speak not of three covenants, but only two. One is the Covenant of Works. If any man is to be saved by that, he must keep the Covenant and never break it. But inasmuch as every man has already broken it, whoever is under that covenant is accursed. He is accursed by the Law.

The Ten great Commandments utter ten solemn curses upon him. The other covenant is a Covenant of Grace. There is no covenant half of works and half of grace. The Covenant of Grace is a covenant of free gift, in which Christ gives to all those who willingly receive, but asks nothing of them. Albeit, afterwards He works in them all that His Spirit loves and makes them to serve Him out of gratitude. Not that they may *be* saved, but because they *are* saved. Not to win salvation, but because they have obtained it and wish to let that salvation manifest and develop itself in all their daily acts.

Many professing Christians, I believe, imagine that there is a remedial covenant, a sort of sincere *obedience* covenant, in which if a man does as much as he can he will be saved by that. Oh, Sinner, God will never take a composition of you. There is no court of heavenly bankruptcy where so much in the pound may be accepted and the debtor then discharged. It is all or none. If you come to pay, it must be to the uttermost farthing. Agree with your Adversary quickly, therefore and take the receipt of your debt freely from His loving hand—for if not and you attempt to pay, you shall never be let out of prison until all is paid—and that will never be, though you swelter in the pains of Hell forever and ever.

I know that people labor under the idea that going to Church and Chapel, taking the Sacrament and doing certain good deeds that pertain to a respectable profession of religion, are the way to Heaven. It is the way to Hell, believe me. Although it is strewn with clean gravel and there are grassy paths on either side, it is not the road to Heaven for all that. You know how I have insisted in reading the chapter this morning, upon the certainty of good works. I have told you that it is only by this that you can be *known* and that you are not Christians unless you *produce* good works.

But at the same time, Beloved, if you rest on anything *but* Christ, or on anything *with* Christ—if you try to prop up His Grace—if you try to add to the perfect robe of His righteousness—you are under the Law and you are under the curse. And you shall find that curse in the daily trembling of

your conscience and meet with it in its fullness at the awful day of God, when the Lord shall curse every soul that is under it.

But one remark more and I will leave this point of the singleness of the eye of faith. If you can be saved by two things, then the glory will be divided. A quaint minister once said if sinners went to Heaven of their own works and their own will, they would throw up their caps and say, "glory be unto myself"—men would take the honor and certainly the praise, if they contributed any part to their own salvation. The song would not be, "Unto Him that loved us," but, "unto Him and myself," or "with my works and my merits." Think you, Sirs, that Christ died to win divided homage and share a divided throne? Did He come from Heaven's highest glories and stoop to the Cross of deepest woe that His name might be sung in conjunction with your poor name?

Oh, no! God forbid that we should indulge in so profane a thought. He must be All. He must have all the crown and every jewel in it shall be His own. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Your name be all the honor and glory and majesty, forever and ever." Every syllable of every song, every shout of every angel, every cry of every redeemed one must bear the same sacred burden and must rise up to the same Divine Throne. And we ought, we must, go bow and ascribe to Him and Him only, "Glory, honor and majesty and power and dominion and might, forever and ever. Amen."

Suffer this word of exhortation. Poor Sinners, trust Jesus Christ now. Just as you are, come to Him now. Bring nothing with you, come empty handed. Robe not yourself, come naked. Wash not yourself, come filthy. Seek not to soften your heart, come with it hard as it is. Try not to get a little comfort—come despairingly. You can come no way else. But come now to His Cross. He was naked when He bought you and you must be naked when He wins you. He was in shame when He served for you and you must be ashamed when He shows His love to you.

He drank the wormwood when He redeemed you and if the wormwood of despair is in your mouth, yet come to Him now and say to Him now, "Heal my backslidings, receive me graciously and love me freely." And when you have said it, "venture on Him, venture wholly." Throw your arms about His Cross and be this the spirit of your faith—"sink or swim, here I must abide. I know I perish if I withdraw, I cannot perish here. Jesus, let Your pitying eye look down on me. I do believe, I will believe that You have power to save even me. I trust You with my all forever."

If you can say that, Sinner, then you are saved, your sins are forgiven you—go in peace. Take up your bed and walk, you palsied man. "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth I bid you stretch out your hand, you with the withered arm." Awake, arise and live. He that believes is justified from all things. Your sins are gone, your soul is accepted. You are saved this morning and you shall see His face and sing His love in glory everlasting.

II. Now I come to my second point. It is a singular fact, that to obey and to believe is in the sacred language very much the same, so that truly to believe Christ is to give security for a willing obedience. As soon as ever we believe Him we obey Him. In fact, Christ does not promise to save us if we disobey His laws. But His promise is this—if we trust Him, He will save us. But then He has His way of saving us and He will only save us in His

own way. And if we really trust Him we shall yield to His ways and be willing to be obedient to His commands. The eye of obedience, however, sometimes in the Christian is not single—I mean in the *professed* Christian. That word has been so dishonored that I often use it without meaning the true child of God. And sad that I should be compelled too often to apply the term “Christian,” to those that are not of Christ and who have never learned His love nor have known His name.

There are many professors whose eye of obedience is not single. They live in this world, they say, “for Christ,” but really no one can believe them. If you can judge them by their fruits they seem to live for almost any other object than Christ. At any rate, if they do give Jesus their allegiance, they seem to give Him but half their heart and serve Him with a love that is neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm. Sometimes they are zealous for Jesus and at other times just as eager after the things of this world. No, I must confess that even true Christians do not always keep the eye single—the speck gets into it, if not the beam.

And there are times when even God’s minister has to bow his knee and with bitter weeping to confess that he cannot keep his motives always single. I have often to mourn over this myself. I can say from my inmost heart that I love my Master’s cause, but I have to ask myself this, “Do not you love to see your Master’s cause prosper by *you* better than by another?” Oh that wicked thought, that ever it should cross our hearts! And yet, what minister of Christ is there that has not to confess it, if he but examine himself? I do feel that when we are in our right state, we would as soon souls were saved by anybody else as ourselves and that God should bless another as us. For it can make no difference to us, if we really love the Master—who it is by whom He honors Himself. Our honor, our standing, ought to be less than nothing—yet it will creep up.

One serves Christ at times very earnestly, but then gets the fly into the sweet pot of ointment—the wishing to serve Christ that self may share in the pleasure of doing good. We must be content to do good and have no self-gratification to indulge—content to serve Christ and know no reward—content to serve our generation, though our names should be cast out. We must be content, though we should only hope to hear the, “Well done” when we shall be in our Master’s presence.

Well, now, let me say a few things about having a single eye. Professors, I speak to you at large, whether you are Christians or not. Get rid of that evil eye which looks asquint and cross-way—looking one way at the world and the other way at the Cross—not straight forward at any object, but is turned here and there and everywhere. Remember, this is the worldling’s eye. The worldling thinks he can serve God and Mammon, and will you think the same, you professed follower of Christ? Will you try to serve two masters who are at deadly enmity to one another?

I tell you, man, when God will say to you, “Take no thought for the morrow, be careful for nothing”—Mammon will say to you, “Look ahead, be careful for everything.” And when God says to you, “Give of your substance to the poor.” Mammon will say, “Hold it tight, it is that giving that spoils everything.” And when God will say unto you, “Set not your affections on the things of earth,” Mammon will say, “Get money, get

money, get it any way you can.” And when God says, “Be upright,” Mammon will say, “Cheat your own father if you can win by it.”

Mammon and God are at such extreme ends of the earth and so desperately opposed, that I trust, Christian, you are not such a fool, such an arrant fool as to attempt to serve them both. If you do you have the worldling’s eye and you are a worldling yourself. Remember, too, if you try to do this we may suspect you of having the hypocrite’s eye. As Matthew Henry says, “The hypocrite is like the waterman. He pulls this way, but he looks that. He pretends to look to Heaven, but he pulls towards his own interest. He says he looks to Christ, but he is always pulling towards his own private advantage. The true Christian, however, is like a traveler, he looks to the goal and then he walks right straight on to it, he goes the way he is looking.”

Be not like the hypocrite, who has this double eye, looking one way and going the other. An old Puritan said, “A hypocrite is like the hawk—the hawk flies upward, but he always keeps his eye down on the prey. Let him get up as high as he will, he is always looking on the ground. Whereas, the Christian is like the lark, he turns his eye up to Heaven and as he mounts and sings he looks upward and he mounts upward.” Be one of God’s own larks. Be an honest lark, looking and going in the same direction with a single purpose, for your double purpose will make the world suspect you of hypocrisy.

Yet further—remember, Christian, unless you have a single eye your usefulness will be entirely ruined. This has been the spiritual death of many a man, who bade fair to do good in the world, but who did not live with one object. I have known ministers preach a sermon in which they wished to profit all, but they wished to please the deacon in the green pew, too, and the sermon fell dead to the ground. We have known men too, anxious to win sinners, but at the same time they were equally anxious that they should be thought well of in their oratory, so that they should not say a course rough word, for fear of degrading their standing among the eloquent of the age. It is all over with the usefulness of such.

A Christian minister, above every man, must have no object in life but to glorify his God and whether it is fair weather or foul weather it should be nothing to him. He should be a man who looks for fights and expects storms—and in proportion to his faithfulness he will be sure to meet with both. He must be one who girds up his loins and makes ready for the battle. Let him understand it is to be battle. And make no preparation for the flesh. And, Christian, if you would do good in this world, you must live for that simple object and not live for anything else. If you run after two objects you will not come upon either, or rather, the world will get the mastery over you.

When Christians have two aims they are like two rivers which flow near the city of Geneva, the Arve and the Rhone. The Rhone comes flowing along, a beautiful blue—a blue which painters give to Italian skies and to the rivers of Switzerland. It is no exaggeration, they are as blue as they are painted. The Arve comes down from the glacier, a chalky, dirty white. I stood sometime ago at the place where these two rivers join. It was not long before the Arve had quenched the Rhone. All that beautiful blue had

fled away and nothing but white was seen. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." If your life is made up of two streams, worldliness running in like the Arve and you hope to have spirituality running in like the blue Rhone, you will soon be mistaken.

Your spirituality, if there is such a thing, will become a stalking horse to your worldliness. Your religion will be swallowed up, for you cannot serve two masters. You cannot serve either of them well and you cannot serve Christ at all, if you are divided in your aims.

And then, further than this, Christian, do you not know that if you have divided aims you will be an object of contempt to the world? The world comes to despise the Church at this very period because she perceives that the Church is not chaste to her husband, Christ. Ah, I love not to say what I am going to say, but really, when I have looked on some professing Christians, a thought I do not like to indulge has crossed my mind. I have seen them so worldly, so sharp in their business, so mingled with the world that you could not tell which was worldling and which was Christian and I have thought, did Christ shed His blood to make such a thing as this? Is the only thing that Christ's redemption can produce a thing no better than nature can bring forth?

I have seen worldly men better than such Christians, in many virtues excelling them. And I have thought, "What? Is it worth while making all this noise about a redemption that does not redeem these men any more than this, but leaves them slaves to the world?" And I have looked at them and the tear has been in my eyes as I have thought, "Is this the Holy Spirit's work? Was there any Holy Spirit necessary here at all? Would they not be as good men without the Holy Spirit, as they seem to be with Him? Is this the best thing Heaven can produce? Has Heaven been in labor and brought forth this mouse? Is this all the Gospel has to give?"

Now, judge you, whether I am not warranted in such thoughts. And if they cross my mind, think how often such thoughts must flit across the mind of the worldling. "Oh," says he, "this is your religion, is it? Well, it is no such mighty thing, after all. I bought such goods at such a shop and I was fairly taken in. This is your Christianity, is it?" "I worked for such a master," says another, "he is a deacon, he is a skinflint too. This is your Christianity." "Ah," says a laborer, "I am employed by So-and-So and he is just as proud and domineering in his behavior to his workmen as if he were a Pharaoh and not a follower of Christ. This is your Christianity, is it?"

Indeed the worldling has good ground for saying something like it. How has the fine gold become dim! How has the glory departed! The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold—how have they become as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! Oh Zion! Your Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, but their face is become black as a coal and their skin is tarnished with mire. Your sons lie in the corners of the street like a wild bull in the net. Your strong men faint and your valiant ones fail, because your glory is departed from you. Would to God we were all Christians who profess to be Christians and that we lived up to what we profess.

Then would the Christian shine forth “clear as the sun, fair as the moon,” and what besides—why, “terrible as an army with banners”! A consistent Church is a terrible Church—an honest, upright Church would shake the world. The tramp of godly men is the tramp of heroes. These are the thundering legions that sweep everything before them. The men that are what they profess to be hate the semblance of a lie, whatever shape it wears and would sooner die than do that which is dishonest, or that which would be degrading to the glory of a Heaven-born race and to the honor of Him by whose name they have been called.

O Christians! You will be the world’s contempt, you will be their despising and hissing unless you live for one object. I know the world will pat you on the back and flatter you, but it will despise you all the while. When I am abused, I know what it means. I look at it in the right spirit and say, “Be it so. It is the highest compliment the world can pay me.” If I am serving my God, I must not expect to be honored of men. But if I am not serving my God, I know I shall be despised of men. So will it be with you. Get a single solitary thought in your mind and that thought the precious love of Jesus and go and live it out and come what may, you will be respected though abused.

They may say you are an enthusiast, a fanatic, a fool, but those names from the world are titles of praise and glory. The world does not take the trouble to nickname a man unless he is worth it. It will not give you any censure unless it trembles at you. The moment they begin to turn at bay it is because they feel they have a man to do with. So it will be with you. Be men, each one of you, stand up for Christ and the word you believe and the world will respect you.

I met with a coachman some time ago, who said to me, “Do you know the Rev. Mr. So-and-So?” “Yes, I do know him very well,” “Well,” said he, “he’s the sort of man I like. He’s a minister and I like him very much. I like his religion.” “What sort of a religion is it?” I said, for I was anxious to know what sort of a religion it was he could like. “Why,” said he, “you see this box seat? Well, he has ridden on this box seat every day for this six months and he’s the kind of man I like, for he has never said anything about religion all the while.”

That is the sort of Christian the world likes and that is the sort they despise. They say, “Ah, we will not speak against him, he is one of our own.” And if he were to come out one day and speak about religion, what would they say? “He does not mean it, let him alone. He was silent as a man and when he speaks, he speaks in his official capacity.” There is no respect for that man for it is not the man in the office, but it is the office that overpowers the man for the time being.

Let it not be so with You. Tread the world under your feet and serve God with all your heart, for you may never expect to have peace in your conscience until you have turned all the idols out of your soul. Live for Christ alone, for where your consecration ends, there your peace ends, too. Christian, you can never hope to stand accepted before God, while you only serve Him with half your heart. You can never hope to enter into Heaven triumphantly when you have only used part of your manhood in the service of your Redeemer.

I speak vehemently when I come to this point. I do pray, my dear Hearers, by your hope of Heaven, by your hope to be delivered from the devouring fire and to enter into a glory and bliss, either serve God or Mammon. Whichever you do, do it with all your heart. But do not try to do both, because you cannot. Oh, if you are Christians, live with all your might for Christ. Keep not back part of the price, like Ananias and Sapphires, but give Jesus all—

***“All your goods and all your hours,
All your time and all your powers,
All you have and all you are,”***

and you will be a happy, blessed, honored, useful man.

Divide your allegiance and you shall be a hissing reproach to sinners. You shall be a pain to yourself, you shall be a dishonor here and you shall be held up to shame and everlasting contempt when Christ shall appear in the glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him. Charge, Christians, in the name of Christ, charge against the embattled marks of sin! But do it with one heart. Break not your rank. Hold not out the flag of truce to the world with one hand and draw the sword with the other. Throw away the scabbard. Be the sworn enemies, forever, of everything that is selfish and sinful. And trusting in the precious blood of Christ and wearing the Cross in your hearts, go forward conquering and to conquer, making mention of your Master's name, preaching His Word and triumphing in His Grace alone.

God grant, if we must have two eyes, that they may be both clear ones, one the eye of faith wholly fixed on Christ, the other the eye of obedience equally and wholly fixed on the same object.

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THOUGHT CONDEMNED, YET COMMANDED

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, What shall we wear? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
Matthew 6:31-33.

THESE are soothing words to read, but difficult words to put into practice. Had anyone except the Lord Jesus Christ uttered them, we might have quoted to him that ancient saying, “Physician, heal yourself,” for we shall never find any other teacher who is, himself, absolutely free from care. But Jesus Christ not only gives us the purest possible precepts, but His own life is the best exposition of them. If ever you want to know what Christ means by His teaching, look at His life. You may rest assured that He never gave us a command which He was not, Himself, prepared to obey. Those of us who have put our trust in Christ are His servants and He, Himself, condescended to be a Servant for our sakes. Indeed, He is the real model Servant and the service which He requires of us, He, Himself, shows us how to perform. I do not intend, therefore, so much to expound the text by any words of my own, as to illustrate it by the life of Jesus Christ Himself. I think that it may be more profitable and certainly it will be more unusual, if I take these words of Christ and say to you, “If you would know their meaning, look at the life of Him whom you call Master and Lord. You can best understand His words by His works.”

I see in the text, first, *a precept forbidding thought*. Secondly, *a precept commanding thought*. And then, in the two precepts, if they are rightly kept, I see *a frame of mind admirably fitted for all Believers in coming to the Communion Table*.

I. First, then, we have here A PRECEPT FORBIDDING THOUGHT—a precept which says, “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, What shall we wear?” How are we to understand this precept?

Certainly, *we are not to understand it in the sense of the idler*, who says, “God will provide and, therefore, there is no need for me to labor. God’s Providence is my inheritance and, therefore, I may fold my arms and sit still.” The man who talks and acts in that fashion will have thistles on his land, emptiness in his cupboard, rags on his back and ruin to his character—and all that will serve him right! Paul wrote to the

Thessalonians, “This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” And it would, perhaps, be the best way of treating some men if they were never allowed to eat anything except what they had themselves earned. Of course, this rule would not apply in the case of those who are disabled by old age, or laid aside by sickness, but, in every other case, work is the lot of us all and it is a benefit to us all—and we ought never, under the pretense of piety, to endeavor to shirk it! You have heard, perhaps, of the very pious man who entered a monastery in order that he might spend all his time in devotion. So, when the time came for the brethren to go into the fields to work, he did not leave his cell—he was too spiritual to handle a hoe or a spade, so he continued in communion with angels. He was very much surprised, however, when the time came for the brotherhood to assemble in the refectory, that he was not called! And after waiting till the demands of hunger overcame the claims of his spiritual being, he went to the prior and asked why he had not been called to the meal. And he was informed that as he was so spiritual that he could not work, it was thought that he was probably so spiritual that he could not eat and, at any rate, the laws of the monastery did not permit him to eat until he had earned what he needed. There was much common sense in that reply and our Lord Jesus Christ was not one of your lackadaisical, goody-goody sort of people who have nothing at all to do! Point me to a single wasted hour in our Savior’s whole life. Show me one instance in which He was a sluggard, if you can. There is His life record before you, written by four truthful men—put your finger, if you can, upon a single spot where He might be rightly accused of being sluggish. If he had been so, we might have had a warrant for interpreting this text according to the lazy man’s version of it, but it is not so. His motto was always, “I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night comes when no man can work.”

Neither did our Lord Jesus Christ intend to inculcate prodigality when he said, “Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat?” and so on. This is what the young spendthrift does when he comes into possession of his estate. He gathers all he has with both hands. Take thoughts? Not he! As long as the gold will last, he will spend it without reckoning! All the proverbs of prudence he despises—he is too free-hearted and generous to think of them—and so, by his sinful extravagance, he speedily brings himself to poverty. Our Lord Jesus Christ never meant that and He never acted like that. With what singular economy did the Savior always behave! Generous to the last degree, He fed five thousand men, besides women and children, but, equally economical, He said to His disciples, “Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” Jesus Christ would have us take care of what we have, for we are only stewards, and a steward must not waste his Lord’s goods. Extravagance, waste—the allowing of anything to perish which ought to be used—is a wrong thing which cannot be too sternly condemned. And the Savior never intended, for a single moment, to justify any such action as that!

Neither did our Lord forbid a certain amount of forethought. One kind of forethought He certainly did condemn when He said, “Take therefore no

thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” But He, Himself—and as I have reminded you, He is His own Expositor and the key to His own teaching—often looked forward. For instance, with regard to Lazarus, who He might have gone to him at once, He stayed away a while, looking forward to the time when Lazarus would have been dead and buried four days as the proper period for displaying His resurrection power! And as for His own death, He looked forward to that from the very opening of His earthly ministry and long before. He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was straitened until it was accomplished. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, not merely once, but virtually all His life! He did think of His latter end and His whole life was a preparation for that great offering up of Himself as a Sacrifice for the sins of men. He did not, therefore, forbid us to look to the end of life and to the necessary preparation for that end. He did not forbid us to look towards ends and objectives which may require futurity to ripen them, for, if we did not do so, our life would be altogether confusion and certainly could not be well-directed!

What, then, did the Savior mean when He said, “Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, What shall we wear?” I think that He meant, first, *“Do not let provision for your temporal needs be the chief end of your life, for this is what the heathen do. The heathen Gentiles live to eat, to drink and to clothe themselves.”* This is what the savage still does—give him “happy hunting grounds” where he can get sufficient food, and where the skins of beasts may cover him from the inclemency of the weather and you have given him all that he needs. Jesus says, “After all these things do the Gentiles seek.” But you are not to make this search the sole end and aim of your life—you were created for something nobler and better than that. For such an objective as this, an ox or an ass may live, but not a Christian! It is utterly beneath the dignity of your immortal spirit, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, to be living alone, or chiefly, for this reason. This is a matter which will require your careful thought—God has formed you of the dust of the ground and the appetites of animals are shared in by you—they crave and demand your attention—but not such attention as would lead you to make these minor matters the main business of your life! But, alas, how many men there are who are simply great consumers of bread, meat, wine and such like things—

“Like brutes they live—like brutes they die.”

May God convert them, by His Grace, and so lift them up to something higher! As for all of you who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, scorn such business as satisfies the heathen savage!

But the Savior must have meant more than that. When He said, “Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink,” He meant, *as compared with the service of God, and the honor and glory of His name, which should be the great objective of your life—do not give any consideration to these other things.* Christ elsewhere puts the matter thus, “He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this

world shall keep it unto life eternal.” He means that His disciple is to hate, or to love less, even his own life—to be prepared to consider that even that is a mere trifle if it should ever be a hindrance to the Glory of Christ. You remember how the Apostle Paul said to the Ephesian elders, “Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.” Brethren, if it ever comes to this, that you must lose your business, your employment, your livelihood, or else do wrong—lose *everything* sooner than commit the smallest sin! And if it came to this, that you must lose your liberty and lie in a dungeon, or else deny the faith—accept the prison, but reject the opportunity of traitorously forsaking your Lord and Master! And if it came even to death, itself, remember how bravely the martyrs behaved when they refused to accept pardon at the price of recantation! They could die, but they could not deny their Lord! They could burn, but they could not turn and, therefore, they took no thought as to what they should eat or what they should drink, or whether they should live or die! They counted all such things as insignificant trifles to those who were seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness! And who will dare to say that they were unwise? If any should even *hint* that they were not wise, think of them, as they are now within yonder pearly portals, amid the white-robed hosts bearing the victor’s palm—

**“Foremost of the sons of light,
Nearest the eternal Throne of God!”**

These are they who, for Christ’s sake and the Gospel’s, took no thought of minor matters, but followed the Lamb where ever He led the way!

Still further to open up the meaning of this injunction, let me remind you that *this is just what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself did*. You cannot say that Jesus Christ ever troubled His head about what He should eat, or what He should drink—His meat and His drink consisted in doing His Father’s will! Even life itself was as nothing to Him, for He cheerfully laid it down for our sakes. When the devil offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, you know how He answered him. And when, afterwards, Peter began to rebuke Him for talking about dying, He seemed to think that He was in the same position as when He was with the devil in the wilderness, for He said to Peter, “Get you behind Me, Satan; for you savor not the things that are of God, but those that are of man.” He counted nothing that He had as being worth preserving and, in this sense, taking no thought of anything, He surrendered all to God to be used for the good of His people!

And, dear Friends, we shall further see the meaning of the text if we note that *we are not to take such thought about eating, drinking and so on, as to make ourselves slaves to work and worry*. I know some professing Christians who seem as if they needed to grasp the whole world. They already have plenty of business, yet they are craving for more. The days are not long enough for them—they would like to be up before the larks, or not to go to bed at all if they could do without sleep! They stretch out their arms like huge encompassing seas seeking to

swallow all the shore. They have what ought to be enough—they have long had enough and a great deal more than enough for their needs—yet they have not enough, nor is it probable that they ever will have enough to satisfy their cravings unless the Grace of God should exert its gracious influence over their hearts! And see how worried they always are! I have seen a poor man with only a crust of dry bread to eat, yet he was perfectly happy. And I have seen a rich man with an abundance of wealth—and he was utterly miserable! The one could rejoice in God, though he had little of this world's goods. But the other could not rejoice notwithstanding all that he possessed!

A Christian should not be one of those who are full of worry, those who rise up early, sit up late and eat the bread of carefulness and devote all their time to secular and secondary things, so that they have no leisure for private devotion, or for the service of God. God ought not to have the clippings and the odds and ends of life. He ought not to come in for the cheese-parings and the candle ends as He seems to do in some men's houses. But the chief part of our time, yes, all our time should, in some respects, be consecrated to Him. While it is right for you to be diligent in business, yet you should always let everything be done for God's Glory—and that cannot be the case if you become the slave of Mammon and if the signs of fretting and worrying are plainly visible upon your very face! Think for a moment—when did your Lord ever fret and worry about gold and silver? Did anyone ever see upon that blessed brow of His any cloud because of His lack of these things? Enough was given to Him for His daily maintenance and that, He entrusted to Judas, the treasurer of His little band of disciples. But He made no request for it, nor did He levy any tithe or tax for the support of Himself and His followers. Nor was He ever anxious about ways and means. He took all things calmly and quietly and He would have you do the same.

And He meant too, dear Friends, *that no Christian ought to be very anxious about anything.* He never was. I know some Christians and some of them are here now, who will not enjoy the service, or the Communion because they are so anxious about what is possibly going to happen. They say that they believe in Providence, but they really disbelieve in it. They say that they are trusting in God, but they do not truly trust Him. They know that they ought to cast all their care upon Him who cares for them, but they do not do anything of the kind! They continue to care for themselves and they are almost worn out with anxiety. Look even at the mother of our Lord when the supply of wine at the wedding-feast ran short—she was, apparently, all in a fret, so she went to Jesus and said, "They have no wine." But Jesus said to her, "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour is not yet come." His time would come in due course and then He would give them what they needed for that wedding feast. But until the right moment came, He remained calm and quiet. And that is how we should be, leaving everything in God's hands. Having done all that we can do by honest labor and earnest prayer, let us leave the rest

with God, for He would not have His children cumbered with much serving, nor have them vexed with earthly cares.

And, more than that, dear Friends, *we ought never to take such thought as to get to murmuring, repining and complaining of our lot*, as though it had not been fixed by Infinite Love and Wisdom! Some people wish that they were almost anything rather than what they are, albeit there are others who would be glad enough to be just what those very people are! You think, my Brother, that your cross is heavier to bear than mine? I would not, however, recommend you change with me, as I certainly would not change with you! If we could all lay our crosses down in this Tabernacle and each man could take another one's cross which he liked better than his own—within 24 hours we should all be back here crying for our own crosses to be given to us again—for each man's cross fits his shoulders better than anybody else's cross would fit them! Besides, we can have Grace given to us to endure the trial which God has sent us—but if we had a trial of our own choosing we could not expect that Divine Grace would be given to support us under that, so what would we do then? Never murmur, my Brothers and Sisters, until you find Christ murmuring. Read all the records of His life and see when He ever complained. Foxes had holes and the birds of the air had nests, but He had nowhere to lay His head. Yet He did not mention that fact in any spirit of complaining. He was a poor Man. His garment was like the common robe of the country. His food did not consist of delicacies and dainties, neither was His drink selected from the choicest liquids in the world. Yet He was a joyous man—“a Man of Sorrows” for our sakes, but, as far as He, Himself, was personally concerned, the noblest, the calmest and the happiest of mankind!

And, Brothers and Sisters, *we must never let thought about temporal things drive us to despair*. Possibly, in this large audience, there is a man who says, “I have struggled very hard and everything seems to go against me—I am inclined to throw it all away.” But, my Brother, when did your Lord throw away all His work, or throw *any* of His work away? He never did! And if you will take to God that portion of your care which you ought not to attempt to carry, you will find that the part of the load which you ought to carry is not too heavy for your shoulders when the Lord strengthens you with His Grace! The wear and tear of life comes not out of the Providential trials which we have to endure, but out of the unbelieving cares and burdens which we make for ourselves! You can carry easily enough the load that God appoints for you, my Brothers and Sisters, but if you let the devil sit on the top of it in the form of your own anxieties, doubts and fears, then the burden will crush you to the earth! Imitate your blessed Lord and Master, and never despair, but hope on, hope always and even if God, Himself, should seem to forsake you, yet cry, “My God, my God,” even as Jesus did when God had forsaken Him!

I will only say one other thing upon this point, which is that *we are not to think about temporal things so as to get into the habit of hoarding, as some do*. They scarcely spend enough to provide for *their own necessities*. The poor ask nothing from them. And God's Church—I was

about to say gets less than nothing—and I might truly say that though it appears to be impossible, for there are some who give a good deal less than nothing to the Lord’s cause, for they occupy a place in the building where services are held which has been erected, and is still kept up by others at an expense which these misers never attempt to share—so that, as far as God’s House is concerned, they absolutely take from that House instead of giving to it, albeit that they have superabundant substance of their own from which they ought to contribute to the work of the Lord! Saving is well, but the first thing that a man has to do is to see to the saving of his soul! And there are some who always look so much to the saving of their wealth that their soul stands very little chance of being saved! *To get and to hold* seems to be the great end-all and be-all of some men’s being—but it can never be so with a true Christian. He, by Divine Grace, is like His Master, who, “though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor.” His riches consisted in giving and, therefore, He was the richest man who ever lived, for He gave more than anyone else when He gave Himself that He might redeem His people!

I have thus explained to you the thought that is forbidden. May God’s Grace enable us to obey our Lord’s injunction. And the secret—the only secret by which we can learn how to obey it is this—somebody must think and care for us and, as we are not to think and care for ourselves, we must cease all sinful caring by believing that our Heavenly Father cares for us! If Jesus cares for me, I may get rid of care about myself. And I urge all my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, by the wounds that were given Him for our sake, and by all the many tokens of His love that He has given to us, never to doubt that He cares for us in anything—in the little things as much as in the great ones, counting even the hairs of our head and bearing all our afflictions, according to that gracious Word of God, “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” Cast your care, then, on Him, for so you may cease to care for yourselves!

II. But now, secondly, we have in the text A PRECEPT COMMANDING THOUGHT—“Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.”

Call back your thoughts from the pursuit of the tidings of this life and when you have recalled them, send them forth in pursuit of the blessings of the life that is to come! What ought a Christian to care for? What did Christ care for? *Christ’s great care was for His Father’s Glory.* For this He lived and for this He died. There is no single action of His life that had not God’s Glory as its end. O beloved Brothers and Sisters who are bought with the blood of Christ, we cannot, any of us, say this about our own lives! Yet we ought to be able to say it and we ought now to pray God’s blessed Spirit to enable us to concentrate all our thoughts, powers and energies upon this one objective—that we might, in all things, glorify God! This is, as the Catechism says, “man’s chief end”—especially the chief end of *redeemed man*—to do everything, whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, to do all to the Glory of God—to make the most common acts of daily life, as well as the higher acts of service and

devotion, subservient to God's Glory. God help you to attain to this ideal Christian life!

Next to that, Christ's great care *was to do the particular work which God had given Him to do*. When He had been sitting by the well, talking to that poor woman of Samaria, His disciples wondered why He did not ask for meat. But He said to them, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." He was completely absorbed in that one thing—the finishing of the work which God had given Him to do. And how early He began that work! What a bright example He has set before you young lads and lasses! When He was 12 years of age, after He had been "in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions," and Joseph and Mary had sorrowed because they could not find Him, He said to them, in answer to His mother's question of reproof, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" And He might have finished His life with the same enquiry. When wicked men led Him away to crucify Him and He willingly went as a sheep to the slaughter, He might have said, "I am still about My Father's business." He never sought to save Himself—He always served His Father who had sent Him. There were no by-ends with Christ. You never find Him seeking personal honor. On the contrary, He hid Himself away from men when they sought to thrust honor upon Him. You never find Him seeking personal pleasure—His life was a life of self-denial. You never find Him seeking riches. Among all the poor, there were none poorer than He was. But He always delighted to do what God had given Him to do!

O Brothers and Sisters, if we were to live as He did, we would make our lives to be grand lives, and happy lives, too, albeit that we would probably multiply our sorrows, even as Christ did. Yet, as I have already reminded you, there was a deep happiness underneath the surface, in Christ's inmost soul, which abundantly recompensed Him for all the trials He had to endure. Let us labor to do as He did so that we shall be able to say, "This one thing I do—the one thing which God has given me to do." Short of this, let us never be content. I long to be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "For to me to live is Christ." I should like to be a thunderbolt, hurled from the right hand of God, and to go crashing through every obstacle till it had reached the mark at which God had aimed me! I pray that the love of Christ may thus constrain me, and drive me on towards the great objective of my being—the Glory of my God! So may it be with you too, dear Friends and, to that end, "gird up the loins of your mind," "lay aside every weight" and the clinging garments which would entangle you and impede you in running to the goal which lies before you—the finishing of the work which God has given you to do!

What else did Christ care for? Well, I might truly say that He cared for nothing else. For these two things—to glorify God and to finish His work—comprehend His whole life. Yet, as a matter of detail, I may remind you that *Christ lived to care for His people*. He was free from care about Himself, yet full of care for His people. From the very first day

when He had disciples around Him, till the hour in which He was taken up from them, He was always thinking about them. Read any one of the Gospels through, with this thought in your mind, and you will be struck with the tender care of Jesus Christ towards those who followed Him. There is Peter, for instance. Christ knows that Satan desires to have him, that he may sift him as wheat, but He means to be before the devil, so He says to Peter, "I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." He did not say, "I will pray for you when you get into Satan's sieve" but, "I have prayed for you already. I have anticipated the temptation by My supplication for you." When Judas and the band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees came to arrest our Lord in Gethsemane, what did He say? "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." His only thought was about His disciples, not about Himself! Just as, after instituting the Last Supper, when He was going out to be betrayed and needed all the comfort, humbly speaking, that His disciples could give Him, He never asked them for comfort, but He began comforting them by saying to them, "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me! In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." You see that all His care was for you, not for Himself! And, Brothers and Sisters, let us have something like this care for the Church of God! Let us be mindful of the Lord's people and let us watch for opportunities of doing good to others. If we hear of any who are seeking the Lord, let us try to guide them to Him. If we know any among our Brothers and Sisters who have backslidden, let us seek to be the means of restoring them. If any are sad at heart, let us endeavor to comfort them. Having given up all sinful cares, let the welfare of the people of God be our one and only care!

And then, again, *Christ had a care for those who had no care for Him.* That is a beautiful simile which He used concerning guilty Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you would not!" That is a beautiful emblem of what Christianity should be. The mother bird seems utterly oblivious of herself altogether. If she can but spread her wings over those little chicks that nestle down close to her bosom, she will give away her own warmth for them and sacrifice her own life in their defense. Christ looked upon that city, which He knew would perish with an overwhelming destruction, but His big heart was palpitating in His bosom and He was longing to cover even those great sinners with His wings of love! He manifested His care for the sons of men very practically. When a crowd gathers to hear anyone preach, surely it is not the preacher's business to feed his congregation as well as teach them! Yet Jesus thought it was His duty to do so. They were hungry, weary and ready to faint—and the gracious Savior was concerned about them, though He had no care about Himself. And He especially cared for those

poor pale-faced women and children who had come so far, and looked so weak. And He said to His disciples, "I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way."

And then, like a prince who makes a great feast, He fed them all with loaves and fishes! And, Christian men and women, if God enables you to get rid of care on your own account, you will begin to care for the poor and needy, and to care for sinners. Yes, and you will learn to love your neighbor as yourself. And when you meet with a case that needs your help, you will be careful in attending to it. And if you cannot tell whether it is a good case or not, you will be like Job, who said, "The cause which I knew not I searched out." That man is like Christ who lives, not for himself, but for others. It has been all too truly said that there are some people whose first care is for themselves, and whose second care is for themselves, and whose third care is for themselves, and whose fourth care is for themselves, and so on as many times as you like to repeat it! Possibly somewhere down in the millions, there is a little care for somebody else, but it is too low down ever to come to anything practical. I am afraid it is often so with some professing Christians! But let it not be so among you. The heathen care for themselves. The brute beasts care for themselves. But the Christian should care for others, with a view to the Glory of God. For this reason he should live, even as Jesus lived.

III. Now, thirdly, IN THE SPIRIT OF THESE TWO PRECEPTS, IT WILL BE WELL FOR ALL CHRISTIANS TO COME TO THEIR LORD'S TABLE.

Come first, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, *without care about temporal things*. Did you come in here heavily burdened, my Sister? Then you had forgotten that the Lord loved you and that He knew all about your needs. Now that I remind you of these facts, leave your burden in the pew where you are sitting—it will not bother anybody else—and come to the Table without it. "O Sir!" you say, "I have worked very hard all week." Then, my dear Sister, do not go on working or worrying *today*. "I have had a crushing burden to carry the last six months," says a Brother. Then, my dear Brother, do not carry it any longer—there is no need that you should. The Jews, when they ate the Passover, stood with their loins girded and each man had his staff in his hand. They were allowed to carry a burden, for they were going on a long journey and they were thrust out in haste. So we read that "the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes, upon their shoulders." But the Christian, at the Lord's Table, does not stand. What ought to be our posture at the Communion Table? In Matthew 26:20, we read, "When the even was come, He sat down with the twelve." No doubt, according to the Oriental custom, they reclined in such a position that John even leaned his head upon the bosom of Christ. They sat, or reclined, perfectly at their ease, as if to remind us that when we believe in Jesus Christ, we enter into rest. What is the teaching of the emblems upon the Table—the bread and the wine? What do they mean? They are to remind us of the broken body of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His shed blood, of which we are, symbolically, to eat

and to drink. Paul says, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?” What? Will He deny you bread for your body after He has given you Christ, the Bread of Heaven, for your soul? Will He deny you clothes for your body after He has clothed your soul with the robe of Christ’s perfect righteousness? Will He deny you a sufficient store of earthly goods that you may get through this world when He has already given you a mansion in the skies and a crown of life that fades not? If we should forget our cares *anywhere*—surely we should do so at the Communion Table!

Now, dear Friends, let me, ask—*why do you still carry your cares?* Have they ever done you any good? Which one of you, who has been the most full of care, has ever put a sixpence into his pocket thereby? With all your fretting and worrying, have you ever obtained any comfort? It is sorry music that you make with your moaning over your anxieties! I am sure that you have never enjoyed the tune yourself, nor has anyone else. And as for you who have been the greatest money-grubbers, I can tell you that you will die poorer than you were when you were born! “No,” you say “that cannot be, for naked came we into this world.” But you will *die* poorer than that, for when you came into this world you had both soul and body—but when you go out of this world, you will have to leave your body behind, so that you will die poorer than you were born! You may save as much as you like and you may struggle, and wrestle, and fret, and fume, and worry, but it will come to that in the end! The man who will carry fifty staves, or a hundred, or who will not be satisfied till he gets many hundred staves and tries to travel along with all that bundle of sticks—well, he may do it if he likes, but if you will give me one good stout stick to walk with, I will be satisfied and I think that is the wise thing to do! He who has what he really needs and who is content, is the truly rich man!

So, Brothers and Sisters, put aside all cares about temporal things as you come to the Table of your Lord. But come to *His Table with your heart full of care about your God*. Come with this care—that you may not come as a mere form! Or with this care—that you may truly discern the Lord’s body! Or with this care—that, through the outward signs, you may behold your Lord and Master crucified for you! Come with this care—that you may really feed upon Christ after a spiritual fashion. And with this care—that, when you go away from the Table, you may not lose what you have gained here, but may show by your life that you have really been strengthened by feeding upon Jesus Christ! Concentrate all your thoughts into this one desire—

**“Nearer, my God, to You!
Nearer to You”—**

and partake of the emblems of His body and His shed blood with this sole objective, that you may get nearer and yet nearer to Him and that you may afterwards live like He did. Come to the Communion in this spirit and God’s blessing will surely reap upon you!

Before I close my discourse, I have a few words to say to those of you who have no part nor lot in the matter of which I have been speaking. I am addressing many persons who are not Christians. They are full of care about the things of the world and, very likely some of them will say to me, "You might let us care about the things of the world, for we have nothing else to care for." Some persons say, "It is a dreadful thing that these unconverted people should have such-and-such amusements." So it is, but there is another aspect of the case. Whenever I see a pig in a sty and the farmer is going to give him some slop from the house, I say, "Let the creature have it. He likes it and it is the proper food for him." I do not envy him and if I were to see a man of my acquaintance go and drink the hog's food, I would be shocked, indeed! So, when I see a man who professes to be a Christian, taking delight in the pleasures of the world, I am shocked—but such things are suited to the poor creatures that like them. Only remember, my Friend, if you are going to be content with this world, you are thereby giving up Heaven and giving up the joys of eternity! And in taking the good things, as you call them, of sin, and the pleasures of the flesh, you take the devil and all his works—and all that involves your being cast away from the Presence of God forever!

Oh, if you only knew your true condition, you who are without God, and without Christ, you would want to get away to your houses and to fall on your knees and cry unto the Lord to have mercy upon you! And if you were wise, you would not even wait till you reached your homes, but in this very place you would cry, "What must we do to be saved?" If your heart really utters that cry, let me give you the Scriptural answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Trust that Savior whose teaching I have tried to explain. Trust Him who did more than teach, for He lived! Trust Him who did more than live, for He died! Trust Him who did more than die, for He rose again and ever lives at His Father's right hand on high! Trust Him and you shall be saved forever! The Lord bless you, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

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

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

FIRST THINGS FIRST

NO. 1864

[This address has been lengthened a little in order to fill the usual number of pages. It has also been revised sufficiently to make it read much the same as it was heard. There were passages which depended so much upon the voice and tone that they could not be reproduced by letterpress.]

**AN ADDRESS BY C. H. SPURGEON,
DELIVERED AT THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE LONDON BANKS'
PRAYER UNION,
HELD AT THE EGYPTIAN HALL, MANSION HOUSE, LONDON,
ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 28, 1885,
THE RIGHT HON. THE LORD MAYOR, M.P., IN THE CHAIR.**

MY LORD MAYOR AND GENTLEMEN—I was asked to give *an address* to the members of the Banks' Prayer Union and to others occupied in banking, but I beg to warn you all that an address from me is very much like a sermon. I am so in the habit of preaching that almost of necessity my talk drops into sermon form. I have heard a story of a painter of sign-boards in Harp Alley in the olden times which illustrates the force of habit. An innkeeper selected an angel as the sign of his house and asked this knight of the brush to produce one, but the painter replied, "You had better have a lion. I have been painting lions so long that they are more in my line than angels." My host answered that there were three or four lions of different colors in the street, already, and that he must have an angel. "Well," said our artist, "if you must have an angel, you shall have an angel, but it will be dreadfully like a lion." Thus it comes to pass that when I am compelled to give an address, it is extremely like a sermon! I pray you have patience with me now that I have confessed my weakness.

A philosopher has remarked that if a man knew that he had 30 years of life before him, it would not be an unwise thing to spend 20 of those years in mapping out a plan of living and putting himself under rule, for he would do more with the 10 well-arranged years than with the whole 30 if he spent them at random. There is much truth in that saying. A man will do little by firing off his gun if he has not learned to take aim.

Possibly I address myself to some who have, up to now, lived haphazardly and, if so, I invite them to a more hopeful method of living. To have a great many aims and objectives is much the same thing as having no aim at all, for if a man shoots at many things, he will hit none, or none worth hitting. It is a grand thing to know what we are living for and to live for a worthy objective with the undivided energy of our being. Shall we, when the end comes, have made a success of life? Has our objective been a right one and has it been wisely pursued? Are the results of our conduct such

as we shall wish them to have been when the conflict of this mortal life is over? These questions deserve immediate consideration.

Another question arises out of them—*What position should religion occupy in reference to a man's life?* That is a question which naturally arises in the arranging of life for, whatever we chose to think of it, there is such a thing as religion in the world—and there is within us some yearning after spiritual things. We cannot help feeling that we need somewhat more than this visible world can offer us. Many of us find our greatest joy in the cultivation of that feeling, for it is to us the token of our spiritual nature and the prophecy of immortality. To us, *this* life is mainly worth living because it promises to be the introduction to a *better* life—

***“Alas for love, if you were all,
And nothing beyond, O earth!”***

Alas for *life* if this were all and there were not a higher and better state of existence! No knell would be more doleful than that which signified the death of man's hope of immortality.

What position should religion occupy in your life and mine? The answer must depend very much upon another question—*What is religion and what does religion, itself, demand?* What are the requirements of the great God and of the soul and of eternity? This question has suggested to me the text upon which I shall speak this afternoon—

***“Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.”***

Matthew 6:33.

I shall not trespass beyond the appointed time. However prosy I may be during the time allotted to me, I shall stop when the hour is complete.

HERE IS AN ACCOUNT OF WHAT TRUE RELIGION IS. According to the Words of Christ Jesus our Lord, it is “The Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Just now I read to you a portion of Scripture, Matthew 6:24-34, and I read it to you that you might note that our text occurs in the midst of a warning against undue anxiety. Undue anxiety is very common among city men and it is not rare anywhere. Certain of us are nervous, timid, doubtful and prone to fear. There are plenty of pessimists about, although they will hardly recognize themselves by that title. To them, evil is always impending—we are about to take a leap in the dark. All their birds are owls or ravens. All their swans are black. If it rains today, it will rain tomorrow—and the next day and the next—and, in all probability, there will be a deluge! Or if it is fine today, it will be dry tomorrow and so on, for months—and the earth and all the meadows that are therein will perish with drought. As to the sun, they observe with pleasing despondency that he has spots. His light they hardly notice, but they dote upon his spots with amiable horror! Minds of this sort—

***Find poisons in trees, deaths in the running brook,
Dirges in stones and ill in everything.***

I suppose they cannot help it—yet Christian men *must* help it, for the Lord's precept is plain and binding—“Be not, therefore, anxious.”

Fretful anxiety is forbidden to the Christian. In the first place, it is *needless*. Matthew 6:26—“Behold the fowls of the air,” said Christ, “they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly

Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?" If you have a Father in Heaven to care for you, are you not put to shame by every little bird that sits upon the bough and sings, though it has not two grains of barley in all the world? God takes charge of the fowls of the air and thus they live exempt from care—why do not we?

Our Lord also taught that such anxiety is *useless* as well as needless, for, with all our care, we cannot add a cubit to our stature. Can we do anything else by fretful care? What if the farmer deplores that there is no rain? Do his fears unstop the bottles of Heaven? Or if the merchant sighs because the wind detains his laden ship—will his complaining turn the gale to another quarter? We do not better ourselves a bit by all our fret and fume. It were infinitely wiser to do our best and *then* cast our cares upon our God. Prudence is wisdom, for it adapts means to ends, but anxiety is folly, for it groans and worries and accomplishes nothing.

Besides, according to our Savior, anxiety about carnal things is *heathenish*—"After all these things do the Gentiles seek." They have no God and no Providence and, therefore, they try to be a providence to themselves! As for the man of God who can say, "God's Providence is my inheritance," why should he pine away with trouble? Let the heir of Heaven act a nobler part than the mere man of the world who has his portion in this life and lives without God and without hope! Our distrust of our God is childish and dishonoring. I was going through these streets one day, driven by a friend in a four-wheeled chaise, and he, being a good driver, must necessarily drive into narrow places where it seemed to me that we should be crushed by the vans and omnibuses. I shrank back in my timidity and expressed my unwise alarms so freely, that with a smile he laid the reins in my hand, and said, "If you cannot trust me, would you like to drive yourself?" From that ambition I was wholly free and I assured him that he might drive as he liked, rather than make me the charioteer. Surely, the great God might well put the same proposal to those who are complaining of His Providence. If we cannot trust *Him*, could we manage better, ourselves? If we are men in Christ, let us believe in our God and leave the governance of the great world outdoors, and of the little world within our own gates, to the Lord God, our heavenly Father, who will surely cause all things to work together for good to them that love Him!

It is plain that within us there is a propensity to be anxious. Can we not utilize it? Can we not turn it to good account? I think so. Some are naturally thoughtful and careful—can they not transform this tendency into a benefit? We have a tendency to be anxious. Very well, let us be anxious, but let our anxiety run in the right direction. Here is a mental heat—let us apply it to some useful purpose. Our text sets before us *the true sphere of Christian carefulness*. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Seek that with all your care! Seek that with all your energy. Be anxious about *that*. Let your whole mind run in that direction with eagerness and thought. You cannot be too careful or too energetic when God and righteousness are concerned.

In our text there is a description of true religion. What is it? "*The Kingdom of God.*" Without using a single superfluous theological term, I may

say that the great God has always had a Kingdom in this world. In the olden times He set up a kingdom among His people, Israel, to whom He gave laws and statutes. But now the Lord is King over all the world—"The God of the whole earth shall He be called." "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." God has a Kingdom in this world, but it is too much neglected and forgotten of men. The first thing to be done by us is to enter that Kingdom. Blessed is that man who has the Lord God to be his King and has learned to order his life according to Divine Law. The highest liberty comes from wearing the yoke of God. The servant of men who dares not call his soul his own is a serf to be pitied. But the servant of God who fears nothing but sin, is a man of princely mold. We must stoop before God, that we may conquer among men! If we determine to yield ourselves wholly unto the Lord, we shall become influential among our fellow men.

We can only enter into this Kingdom of God by being born again of His Spirit, for, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." In that new birth we learn to submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and to find in Him, eternal life. God has appointed the Lord Jesus heir of all things. By Him, also, He made the worlds. He says of Him, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Faith in Christ casts our sins at the foot of His Cross and brings us an inward life unto holiness. We must believe in Jesus and trust in His great Atonement for sin, for apart from His full Atonement, there is no salvation and no true service to God. This faith puts us into the Kingdom of God for, to "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." The first anxiety of every man should be to be a loyal subject of the Kingdom of God.

And when we feel that we are reconciled to God and are under His supreme sway, our next objective should be to continue there and to become more and more completely obedient to Divine rule—so that we may more fully enjoy every privilege of the Kingdom. In the Kingdom of God every man is a king and a priest. He that serves God reigns. He that serves God is the possessor of all things! All things are ours when we are Christ's—

***"This world is ours, and worlds to come:
Earth is our lodge, and Heaven our home."***

Let the Christian seek to know to the fullest what is the heritage of the saints in Christ Jesus.

Our next business should be to *spread* that Kingdom—to try to bring others under the dominion of Christ. It should be the lifework of each man to bring others to acknowledge the Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. What opportunities most of you possess! Your station, your education, your wealth—all give you advantages for serving the Lord. Are you using them? It is a great joy to the Christian minister to have about him a people who are missionaries in their daily lives. With great joy have I listened to some poor girl who has confessed her faith in Christ and then has added very timidly, "There is another girl waiting outside who would like to speak to you. She works with me in a warehouse in the City and I spoke to her and

she sought Jesus. And I believe she is converted.” I fear that many men of position are less diligent in winning souls than the poor workers they employ. Should it be so? He lives most and lives best who is the means of imparting spiritual life to others! May not some of you, at the last, come to a lonely end from lack of usefulness? We heard, not long ago, of the shipwreck from which a mother was washed on shore, but found all her children drowned. She telegraphed to her husband two words. The first was very pleasant to his eyes—“*Saved.*” The next was full of misery—“*Saved alone.*” Ah me! Would you or I like to have it—“*Saved alone*”? God forbid! When we reach Heaven’s gate, may we be able to say, “Here am I, and the children that You have given me.”

This is the meaning of that first word—“*Seek the Kingdom of God.*” The reign of our Lord is to be our main objective if we would lead a well-ordered, useful, happy, and honored life.

Our text has a second word—“*Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness,*” by which I understand the practical part of true religion. Seek to have the imputed righteousness of Christ, by all means, but seek, also, to exhibit the infused righteousness which comes of *sanctification*. Brothers in Christ, let us aspire after a high degree of holiness! We are called to be saints and saints are not miraculous beings to be set up in niches and admired—they are men and women who live, trade, do righteousness and practice charity in the streets of a city, or the fields of a village! Those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb should not be satisfied with the common cleanliness of morality—the garment of their life should be whiter than any fuller can make it! Purity becomes the disciples of Jesus. In spirit, soul and body we ought to be holiness to the Lord. Our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees! It should be a reproduction of the Character of our Lord!

By the phrase, “*His righteousness,*” I understand that power in the world which is always working, in some form or other, for that which is good, true and pure. Everything in this world which is holy, honest and of good repute may count upon the Christian as its friend, for it is a part of God’s righteousness. Does drunkenness eat out the very life of our nation? Do you want men of temperance to battle with this evil? The Christian man cries, “*Write down my name!*” When the slave had to be freed, the subjects of God’s Kingdom were to the front in that deed of righteousness. And today, if oppression is to be put down, we dare not refuse our aid. If the people are to be educated and better housed, we hail the proposal with delight. If the horrible sin of the period is to be denounced and punished, we may not shrink from the loathsome conflict! Let each man in his own position labor after purity and, as God shall help us, we may yet sweep these streets of their infamies and deliver our youth from pollution! Every Christian man should say of every struggle for better things, “*I am in it, cost what it may.*” Hosts of your professors of religion forget to seek God’s righteousness and seem to suppose that their principal business is to save their own souls—poor little souls that they are! Their religion is barely sufficient to fill up the vacuum within their own ribs where their hearts should be! This selfishness is not the religion of Jesus! The religion

of Jesus is unselfish—it enlists a man as a crusader against everything that is unrighteous. We are Knights of the Red Cross and our bloodless battles are against all things that degrade our fellow men, whether they are causes social, political, or religious. We fight for everything that is good, true, and just.

True religion is diffusive and extensive in its operations. I see people drawing lines continually and saying, “So far is religious, and so far is secular.” What do you mean? The notion is one which suits with the exploded notions of sacred places, priests, shrines and relics! I do not believe in it. Everything is holy to a holy man! To the pure, all things are pure. To a man who seeks, first, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, his house is a temple, his meals are sacraments, his garments are vestments, every day is a holy day and he, himself, is a priest and a king unto God! The sphere of Christianity is co-extensive with daily life. I am not to say, “I serve God when I stand in the pulpit,” for that might imply that I wished to serve the devil when my sermon was over! We are not only to be devout at Church and pious at Prayer Meetings, but to be devout and godly everywhere! Religion must not be like a fine piece of medieval armor, to be hung upon the wall, or only worn on state occasions. No, it is a garment for the house, the shop, the bank! Your ledgers and iron safes are to be made, by Grace, “holiness unto the Lord.” Godliness is for the parlor and the drawing room, the counting house and the exchange. It can neither be put off nor on. It is *of* the man and *in* the man if it is real! Righteousness is a quality of the heart and abides in the nature of the saved man as a component part of his new self. He is not righteous who is not *always* righteous!

Undeclared religion is a vital matter—it is in the life of the man. I am afraid that the religion of some people is like the shell of the hermit crab. At sea, the dredge brings up innumerable creeping things and among them, creatures which have their own natural shells to live in. But here comes a fellow who has annexed the shell of a whelk and bears it about as if it were his own. He lives in it while it suits him and he gives up the tenancy when it becomes inconvenient. The shell is not part of himself. Avoid such a religion! Beware of a Sunday shell and a weekday without the shell! That religion which you *can* part with, you had *better* part with! If you can get rid of it, get rid of it! If it is not part and parcel of yourself, it is good for nothing! If it does not run right through you like a silver thread through a piece of embroidery, it will not be of any use for your eternal salvation.

I said, just now, that true godliness must be diffusive and I return to the statement. I remember a remark of John Newton, once rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, across the road. He was a thoroughly Calvinistic preacher, but when one asked him whether he believed in Calvinism, he replied, “I am a Calvinist, but I do not take it as children eat lumps of sugar. I use it to flavor all my preaching, as men use sugar in tea or food.” Hypocrites swallow religion in lumps—inviting all to admire the quantity—but sincere seekers after righteousness quietly dissolve their godliness in their lives and sweeten all their common relationships with it. The real

saint flavors his ordinary life with Divine Grace so that his wife and his children, his servants and his neighbors are the better for it. Mr. Rowland Hill used to say that a man was not a true Christian if his dog and his cat were not the better off for it. That witness is true.

A man's religion ought to be to him what perfume is to a rose, or light to the sun—it should be the necessary outcome of his existence. If his life is not fragrant with the Truth of God and bright with love, the question arises whether he knows the religion of our Lord Jesus. The division between sacred and secular is most unhappy to both divisions of life—we need them united! In the days of Queen Mary, a foolish spite dug up the bones of the wife of Bucer. Poor woman! She had done no ill except that she had married a teacher of the Gospel—but she must be dragged from her grave to be buried in a dunghill for that grave offense! When Elizabeth came to the throne, her bones were buried again—but to make the body secure from any future malice of bigots, our prudent forefathers took the relics of a certain Popish saint who was enshrined at Oxford and mixed the remains of the two deceased persons past all chance of separation! Thus Mistress Bucer was secured from further disrespect by her unity with the body of one of the canonized! I want the secular to be thus secured by union with the sacred! If we could only feel that our common acts are parts of a saintly life, they would not so often be done carelessly. If we lay our poor daily life by itself, it will be disregarded, but if we combine it with our holiest aspirations and exercises, it will be preserved. Our religion must be part and parcel of our daily life and then the whole of our life will be preserved from the destroyer. Does not the Scripture say, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”?

“But,” says one, “are we not to have amusements?” Yes, such amusements as you can take in the fear of God. Do whatever Jesus would have done. This is liberty enough for one who aspires to be like Jesus. There is happiness enough in things which are pure and right—and if not, we will not do evil to find more! We find pleasure enough without hunting for it in the outskirts of sin. There are joys which are as far above the pleasures of folly as the feasts of kings are above the husks of swine. At times our inner life flames up into a blaze of joy and if usually it burns lower, there is at least a steady fire of peace upon our hearth which makes our life such that we envy no one. It is not *slavery* that I set before you when I say that we are, first of all, to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness—there is a present recompense which justifies the choice. And as for the eternal future, it pleads for it with a voice of thunder.

It is time that I changed the subject and dwelt upon a further theme. HERE IS AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROPER POSITION OF TRUE RELIGION. “Seek you *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

Let the word, “first,” indicate to you the order of *time*. You know those venerable city gentlemen. I hope you reverence them as I do, since they are the embodiment of wisdom. One of these said to his son, “William, I am pleased to see you incline towards religion. But take my advice and be reasonable. I have been in business, now, for 40 years, and my advice is—

stick to trade and make money and *then* attend to religion.” Now, the young man, as young men are apt to do, had begun to think for himself and, for a wonder, his thoughts ran in the right groove and, therefore, he replied, “Father, I am always grateful to you for your good advice, but this time you must excuse me if I differ from you, for the Scripture says, ‘Seek you first, the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness’ and, therefore, I cannot go in for making money first, but I must at once serve God, and yet, I hope I may be none the less attentive to business.” It is a good rule to begin as you mean to go on. That son was wiser than his counselor!

My Lord Mayor will not say that he was wrong, I am quite sure. Nor will anybody here who has tried what it is to seek first, the Kingdom of God, while engaged in business. True godliness is as good for this life as for the next. If I had to die like a dog, I would still wish to be a Christian! Place religion first *in the order of time*. Begin each week by carefully consecrating the first day to rest and holy worship. Begin each day by giving the dew of the morning to communion with Heaven. Begin your married life by seeking the blessing of the great Father and choosing for a partner one that will agree with you in the fear of God. In opening a new business, sanctify the venture with the supplications of godly friends and in all fresh enterprises be guided of the Lord. If we begin, continue and end with God, our way will be strewn with blessings.

Seek, also, the Kingdom of God first *in order of preference*. If it should ever become a choice between God and Mammon, never hesitate. If wealth and righteousness run counter to each other, let the gold perish and hold fast to righteousness. Follow Christ, however dear it costs you. Blessed is that man who never deliberates because his mind is made up, rather, to “suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Blessed is the man who knows no policy but that of thorough consecration to God and righteousness—who is not careful to answer in this matter, but has his mind decided once and for all. This is his motto—

**“‘Tis done! The great transaction’s done—
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!”**

We have lifted our hands unto the Lord and we cannot go back.

“Well,” cries one, “But, you know, we must live.” I am not sure about that. There are occasions when it would be better not to live. An old heraldic motto says, “Better death than false of faith.” I am, however, quite clear about another necessity—*we must die*—and we had better take that, “must,” into consideration and not quite so often repeat the cant phrase, “We must live.”

But we *shall* live, Brothers! We shall live without grinding the poor, or stooping to questionable finance, or lying to the public by a false prospectus. We shall live without dishonor. We young men—we shall live without lowering our colors to please those who jest at godliness. Here stands one who has run the gauntlet of public criticism for more than 30 years and he has not suffered thereby—certainly he has not been forced to hide his faith, or recant his teachings. Silly stories, jests and sarcasms, have not killed us, nor even robbed us of our sleep! Younger Brethren, never fear—

if you are right, nothing can harm you! Stand your ground and keep it. Say, "I shall do what I feel it right to do, God helping me." Any little difficulties which now arise will soon come to an end if you are firmly conscientious. Never be a coward—

***"I had as lief not be, as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself."***

Let none of us ever raise a question about whether we shall please or displease by doing right, but let us "seek first the Kingdom of God."

Let godliness be first *in intensity*. It is to be feared that many give their force to their worldly pursuits and their feebleness to their religion. They are "all there" during banking hours, but they are not "all there" at the hour of prayer. They remind me of one whose voice in our assemblies for prayer was exceedingly low and well near inaudible. But in the shop he could be heard almost too well. Should it be so, that self should have our energies and Christ should have our lukewarmness? If ever we grow ardent and enthusiastic, it should be in the noblest of all causes, in the service of the best of Masters! In that work, we cannot be too earnest! Seldom enough do we meet with a person who verges upon excess of zeal in this matter. For Him who has redeemed us with His precious blood, we cannot do too much! Our heart complains that we cannot do enough! Alas, the comparative sizes of the Bible and the ledger are frequently symbolical—a neat little Bible is buried under a huge ledger. I claim for things Divine a different place—let that be first which is first—throw your whole soul into the love and service of the Lord!

"Is your father a Christian?" said a Sunday school teacher to a child. The girl answered, "Yes, I believe that Father is a Christian, but he has not worked much at it lately." No doubt there are many of that sort. Their religion has taken a holiday and they, themselves, have gone up to a sluggard's bed. Let them be awakened, for it is high time to awaken out of sleep!

Seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness first, by giving to true religion *a sovereignty over your lives*. The helm by which life is steered should be in the hands of God. To glorify God and promote righteousness should be our master passion. This Aaron's rod should swallow up all other rods! Be *first* a man of God—after that a banker, or a merchant, or a working man. I like to see our public men, first Christians, then Englishmen, then Conservatives, or Liberals, or Radicals, as their convictions sway them—but in any case, let a man be first a man of God. I would to God that our politics, our merchandise, our literature, our art were all saturated with this idea—"First a Christian." Then the secondary character would rise in excellence and nobility! Science, social laws, trade usages, domestic life would all be the better for coming under the supremacy of living religion. The fear of God should be the foundation and the top stone of the social edifice. "Christ first" and other things in their due order! Over and above all, let consecration to God shine forth even as the pillar of fire in the wilderness covered and illuminated the entire camp of Israel.

I may honestly claim five minutes more to complete the hour allotted to this service and I will spend it by TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE PROMISE HERE MADE TO THOSE WHO “SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Does anyone demand, “What will become of our business if we place godliness first?” The answer is in the text—“All these things shall be added unto you.” A young man beginning life resolving that he will do everything in the fear of God and that as God helps him, he will do nothing that is contrary to the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ—shall he prosper? He shall get on so far as this—he shall have bread to eat and raiment to put on—all that is necessary for this life “shall be added to him.”

“Alas!” sighs one, “I am out of place and I know not how to provide for myself and my household.” Are you sure that this trial has come without your own fault? Then be not of doubtful mind, for the Lord will provide for you. He has said, “Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” David’s experience was, “I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken.” The drunk, the vicious, the idle, the dishonest may suffer hunger and it will be well for them if such discipline amends them. But to the upright there arises light in the darkness. They that serve God shall not have to complain of His deserting them. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, a certain merchant of this great city was desired by her Majesty to go abroad for her upon affairs of State. He pleaded that his own business would suffer, whereupon her Majesty replied, “Sir, if you will mind *my* business, I will mind *your* business.” Rest assured that God will care for you if you make His service your delight! “All these things shall be added unto you.”

The blessings of this life come to gracious men in the best shape and form, for they come by Divine promise. Suppose that it were now put into the power of each one of us to be rich? I suspect that the most of us would be eager to avail ourselves of the opportunity and yet it is a moot point whether it would be best for certain of us to have the burden of wealth. It is a question whether some people, who behave splendidly where they now are, would be half as good, or a 10th as happy if they were lifted to higher positions. I have seen heroes drivel under the influence of luxury. Many are the creatures of circumstances and make but poor creatures when their circumstances allow of self-indulgence! We do not know what is best for us. It is sometimes very much better for us to suffer loss and disappointment than to obtain gain and prosperity.

When that eminent servant of God, Mr. Gilpin, was arrested to be brought up to London to be tried for preaching the Gospel, his captors made mirth of his frequent remark, “everything is for the best.” When he fell from his horse and broke his leg, they were specially merry about it, but the good man quietly remarked, “I have no doubt but that even this painful accident will prove to be a blessing.” And so it was, for, as he could not travel quickly, the journey was prolonged and he arrived at London some days later than had been expected. When they reached as far as Highgate, they heard the bells ringing merrily in the city down below. They asked the meaning and were told, “Queen Mary is dead and there will be

no more burnings of Protestants.” “Ah!” said Gilpin, “you see, it is all for the best.” It is a blessing to break a leg if thereby life is saved! How often our calamities are our preservatives! A less evil may ward off a greater. Many a man might have soared into the clouds of folly if his wings had not been clipped by adversity. Better struggle and be honorable than become wealthy by disgraceful deeds. Agur’s prayer, “Give me neither poverty nor riches,” was a wise one, but our Lord’s is still better, “Not as I will, but as You will.”

“All these things shall be added unto you,” and the measure of the addition shall be arranged by Infallible Wisdom. Temporal things shall come to you in such proportion as you would, yourself, desire them if you were able to know all things and to form a judgement according to Infinite Wisdom. Would you not prefer a lot selected by the Lord to one chosen by yourself? Do you not joyfully sing with the Psalmist, “You shall choose my inheritance for me”?

Does not the promise also imply that necessary things shall come to the Believer without vexatious worry and consuming labor? While others are worrying, you shall be singing! While others rise in the morning and cry, “How shall we live through the day?” you shall wake to a secure provision and you shall have a happy enjoyment of it. Your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks. Your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure. Contentment with your lot and confidence in God will make life peaceful and happy—a dinner of herbs with content will yield a flavor of satisfaction unknown to those who eat the stalled ox. It is better to be happy than to be rich—and happiness lies in the heart rather than in the purse. Not what a man has, but what a man *is* will decide his bliss or woe in this life and the next. Oh yes, if God Himself adds to you the things of this life while you are serving Him, the lines will fall to you in pleasant places and you will have a goodly heritage.

The wording, of the text, “All these things shall be added unto you,” reminds me that the acquisition of property often decreases a man rather than adds to him. Have you not seen a man become visibly smaller as his riches grew greater? It is a wretched sight which has often pained me. I have distinctly seen a man become “the architect of his own fortune” and the destroyer of himself! He has built up a palatial estate upon the ruins of his own manhood. It is a pity when a man bricks himself up with his growing gains. Look at that hole in the wall. The man stands in it and greedily cries for bricks and mortar! He must have golden bricks and silver mortar. They bring him the materials. He cries eagerly for more! He cannot be content unless he builds himself in. The wall which shuts him out from his fellow men and from the light of peace and true joy, rises higher and higher, month by month and year by year. His sympathies and charities are bricked up, for the wall is more than breast high. Still he pines for more metallic material! At last he is built in, buried beneath his own gatherings, lost to all manhood through his accumulations. You see his house; you see his carriage and his horses; you see his broadcloth and his broad acres, but you cannot see the man. Heart, soul, aspiration, spirituality—they are all gone—and nothing remains but a vault of greed

and care to be buried, itself, under a monument bearing these words, "He died worth half a million."

A far more desirable idea is for a man to rise above his possessions, elevating life upon steppingstones of these dead gains; building with them a pedestal above which the inner manhood rises!

This is what God intends to do in Providence to the man who serves Him heartily. He will add to him the things of this life. These shall be thrown in as supplements to the Divine heritage. I incur certain little outlays in connection with my study. We need a few matters which may be paid for out of petty cash, but I have never seen, as far as I recollect, a single penny for string and brown paper because, as a reader and writer, I buy books and then the string and brown paper are added to me! My purchase is the books, but the string and brown paper come to me, added as a matter of course. This is the idea of our text—you are to spend your strength on the high and noble purpose of glorifying God—and then the minor matters of, what shall we eat? And, what shall we drink? And, how shall we be clothed? are thrown in as supplements! Earthly things are but the brown paper and string—and I pray you never think too much of them.

Some people get so much of this brown paper and string that they glory in *them* and expect us to fall down and worship them. If we refuse this homage, they are foolish enough to adore *themselves*. It must not be so among the servants of God. To us, the man is the man, and not the guinea's stamp. "All these things" are, to us, small matters. The real life of the soul is all in all. Do not slice pieces out of your manhood and then hope to fill up the vacancies with bank notes. He who loses manliness or godliness to gain gold is a great cheater of himself. Keep yourselves entirely for God and for His Christ—and let all other matters be additions, not subtractions! Live above the world. Its goods will come to you when you do not bid high for them. If you hunt the butterfly of wealth too eagerly, you may spoil it by the stroke with which you secure it. When earthly things are sought for as the main objective, they are degraded into rubbish and the seeker of them has fallen to be a mere man with a muck-rake, turning over a dunghill to find nothing! Set your heart on nobler things than pelf!

Cry with David, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills where comes my help." Men and brethren, let us so live that it will be safe for God to add to us the blessings of the life that now is, but that can only be done with safety when we have learned to keep the world under our feet. May the Lord enable us to live to high and noble purposes, so that we may meet in the Glory Land and hear the approving voice of Jesus, our Savior and Captain, saying to us, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

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SOMETHING WORTH SEEKING

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***“But seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.”
Matthew 6:33.***

THERE is just as much need of this exhortation today as there was when our Savior first uttered it. These are times in which fretful care is very apt to enter into the hearts of Believers and if our Lord were here in Person, now, He would admonish us to be rid of such care, for fretful care is not becoming in a child of God. It is so opposed to faith and to the life of God in the soul, that it ought to be struggled with and driven out. None of us who are trusting in Christ ought to allow ourselves to become the victims of it.

Fretful care is altogether unnecessary in a Believer. Our Lord says, in this very chapter, “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?” “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Therefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” If, therefore, God will do it, why should you worry about it? If you saw a farmer feeding his barn-door fowls plentifully, you would not believe a slanderer who said that the man starved his children—and as long as you see God providing for the baser creatures, and even the wild beasts that He has formed, rest assured that He will take care of His children! Therefore fretful care is unnecessary.

And, further, it is useless. Even if you feel yourself bound to fret, of what possible service will all your fretting be? Would the fowls of the Heaven be better fed if they sullenly moped on the boughs in winter time, or if they croaked and cried out against the God who created them? And if you begin croaking, what will you gain by it? Can you, by complaining, add a cubit, or even an inch, to your stature? If there is no rain, will the fretfulness of the farmer compel the clouds to come and empty themselves on his meadows? If the husbandman should fancy that it is raining too much, will his grumbling seal up the bottles of Heaven? If your trade is dull, will it be made any brisker by your murmuring? If your business yields you no profit, will you get any profit out of your complaints? This worrying is a poor business—it cannot bring any good results. Carking care, therefore, is as useless as it is unnecessary.

Our Savior dissuades us from it by a third argument. He says that it is heathenish. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." We need not wonder if those who have no knowledge of God, no Savior, no Father in Heaven, should try to get all they can out of this world, for they have no other! Well may they make gold their god, for they have no God who can give them any pleasure or delight. But it should not be so with you who are the twice-born, the immortal, the God-descended. You who have eternal life within you, you in whose bodies the Holy Spirit is dwelling as in a temple—and it is so with you unless you are hypocrites and are making a pretense to that which is not true—you should not be fretting and stewing about what you shall eat, or what you shall drink and how you shall be clothed! Endowed with such a noble nature, called to higher things than the heathen have ever dreamed of, descend not to the trifles which content them, but let your spirit rise above these earthly things!

To help you to do so is the objective of the present discourse and, first, dear Friends, I shall try and show you *the proper sphere of care*—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." Then, in the second place, I shall try to tell you of *the proper quietus of all anxious care*—"All these things shall be added unto you."

I. Here is first, then, THE PROPER SPHERE OF CARE. There is nothing in man but has its special function and end. And there is in all of us, to a greater or less extent, the propensity to care. There are some men and some women, especially, who are very careful souls. It would not matter in what station of life they might be placed, they would always be very thoughtful, much given to looking ahead and possibly much inclined to look on the dark side of everything. Now, dear Friend, if this is your propensity, here is a way of turning it to good purpose—let your deepest, most intense, and most thorough care be exercised in this direction—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

What is it that we are to seek? The text says, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God." God has set up His Kingdom in this world—inside the kingdoms of men, there is the Kingdom of God, wherein He rules. It is of another kind from all earthly kingdoms, for Christ said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." It is a purer, higher, truer, more durable kingdom than any Caesar has ever been able to set up.

Our desire should be, first of all, *to enter into the Kingdom of God*—the Kingdom of the new life, the Kingdom of perfect liberty, the Kingdom of faith in Christ, the Kingdom of union to Christ, the Kingdom of the power of the Spirit of God. Have we all entered it? If we have not, let us seek that Kingdom immediately. Before we seek our own door, let us seek first this Kingdom of God, that we may take up our citizenship in it and become loyal subjects of the great King. The way of admission into the Kingdom is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." Seek thus to enter the Kingdom of God.

Once in it, then seek *to enjoy its privileges*. When you have become the subjects of the great King, ask Him to fully rule in your spirit and therein to set up His throne of righteousness. Ask that you may have all the peace that appertains to that Kingdom, all the holiness which is the

characteristic of that Kingdom, all the rest, all the joy, all the spiritual wealth and all the sacred ennobling which come to men who are brought under the sway of the Lord's Christ, whose gracious Spirit brings every thought into captivity to His Sovereign will.

Further, being in the Kingdom of God, and enjoying its privileges, then seek *to extend that Kingdom*. Go forth every morning, conquering and to conquer! With the weapons of love and kindness, seek to win men to Christ. Enlisted in this holy army, carry on a constant crusade for Christ. From your earliest waking thoughts, till you fall asleep at night, be intent, first and foremost, to win other hearts to Christ. Let all your care go in this direction—to serve God, to live for God, to glorify God! Seek this as earnestly as the merchant seeks more trade, as the miser seeks more gold, as the sick man seeks a return of health—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God."

Together with this, there is another thing to be sought—"His righteousness." It may mean, seek *that righteousness which God has prepared for us through His dear Son*. Seek to be justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ. But I do not think that is what is meant in this place. Seek God's righteousness, that is, seek a holy *character*—seek *first of all to be right*, not to be rich. Seek first of all to be just, not to be wealthy. Seek first of all to obey God, not to become the master of others. Seek not to be great, but seek to be good. Let this be your one ambition—"Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." The one aim of the life of a Christian should always be to do the right. It may sometimes seem expensive and involve sacrifice, but it is always safe and, in the long run, it will prove to be the most profitable to do that which is according to the mind of God. Keep you to the King's Highway—never get off of it by trying the devil's "short cuts." Act not according to human policy, but remember that ancient advice, "I counsel you to keep the King's Commandments." You shall find it to be the lodestar of your life if you seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

You and I are bound to seek God's righteousness in our own lives, but we should also *seek to spread that righteousness in the world*. Is there anything that tends towards temperance? I am a Christian, so I am on that side. Is there anything that helps to make men honest? I am on that side. Is there anything that is for the real liberty of mankind? Is there anything that puts down oppression? Is there anything that rectifies social wrong? Is there anything of purity left under Heaven? I am on that side, Sir! We remember the statesman who was known to say that he was on the side of the angels. That is the side on which every good man ought to be—on the side of everything that is pure, right, holy and heavenly. I cannot understand the indifference of some people to the crime that flows in black torrents down our streets. It seems to me that if I am a Christian, I am to seek to promote the Kingdom of righteousness everywhere! And that the side I ought to take in social life, politics and everything else, is the side of righteousness.

"Stand up, stand up, for Jesus," everywhere, because Jesus stands up for that which is true and right, both towards God and towards man—and never fear the consequences! The right harms nobody except those who ought to be harmed and if, for the moment, the right should seem to

bear hard upon certain special interests, yet taking the world all round, and taking God's ages in their length and breadth, the right will prove to be best for all who follow it. The Christian man is bound, first, to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!

The text says, Seek it. But how are we to seek it? If you are not in that Kingdom, seek it at once by prayer, seek it by earnest cries to God. Seek it specially by faith in Jesus Christ, that you may enter into that Kingdom now. But if you are in it, then seek it by continually being watchful that you are not overtaken by unrighteousness, that you are not led to do anything which would injure the Kingdom of your God and Savior.

Seek the Kingdom of God as a man seeks goodly pearls. Seek it as the traveler in an unknown land seeks to find its rivers and its streams. With your whole heart seek after God, His Truth and everything that is right!

Notice that the text says, "Seek you *first* the Kingdom of God." That is, first in order of time. Young men, seek God first. Get your hearts right with God first. The highest should come first and the highest is God! The most enduring should come first and God is eternal! That which concerns your highest part should come first and your soul is more precious than your body! Your body will soon become food for worms, but your soul will outlast the stars. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God," for this is the first thing. And take things in their proper order, for so shall you take them aright. Seek the Kingdom of God first while yet the blood leaps in your veins, before you are sluggish with approaching age, or even death itself. While yet your eyes are bright and your mind is clear, "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Seek this first in the week. Be always observant of that first day of the week—give it all to God. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God." Seek it first in each day. Give God the first few minutes of every opening morning. Always begin your day with God. Seek first in order of time the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.

And then seek it first in order of degree. If you need health, seek it, but seek first the Kingdom of God. If you desire knowledge, seek it, but seek first that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. If you want wealth, seek it in that moderate way which is allowable to you, but first of all let your treasure be in Heaven. Seek your God first, before everything else. You may seek to have the love of those about you, but seek first the love of God. You may seek a wife, and you shall not do ill if you seek aright, but seek first your God. You may seek a house and seek to build up a family and be a blessing to those about you, but first seek your God. Let your rule be, first an altar, then a tent. First seek God and then that which is nearest and dearest to you of earthly things.

Then, again, should it ever come to the alternative of God or earthly things, seek first the Kingdom of God. Let all other things go, but seek you first your God. Look at the martyrs when they had to choose between Christ and death, or dishonor to Christ and life—they never deliberated, brave spirits that they were! They were never anxious about their answer to their accusers, for it was given unto them what they should speak. And they reckoned not with lions, or with the fierce flames, or with the cruel rack. They sought God first, never counting any cost, for no cost could be great for such jewels as they had to conserve! They flung their

lives away without a sigh, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection—and they were no fools, they were gainers by their losses! The ruby crowns they wear to-day and forever are the full reward of all their suffering. “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.” Let that override everything. Let it, like Aaron’s rod, swallow up all other rods. Be this your passion that shall consume you. Be this, if necessary, called of men, “your fanaticism”—better still, your *enthusiasm*—for the Spirit of God within you shall make all other things as dust and ashes in your esteem!

Before passing to the other part of the subject, I must just notice who ought to do this. They especially ought to do it who call themselves followers of Christ. “Seek you first.” These are the people whose Father is in Heaven. “Your heavenly Father.” “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.” They are the people for whom God most graciously provides and the people who yield obedience to Him. It is of them that the Lord Jesus Christ said that His Father would take care. “Shall He not much more clothe *you*, O you of little faith?” Provided for by God, seek you first the Kingdom of God! You wear His livery, you eat His bread, you drink from His cup, His broken body is your meat, His shed blood is your drink, He, Himself is your hope, your all! Therefore, “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.”

You who aspire to be among this favored band, unless you throw away the hope of the adoption into the family of God, unless you refuse to have God for your Father and your Friend, you, I say, must be included in these to whom Christ says, “Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” You young men and women who are beginning life, I charge you, lay this text to heart! You, Sirs, who are just about to enter upon new businesses, take care that you soil not your consciences when you unpack your goods! See to it that, from this day and till your last day, it is first, God, and then yourself. No, not so! First God, then your *neighbor*, and *then* yourself! See that you have a higher motive than mere greed of gain, or honor, or comfort! Now say within yourself, “God helping me, I will obey this command of my redeeming Lord, ‘Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.’”

There, dear Friend, is sphere enough for your care. If you want to care, care away! Care for God and care for nothing else. If you want to fret, fret at your sins! If you want something that is worth agitating for, agitate for righteousness! If you want something that shall consume your faculties with zeal, here you have it! If you want something worth seeking, “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.”

II. Pause just a moment for solemn thought about this matter and then let us notice the proper quietus of all other care.

Child of God, do you believe your Father? You will not tell me no. Do you believe your Father? If so, listen. “And all these things shall be added unto you.”

“All these things.” So first, if you make God your care, all things necessary for this life shall come to you. Listen—“Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” “He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” “Just now,” says one, “I do not see how I am to make ends meet.” Then, Brother, there is all the

more reason why you should leave all to God. Remember how the hymn puts it—

***“In some way or other, the Lord will provide.
It may not be my way, it may not be your way
And yet in His own way, ‘the Lord will provide.’”***

Rest you sure of that! David said, “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” If you will care only to seek your bread, yourself. If you will make your gain your great objective in life, then you may provide for yourself. But if you will serve God. If you will mind His business, He will mind your business! And as surely as He lives, He will provide for His own.

“All these things.” Notice what they are. It is what we shall eat, what we shall drink and with what we shall be clothed. It does not say that we shall have the best broadcloth, or silks and satins. It is not dainties, not the fat of the land, not wine and strong drink that is promised—but you shall have what you may eat, what you may drink and with what you may be clothed. If you will only trust in your God, and serve Him, alone, it shall be with you as it was with Jacob at Bethel, for God fulfilled His Covenant that He made with him there. The Lord will take care that “all these things” shall be added unto you. See to it, then, that you care for Him, and He will care for you.

But, next, “*all these things*” shall come by way of promise. To the ungodly man, “these things” come, but they come by way of hard work. He says they come by way of chance, but to you who believe, they shall come by way of promise. When you eat bread, you shall say, “Blessed be the Lord who has given me this bread which He promised me.” When you drink water, you shall say, “Blessed be the Lord who has given me this refreshing draught which He promised me.” And when you put on your clothes, though they are, by no means dainty, but of the more common kind, yet you shall feel that it is the livery that God has sent His servant and, as you put them on, you shall say, “This comes from the hand of the great Universal Provider, even the Lord God.” “All these things shall be added unto you.” It is not so much the thing you have, as the way in which you have it that brings you the blessing!

I spoke, the other Sunday night, about the old Scotch woman and her porridge. She said that she liked her porridge, but she rejoiced and blessed God that she had a Covenant right to the porridge, for the Covenant had given her a right to what she should eat and what she should drink. It is a great mercy to see the mark of the Lord’s hand on the common blessings of every day and to say to yourself, “It has come true as my Lord said, ‘All these things shall be added unto you.’” They come by way of promise! You do not have to seek them, for they are added unto you!

And, further, *they come to us in a way of Infinite Wisdom*. Dear child of God, your bread and your water and your clothes are all measured out by God. If you have but little, God knew that you could not do so well with more. There are some children you know who must not have too much dinner—they would be ill if they did. If you sometimes are placed in a condition of poverty, it is because only by poverty can some of you ever get to Heaven. I do not doubt that there are some men who behave

grandly in their sphere of life, who, if they were placed in another sphere, would conduct themselves in an unseemly manner. Many a man has tried to scramble up a rock to see whether he could get to the top and he has come down again a dozen times because he was always safer down below. His was not the head that could bear the dizzy height and, therefore, the great Lord would not let him go there. Do you want to have what God knows would hurt you? Do you want doubtful blessings? Is it not better to say, "My times are in Your hands"? If you are a child of God, and you care for Him, He will care for you. He will measure out your cloth. He will measure out your water. He will measure out your food. He will give you what you should have—so let the prayer of Agur be your prayer, also—"Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with food convenient for me."

Again, if we thus look to God and trust His promise, "All these things shall be added unto you." Then *these things will come to us without any fretting or fuming*. If God makes us rich, we shall say, "Well, I never asked for wealth, but now that it has come, I only long for Grace to use it aright." And if it does not come, you will say, "Well, I never expected it. I thank and praise His name for what I have, and ask for Grace that I may know both how to abound and how to suffer loss." That which comes with fretting and fuming has often lost all the goodness of it before you get it. Too often men are like boys who hunt butterflies. See the boy with his hat off, dashing after the fly. It has gone and he pursues it here and there and yonder and, at last, he has caught it, but in catching it he has crushed it to atoms! It is good for nothing. So have men pursued wealth—they have toiled and labored till, when they have gained the wealth they sought, their health has gone, or their mind has failed them—and they have not been able to enjoy it. But that which comes to us in the golden ship of infinite mercy, brought across the sea by a better Pilot than our prudence, comes most sweetly, and we bless and praise and magnify the Lord for it all!

And, once more, that which God adds to us thus *shall come to us without absorbing us*. "All these things shall be *added* unto you," so that, you see, you yourself will be there, and all these things shall be added unto you. To some men wealth has come like the massive shields in the Roman story. When the vestal virgin agreed to open the gates to the soldiers, they promised to give her as her reward that which they carried on their left hands. She meant their golden bracelets and she dreamed that she would be rich. But as each man came in, he flung his shield upon her, and so she was killed and buried beneath the weight! So has it often been with the gains of this world—they have come to the man, but they have buried him—and there has been no man left. According to *The Illustrated London News*, he has left a good deal of money, but there has been no *man* left—the man has been gone long ago. The man was all absorbed, crushed, doubled up under his money—and he, himself, was gone.

I have used before an illustration which I cannot help using again. When you go to a shop and buy some goods, you will get the string and the brown paper in which what you buy is wrapped. So, when a man lives for God and for eternal life, he will get all the things he needs with-

out seeking for them. “Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” When a man gets his string and brown paper, well, they are very useful, but he does not begin crowing about them! The string and brown paper are nothing but the wrappings of something that is more valuable. Yet there are some fellows, who are really nobodies, who have not anything of the highest value, but they have such a lot of string and brown paper that they expect us all to fall down and worship their string and brown paper! And, what is perhaps worse than that, they fall down and worship their own string and brown paper themselves. But the child of God does nothing of the kind. He says, “I needed this blessing and it has come, thank God, but I do not live for this, I do not live for this.”

Dr. Johnson said to one who showed him his beautiful garden and park, “These are the things that make it hard to die.” Oh, but it is not so for a Christian! Good Mr. Gurney, one day walking through his beautiful garden, said, “This paradise helps me to think of what the Paradise above will be—and makes me long to be there.” And I know that it ought to be so and *will* be so with us if we are, first of all, seeking the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, it will be safe to trust us with wealth and it will be equally safe to trust us with none at all! Having grasped the nobler thing, we shall neither be over-balanced if we gain, nor despairing if we lose.

So I leave with you both the precept and the promise of the text—“Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” May this be true of all of you, dear Friends, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 14.

I suppose that many of you know this chapter by heart. I notice that in all old Christians’ Bibles, this leaf is well worn—sometimes worn out. We have here our Lord’s homely talk to His disciples. It is full of sublimity, yet it is blessedly simple. There is a sort of unveiling of Himself in this chapter. It is not so much like a public discourse as a private conversation and this tends to make the Savior’s speech appear the more condescending, and yet, also, the more sublime.

Verse 1. *Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in Me.* There is no cure for heart-trouble but heart-trust. “You believe in God”—you trust in Divine Providence, now trust in the Savior’s great Atonement. You have come close to God already, come closer to the Incarnate God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear Him say to you, “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” Your faith already deals with some things. Now let it deal with more things. Your past troubles have been endured by faith. Now endure the *present* in the same way.

2. *In My Father’s house are many mansions.* You are at home in Christ even now if you are a Believer in Him. Wherever you are, you are your Heavenly Father’s own child, and you have realized the Truth of what David wrote in the 23rd Psalm, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for-

ever.” Usually, when we are singing that sweetly solemn hymn, beginning—

Forever with the Lord,

we are thinking about Heaven. That is quite right. But “forever” means *now* as well as the future! It covers time *here* as well as eternity in *Heaven*. We are with the Lord even *now*—whether we are down here or up there!

2. *If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* So that, when you go from this earth, you need not fear that you will be launched into space, or that you will have to plunge into the great unknown.

3. *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.* “I will come to you by My Spirit. I will come to you, by-and-by, if my Father shall purpose it, in the hour of death. Or if not, I will come in Person at my Second Advent. But, in any case, I will be sure to come. My dear children, I am going away, but it is only for a little while. I am coming again, so be not troubled as though you had said, ‘good-bye’ to Me forever. ‘I will come again,’ and when I do, I shall never go from you again.”

4. *And where I go you know, and the way you know.* Yes, we do know where Christ has gone and we also know the way.

5. *Thomas said to Him, Lord, we know not where You go and how can we know the way?* I like to hear Thomas talk, even though his is a very unwise speech. I wonder when you and I ever made wise ones! We never do unless we borrow them, for all that comes of us naturally is childish and foolish, “for we know in part, and we prophesy in part.” When the child becomes a man, he will put away childish things, but meanwhile our speech betrays us. We seldom speak even of any of the great mysteries of the Gospel without uttering some words of our own which show that we have never really understood them. I think the Lord likes us to display our ignorance, first, that we may know it, and then that He may remove it.

6. *Jesus said unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me.* Christ has gone to the Father’s upper house to make it ready for all the redeemed family. We could never have entered there if He had not gone in first. And even now there is no coming to the Father in faith or in prayer except by Christ. We must not even *dream* of communion with God except through our Lord Jesus Christ. Luther used to say—and to say very wisely, too—“I will have nothing to do with an absolute God! I must come to God by Christ Jesus.” “No man comes unto the Father, but by Me.”

7. *If you had known Me, you would have known My Father, also, and from henceforth you know Him, and have seen Him.* All of the Father that we can know is visible in Christ, “for in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” And if we truly know Christ, we also know the Father. Christ always seems to be knowable, for He brings Himself down to such a nearness to us that it seems easy to know Him. Well, then, knowing Christ, we also know the Father and have seen Him!

8. *Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.* Thomas spoke just now like a babe in Grace. Now here is Philip talking

like another baby! Yet how bold his speech is! “Lord, show us the Father.” Why, no man can see the Father’s face and live! Yet here is a child of God apparently forgetful of that fact.

9. *Jesus said to him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip? He that has seen Me has seen the Father; and why say you, then, Show us the Father?* Is not this a homely talk between the Master and His disciples? Said I not rightly that Christ, here, seems to unveil Himself? He lets these children of His talk away much at their ease—and I think we ought to be at ease when we are talking with Christ. Some like a very stately service in their worship, something very grand, that makes ordinary worshippers stand afar off. Let them enjoy it if they can, but as for us, we prefer something which permits us to come very near to our Lord.

10. *Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?* Yes, Lord, we do believe that. Your eternal and inseparable union with the Father is a doctrine about which we have no question whatever!

10. *The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself, but the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works.* Notice, dear Friends, that even the Lord Jesus Christ did not profess to teach doctrines out of His own mind! He says, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself.” Now, if it is so with the Master, how much more ought it to be so with the servants! But have you not noticed how it is with the great men of the pulpit in these days? It is, “What I have thought out, I make known to you.” It is, “What has come to me by the spirit of the age, the culture of the period, I tell you.” God save us from this kind of talk! It is no business of mine, I know, to ever come to you merely with a message of my own, for if the Lord Jesus Christ did not do so, what a fool His servant must be if he pretends to do it! No, if it is not revealed in this Book, neither shall it be taught by us, nor ought it to be received by you! So Jesus says to His disciples, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself.” He glories in His union with the Father, and in the fact that He does not come as an independent teacher of thoughts of His own inventing, but He tells out to us what is in His Father’s heart.

11, 12. *Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father. We cannot do Christ’s redeeming work—it would be blasphemy to suppose that we could, for He said of it, “It is finished.”* But we can do the kind of work that Christ did in instructing men and in being the means of blessing men. Many of the Apostles brought to a knowledge of the Truth of God more souls than their Lord did by His personal ministry. He was pleased, after the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of *Pentecost*, to bring great multitudes to the faith by some of His servants, while He, Himself preached, comparatively speaking, to but few, only journeying up and down that little land of Palestine and scarcely traversing all of it. And if we will but trust Him and seek to imitate His wondrous life, we, also, shall do the works that He did, and do them on an even larger scale, and do them with even greater results.

13, 14. *And whatever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.* Observe the *breadth* of prayer—"If you shall ask anything." Yet observe, also, the *limit* of prayer—"If you shall ask anything *in My name.*" There are some things which we should not ask in Christ's name, as we have no promise about them, or because we have indications that they would be contrary to God's usual method of procedure. We must not ask, in the name of Christ, for what would be absurd or outrageous for us to expect God to grant. Neither dare we use that sacred name in pleading for things which would only be for the satisfaction of our own will. We must let the will of God rise above all! But, subject to that will, we may ask anything in Christ's name and He will do it.

15. *If you love Me, keep My Commandments.* Obedience is the truest proof of love. Some, out of supposed love to Christ, have attempted or committed acts of fanaticism. They have been enthusiastic and, in many cases, doubtless, very sincere. But they have also been very unwise. Here is the best thing that you can do out of love for Christ—"If you love Me, keep My Commandments."

16. *And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever*—"One who will not need to die and so to be separated from you, but who, once coming to you, shall tarry with you throughout the ages."

17. *Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you.* Do you not notice how this verse contradicts the current thought of the period about, "the spirit of the age" being so much in advance of the Spirit of all past ages? Listen again to these words of our Lord—"The Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive." The world is always receiving one form of falsehood or another. Tossed to and fro and never abiding long in one place, it cries, "This is the truth," or, "That is the truth," or, "Now we have it; *this* is the truth." But Christ says, "The Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, neither knows Him: but you know Him; for He dwells with you, and shall be in you."

18. *I will not leave you comfortless.* Or, "orphans," for that is the meaning of the original. "I will not leave you orphans."

18-20. *I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees Me no more; but you see Me. Because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.* This is all very simple. The words are nearly all words of one syllable, yet there are depths here in which a leviathan might plunge and lose himself!

21-23. *He that has My Commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me: and he that loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him. Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man loves Me, he will keep My Words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.* Only holy men can see the holy Christ, and it is only as we walk in obedience to Him that we can have the Son of God walking with us, and the Father and the Son dwelling with us.

24. *He that loves Me not keeps not My sayings: and the Word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent Me.* Notice, again, that important Truth of God, and observe what weight and what stress Christ lays upon it.

25, 26. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatever I have said unto you.* Brothers and Sisters, ought we not to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, since the Father, Himself, does everything in that name? Even concerning the sending of the Comforter, Christ says, "whom the Father will send in My name." Then He would certainly have the Father and the children acting upon the same principles—the Father glorifying Christ by sending the Spirit in His name—and ourselves glorifying Christ by presenting our prayers and praises in that one adorable name!

27. *Peace I leave with you.* "I told you not to let your heart be troubled. Now I go further and I leave you this precious legacy of peace—"Peace I leave with you."

27. *My peace I give unto you.*—"My own deep peace, which even My sufferings and death cannot disturb."

27-29. *Not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that, when it is come to pass, you might believe.* Oh, what numbers of things which Christ foretold have come to pass already! Have you, dear Friends, believed all the more because of them? How many answers to prayer, how many deliverances out of trouble, how many helps in the time of need have you had! Surely, when all this has come to pass, you ought to believe.

30, 31. *Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me Commandment, even so I do, Arise, let us go hence.* So the Savior went forth to His passion and His death that all might know the supremacy of His love to the Father and His love to His people. And so let us, in our measure, be always ready to say, "Arise, let us go hence," to service or to suffering, since our Savior leads the way.

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

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

“KNOCK!”

NO. 1723

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 27, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”
Matthew 7:12.***

I believe, no doubt, that, taken very strictly, the three exhortations of this verse—which, indeed, are but one—were, first of all, intended for God’s believing people. It was to His disciples that the Lord said, “Cast not your pearls before swine” and, perhaps, certain of them who were poor in spirit might turn around and say, “Lord, we have few pearls; we are too poor to have the treasures of Your Grace so plentifully. You have bidden us not to give that which is holy unto dogs; but holiness is rather a thing we seek after than possess.” “Well,” says the Lord, “you have only to ask and have; you have not because you ask not; you have only to seek and you will be sure to find—for holy things, like rare pearls, are to be discovered if you look for them. You have only to knock and spiritual secrets shall open to you, even the innermost Truths of God.”

In each exhortation our Lord bids us *pray*. Beloved, let us abound in supplication! Depend upon it, failure in prayer will undermine the foundation of our peace and sap the strength of our confidence. But if we abound in pleading with God, we shall grow strong in the Lord and we shall be happy in His love and we shall become a blessing to those around us! Need I commend the Mercy Seat to you who wait before it? Surely prayer must have become such a joy to you, such a necessity of your being, such an element of your life, that I hardly need press it upon you as a duty, or invite you to it as a privilege. Yet I continue to do so because the Master does it by a triple exhortation. A threefold cord is not easily broken—let not my text be neglected by you. Let me urge you to repeated, varied, ever intensifying prayer—ask! Seek! Knock!

Cease not to ask till you receive; cease nor to seek till you find; cease not to knock till the door is opened unto you! In these three exhortations there would appear to be a gradation—it is the same thought put into another shape and made more forcible. *Ask*—that is, in the quiet of your spirit, speak with God concerning your needs and humbly beg Him to grant your desires—this is a good and acceptable form of prayer. If, however, asking should not appear to succeed, the Lord would awaken you to a more concentrated and active longing. Therefore let your desires call in the aid of knowledge, thought, consideration, meditation, practical action and learn to *seek* for the blessings you desire as men seek for hidden treasures. These good things are laid up in store and they are accessible to fervent minds. See how you can reach them. Add to asking the study of the promises of God, a diligent hearing of His Word, a devout meditation

upon the way of salvation and all such means of Grace as may bring you the blessing. Advance from asking to seeking.

And if, after all, it should still seem that you have not obtained your desire, then *knock* and so come to closer and more agonizing work—use not only your voice, but your whole soul—exercise yourself unto godliness to obtain the gift! Use every effort to win that which you seek after, for remember that doing is *praying*; living to God is a high form of *seeking* and the bent of the entire mind is *knocking*. God often gives to His people, when they keep His Commandments, that which He denies to them if they walk carelessly. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” Holiness is *essential* to power in prayer—the life must knock while the lips ask and the heart seeks.

I will change my line of exposition and say—ask as a beggar petitions for alms. They say that begging is a poor trade, but when you ply it well with God, no other trade is so profitable! Men get more by asking than by working without prayer. Though I do not recommend not working, yet I most highly commend praying! Nothing under Heaven pays like prevailing prayer! He that has power in prayer has all things at his call. Ask as a poor mendicant who is hungry and pleads for bread. Then seek as a merchant who hunts for goodly pearls, looking up and down, anxious to give all that he has that he may win a matchless treasure. Seek as a servant carefully looking after his master’s interests and laboring to promote them. Seek with all diligence, adding to the earnestness of the beggar, the careful watchfulness of the jeweler who is seeking for a gem.

Conclude all by knocking at Mercy’s door as a lost traveler, caught out on a cold night in a blinding sleet, knocks for shelter that he may not perish in the storm. When you have reached the gate of salvation, ask to be admitted by the great love of God. Then look well to see the way of entering, seeking to enter in—and if the door still seems shut against you—knock right heavily and continue knocking till you are safely lodged within the home of love! Once again, ask for what you need, seek for what you have lost, knock for that from which you are excluded. Perhaps this last arrangement best indicates the shades of meaning and brings out the distinctions. Ask for *everything* you need, whatever it may be—if it is a right and good thing, it is promised to the sincere asker!

Seek for what you have lost, for what Adam lost you by the Fall; for what you have lost, yourself, by your neglect, by your backsliding, by your lack of prayer—seek till you find the Grace you need. Then knock. If you seem shut out from comfort, from knowledge, from hope, from God, from Heaven—then knock, for the Lord will open unto you! Here you need the Lord’s own interference—you can ask and receive, you can seek and find—but you cannot knock and open! The Lord must open the door, Himself, or you are shut out forever. God is ready to open the door. Remember, there is no cherub with fiery sword to guard this gate, but, on the other hand, the Lord Jesus, Himself, opens, and no man shuts.

But now I must drop this line of things, for my desire is to use the text in reference to those who are not yet saved. Last Lord’s-Day, when we

preached upon glory, [*Glory!* #1721] we had before us the end of the pilgrim way. It was a very, very happy time, for in meditation we reached the suburbs of the Celestial City and we tasted of eternal Glory. This morning I thought we would begin at the beginning and enter in at the wicket gate, which stands at the head of the way to Heaven. Mr. Bunyan, in his, "Pilgrim's Progress," says, "Now over the gate there was written, 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'" His ingenious allegory is always as truthfully instructive as it is delightfully attractive. I concluded that this should be my text.

If it is thought worthy to be written over the gate at the entering in of the way of life, it must have a great claim upon the attention of those who have not yet started for Glory, but are anxious to do so. May God the Holy Spirit instruct and quicken them while we hear the Lord from within His palace saying, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

I. First, then, dear Friend, whoever you are, if you are desirous of entering into eternal life, I would expound to you the inscription over the gate, by saying, first, THE DOOR OF MERCY MAY APPEAR TO YOU TO BE CLOSED AGAINST YOU. That is implied in the text—"Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." If to your consciousness the door stood wide open, there would be no need of knocking. But since in your apprehension it is closed against you, it is for you to seek admission in the proper way by *knocking*. To a large extent, this apprehension is the result of your own fears. You think the gate is closed because you feel it *ought* to be so—you feel that if God dealt with you as you would deal with your fellow men—He would be so offended with you as to shut the door of His favor once and for all.

You remember how guilty you have been, how often you have refused the Divine call and how you have gone on from evil to evil and, therefore, you fear that the Master of the house has already risen up and shut the door. You fear lest, like the obstinate ones in Noah's day, you will find the door of the ark closed and yourself shut out to perish in the general destruction. Sin lies at the door and blocks it. In your judgment, your desponding feelings fasten up the gate of Grace. But it is not so! The gate is *not* barred and bolted as you think it to be—though it may be spoken of as closed in a certain sense, yet in another sense it is never shut! In any case, it opens very freely. Its hinges are not rusted, no bolts secure it. The Lord is glad to open the gate to every knocking soul!

It is closed far more in your apprehension than as a matter of fact, for the sin which shuts it is removed so far as the believing sinner is concerned. Had you but faith enough, you would enter in at this present moment, and if you did once enter in, you would never be put out again, for it is written, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." If you could, with holy courage, take leave and license to come in, you would never be blamed for it. Fear and shame stand in the sinners road and push him back and, blessed is he whose desperate mind forces him to be bold! One thing we should remember when we fear that the door is closed against us, namely, that it is not so fast closed as the door of our hearts has been.

You know the famous picture of, “The Light of the World”? It seems to me to be one of the finest sermons the eyes have ever looked upon. There stands the Ever-Blessed, knocking at the door of the soul, but the hinges are rusted, the door, itself, is fast bolted and wild briars and all kinds of creeping plants running up the door prove that it has been a long time since it was moved. You know what it all means—how continuance in sin makes it harder to yield to the knock of Christ and how evil habits creeping up, one after another, hold the soul so fast that it cannot open to the sacred knocking. Jesus has been knocking at some of your hearts ever since you were children—and still He knocks. I hear His blessed hand upon the door at this moment! Do you not hear it? Will you not open?

He has knocked a long time and yet He knocks again. I am sure that you have not knocked at Mercy’s door so long as Incarnate Mercy has waited at your door! You know you have not. How, therefore, can you complain if there should be an apparent delay in answering your prayers? It is but to make you feel a holy shame for having treated your Lord so ill! Now you begin to know what it is to be kept waiting—what it is to be a weary knocker, what it is to cry, “my head is wet with dew and my locks with the drops of the night.” This will excite you to repentance for your unkind behavior and also move you to love more intensely that gentle Lover of your soul who has shown such patience towards you. It will be no loss to you that the door was shut for a while, if you do but gain a penitent heart and a tender spirit!

Let me, however, warn you that the door can be closed and kept shut by unbelief. He that believes enters into Christ when he believes. He that comes in by the door shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture—so our Lord says in the 10th chapter of John. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life,” there is no question about that! But we read, on the other hand, “So, then, they could not enter in because of unbelief.” Forty years the tribes were in the wilderness, going towards Canaan, yet they never reached the promised land because of unbelief! And what if some of you should be 40 years attending this means of Grace? Coming and going, coming and going, hearing sermons, witnessing ordinances, and joining with God’s people in worship—what if, after all the 40 years, you should never enter in because of unbelief?

Souls, I tell you, if you lived, each one of you as long as Methuselah, you could not enter in unless you believed in Jesus Christ! The moment you have trusted Him with your whole heart and soul, you are within the blessed portals of the Father’s house! But however many years you may be asking, seeking and knocking, you will *never* enter in till faith comes, for unbelief keeps the chain on the door and there is no entering in while it rules your spirit. Do you, however, complain that you should have to knock? It is the rule of the Most High!

Am I addressing any who have been earnestly praying for several months? I can sympathize with you, for that was my case, not only for months, but even for years! Through the darkness of my mind and my cruel misapprehensions of the Lord, I did not find peace when I first began to ask for it, although I also sought with much earnestness, going to

the House of God every time I could, and reading the Bible, daily, with a burning desire to know the right way. I did not enter into peace till I had knocked long and heavily. Listen, therefore, to one who knows your troubles and hear from me the voice of reason! Ought we to expect to enter into the glorious house of mercy without knocking at its door? Is it so with our own houses?

Can every straggler carelessly saunter in? Is it not God's way in the world to give great blessings, but always to make men knock for them? We need bread out of the earth but the farmer must knock at the door of the earth with his plow and with all his instruments of agriculture before his God will hand him out a harvest! Is anything gained in this world without labor? Is it not an old proverb, "No sweat, no sweet: no pains, no gains: no mill, no meal"? And may we not expect, in heavenly things, that at least these great mercies should be prayed for with fervency before they can be bestowed? It is the usual rule with God to make us pray before He gives the blessing. And how could it be otherwise? How could a sinner be saved without prayer?

A prayerless soul must be a Christless soul! The feeling of prayer, the habit of prayer, the spirit of prayer, are parts of salvation. Unless it can be said of a man, "Behold, he prays," how can there be any sort of hope that he knows his God and has found reconciliation? The prodigal did not come home dumb, neither did he enter his father's house in sullen silence. No, but as soon as he saw his father, he cried, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven." There must be speech within God, for God gives not a silent salvation! Besides, to make us knock at Mercy's gate is a great blessing to ourselves upon the spot. It is a going to school for us when we are set to plead with God for a while without realized success. It makes a man grow more earnest, for his hunger increases while he tarries.

If he obtained the blessing when first he asked for it, it might seem dog cheap. But when he has to plead long, he arrives at a better sense of the value of the mercy sought. He also sees more of his own unworthiness as he stands outside Mercy's gate, ready to swoon with fear—and so he grows more passionately earnest in pleading and, whereas he did but ask at first, he now begins to seek, and he adds cries and tears and a broken heart to all the other ways of his pleading. Thus the man, by being humbled and awakened, is getting good by means of his sorrow while he is kept, for a while, outside the gate!

Beside that, he is increasing his capacity for the future. I believe I never could have been able to comfort seekers in their anguish if I had not been kept waiting in the cold, myself. I have always felt grateful for my early distress because of its later results. Many men, whose experiences are recorded in books which are invaluable in the Christian library, never could have written those books if they had not, themselves, been kept waiting—hungry and thirsty and full of soul travail—before the Lord appeared to them. That blessed man, David, who always seems to be—

"Not one, but all mankind's epitome"

the history of all men wrapped up in one—how he pictures himself as sinking in the miry clay! Lower and lower did he go, till he cried out of the

depths and then, at last, he was taken up out of the horrible pit and his feet were set on a rock that he could tell others what the Lord had done for him!

Your heart needs enlarging, dear Sir. The Lord means to prepare you to become a more eminent Christian by expanding your mind. The spade of agony is digging trenches to hold the Water of Life. Depend upon it, if the ships of prayer do not come home speedily, it is because they are more heavily freighted with blessing! When prayer is long in the answering, it will be all the sweeter in the receiving, like fruit which is well ripened by hanging longer on the tree! If you knock with a heavy heart, you shall yet sing with joy of spirit! Therefore, be not discouraged because, for a while, you stand before a closed door.

II. Secondly, A DOOR IMPLIES AN OPENING. What is a door meant for if it is always to be kept shut? The wall might as well have remained without a break! I have seen certain houses and public buildings with the form and appearance of doors where there were none—the sham doorway being made for architectural purposes—but nothing is a sham in the House of the Lord. His doors are meant to open! They were made on purpose for entrance and so the blessed Gospel of God is made on purpose for you to enter into life and peace. It would be of no use to knock at a wall, but you may wisely knock at a door, for it is arranged for opening.

You will eventually enter in if you knock on, for the Gospel is good news for men—and how could it be good news if it should so happen that they might sincerely come to Christ and ask mercy—and be denied it? I fear that the Gospel preached by certain divines sounds rather like bad news than good news to awakened souls, for it requires so much feeling and preparation on the sinner's part that they are not cheered nor led to hope! But you can be sure that the Lord is willing to save all those who are willing to be saved in His own appointed way. A dear Brother beautifully said in prayer on Monday night—"You, O Lord, are perfectly satisfied with the Lord Jesus, and if we are satisfied with Him, You are satisfied with us."

That is the Gospel put into a few words! God is satisfied with Christ and if you are satisfied with Christ, God is satisfied with you! This is a glad tidings to every soul that is willing to accept the Atonement made and the righteousness prepared by the Lord Jesus. Dear Friend, this Gospel must be meant to be received by sinners, or else it would not have been sent. But one says, "I am such a sinner." Just so. You are the sort of person for whom the news of mercy is intended! A Gospel is not needed by perfect men—sinless men need no pardon. No sacrifice is needed if there is no guilt—no atonement is needed where there is no transgression. They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick! This door of hope which God has prepared was meant to be an entrance into life and it was meant to open to sinners, for if it does not open to sinners, it will never open at all!

We have all sinned and so we must all be shut out unless it is of free Grace for those who are guilty. I am sure this door must open to those who have nothing to bring with them. If you have no good works, no merits, no good feelings, nothing to recommend you, be not discouraged, for it

is to such that Jesus Christ is most precious and, therefore, most accessible, for He loves to give Himself to those who will prize Him most! A man will never have Christ while he has enough of his own; but he that is consciously naked, poor and miserable, is the man for Christ's money—he it is that has been redeemed by price!

You may know the redeemed man, for he feels his bondage and acknowledges that he must remain therein unless the redemption of Christ is applied for his deliverance. Dear Friends, that door of hope will be opened to you though you may be ignorant, weak and quite unable to fulfill any high conditions! When the text says, “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you,” it teaches us that the way of winning admission to the blessing is simple and suitable to common people. If I have to enter in by a door which is well secured, I shall need tools and science. I confess I do not understand the arts—you must send for a gentleman who understands picklocks, “jimmies,” and all sorts of burglarious instruments!

But if I am only told to knock, fool as I am at opening doors, I know how to knock! Any uneducated man can knock if that is all required of him. Is there a person here who cannot put words together in prayer? Never mind, Friend! Knocking can be done by one who is no orator. Perhaps another cries, “I am no scholar.” Never mind, a man can knock though he may be no philosopher. A dumb man can knock! A blind man can knock! With a palsied hand, a man may knock. He who knows nothing of this Book can still lift a hammer and let it fall. The way to open Heaven's gate is wonderfully simplified to those who are lowly enough to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance and ask, seek and knock believingly!

God has not provided a salvation which can only be understood by learned men. He has not prepared a Gospel which requires half-a-dozen folio volumes to describe it. It is intended for the ignorant, the short-witted and the dying, as well as for others and, therefore, it must be as plain as knocking at a door! This is it—Believe and live! Seek unto God with all your heart and soul and strength, *through Jesus Christ*, and the door of His mercy will certainly open to you! The gate of Grace is meant to yield admission to unscientific people since it shall be opened to those who knock! I am sure this door will open to you because it has been opened to so many before you. It has been opened to hundreds of us now present. Could not you, dear Brothers and Sisters, stand up and tell how the Lord opened the gate of His salvation to you?

That door has opened to many in this house during the last few weeks. We have seen persons coming forward to tell how the Lord has been pleased to give them an entrance into His mercy, though at one time they were afraid that the door was shut and they were ready to despair! Well, if the door has been so often opened for others, why should it not turn on its hinges for you? Only knock, with faith in God's mercy, and before long it shall yield to your importunity! It is for God's Glory to open His door of Grace and that is one reason why we are sure He will! We cannot expect Him to do that which would be derogatory to His own honor, but we do expect Him to do that which will glorify His sacred attributes!

It will greatly honor the mercy, the patience, the love, the Grace, the goodness, the favor of God if He will open the door to such an undeserving one as you are, so knock! Knock, since God delights to give! Knock at the door which, every time it turns on its hinges, unveils His greatness! Knock with a holy confidence at this present moment for “it shall be opened unto you.” It is a door which seems closed, but because it is a door, it must be capable of being opened!

III. Thirdly knock, for A KNOCKER IS PROVIDED. When persons can be admitted by knocking, a knocker is usually placed on the door—and if not, we often see the words, NO ADMITTANCE. Before bells became so common, the habit of knocking at the door was well near universal and people were accustomed to like the door to resound with their blows. There was a nail head for the knocker to drop upon and people used to smite it so heavily that it became remarked that such blows on the head were killing and, therefore, arose the mirthful proverb, “as dead as a door-nail.” It typifies a hearty kind of knocking which I would have you imitate by prayer.

Knock at Heaven’s gate as earnestly as people knocked at doors in the olden times! Have you not had knocks at your own doors which could be heard all through the house? Some of our Friends are vigorous and knock as if they meant to come in! It may be that gentle folks give such tender taps that they are not heard by the servants, and so they have to wait—but these I am speaking of never fall into *that* error, for they so startle everybody that they are glad to let them in, for fear they should thunder a second time! In this style let us pray—let us plead in a downright fashion and never cease till we gain admission.

I have said that the Lord has provided a knocker. What is this knocker? First of all, it may be found in the promises of God. We are sure to speed well when we can plead a promise. It is well to say unto the Lord, “Do as You have said.” What force abides in an appeal to the Word, the Oath and the Covenant of God. If a man presents to another a promissory note upon the day on which it is due, he expects to receive the amount stated therein. God’s promises are bills of exchange and He will duly honor them. He was never known to dishonor a bill, yet, and He never will do so. If you can only quote a promise applicable to your condition—spread it before the Lord in faith and say—“Remember this Word unto Your servant upon which you have caused me to hope,” you will obtain the blessing!

Pleading the promise gives such a knock at the gate of Heaven that it must be opened. The great knocker, however, is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person were to call upon you on the behalf of some dearly-beloved son who is far away. If he brought you due credentials and a letter, saying, “Father, treat the bearer well for my sake,” you would be sure to show him kindness! And if the aforesaid person was authorized to receive a promised amount in the name of your son, would you not hand out the money? Now, when we go to God and plead the name of Christ, it means that we plead the *authority* of Christ, that we ask of God as though we were in Christ’s place and expect Him to give it to us as if He were giving it to Jesus! That is something more than pleading for Christ’s sake.

I suppose the Apostles, at first, did plead with God for Christ's sake, but Jesus says to them, “Hitherto you have asked nothing in My name.” It is a higher grade of prayer, and when we get to pleading Christ's name with the Father, then do we gloriously prevail. At a Primitive Methodist meeting, a person was trying to pray, but did not get on at it and, presently a voice was heard from the corner of the room, “Plead the blood, Brother! Plead the blood!” I am not very fond of such interruptions, yet this was to be commended, for it gave the right note and set the pleader in his right place. Plead the precious blood of Jesus Christ and you have knocked so that you *must* be heard!

“Alas!” says one, “I see the knocker, for I know something of the promises and of the Person of our Lord, but how am I to knock?” With the hand of faith! Believe that God will keep His promise! Ask Him to do so and thus knock. Believe that Jesus is worthy, whose name you are pleading, and so knock in confidence that God will honor the name of His dear Son. “Alas! My hand is so weak,” you say. Then remember that the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities. Ask *Him* to put His hand upon your hand and, in that fashion, you will be able to knock with prevailing vehemence! I beseech you, knock with all the strength you have and knock often. If you are not in Christ, my dear Hearer, do not give sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids till you have found Him!

If you have prayed once, go and pray again! And if you have prayed 10,000 times, yet still continue in prayer! Knock with all your might, with all the vigor of your spirit! Plead as for your life—knock at the door as a man would knock who saw a wolf ready to spring upon him! Knock as one would knock who found himself ready to die of cold outside the door. Throw your whole soul into the work. Say unto the Lord, “I beseech You have mercy upon me and have mercy upon me, now. I faint, I die, unless You manifest Your love to me and take me into Your house and heart, that I may be Yours forever.” “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” There is the knocker.

IV. Next, to you who are knocking at the gate, A PROMISE IS GIVEN. That is more than having a door before you, or a knocker to knock with. The promise is above the gate in plain words. Read it. You are growing faint and weary. Read the promise and grow strong again! “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Observe how plain and positive it is with its glorious, “shall,” burning like a lamp in the center of it! In letters of love, the inscription shines out amidst all the darkness that surrounds you—and these are its words—“It shall be opened unto you.” If you knock at the door of the kindest of men, you see no such promise set before you and yet you knock, and knock confidently! How much more boldly should you come to the door of Grace when it is expressly declared, “It shall be opened unto you!”

Remember that this promise was freely given. You never asked the Lord for such a word—it was uttered by spontaneous goodness. You did not come and plead with Jesus for a promise that you should be heard in prayer. Far from it—you did not even pray! Perhaps you have been living in the world 40 years and have never truly prayed at all. But the Lord, out

of His overflowing heart of generous love has made this promise to you, “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Why do you doubt? Do you think He will not keep His Word? A God who cannot lie, who was under no necessity to promise, but freely, out of the greatness of His Divine Nature, which is Love, says to a poor sinner, “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Oh, be sure of this that He means it! And till Heaven and earth shall pass away, His Word shall stand, and neither you nor any other sinner that knocks at His door shall be refused admittance! This inscription has encouraged many to knock—when they have been ready to faint and give up all further seeking, they have read again the cheering words, “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you”—and they have taken heart and made the gate resound again!

Now, do you think God will tantalize us, that He will make fools of us, that He will excite hopes in poor sinners for the mere sake of disappointing them? Will He induce you to knock, by His promise, and then laugh at you? Did the God of Mercy ever say, “I called and you came; I stretched out My hands and you drew near to Me, and yet I will mock at your calamity, and laugh when your fear comes”? Why, a bad man would scarcely speak so! Such an act would be more like Satan than God! Do not tolerate the thought that the God of all Grace could treat a seeker thus! If it ever crosses your mind, thrust it away and say, “He that taught me to pray has thereby bound Himself to answer prayer. He will not invite me to knock in vain! Therefore I will knock again, only this time more vigorously than ever, relying upon His Word and His Truth.”

Oh, that you may never stop your knocking till salvation’s door is entered by you! The promise of the Lord was given freely and on the strength of that promise we knock and, therefore, we are sure that the Lord will not deny His trusting servants. The mercy is that this promise is meant for *all* knockers—“Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” The Lord has not denied to you, my Hearer, the privilege of praying, or declared that He will not answer your requests. You may knock and you may expect to see the door open! I know the blessed doctrine of Election and I rejoice in it, but that is a secret with God, while the rule of our preaching is—“Preach the Gospel to every creature.” I would, therefore, say to each one here, “Knock, and it should be opened unto you!” The Lord knows who will knock, for, “the Lord knows them that are His.” But knock, my Friend, knock now, and it will soon be seen that *you* are one of God’s chosen ones!

Remember the story of Malachi, the Cornishinuan? When a Methodist friend had some money to give him, he smilingly said, “Malachi, I do not think I shall give you this money because I do not know whether you are predestinated to have it. Will you tell me whether you are predestinated to have it or not?” Malachi replied, “You put the money in my hand and I will tell you.” As soon as Malachi had the sum in hand, he knew that he was predestinated to have it—but he could not know before he had it in possession. So the secret counsel of the Lord is revealed to our faith when it gets Christ in possession and not before! Knock at once! If you are predestinated to enter, I know you will knock and knock till you are admitted,

for so it stands, and no exception is made to it—“Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” It is a rule with the Lord that to him that knocks, it shall be opened!

Blessed be God, this text of mine shines out as if printed in stars and it continues to shine from the dawn of life to the setting of the sun! As long as a man lives, if he knocks at God’s door, it shall be opened unto him! You may have been long a rebel and you may have heaped up your sins till they seem to shut out all hope from you—but still knock at Christ, the Door, for an opening will come! But put not off your day of knocking because of God’s long-suffering mercy, but rather, today, knock, knock *now*, while sitting in the pew, and if you are not answered immediately, as I trust you will be, yet go home and there, in secret, cry unto the Lord, “I will not let You go unless You bless me! I am lost unless You find me! I am lost unless I find my Savior and Lord! I am not playing at prayer, now—my very soul means it! I must have Christ or else I am lost! I come just as I am. I cast myself upon You and trust in Your atoning Sacrifice. Oh manifest Yourself to me as a pardoning God!”

I will be bound for God as a hostage that He will answer you! I sought the Lord and He heard me—and since then I have never doubted of any living soul but that if he, too, will seek the Lord through Jesus Christ, he will certainly be saved. Oh, that you would try it! The Lord have you do it by His own blessed Spirit!

V. So I close with one more point. When the door opens, IT WILL BE A GLORIOUS OPENING TO YOU. “Knock, and it shall be opened.” What will come of it, then? Immediately you who have knocked will enter. If you have knocked in sincerity, the moment you see Christ *as* a Savior, you will accept Him as *your* Savior. Enter into Christ by faith. Behold, He sets before you an open door and no man can shut it! Do not hesitate to enter in. Up to now you have thought there were many difficulties and obstacles in your way, but, indeed, it is not so! Believe and live!

When, in answer to your knocking, you see the door move, then arise and tarry not. Remember that the opening of that door will not only give you entrance, but it will ensure you safety. He who once enters into Christ is safe forever. Only pass beneath that blood-sprinkled portal; only rest in the house of the Well-Beloved and you shall go out no more, forever! The life which He bestows is eternal, therefore you shall not die. The destroying angel, whenever he may take his flight, must pass you by. Only believe and you are saved! Only trust Christ with your whole heart, soul and strength and salvation has come unto your house—and you have come unto the house of salvation!

But then there shall come to you more blessings, for yours shall be the adoption! Once entered in, you shall abide in the mansion of Grace, no more a stranger or a guest, but as a child at home! You shall sit at the Father’s table and eat and drink as a son, an heir, a joint-heir with Christ. Yours shall be the liberty, the plenty, the joy of the great house of love. At God’s right hand there are pleasures forever more—and these shall all be your heritage! Yes, and more than that, for when you have once entered into the house of love, you shall have access to its inner chambers! Even

the vestibule of God’s house is a place of safety, but afterwards, the Master of the house shall take you into many rooms and show you His treasures, and open to you His storehouses, so that you shall go from Grace to Grace, from knowledge to knowledge, and glory to glory by continued progress! All this can only be understood by experience and that experience can only be obtained by knocking.

I need to say this and I have done. Some people think if they have begun to pray and are a little in earnest that this is enough. Now, praying is not an end—it is only a means! Knocking is not the ultimatum—you must enter in. If any of you are seeking, I am glad of it. If you are knocking, I am glad of it. But if you say, “I am perfectly satisfied to stand outside the door and knock,” then I am grieved for you. You are foolish to the last degree because you are resting in the *means* as if they were the end! You must *enter* by the Door or else knocking will be labor in vain. Would any of you be content to visit a friend and merely to stand for an hour or two outside of his door knocking? Did you ever say, “I do not need anything more. I shall sit down comfortably on the steps and then get up and have another knock or two”?

Knocking would not give you a dinner, nor do your business for you. Knocking is only the way of entrance, but if you stop at knocking it is poor work. The most earnest praying is only a way of getting to Christ. The Gospel, itself, is, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Come, then, to Christ! If you find the door shut, knock. But oh, remember, the door is not really shut—it is only so in your apprehension! Heaven’s gate stands open night and day! At once believe and live! Trust in the merit of Jesus Christ and you are clothed with it! Trust in the blood of Christ, and you are washed in it!

Faith saves in an instant! It touches Jesus and the healing virtue pours forth from His garment’s hem! Faith steps over the threshold and the soul is safe! The Lord grant that you may enter in at once—and then it shall be our joy, and the angels’ joy, and the great Father’s joy, forever and ever, to see you rescued from destruction! Amen.

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THE SIEVE

NO. 1158

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

***“Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter
into the kingdom of Heaven;
but he that does the will of My Father which is in Heaven.”
Matthew 7:21.***

IN reading this chapter one is led to feel that it is not, after all, an easy thing to be a sincere Christian. The way is hard, the road is narrow. Who will, may represent the way to Heaven as being easy, but our Savior does not speak so of it. “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it.” “Many are called and few chosen.” The difficulty of being right is increased by the fact that there are men in the world whose trade it is to make counterfeits. There were, and there are, many false prophets. Our Savior has spoken about them in this chapter and given us a way of testing them—but they are still carrying on their trade as successfully as ever.

Now, since there are traitors abroad whose business it is to deceive, we ought to be doubly vigilant and constantly upon our watchtower lest we be misled by them. I charge you, examine every statement you hear from Christian pulpits and platforms! I charge you, sift and try every religious book by the great standard of the Word of God. Believe none of us if we speak contrary to this Word—yes, believe not an angel from Heaven if he preaches any other Gospel than that which is contained in Inspired Scripture.

“To the Law and to the Testimony,” if they speak not according to this Word it is because there is no truth in them. God grant us Grace to escape from false prophets! We shall not do so if we are careless and off our guard, for the sheepskin garment so effectually covers the wolf—the broad phylactery so decorates the hypocrite—that thousands are deceived by the outward appearance and do not discover the cheat! Crafty are the wiles of the enemy and many foolish ones are still ignorant of his devices. Tutored by the experience of ages, seducers and evil men not only wax worse and worse, but they grow more and more cunning. If it were possible, they would deceive even the very elect! Happy shall they be who, being elect, are kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation so that they are not carried away with any error.

In addition to the fact that there are false teachers, it is certain that there are false *professors*. There never was a time in the Church of God in which all were Christians who professed to be so. Surely the golden age of the Church must have been when the Master Himself was in it and had selected 12 choice spirits to be nearest to His Person and to act, as it were, as the prime ministers of His kingdom. Yet there was a devil among the 12—a devil in the Church of which Jesus was Pastor! Judas, the treasurer of the Apostles, was also a son of Perdition. When Paul and the

Apostles kept watch over the elect Church, surely that must have been a happy time—and when persecution raged all around and acted like a great winnowing fan to drive away the chaff—one would have expected to find that the threshing floor contained only clean grain!

But it was not so. The heap upon the threshing floor of the Church was, even then, a mingled mass of corn and chaff. Some turned aside from love of the world and others were deluded into grievous error. And there were others who remained in the Church to discredit it by their impurity and to bring chastisements upon it by their sin. We shall never see a perfect Church till we see the Lord face to face in Heaven. Above yon clouds is the place for perfection! But here, alas, nothing is undefiled. Even in the purest Churches we find deceivers and deceived. Among you over whom it is my calling to preside, I know that there are false professors—lovers of the world rather than lovers of God—and though I cannot remove you any more than the servants of the householder could uproot the tares from the wheat, yet I sigh over you and you are my daily cross and burden. Oh, that God would convert you and make you true to your professions, or else remove you from the Church which you so greatly grieve and weaken!

But now, if in the Church of God there are those who are deceivers and deceived, the question comes to each one of us, “May we not, also, be mistaken? Is it not possible that we, though making a profession of religion, may, after all, be insincere or deluded in that profession and fail to be what we think we are?” Therefore let us put ourselves, at this time, into the attitude of self-examination—and whatever is spoken, let it come home to us *personally*. May we try ourselves whether we are right or not, not flinching from any pointed Truth of God but anxiously desiring to be tried and tested before the Lord Himself.

I would bring the text before you by noticing, first, that it contains a *very commendable expression*, “Lord, Lord.” But, secondly, *it was used by gross hypocrites*. And then, thirdly, we shall show *wherein these hypocrites failed*—what it was that they lacked which rendered it impossible that they should enter into the kingdom.

I. First, then, the text contains A VERY COMMENDABLE SPEECH. We may be sure the speech was a good one, or the hypocrites would not have used it as a cloak for their hypocrisy. Men do not use dubious expressions when they want to appear exceedingly devout. They take care, however bad their deeds may be, to make their words, at any rate, sound well. Therefore the persons spoken of in the text said to Jesus, “Lord, Lord.” It is a fitting mode of speech for each one of us to use.

And first, dear Friends, we ought to say to Jesus, “Lord, Lord,” in reference to His Divinity. How can we be saved if we do not? Jesus Christ of Nazareth is to us Lord and God! We do not hesitate to use the language of Thomas when he put his finger into the print of the nails and said to Him, “My Lord and my God.” Let others say of Him what they will. Let them make Him to be a mere man, or a Prophet, or a delegated God—such talk is nothing to the point with us! We believe Him to be very God of very God and we worship Him this day as He is enthroned in the highest heavens, believing Him to be worthy of the adoration which is due to God, alone!

I do not wonder that those who believe our Lord Jesus Christ to be a mere man say severe things of us. Nor must they wonder if we deliver very strong utterances with regard to them! If we are wrong, we are idolaters, for we worship a person who is only a man. If we are right, much of their teaching is blasphemous, for they deny the Deity of the Christ of God! There is a great gulf between us and it is only common honesty to admit it. To conceal the fact in order to be thought liberal would be a mean artifice—unworthy of an honest man. The question in debate is a vital one and there can be no halting place between one view or the other.

Compromise must always be impossible where the Truth of God is essential and fundamental. There are some points in which we may agree to differ, but these are points in which there can be no mutual concessions or toning down of statement. Christ Jesus is either God or He is not! And if He is God, as we believe He is, then those who reject His Deity cannot be true believers in Him. And therefore they must miss the benefits which He promises to those who receive Him. I cannot conceive any man to be right in religion if he is not right in reference to the Person of the Redeemer. “You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of Him.” If you will not have Him to be your God, neither will He save you. Let His abundant miracles, His Divine teaching, His unique Character and His Resurrection convince you that “the Word was God,” and is in all respects equally Divine with the Father and the Spirit.

The expression before us is commendable under another aspect—one in which, very likely, it was used by these hypocrites. We use it towards Christ to denote that we acknowledge Him to be our Master—He is, “Lord, Lord,” to us. In the true Church of Christ there are no lords but this *one* Lord. “One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren.” “Lord Bishop” is an expression suitable for Babylon or Rome—but not for the new Jerusalem. I challenge the whole world to find any Apostolic title of the kind, or anything approaching to it in the days of the Apostles! It is as contrary to Christianity as Hell is contrary to Heaven!

As servants of one common Master, we stand upon equality. Did He not say, “The rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, but it shall not be so among you”? *Christ* is Lord to us and no one else in the Church of God. And the Church takes care, when she is in a right state, that there shall never be any legislator for her except Christ. He is her lawmaker—not Parliaments or kings. Jesus walks in the midst of the Churches, among His golden candlesticks, to observe and prescribe her order. He tolerates no other lawgiver or ruler in spiritual things. We know no Rabbi but Christ! Doctrine comes from His lips and from His Word, but from no councils and no teachers or divines.

As to the rules of the Church, if they are not the rules of Jesus, given by the authority of His Spirit, they are not rules for us. As for human traditions, prescriptions and ordinances in reference to religion, tear them to pieces and toss them to the winds! Christ is Lord and every Christian’s heart echoes to the words when I say, in the name of His people, “Jesus, son of Mary, Son of God, You are to us Lord, Lord. Your mother’s sons bow down before You and do You homage. The sun and moon and 11 stars of Israel’s household bow before You—You who were separate from

your brethren for your brethren's sake." Onto Jesus, who was once nailed to the tree, be honor throughout all ages. He is Lord, Lord, in that sense.

And, beloved, as he is thus beyond all controversy Lord divinely and Lord as legislator, it is right that this should be spoken. It was a brave thing for the Covenanters of Scotland to be ready to die for the headship of Christ in His Church, and I trust there are thousands still alive who would as gladly relinquish life, itself, to preserve the crown right of our exalted Lord. It would be well worth any man's while to lay down his life to defend the Deity of Christ, which doctrine cannot be taken away without removing the very foundations of the faith! And if the foundations are moved, what can the righteous do? Bear your testimony, then, you followers of the Lamb, and be not afraid to acknowledge His name! Though hypocrites have said it, you need not blush to say it—for it is most true that Jesus is both Lord and God. Say "Lord, Lord" with unfaltering tongue!

Say it daily by your actions. Have respect unto your Master and let others see that you respect Him. Do this good action because Christ bids you. Refuse to do that evil thing because Christ forbids you. Move in that line because He leads the way. Refuse that other line because you do not see His footprints there. Let all men see that you practically say, "Lord, Lord," whenever you think of Jesus. This is the very spirit of Christianity—to do what Christ bids us—and to honor Him in heart and lip and life forevermore! I wish that some Christians were a little more outspoken in their acknowledgment of their great Lord and Master—and I commend these hypocrites, if I can commend them at all—that they wisely choose a fit and godly speech, though, alas, they dishonored the good speech by using it so foully when they said, "Lord, Lord."

II. And now, secondly, THERE WERE HYPOCRITES WHO USED THIS EXCELLENT MODE OF SPEECH. What sort of people were they who said, "Lord, Lord," and yet the Master says of them, that not everyone of them shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven? Well, I think He refers to a considerable number of people, and I will search for them. I wonder whether I shall find any in this congregation? Help me, my Brothers and Sisters, by your own self-examination to discover these people. There can be no doubt our Lord referred, in the first place, to a certain class of superficial externalists, who said, "Lord, Lord," and there their religion ended.

Such persons still exist all around—they are superficial in nature and in general character. They say good things, but they never feel what they say. Their pious expressions come from as low as the throat, but never from the abysses of the heart. They are of the stony ground order and have no depth of earth. The hard, barren rock is barely concealed by a sprinkling of soil. They may accurately be styled externalists, for they have the notion that when they have attended to the *outside* of godliness, the whole matter is fully discharged. For instance, if they sing with their voices, they conclude that they have praised God—and that when the hymn is uttered to melodious notes—worship has been presented to God, even though the heart has never praised Him at all.

When they bow the head and close their eyes in public prayer, they consider they are doing something very right and proper—though they are

very likely thinking of their farm, their garden, their children, or their home—casting up their accounts and wondering how they will find trade and the money-market on Monday when they get to their shops. The externalists are satisfied with the *shell* of religion whether *life* remains or not. They have a form of godliness, but they are strangers to its *power*. If they read a chapter every day, they feel very self-complacent and think they are searchers of the Word, though they have never entered into the inner sense, but merely allowed the eye to run over the verses and lines.

If they never get an answer to prayer, they feel quite satisfied because they have duly said their prayers. Like boys who give runaway knocks, they have no expectation of an answer. They merely give God the husks and they think He never looks to see if there is a kernel there. They give Him the outward sign and imagine that He is satisfied, though the thing meant is absent. Oh, how large a proportion of our fellow creatures seem to be content when they have rendered an outward obedience to religious requirements! They are content to have made clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but the washing of the *inside*—the new heart, the Truth in the inward parts, the giving of the heart's love to Jesus—does not seem to be worthy of their attention. And if we talk of it, they are weary of it, and think we are Puritanical and imagine that we mean to judge them after a too lofty standard.

We are too severe with them, they say, but oh, Beloved, it is not so! Does not every thoughtful man see that without the heart, religion must be vain? What can there be in mere external *forms*? Put it to yourselves—what can there be? What do you, yourselves, think of your children if you see them doing what you bid them, but doing so because they *must*—not from an obedient spirit, or because they love you? What would you think of them if they had no trust in you, no confidence in their father's love and in their mother's care, but just went about the house mechanically doing what you bade them and no more? You would feel you needed your children's love—you must have their hearts.

And God, our Father, thinks the same of us! If we do not love Him, whatever we may do cannot be acceptable with Him. Perhaps you have attended regularly at Church or Meeting House almost since you were born. And it is possible that you have gone through all the rites and ceremonies of the community to which you belong. I am not about to condemn you for doing so if you are a Churchman, or if you are a Methodist, or if you are a Presbyterian, any more than I will if you are a Baptist—only I will put the whole together and say—"God abhors the sacrifice where the *heart* is not found, and if you have brought Him nothing but these externals, the verdict of truth concerning your religion is just this—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

If you say "Lord, Lord," you must yield a hearty obedience to Jesus and make your inner nature to be the temple of His Holy Spirit, or else your hypocrisy will condemn you at the Last Great Day as one who dared to insult the God of Truth with a false profession! Another class of persons who say, "Lord, Lord," and yet are not saved, are those who regard religion as a very excellent thing for quieting their conscience, but who do not look upon it as a practical influence which is to affect their lives and to influ-

ence their conduct. I have known persons who certainly would not be easy if they had not gone through their morning and evening prayers—and yet they were bad husbands and quarrelsome neighbors. They could falsify an account and put down an article twice to a customer without a very great disturbance of their self-satisfaction—and they would not like to have been away from the house of God on the Sabbath—or to have heard an unsound discourse.

Either of these things would have touched their conscience, though it was callous on the point of unfair dealing! They could lie, could lie handsomely, but they would not swear, or sing a song. They draw the line somewhere and compounded for a thousand sins of dishonesty by avoiding certain other vices—thus being left to cheat themselves as a righteous punishment for cheating others. Oh, the deceits and cheats which men play upon themselves! They are their own most easy dupes. A mere matter of religious form will outweigh the most important matters of virtue when the judgment is perverted by folly. We have heard of the Catholic in Spain who had a very serious sin to confess to his priest. He had been a brigand and had murdered hundreds, but the sin that lay upon his conscience was not murder.

He had perpetrated a thousand robberies but the sin that troubled him was not theft. Once upon a time, upon a Friday, a drop of blood spurted from a man he had killed and it had fallen on his lips, so that he had tasted flesh on a Friday—*that* had troubled him! His conscience, which, like Achilles, was invulnerable everywhere else, could yet be rounded at the heel. Though we might smile, the same eccentric fact might be declared concerning many beside the brigand. Their eyes see motes and overlooks beams. Their judgment strains out gnats and flies—and yet it swallows camels and elephants. They leap one hour and limp another. They are very nice on points of ritual and equally lax as to common honesty.

The thing really worth having—love to God and love to man—they fling behind their backs and fancy they shall be saved because they have complimented God by a hypocritical presence of worship and have deceived men by sanctimonious pretensions. As though if I cheated a man every day I could make up for it by taking my hat off in the streets to him! They bow to the Almighty and rebel against Him. Do they fancy He is to be fooled by them? Do they dream that He is gratified by their sound words and empty declarations? Whatever they may imagine, it is not so! Many say, “Lord, Lord,” to quiet their conscience, but they can never enter the kingdom of Heaven!

Now, of this class of hypocrites there are many. There is one I have met with—an old acquaintance of mine—he may be here now. He is a gentleman who is exceedingly orthodox. I would have you know that he assesses the imperial and infallible standard of orthodoxy. I believe there is a legal pound and a legal yard, kept somewhere in London, to which all measures must conform. This gentleman has got the legal standard of theology in his own possession. He knows exactly what a preacher ought to say upon a text. And it is one of his great delights to sit down and listen to a sermon and say, “A part of that was right, but it was not all so. It was yes and no.

The preacher gave a pail of good milk and then tipped it over at the close. He was not bound on such a point, and such a point.”

This gentleman can divide a hair between the west and north-west side with extreme accuracy—and he can never be wrong under any circumstances. He has infallibility. The truth was born when he was born and will expire when he expires. He is a paragon of accuracy as to his beliefs—but unfortunately he is not quite so accurate in the daily conduct of his business. He may be sound in his creed, but he is cracked in his manners. His wife never told me so, but I think if she did speak out her mind, she would complain that she has the most crabbed, ill-tempered husband that ever a woman was plagued with! His children don't go to the place of worship where their father goes because he does not know whether they are elect. He does not trouble himself whether they are so or not, for if they are to be saved they will be saved in God's own time and it does not matter whether they go to a place of worship or not.

Neither would they like to accompany their father, for they have come to the very natural conclusion that whatever religion their father believes in, they would like to believe the very opposite—for they would like to follow a religion which would make them different from what he is! He is known in the place where he lives as being a man who will walk 10 miles to hear some favorite preacher, but would not stir a finger to reclaim the sinner or instruct the ignorant. And he is known for another thing, that, with the exception of his divinity, you cannot believe a word he says! Oh, may God deliver us from these men! There are such to be found in most of our villages. They set themselves up for judges in God's heritage and yet they know not what it is to have their nature renewed—in fact, if you were to preach a sermon to them upon, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” they would try to pump the meaning out of it and put another sense upon it, instead!

They would say that practical godliness is *legality* and that the children of God are not to be talked to in that fashion. They imagine that they may live as they like and yet be the dear people of God. Beloved, may God save us from this spirit of Antinomianism! For of all the devils that have ever come up from Hell, I believe this is one of the most brazen-faced and deceitful, and has done more damage among professors than almost any other. They say, “Lord, Lord,” but they shall *not* enter into the kingdom! We have also met with others who say, “Lord, Lord,” but not in sincerity. They are very busy professors—always ready to do anything—and they are not happy unless they have something to do. I blame them not for being busy—I would to God that the *sincere* people were half as busy!

But I detect in them this vice—they are fondest of doing that which will be most *seen*. They prefer to serve God in those places where the most honor will be gained. To speak in public is infinitely preferable to them to the visitation of a poor sick woman. To work or to give where the deed will be blazoned abroad is after their minds. To take the chair at a public meeting and receive a vote of thanks is delightful to them. But to go into a back street and look after the poor, or plod on in the Sunday school in some inferior class is not according to their taste. It may seem harsh, but it is nevertheless true that many are serving *themselves* under the pre-

tence of serving Christ! They labor to advance the cause in order that they may be, themselves, advanced—and they push themselves forward in the Church this way and that way for the glory of place and position—that everybody may say, “What a good man that is, and how much influence he has, and how well he serves his Master!”

Beloved, if you and I do *anything* nominally for God, and at the bottom we are doing it for the sake of praise, it is not for God. We are doing it for ourselves! I do not say there is anybody here of that sort, but I would like your conscience to ask you, as my conscience is asking me, “Do I really serve the Lord, or do I work in the Church in order that I may be considered to be an industrious, praiseworthy minister, seeking the good of my fellow men?” I charge you before God, shun the desire of human praise and never let it pollute your motives! May the Holy Spirit purify you from so base a motive! The praise of God—to have it said by Him, “Well done, good and faithful servant”—*that* you should seek. But honor from men avoid as you would a viper! Shake it off into the fire if ever you find the desire of it clinging to your soul, else it may be your unhappy lot to find at last, that saying, “Lord, Lord,” will not secure you an entrance into the kingdom.

In all Churches, I fear, there are some of another class of hypocrites, who say “Lord, Lord,” for the sake of what they can get by it. John Bunyan speaks of Mr. Byends who had many motives for going on pilgrimage besides going to the Celestial City. He came from the town of Fairspeech and there he had a large circle of interesting relatives. Mr. Smooth Tongue, Mr. Doublemind, and Mr. Facing-Bothways who made all his money as a waterman, by looking one way and pulling the other. Many of his race still survive in all circles—gentlemen who hold with the hare and run with the hounds—especially run with the hounds if the hare is likely to be caught. They believe that if gain is not godliness, godliness may be made helpful to gain.

These gentlemen flourish in all quarters of town and country. One of them set up in a village and the first question he asked before he opened his shop was, “Which is the most respectable congregation in the neighborhood?” His object being to go there that he might not only get good, but dispose of his goods as well! We meet with persons in another rank in life whose object in attending a place is that they may get into a respectable circle and have wealthy friends, and have their hand upon the door handle of society. Swimming with the stream is their delight and they prefer that stream in which there are the most gold fish. Others who are poorer have a keen eye to the loaves and fishes and those Churches are best where the loaves are not made with barley, as they used to be, but with white flour—and are not mere penny loaves—but good substantial quarters.

They are pleased, also, if the fishes are larger than those we read of in the New testament. One of these loathsome hypocrites came to Rowland Hill and was soon detected by that shrewd Divine. “Well,” he said, “and so you profess to have been converted?” “Yes,” said the old lady, “I was converted under your blessed ministry.” “And where have you attended since that time?” “Sir, I have always attended your blessed ministry.” “And I

hope you have been comforted and built up?” “Yes, I have, very much, under your blessed ministry.” “I suppose you know some of the rich people who attend with us.” “Yes, I have been kindly noticed by many who sit under your blessed ministry.” Mr. Hill then said, “I suppose you have heard that we have some blessed almshouses?” “Yes,” she said, she had, “and she hoped she might have the blessed privilege of dwelling in one of them.”

Alas, alas, the blessed almshouses and the other blessed charities, which, indeed, are blessed if given from pure motives, have often been perverted to most accursed ends, and, “Lord, Lord,” has been said with importunity by some whose sole object for saying it was that they might gain pence thereby. In whatever station of life you may be, I beseech you, scorn this meanness! Many a member of Parliament is as mean as any man in this respect. He pretends to be zealous for religion in order to gain a seat in the House. Everywhere there is too much of making religion a stalking horse by which lower ends may be reached. If you wish to be rich and opulent, go and get a ladder from anywhere except from Calvary! Put not the Cross to so mean a use! If you take the wounds and blood of Jesus and the Savior’s precious name, and only to get worldly gain by them, what can come upon you but an angry blast from Almighty God? How can He bear such hypocrisy? And yet many will say, “Lord, Lord,” for this reason and will never enter into the kingdom.

Well, the list is sorrowfully long, but I must mention one or two others. One is the Sunday Christian. I dare say he is here now. He is an excellent Christian on Sunday. As soon as the sun shines upon the earth on the first day of the week, all his religion is awake! But, alas, he is a very strange Christian on Monday and a remarkably bad Christian on Saturday nights. Many people keep their piety folded up and put away with their best clothes—they only give it an airing on the Sabbath. Their Bible is to be seen under their arm on Sunday—but on Monday, where is that Bible? Well, not at the man’s right hand as a perpetual companion! Where are the precepts of Scripture? Are they in the shop? Are they in the house? Alas, the golden rule has been left in Church to lie dusty in the pews until *next* Sunday!

Religion is not needed by some people on a weekday—it might be inconvenient. Many there are who sing Psalms of praise to God but confine their praises to the congregation. As to praising Him in their heart at home, it never occurs to them. Their whole religion lies inside the Meeting House walls, or comes up at certain times and seasons during the day, when the family is called in to prayer. May God bare us from intermittent religion! May He grant us Grace to be always what we should wish to be if we were about to die! May religion never be to us a coat or a cloak to be taken off, but may it be intermingled with the warp and woof of our nature so that we do not so much talk religion as *breathe* and *live* it!

I desire to eat and drink and sleep eternal life, as an old Divine used to say. May that be ours. Good John Newton used to say of his Calvinism that he did not preach it in masses of dry doctrine like pieces of lump sugar, but that it was stirred up in all his preaching, like sugar dissolved in our tea. Oh, that some of those people who keep lumps of religion for

Sundays would sweeten their lives and tempers with it till men could see that their ordinary everyday actions were full of the Grace of God and that they were actuated at all times by the love of the Most High!

God save us from being Sunday Christians! I will not continue the list, as our time is almost fled. There are many more varieties of vain professors, even as of unclean beasts there are many kinds. May we not be among them!

III. WHERE DID THESE PEOPLE FAIL? That is the last point. The Savior said that they *did* not do what He said. "He that does the will of My Father which is in Heaven," says He, "shall enter the kingdom." What is the will, then, of His Father in Heaven? We are expressly told that this is the will of Him that sent Christ—that whoever sees the Son and believes on Him should not perish. It is a part, then, of the will of God, which we must do if we would be saved, that we believe on Jesus Christ.

Dear Hearer, have you believed in Jesus? It not, your sacraments, your Church attendance, your Chapel attendance, your prayers and hymns all are for nothing! If you do not trust in Jesus, you have not even the foundation stone of salvation! You are lost, and may God have mercy upon you! It is a part of God's will, moreover, that where there is faith there should be *obedience* to God, conformity to the Divine precepts. In fact, true faith in Jesus always brings this. There never was a man that believed in Jesus but what he sought to do the will of Jesus! Now it is a part of the will of Jesus that all those who are His should love one another. Hypocrites do not love one another—though they are always talking about the need of love there is in the Church.

Listen to them! They are always denouncing other people—and this is no mark of love to the Brethren. They have a keen eye for the imperfections of others, but they have no love to those they censure. We must love the Brethren or we lack the most plain and most necessary evidence of salvation, "for we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren." The true child of God, also, adds to his faith, love, and faith begets in him all the Graces and virtues which adorn renewed manhood and bring glory to God. Alas, I have known some high professors, not commonly truthful, who would talk about communion with Christ and sweet enjoyments of Divine love, and yet they seemed to miscalculate the multiplication table and did not know how many pounds went to a hundredweight! How dwells the love of God in a man who is a *thief*?

How can it be that he is a servant of a just and holy God, when he is unjust in his dealings toward his fellow men? It will not do, Sir! You prate as long as you will, but you are no Christian unless the rule of integrity is the rule of your life! Yes, and there are some who are unchaste, and yet dare to talk about being Christians. My eyes might at this moment glance upon some who make this Tabernacle their place of pretended worship and profess to hear the words we speak with pleasure, who are a disgrace to Christianity all the time! Let them get home to their knees and pray God to give them manliness enough, at least, to be damned honestly and not to go down to Perdition wearing the name of Christian when Christians they are not! If I served Satan and loved the pleasures of sin, I would

do so out-and-out like a man! But to sneak into the Church of God and to live unchastely—I have no words sufficiently strong with which to denounce such detestable meanness!

Alas, I must add that here are some professed Christians who are not sober. If a man is not temperate in meats and drinks, how dare he talk about the power of prayer? How dare he come to the Prayer Meeting and open his month? Do you suppose that Christ has any communion with Bacchus, that He will strike hands across the ale house bar, and call him a friend who staggers out of the door of the gin palace to go and listen to a sermon? “Is that ever done?” asks one. Done? Yes, let some here confess that they have done it this very day! How dare they say, “Lord, Lord,” and yet drain the drunkards’ bowl in secret? O Sirs, I don’t want to put any of these cases in such a way that you should be vexed and angry, and say, “He is too personal.” But if you did say so I should not apologize! I would tell you that so long as you are personal in your offense to Christ, I shall be personal in my rebukes! If you are personally insulting the Savior, you must expect the Savior’s servant to be personal in upbraiding you!

Once more, I fear there are, in these days, a large number of professors who never exercise real private prayer. The Savior says He will say to them, “I never knew you.” Now He *would* have known them if they had been accustomed to conversing with Him in private prayer. Had they communed with Him in earnest supplications, the Lord Jesus could not, then, have said, “I never knew you,” for they would each one have replied, “Not know *me*, Lord? I have wept before You in secret when no other eyes saw me but Yours. I brought You habitually my daily cares and cast my burden upon You. Do You not know *me*? I have spoken to You face to face, as a man speaks with his friend! I know *You*, O my Lord, by joyous experience of Your goodness, and therefore I am sure You know me. Your answers to my prayers and your gifts of Divine Grace have been so constant that I am sure You know me! Who is there on earth You know if You do not know me?”

Happy is the man who can speak thus! But alas, many are quite unable to make such a reply. I fear there are some professors now before me who do not pray. You were baptized and yet you do not pray! You have joined the Church and yet you restrain prayer! You dare come to the Communion Table, although for a long time you have lived without prayer, for I cannot call *that* prayer which you slobber over in the way you do with your morning prayer when you are in a hurry, and your evening prayer, when you are almost asleep. God bless you, Beloved, and save you from sham praying! May He, by His Grace, make you to have truth in your inward parts and cause you to be sincere before the living God.

Now, I know what will happen. Some dear trembling heart will say, “I always thought I was a hypocrite. Now I *know* I am. I have always been fretting and troubling about that.” It generally falls out contrary to our desire—those who are *not* hypocrites think they are—while real hypocrites throw off our warnings as an ironclad man-of-war casts off the shots of an ordinary gun! I try to make caps fit heads which deserve to be covered, but the people whose heads they will fit never put them on! And others for whom they were never intended at all—dear, loving, tender-hearted Be-

lievers, always watchful and careful—are the very ones who will put them on their own heads and cry, “Yes, I fear I am the hypocrite.”

Ah, dear Soul, do not write bitter things against yourself, because if you will consider the matter, you will soon see that you are no hypocrite. Would you do anything to grieve Christ? Do you not, above all things, desire to trust Him? Do you know anybody to trust in but Jesus? Are you not depending upon Him? And though you could not say you would die for Him, yet I believe, if it came to that, that your trembling faith would still stay alive—but some of the boastful ones, who, in their own esteem, are almost perfect—would give way and end in apostasy. To each one I would say, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart—you are no hypocrite!

But if any one of you has been a hypocrite and has to plead guilty to many things I have mentioned, come to the foot of the Cross and say, “Jesus, Master, I am the chief of sinners—have mercy upon me! Look on me and let my sins pass away. Look on me and let all cunning and hypocrisy be driven far from me. Give me a new heart and a right spirit, and from this day make me Your child and I will glorify You, both on earth and in Heaven, forever and ever.”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 7.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—643, 640, 637.**

MESSAGE:

Beloved Friends—This is the last sermon to be issued in my absence. I hope to present you next week with a discourse preached on my return. I have been very ill during my absence in foreign lands, but I hope the result will be that on recommencing my work I shall be both physically and mentally all the more fitted for it. And I pray that to these blessings spiritual energy may be added by the abiding power of the Holy Spirit. It is a period of revival—may the Lord revive His work in each of us! I entreat the prayers of my readers and of my beloved flock. Grace, mercy, and peace be with you all. Amen.

Mentone, February 12, 1874

C. H. SPURGEON

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THE DISOWNED

NO. 2808

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 7, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 22, 1877.

“Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity.”
Matthew 7:21-23.

ONE of the best tests by which we may try many things is to ask, “How will they appear at the Day of Judgment?” Our Lord here says, “Many will say to Me in that day.” He used no other words to describe that memorable period because that terse, brief expression suggests so much—“in that day”—that terrible day—that Last Great Day—that day for which all other days were made—that day by which all other days must be measured and judged. I pray, dear Friends, that we may, each one of us, begin to set in the light of “that day” the things that we most prize. The riches upon which you have set your heart—how will their value be reckoned “in that day”—and how much of comfort will they then afford you? As for the way in which you have been spending your wealth—will that be such as you will remember “in that day” with satisfaction and comfort? Value your broad acres and your noble mansions, or your more moderate possessions according to this gauge of their real worth—how will they be valued “in that day”? And as to the pursuits which you so eagerly follow and which now appear so important to you that they engross the whole of your thoughts and arouse all your faculties and energies—are they worthy of all this effort? Will they seem to be so “in that day”?

What is the chief objective of your life? Will you think as much of it “in that day” as you do now? Will you then count yourself wise to have so earnestly pursued it? You fancy that you can defend it, now, but will you be able to defend it *then*—when all things of earth and time will have melted into nothingness? You value the esteem in which you are held among men and you do rightly, for, “a good name is better than precious ointment.” But are you really worthy of the good name that has been given to you? Is that favorable judgment of your fellow creatures the verdict of the Infallible Truth of God? Will you be as highly honored “in that day” as you are now? Will as much credit be given to you for honesty and vir-

tue, then, as is given to you now? Is there no tinsel, no veneer, no deception, no counterfeit coin about you? O my Brothers and Sisters, who among us can submit his position and his fellow men to such a test as this without the most solemn questioning and searching of heart?

You young men are, perhaps, rejoicing in your youth and letting your heart take full liberty in the enjoyment of earthly pleasure. God forbid that I should deprive you of any real pleasure, but let me ask, concerning those enjoyments, how will they appear “in that day”? Will they bear serious reflection even now? Then, how are they likely to endure the more sober judgment that will be exercised then? “In that day,” when the glare of this world’s lamps shall have died out and the glitter of its pomp shall forever have passed into the eternal darkness, how will your pleasures look then? Especially if you have sold yourself for those pleasures—if you have bartered your peace of mind for them—if you have disobeyed your God in order that you might enjoy them! How will they then appear when, at the end of the feast, the cost of it has to be met and you have to give in your last account? It is truly wise for a man to be familiar with his last hours. It is well for him to often rehearse that grand act when he must gather up his feet in the bed and die—and meet his father’s God.

But it is still wiser for him to leap over the chasm which divides him from the realities of eternity and, by the force of faith rather than by imagination, picture himself standing in that mighty throng of the risen dead from every part of land and sea—the innumerable population of this great globe—every eye turned in one direction, all looking to Him who shall sit upon the Great White Throne, that Christ who was once crucified in weakness, but who shall come in power and great Glory, appointed Judge of all mankind! I know that I am inviting you to think of something that you do not wish to have brought to your mind. The world plucks you by the sleeve and says, “Come away,” but I would gladly detain you for a little while as the ancient mariner held the wedding guest—yet not to tell you a quaint story of far-off seas and strange adventures, but to solemnly talk to you about your immortal soul—and to stir you up to see to its future destiny, lest Christ should come and you should be as unprepared for His coming as the men in the days of Noah were for the flood which swept them all away!

Well, then, as everything is to be regarded as it will appear “in that day,” we will try to judge our profession of religion by that test, for it will mainly be to those who think themselves Christ’s people that I shall speak. And I pray that a strong North wind may blow through us and if there is any chaff in this great heap, may it be speedily discovered and be driven out from amidst the wheat!

We shall, first of all, notice that the persons mentioned in our text, whom Christ “never knew” in a saving sense, *went a long way in religion*. Secondly, *they kept it up a long while*. Thirdly, *they were fatally mistaken* and, fourthly, *they found it out in a very terrible way*.

I. First, then, there are some to whom Christ will say, at the last, “I never knew you,” yet who WENT A LONG WAY IN RELIGION. Who were they and what did they do?

Well, first, *they were persons who made an open profession.* Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven." They called Christ, "Lord," so they virtually declared that they were His disciples. They said this plainly, as though they were not at all ashamed of it and were, indeed, even proud of it. They said it twice over, zealously, frequently, "Lord, Lord." They said it as if the saying of it were so sweet to them that they could not say it often enough. They said it in all sorts of company. They sometimes said it when wiser men would not have said it. We know many persons who have never made any profession of being Christ's followers. They that are outside of Christ, God judges. But let those who are within, those who have come into the fellowship of the Church and have said, "Lord, Lord," judge themselves lest they should be deceived into a false security! It is not everyone who has been called by the name of Christ whom He will acknowledge "in that day." There has been many a loud profession that will count for nothing in that heart-searching time. O my Brothers and Sisters, I am speaking to myself as I speak to every member of this Church and every member of any other Christian Church—I beseech you to see to it that you have something more than a mere profession, for these condemned ones had made an open profession of religion, yet Christ will say to them—"I never knew you."

Note, next, that they *had undertaken religious service, and that of a high class,* for Christ says of them, "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name?" They had not served in any mean capacity, for they had prophesied or preached in the name of Christ! This is one of the things to which false professors are very prone—they love to take the chief places in the synagogue. There is many a true servant of Christ who prefers to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, while many a hypocrite, who would not keep the door on any account, would very cheerfully occupy the Prophet's chair and prophesy in Christ's name! Ah, my Brothers, this thought comes home to those of us who hold any office in the Church, and especially to those of us who are preachers of the Gospel! If preaching could save a man, Judas would not have been damned! If prophesying could save a man, Balaam would not have been a castaway. We may preach with the tongues of men and of angels, yet, if we have not love, it profits us nothing. We may be even leaders of the Church in the noblest and highest enterprises and yet, for all that, Christ may say to us, at the last, "I never knew you." "But, Lord, the world blazed with my fame!" "I never knew you." "I gathered thousands round about me." "I never knew you." "Wherever I went, they flocked to listen to my words." "I never knew you." Some of you may say, "Lord, I was a deacon of the Church," or, "I was an elder. I was accustomed to visit the sick and to speak to enquirers. Everybody in the Church knew me and I was held in high repute." Yet He may say, "I never knew you. I am an utter stranger to you. Your name was never familiar to Me. I never knew you. Depart from Me." This Truth of God comes close to home and it ought to, to everyone of us who has ever professed to be engaged in Christ's service!

These people, too, *had obtained remarkable success*, for they went on to say, “Have we not, in Your name, cast out devils?” It is grand success to cast out devils and they might well rejoice in it. But, dear Friends, if you and I should be able to cast devils out of others, yet the devil would not be cast out of ourselves and we will be in a woeful plight at the last! If you knew a man who had the power to cast out a devil, you would probably say to yourself, “I wish I were as sure of salvation as he is. Did I not see Satan, as lightning, fall from Heaven while he spoke in the name of the Lord?” Suppose that did happen—it would not prove that his name was written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Rejoice in your success, my dear Friend, as I may rejoice in mine, but let us both rejoice with trembling, for, although we may have brought ten thousand souls to Christ, yet, after all, we may never have come to Him, ourselves! And if so, He will say to us, at the last, “I never knew you.”

And, once more, these people were not merely professors, and doers of great works, and very successful, but *they were exceedingly zealous and were noted for their practical energy*, for they said, “Have we not, in Your name, done many wonderful works?” They had done many works in Christ’s name. They were busy night and day—they had a great many irons in the fire. They seemed as if they could never do too much and what they did was really very wonderful! In fact, they did not like to do anything unless it was wonderful. A great part of the charm of it, to them, was that people wondered at them, and it kept them diligently at their work because they were so much wondered at. Yet is it possible that a wonderful life should, after all, be a lost life—that a doer of many wonderful works should, at the last, be found wanting? Can it be? Yes, for so the Lord Jesus puts it in our text and, therefore, I invite each professed Believer here, however highly favored he may have been in his Master’s service, to put away from him everything that might tend to false security and to ask himself, “Shall I, in that Last Great Day of account be proved to be right?”

I can imagine what some of you have been saying to yourselves while I have been speaking. You have said, “Well, I am not a professor of religion. I am not a prophet. I never thought of attempting to cast out devils! I never did any wonderful works.” And you have comforted yourselves with the thought that my message did not concern you. But immediately after my text there is something that relates to you—“Whoever hears these sayings of Mine.” Now, you are, at least, all *hearers*—and if the Gospel that you hear shall be so perfectly pure that it may be truly called the sayings of Christ, yet remember that there are multitudes of hearers who, through not being doers of the Word, will find at last that Christ never knew them, either! “But, Lord, I always sat in my seat. I was never absent from the services—I used to be there whenever the doors were opened. I was there as regularly as the minister, himself.” Yes, that may all be true, yet the Lord Jesus will not know you unless your heart has truly known Him!

If you remain without repentance and without faith, you may go to the House of Prayer till you totter on your staff and you may never once have

been an inattentive hearer—but, unless faith comes to you by the hearing of the Word—and that faith makes you a doer of it, verily, verily, I say unto you, when the winds shall blow, the floods shall rise and the rain shall descend, your house shall be proved to have been founded on the sand and shall be swept away forever! So take our text with that which goes before it—and that which follows after it—and you will find that there is something here for each of you! These people went a long way in religion, but they did not go far enough.

II. Now, secondly, THEY KEPT IT UP A LONG WHILE.

Have you ever noticed how long some people will manage to keep a business going even after the capital has been spent for years? The whole concern is thoroughly rotten, but, somehow or other, in divers ways they succeed in keeping up the appearance of prosperity. There gets to be, at last, a little suspicion abroad that things are not quite as they seem, yet the clever people avoid the crash that appears to be inevitable. I expect there is many a firm in the city that is just like tinder, yet, for all that, it does not catch on fire for a time. There are certain artful ways by which men can prop up a thing which, otherwise, would soon tumble down. It is so with religion. You can very easily patch up a profession when a nasty, ugly hole comes in it—you can daub it over and if a sudden temptation comes like the blast of a tempest and takes off a piece of the roof, there are plenty of roofers to be had who will soon put on a few new slates and make the broken place look neat and sound. And even when the old hovel is only fit to be taken down and burned, you can still get some ivy and a few flowers to grow over it and make quite a picturesque thing of it. And there are people who do just that with their old rickety religion. It never was worth having, yet they managed to keep it up for a very long while!

It was so with the people mentioned in our text, for, first, *they were not silenced by men*. They prophesied in Christ's name, yet nobody said to them, "You shall not prophesy again, for you are living such inconsistent lives that we will not listen to you." This does not appear to have happened with any of these people. The man who went about casting out devils was not stopped and he kept on doing so and he even declared to Christ that he had done it, and done it continually. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, some of us have seen ministers whose characters have been ruined so that they will never be likely to preach again! We have known some church members whose hypocrisy has been found out, so that they will never come to the Communion Table again unless the Lord shall, in His Grace, grant them repentance. Yet, what may be the difference between them and some of us except that they have been found out and we have not? Or it may be that had we been exposed to the temptations to which they yielded, or had we been tested as they were, we would have fallen with as great a crash as they did, for it is quite possible that we are no more sound at heart than they were! May the Lord give us the Grace to lay this matter to heart, for, if a man is conscious of being right, it will not hurt him to search himself—and there is not one among us to whom

it will be an injury to have it suggested that we should try and test ourselves in the sight of God.

Further, *it does not appear that Christ Himself openly disowned these people during their lifetime.* He held His tongue concerning them until “that day.” There they were, preaching, teaching a Sunday school class, distributing the bread and wine at the Communion Table, going about among their fellow members, actively engaged in Christian service and everybody saying of them, “What good people they are! “Yet the Lord Jesus Christ knew that they were not! Why, then, did He not, in His righteous wrath, at once expose them? He did not, for such is His gentleness that He will bear long—even with a Judas—so He let these hypocrites alone throughout their whole lives. And they died “in the odor of sanctity,” and somebody preached a funeral sermon upon them and wrote their memoirs and it was only at the Last Great Day that the lie was discovered and then, for the first time, Christ said publicly to them, “I never knew you. I had nothing to do with you. How came you to be professedly in My Church? What right had you to preach in My name? What authority had you to speak to devils in My name? I never knew you. You were always an impostor from the first day until now.” He knew all about them all the while, yet He did not expose them until the last.

And note, once more, that *they clung to their false hopes right to the end.* They did not really know of the deception themselves. “What?” you ask, “did they never think that they were deceived?” Perhaps they did, now and then, but they always said to themselves. “We must not get into a doubting frame of mind. This looking within and searching our hearts will not do—it will only disturb and distress us.” So they went on daubing themselves with untempered mortar. They were as wrong as wrong could be, yet everybody treated them as though they were right, so they thought at last that they *were* right. For a man may, in time, make himself believe what he knows to be a lie. I have heard persons tell stories about themselves which had not any foundation in fact, but they have told them so often that I am sure they believe that they are really speaking the truth, though if they would only think seriously, they would perceive that their tale is all invention. A man may go in and out among Christians, join in their prayers, and praises, communions and even preach their Gospel or hear it, till, at last, without any reason for his belief, he may persuade himself that it is all right. He may even pass through the portals of death undeceived! The righteous are often troubled when they come to die, but it is with these self-deceived people as the Psalmist said, “There are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.” Take heed, I beseech you, of self-deception. I say it first to myself and next to you, lest, not until “that day” should we hear the Lord Jesus say to us, “I never knew you,” and lest, even “in that day,” we should say to Him, “Lord, Lord,” and begin to argue that we were all right—but Christ should put an end to it all by saying, “Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.”

III. I must be brief upon my third division. These people went a long way in religion and they kept it up a long while, but **THEY WERE FATAL-
LY MISTAKEN.**

They were mistaken, first, *because their tongues belied their hands.* They said, “Lord, Lord,” but they did not do the will of the Lord. They were very glib of tongue when they took to prophesying, but the message never came out of their *hearts*. They never did the things they told others to do—they were earnest to exhort, but not diligent to set a good example to their hearers. They cast out devils, but, at the same time, they did not, themselves, escape from the power of the devil by giving up sin and following after righteousness. They failed in the matter of practical holiness. They had not the Grace of God in their souls, displaying itself in their ordinary, everyday actions. They could talk. They could sing. They could prophesy, but they were not obedient to the Divine commands and they did not walk in the ways of God.

Then, next, *they used the name which is dear to the disciples of Christ, but they did not possess the nature of disciples.* They used Christ’s name, for they said to Him, “Have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works?” They knew Christ’s name, but they had not His Nature! They quoted His name, but they never copied His example. They had never come to Him and trusted and loved Him. They knew His name, but they did not know Him. And, alas, He knew their names, but He did not know them. There was no communion—no intimacy between them.

Next, *they prophesied, but they did not pray.* Prayer is a vital evidence of Christianity, but prophecy is not. A thousand sermons would not prove a man to be a Christian, but one genuine prayer would. It is easy enough to speak to men, but quite another thing, from our inmost soul, *to speak to God.* They failed in that point and, therefore, their failure was fatal.

Further, *they attended to marvels, but not to essentials.* They neglected the important things which should have been done in secret. They did much that could be seen in public, but they failed in the plainer, simpler things that nobody saw. Let me just say to you, Brothers and Sisters, that herein lies a great part of our danger—the risk of getting a religious character without having a renewed heart—doing religious actions without really being born-again—learning the brogue of the New Jerusalem without having been born as a citizen of the heavenly city—becoming fluent talkers and earnest workers, but not having confessed sin, or repented of it, or laid hold on Jesus Christ by living faith. I beseech you, young professors, to *covet most of all secret holiness*—the holiness that does not wish to be seen—plain, honest dealing with God in private—much secret prayer and meditation upon the Word—in brief, a life of true consecration to God. You may prophesy if God calls you to do so. Perhaps you will cast out devils, I hope you may and, in Christ’s name you may do many wonderful works, but, first of all, “you must be born-again.” You must become as little children to sit at the feet of Jesus and to learn of Him. You must be obedient to His commands and yield your-

selves up to Him, or else you will be fatally mistaken, whatever profession you may make.

IV. Now, last of all, I want to remind you that THESE PEOPLE FOUND OUT THEIR MISTAKE IN A MOST TERRIBLE WAY.

Oh, if they could only have found it out before! Possibly, they attended a ministry that was very soothing. Or, if they heard a sermon that seemed to plow them up, they said, "The preacher is very rough, he has not enough love"—as if it were not the truest love to bid men search, test and try themselves, lest they should be mistaken and so be lost! There are some whose preaching is all sweetness—it would do very well for catching flies—but it is no use in winning souls. It would be more than my soul is worth for me to come here and cajole you into a lying confidence and, as long as these lips can speak, there shall be no man self-deceived here for lack of warning and earnest exhortation to lay himself before God and ask God to search him and try him, and see if there are any wicked ways in him—and lead him in the way everlasting! It is not sufficient to feel quite sure of Heaven, and to begin singing—

"Happy day! Happy day!"

Suppose that, after all, you are not saved? "Ah," says one, "I cannot endure that supposition." No, dear Friend, but perhaps it may be true. And if it is true, what a mercy it would be for you to find it out *now*, when, in a moment, you may look away to Jesus and find eternal life! Whereas, if you do not find it out till the time when the unhappy men and women, mentioned in our text, found it out, that is to say, "in that day," you will then find it out too late! Once become a bankrupt in the great business of life and you are bankrupts forever! Once lose the battle of life and your defeat is eternal! Imagine not—dream not—conjure not up to yourselves any false notion of a larger hope lest you sink at last into a still deeper disappointment. "The Holy Spirit says, Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." But He tells none of us to hold out to you any hope but that which hangs upon the winged moment in which you are now existing! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." This is part of the great commission that Christ gave to all His disciples and he that dares to fall short of it, or to go beyond it, is a traitor to his Lord and a murderer of the souls of men! And this we pray that we may never be.

Notice how these people found out their fatal mistake. *They found it out from what Christ said.* He said to them, "I never knew you." Not passionately, or angrily, but in stern, sad, solemn tones He said, "I never knew you." "But we used Your name, good Lord." "I know you did, but I never knew you, and you never truly knew Me." I can almost imagine someone turning around, "in that day," and saying to some Christians who used to sit in the same pew, "You knew me." "Yes," they will reply, "we knew you, but that is of no use, for the Master did not know you." I can picture some of you crying out to your minister, "Pastor, did you not know us? Surely you recollect what we used to do." What can he reply? "Ah, yes, sorrowfully do I acknowledge that I know you, but I cannot help you. It is only Christ's knowing you that can be of any use to you."

Note, also, *the terror that is implied in what Christ did not say*. He says, “Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.” But who can tell all that those words mean? What happened to these people after that sentence was pronounced upon them by Christ? It was that “nameless woe” of which we sang a little while ago. There is no name that can ever fully describe your state of woe if Christ does not know you—and says that He never did know you. If you have no acquaintance with the Redeemer—if in His loving heart there is no recognition of you—if He says, “I never knew you,” ah, then, woe! Woe! Woe a thousand times! Woe without hope for you, for, to be unknown of Him is to be devoid of hope forever and forever!

Perhaps the worst thing of all was, *the solemn truth of what Christ did say*. He never tells a lie, so, if He ever says to a man, “I never knew you,” His words are true. Just think a minute about that short sentence. I wonder whether it is true concerning any of you here? Christ knows all who have ever sought His face with repentance and faith—but these people, though they had prophesied in His name, cast out devils and done many wonderful works, had never repented, or believed in Jesus. You remember those verses by John Newton—

***“Do you ask me who I am?
Ah, my Lord, You know My name!
Yet the question gives a plea
To support my suit with Thee.
Once a sinner near despair
Sought Your Mercy Seat by prayer—
Mercy heard and set him free—
Lord, that mercy came to me!”***

If that is true of any of you, you can say to the Lord, “You know me, Lord, for I came to You and said, God be merciful to me a sinner.” But, “in that day,” these pretenders will have to recollect that they never did that! David said to the Lord, “You have known my soul in adversities.” Beloved, some of you know what it is to go to God with every trouble that ever comes upon you, but these pretenders did not—and they had to remember, “in that day,” that they had never resorted to God—never had fellowship with Christ—never, indeed, became acquainted with Him. “No,” says Christ, “I never saw you come as a beggar to My door. I never saw you sit as a disciple at My feet. I never saw you as a humble follower treading in My footsteps. I never saw you as a sheep that knew My voice and followed Me. I never knew you. You were a stranger to Me—you and I never exchanged a word with one another. We were not friends. You never leaned your head on My bosom. You had nothing to do with Me and now I have nothing to do with you.”

If Christ ever thus shakes you off and says to you, “I never knew you,” you will, indeed, be shaken off! It may be that my words upon this solemn theme distress you, but how much more will His words distress you when His own dear lips shall say, “I never knew you!” O Christ of God, never say those words to any of us! O blessed Lamb of God, You who are all our salvation, and all our desire, we know that You can never say such words as those to some of us, for you have known us even from eternity and we have long known You! You know whom You have cho-

sen—You know whom You have redeemed with Your precious blood—you know whom You have called by Your Grace. You know whom You have quickened, preserved and kept even to this day, but, oh, never let us be among the self-deceived who shall, “in that day,” hear You say, “I never knew you!”

There is more thunder in those four words than you ever heard in the most terrible tempest that has rolled over your heads! There is no stamp of the foot or fire-glance of the eye to accompany them—they are spoken calmly and deliberately, yet they are terrible and overwhelming! “I never knew you.”

Judge, dear Friends, whether you know Christ or not, and whether Christ knows you and, as you judge yourselves, whatever your verdict may be, take this last word of advice—whether He knows you or not, come to Him! Trust Him! Rest in Him! I felt, as I was thinking over this subject, “Well, perhaps my Lord does not know *Me*.” So I made sure that He should, for I sought Him, then and there, and I exhort you to do the same. If you fear whether you know Him, trust Him this very moment! Then if you have made a mistake up to now, and have not really known Him, you will begin to know Him, now. And if you have known Him, you will blessedly renew your acquaintance with Him and the question that has troubled you will disappear! And you will say, “Yes, Lord, blessed be Your name, I do know You, by Your Grace, and You know me, and You will know me forever and ever.” May the Lord give each one of us this blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 7.

Verses 1, 2. *Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.* Some people are of a censorious disposition. They see nothing in others to praise, but everything to blame—and such people generally find that they are condemned according to their own wicked rule. Other people begin to judge those who are so fond of judging. If they are so wise and so discriminating, others expect more from them and, not finding it, they are not slow to condemn them. It is an old proverb that chickens come home to roost, and so they do. If you judge ill of others, that judgment will, sooner or later, come home to yourself.

3-5. *And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but consider not the plank that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull out the speck in your eye; and, behold, a plank is in your own eye? You hypocrite! First cast out the plank in your eye, and then shall you see clearly to cast out the speck in your brother’s eye.* At the bottom of all censoriousness lies hypocrisy. An honest man would apply to himself the judgment which he exercises upon others, but it usually happens that those who are so busy spying out other people’s faults have no time to see their own! And what is that but insincerity and hypocrisy?

6. *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and tear you in pieces.* Zeal should always be tempered by prudence. There are times when it would be treason to the Truth of God to introduce it as a topic of conversation—when men are in such a frame of mind that they will be sure to quibble at it rather than to believe it. Not only speak well, but speak at the right time, for silence is sometimes golden. See that you have your measure of golden silence as well as of silver speech.

7. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* Here is a three-fold encouragement to us to pray! When we cannot use one style of prayer, let us use another, for each shall be successful at the right time. O child of God, let nothing keep you from prayer! It has been well said that a Christian may be hedged in, but he cannot be roofed in—there is always a passage upwards to the Throne of the great Father and asking, knocking, seeking, he shall be sure to be successful with his suit!

8. *For everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened.* Ask the people of God whether it is not so! Go among them and question them upon this matter. They know the power of prayer, so let them tell you whether they have been deceived or not. Well, then, as it has been so with them, let this encourage you to expect that it shall be the same with you!

9-12. *Or what man is there of you whom if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him? Therefore all things whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them for this is the Law and the Prophets.* Is there a connection between this conduct on our part and answers to our prayer? Undoubtedly it is so from the position of the text. If we will never grant the requests of those who need our help—in cases where we should expect to be ourselves helped, how can we go to God with any confidence and ask Him to help us? I doubt not that many a man has received no answer to his prayer because that prayer has come out of a heart hard and rocky, which would not permit him to grant the requests of others. O child of God, do you to others as you would that they should do to you—*then* can you go to your God in prayer with the confidence that He will hear and answer you!

13. *Enter you in at the strait gate.* Do not be ashamed of being called a Puritan, precise and particular—“Enter you in at the narrow gate.”

13. *For wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction.* Do not choose that way.

13-21. *And many there are who go in there because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads unto life, and few there are that find it. Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good*

tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not everyone who says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. That still remains as the great test of the true heir of Heaven—the doing of the Divine will. All the talking, thinking and posturing in the world will not save a man. There must be in him such a faith as produces holiness.

22-25. *Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works? And then I will declare to them. I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity. Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.* Whoever you are, and whatever you build, it will be tried. No matter how firm is the rock beneath you, the winds will blow and the rains will pour down upon your building. Whether you are in a palace or in a hovel, trial and testing must and will come to you! “The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.”

25. *And it fell not.* There is the mercy—“it fell not.”

25-27. *For it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.* Even if you live to the world, or live to Satan, you will not live without trial. The ungodly, who have their portion in this life, have to eat some bitter herbs with it and have to dip their morsel in vinegar quite as much as Believers do. “The floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house.”

27. *And it fell.* Just when the tenant most needed shelter, it fell! He did not need it so much till the floods came and the winds blew. But now, when he would gladly have crouched down beneath his roof-tree, and have been at peace from the howling hurricane, then, “it fell.”

27. *And great was the fall of it.* The fall was so great because he could never build again.

28, 29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.* Not quoting Rabbi So-and-So, to show how well He was acquainted with his writings, but speaking as one who knew what He had to say, and who spoke out of the fullness of His heart, truth that was evidently Inspired! And His hearers felt the force of the solemn message which He thus delivered.

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

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

THE TWO BUILDERS AND THEIR HOUSES

NO. 918

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Therefore whosoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house. And it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that hears these sayings of Mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house. And it fell: and great was the fall of it.”
Matthew 7:24-27.

THESE were the closing words of our Savior's most famous sermon upon the mount. Some preachers concentrate all their powers upon an effort to conclude with a fine thing called a peroration, which, being interpreted, means a blaze of rhetorical fireworks in the glory of which the *speaker* subsides. They certainly have not the example of Christ in this discourse to warrant them in the practice. Here is the Savior's peroration, and yet it is as simple as any other part of the address. Here is an evident absence of all artificial oratory.

The whole of His hill sermon was intensely earnest, and that earnestness was sustained to the end so that the closing words are as glowing coals, or as sharp arrows of the bow. Our Lord closes not by displaying His own powers of elocution, but by simply and affectionately addressing a warning to those, who, having heard His Words, should remain satisfied with hearing, and should not go forth and put them into practice. As according to usual experience, a preacher warms to his subject as he advances and becomes more intense as he nears his final sentences—so we are bound to give the more earnest heed to the words which are now before us—words with which the Lord of all preachers concluded His memorable discourse.

Jesus had been saying many things, but these are two words to which I think He especially alluded when He said, “Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man.” The first of these words was, “Enter you in” (Matt. 7:13). And the second was, “Beware” (Matt. 7:15). Our Lord had spoken of the “strait gate” of the “narrow way,” and of the few who travel it, and His urgent admonition was, “Enter you in.” not, “Learn you all concerning it, and then be satisfied.” Not, “Find fault with the travelers and the road.” Not, “Seek to enlarge the gate and widen the way,” but, “Enter You in.”

Be obedient to the Gospel—believe its testimony concerning Jesus—enter into fellowship with its mysteries, receive its blessings. Be travelers along its roads. “Enter you in.” He who hears of the way to Heaven, but enters not into it is a foolish man. He, who hearing of the strait gate, presses to enter in, is a wise man.

Afterwards our Lord added the other admonition, "Beware." "Beware," says He, "of false Prophets." And after having dwelt for awhile on that, He added in other words, "Beware of false professions." Of false Prophets beware, for they may delude you. They may bring before you a salvation which will not save, a mere mirage that looks like the pure, cooling, refreshing stream—but which only mocks your thirst. Beware of all teaching which would lead you away from the one Savior of the souls of men.

And then He adds, "Beware of false professions," however loudly they make you cry, "Lord, Lord." You may have in company with these professions the loftiest gifts, Such as casting out devils, and the greatest abilities, such as only Prophets possess. But they shall not avail you anything. In that day when the Master shall only accept into His marriage feast the companions of His warfare on earth, He will say to those who have not done the Father's will, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." These are two of the sayings of Christ, and they are comprehensive of almost all He ever said—"Enter you in," and, "Beware." Take heed that you do them as well as hear them.

I. We shall now proceed to the Master's parable, and will you please notice, first of all, THE TWO BUILDERS. The wise and the foolish man were both engaged in precisely the same avocations, and to a considerable extent achieved the same design. Both of them undertook to build houses. Both of them persevered in building. Both of them finished their houses. The likeness between them is very considerable.

They were equally impressed with the need of building a house. They perceived the necessity of shelter from the heavy rains. They were alike desirous of being shielded from the floods and screened from the wind. The advantage of a house to dwell in was evident to both. Even thus, at this period, we have a large number in the congregation who are impressed with the conviction that they need a Savior. I am delighted to find that there is a stir among my hearers, and I trust it is a movement of God's Holy Spirit.

And as a result very many of you feel deeply that you need a refuge from the wrath to come. You now admit that you must be forgiven, justified, regenerated and sanctified, and your desires are fervent—for all which I am deeply grateful, but also deeply anxious. You are in crowds desirous of becoming builders, and although some are wise and some foolish, up to this present we can see no difference in you. For you seem to be equally convinced that you need eternal life and a good hope for the world to come. Nor does the likeness end here—for the two builders were both alike resolved to obtain what they needed—a house. And their determination was not in words only, but in deeds—for they both resolutely set to work to build.

In the same way there are among us at this hour many who are resolved that if Christ is to be had, they will have Him. And if there is such a thing as salvation, they will find it. They are very earnest, intensely earnest, and though some of them will fail, and some of them succeed, yet up to this point they are all alike, and none but He who searches all hearts can discern the slightest difference. I look with sadness upon the two pilgrims, with their faces zealously turned toward Zion, and I am sad as I wonder which one will find the Celestial City, and which will join with

Formalist and Hypocrisy, and perish on the Dark Mountains. We are glad to hear of yearning hearts and resolute determinations, but, alas, all is not wheat that grows in wheat fields, all is not gold that glitters.

Appearances are very, very hopeful, but appearances are often deceptive. There may be a deep sense of need, and there may be a determined resolution to get that need supplied. And yet out of two seekers, one may find and the other may miss—one may be foolish and the other may be wise. These two builders seem to have been equally well skilled in architecture. The one could build a house without receiving any more instruction than the other. I do not find that there was halt or pause on the part of either because he could not turn an arch, or fix a truss. Evidently they were both skilled workmen, well acquainted with their art.

So is it with many here. They know as far as the theory goes, what the plan of salvation is as well as I do. Yet, where the knowledge is the same, the ultimate result may vary. Two men may be equally well instructed in the Scriptures, yet one of them may be wise and the other foolish. To know what faith is, what repentance is, what a good hope in Christ is may all be yours—and yet it may but increase your misery forever. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them. It is not the *hearer*, but the *doer* of the Word, that is blessed. Knowledge puffs up—love alone builds up.

My dear Friends, I am most earnest that those of you who are desiring to find everlasting life in Christ Jesus may not be content with anything short of a true, deep, and real work of Divine Grace in your hearts. For no clearness of head knowledge, no natural earnestness of purpose or eagerness of desire can save you. Without an interest in Christ Jesus you are lost to all eternity. “You must be born again.” You must be brought into vital union with the living Savior or your hopefulness will end in overwhelming destruction.

Once more, these two builders both persevered and finished their structure. The foolish man did not begin to build and then cease his work because he was not able to finish, but, as far as I know, his house was finished with as much completeness as the other. And, perhaps furnished quite as well. If you had looked at the two structures, they would have seemed equally complete from basement to roof, and yet there was a great difference between them in a most essential point. Even thus, alas, many persevere in seeking salvation until they imagine that they have found it! They abide for years in the full belief that they are saved.

They cry, “Peace, peace,” and write themselves down among the blessed—and yet a fatal error lies at the base of all their religion. All their hopes are vain, and their lifework will prove to be a terrible failure. The builders are much alike up to this point, but yet in reality they are wide as the poles asunder both in work and character. The one builder is wise, the other foolish. The one superficial, the other substantial. The one pretentious, the other sincere. The wise man’s work was honest work where men’s eyes could not judge of it. The other’s work was only well worked above ground—there was nothing of reality in the hidden parts. And therefore in due time the first builder rejoiced as he saw his house outlive the storm. The other, with his house, was swept away to total destruction.

II. Thus much upon the two *builders*, let us now think upon THEIR TWO HOUSES. One chief apparent difference between the two edifices probably was this—that one of them built his house more quickly than the other. The wise man had to spend a deal of time in excavation work. Luke tells us that he dug deep and laid his foundation on a rock. Now that rock-blasting, that carving and cutting of the hard granite, must have consumed days and weeks.

The foolish builder had not this delay to encounter. The sand was all smooth and ready for him. He was able to commence at once to lay his courses of brick and raise the walls with all rapidity. But all haste is not good speed, and there are some who travel too fast to hold. Unsound professors are often very rapid in their supposed spiritual growth. They were yesterday unconverted—today they become Believers—tomorrow they begin to teach and the next day they are made perfect. They appear to be born of full stature, and equipped at all points, like Minerva, when, according to the fable, she leaped from the brain of Jupiter. They come up in a night, and alas, too often, like Jonah's gourd, they perish also in a night!

Now I raise not a question concerning the genuine character of sudden conversions. I believe that sudden conversions are among the best and truest forms of conversion. Take, for instance, that of the Apostle Paul. But still there are among those who profess to have been suddenly converted a sadly numerous company who answer to the description I have just given. They build very, very quickly—much too quickly for the masonry to be well constructed and lasting. It may be that some mourner is lamenting bitterly that he makes very slow progress in Grace.

"I have been seeking God in prayer," says one, "these months. I have been humbled and broken down under a sense of sin for weeks. And I have only as yet had now and then a glimpse of hope when I have been able to turn my eye to the crucified Savior. I have as yet few consolations, and many doubts. I gladly would have the full light of love in my heart, but the dawning is slow in breaking." Well, Friend, you are building slowly, but if it is *surely*, you shall have no cause to regret that deep digging. Small cause will you have to mourn that it took you longer to arrive at peace than it did your hasty friend, if your peace shall last you to eternity, while his hope shall be a possession in cloudland, driven away by the wind.

Of the two houses, one was built, I doubt not, with far less trouble than the other. Digging foundations in hard rocks, as I have said, takes time, and it also involves labor. Oftentimes did that wise builder pause to wipe the sweat from his brow. Oftentimes did he retire to his bed worn out with his day's work, and yet there was not a stone appearing above the soil. His neighbor, opposite, had run up the walls, had reached the gable, was almost about to put on the roof, before there was scarce a foot above the ground of the wise builder's structure.

"Ah," said he of the sandy foundation, "your toil is needless, and you have nothing to show for it. See how quickly my walls have risen, and yet I don't slave as you do! I take things easily. I neither bore myself nor the rocks, and yet see how my house springs up, and how neat it looks? Your old-fashioned ways are absurd! You dig and hammer away down below

there as if you meant to pierce the center of the earth. Why not use your common sense, and go ahead as I do? Away with your sighing and groaning, do as I do, and rejoice at once. Anxiety will kill you.”

After this fashion are truly awakened souls like “lamps despised of those who are at ease.” One man jumps, as it were, into peace, and boasts himself secure. Whether he is correct or not in his confidence, he does not pause to question—he is too comfortable to have time to enquire into that matter. The estate is fair, why worry about the title deeds? The feast is rich, why tarry for the wedding garments? If a doubt should arise, the carnally secure man ascribes it to Satan, and puts it aside—whereas it is not Satan, but his own conscience and the warning voice of Heaven which bid him take heed and be not deceived.

The prayer for the Lord to search and try his heart and his reins, he never sincerely offers. Such a man does not like self-examination, and cannot endure to be told that there must be fruits meet for repentance. He takes things as guesswork, comes to rash conclusions, and shuts his eyes to disagreeable facts. He dreams that he is rich and increased in goods, whereas he is naked, and poor, and miserable. Alas, what a waking will his be! His more serious companion, aroused at the same time is, on the other hand, far more diffident and self-distrustful. When he prays his heart groans before God, yet he fears he does not pray aright, and never rises from his knees content with himself.

He is not quite so soon satisfied about the reality of his faith as the other. “Perhaps,” he says, “after all, it is not the faith of God’s elect.” He examines himself whether he is in the faith. He trembles lest he should have the form of godliness without the power. He is afraid of shams and counterfeits, and is for buying gold tried in the fire. “My repentance,” he says, “am I sure it is a real loathing of sin as sin, or did I only shed a tear or two under the excitement of a revival service? Am I sure that my nature is renewed by the work of the Holy Spirit, or is it mere reformation?”

You see, this second man has much exercise of soul. He labors to enter into rest, lest by any means he should seem to come short of it. He has many strivings, many anxieties, many searching of heart because he is sincere and fears to be deceived. From him the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence—he finds the gate strait and the way narrow—and that the righteous scarcely are saved.

Be thankful, dear Hearer, if you are among this second class—for these are the true sons of God and heirs of immortality. Your house costs you more to build, but it will be worth the cost. O beware of wearing the sheep’s clothing without the sheep’s nature! Beware of saying, “Lord, Lord,” while you are the servant of sin! Beware of getting up fictitious religion—borrowing your experience from biographies—picking up godliness secondhand from your parents, friends, and acquaintances! Whatever it may cost you of heartbreak and agony, see to it that the sure foundation is reached, and the house so built that it will endure the trials which will inevitably test it. I would gladly saturate my speech with tears, so weighty and so needful do I feel this caution to be—both to myself and you.

I should think that in the course of time, although the foolish builder built with so much less cost, and so much more rapidly, his walls would be liable to very ugly settlements. For walls that have no foundation—that

are but piled up on the sand—would every now and then gape wide with hideous cracks. And stones would move here, and timbers would slip there, and cement and stopping would need much repair. What work for daubers and plasterers to make the ruinous fabric look like decent masonry! Very likely when a settlement crack was covered up in one place, another would happen in the next wall.

For with such a foundation it would be hard to keep the structure together, and in the long run I should not wonder but what it would cost the foolish builder more pains to keep up his wretched edifice than it did the wise builder who labored so hard with his foundation at the first. Mark you well that mere formal religion and hypocrisy in the end become a very difficult affair to maintain. The man has to struggle hard to patch up his reputation, propping it up with new lies and bolstering it with fresh pretences. At one time an unrenewed will rebels fiercely and he has to feign resignation to affliction. Next an unconquered lust demands indulgence, and he has to conceal the sin with more double-distilled deceit.

The form of prayer becomes irksome, and he has to screw himself up to the horrible farce. And meanwhile his outward life is always on the verge of a slip, and he fears detection. One way and another he is continually afraid, like a thief at large who fears that the police will find him. At every puff of wind his habitation threatens to tumble about his ears. He half wishes, after all, that he had taken the trouble of digging a foundation on the rock—but with desperate resolve he puts from him the voice of caution—and will have none of its rebuke.

O dear Hearer, rest assured that Truth, after all, is the cheapest and easiest in the long run. Your gilt, your varnish, your paint, your hypocrisy will soon wear off, while the reality is at no expense for beautifying. Even as a matter of consideration for this life it will be more hard in the long run to keep up the pretentious than to maintain the true. And then in the latter case you have God at your back, and He abhors everything unreal. I beseech you see to it that you daub not your walls with untempered mortar lest they not only come down with a crash when most you need to shelter behind them, but even now begin to show alarming signs of decay.

The higher the foolish man built, the harder work he had to keep it afloat. For, of course, every tier of bricks that he laid made the weight the greater and caused the sand to give way. The nearer Heaven the builder went the sooner his wall bowed to its fall. A man who only makes it his aim to be thought a respectable man by attending a place of worship, may manage pretty well to keep up such a low wall even without a foundation. Another man who joins a worldly Church—a Church that makes no pretense of purity—can also succeed with ease. But if he joins a Church of Jesus Christ which carefully seeks to preserve purity in its membership, he has hard work to live up to the standard required of him.

Suppose, yet further, that he should become a deacon or an elder and he is devoid of Grace? His higher aim will cost him more by far—for there are more to look at him, and there is more required of him. Now he prays in public. Now he speaks a word of instruction to enquirers—and what straits and shifts the poor man is driven to—how constantly out of his own mouth is he condemned! “Why,” says he in his heart, “I know nothing about these things in my soul, and yet I have to speak and act as if I were

taught of God.” If he becomes a preacher, he is in a still more pitiful plight. What hard work must it be, then, to keep up the character!

When the tower rises tier upon tier upon so frail a base, it leans like the tower of Pisa, and unlike that singular structure it threatens to come down with a crash. By-and-by such a trumpery thing falls in utter ruin, and its elevation helps to hasten the catastrophe. So, dear Hearers, the more spirituality you aim at, and the more usefulness you strive for, the worse for you, unless you have a good foundation to begin with, in true sincerity and real faith. So bad is the course of unsound religion, that the further you go in it the worse it becomes.

The main difference, however, between the two houses did not lay in these cracks and settlements, nor in the cheapness or rapidity of the building—it lay out of sight, *underground*. It was all a matter of the foundation. How many there are who suppose that if a thing is out of sight it may as well be out of mind! Who do you think is likely to dig down and see what the foundations are? “Well,” says one, “I see no need for being over precise. I do not believe in being so particular. What nobody sees cannot mean anything.” Many subscribe to the graceless song —

**“For faith and Grace let foolish zealots fight;
He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”**

“You pay twenty shillings in the pound, attend a place of worship, take the sacrament, are charitable and say your prayers, and never trouble about anything further”—that is the popular notion. “What is the use of fretting about your heart? That is all transcendental nonsense! What can it signify?” That is how the foolish builder comforted himself. And he doubtless sneered at the wise builder as a poor miserable creature who was overmuch righteous and melancholy. Outward appearance is everything with men, but nothing with God. The essential difference between the true child of God and the mere professor is not readily to be discovered, even by spiritual minds. But the Lord sees it. It is a secret mysterious something which the Lord prizes, “for He knows them that are His.” He separates between the precious and the vile. He puts away the pretenders as dross, but He suffers no sincere heart to be destroyed.

What, then, is this important matter? I answer it is just this—beloved Hearer, if you would be built on a rock, see to it that you have a true sense of sin. I do not say that a sense of sin is a preparation for Christ, and that we ought to pull men back from the Gospel till *they feel their sin*. But I do believe that wherever there is true faith in Jesus there goes with it a deep abhorrence of sin. Faith without contrition is a dead and worthless faith.

When I meet with professors who talk lightly of sin, I am sure that they have built without a foundation. If they had ever felt the Spirit’s wounding and killing sword of conviction, they would flee from sin as from a lion or a bear. Truly forgiven sinners dread the appearance of evil as burnt children dread fire. Superficial repentance always leads to careless living. Faith that was never bedewed with repentance never brings forth the flowers of holiness. Pray earnestly for a broken heart. Remember it is the contrite spirit which God is pleased with. Do not believe that you can have ground for rejoicing if you never saw reason for lamenting. The promised comfort is only secured to those who have been mourners (Matt. 5: 4).

Next to this seek for real faith. Many things which men call faith are not the precious faith of God's elect. Sincere trust in Jesus Christ is counterfeited in a thousand ways—and often imitated so accurately that only by rigid self-examination can you discover the cheat. You must lie flat upon Christ, the Rock! You must depend entirely upon Him! All your hope and all your trust must be in Him. If you believe with the heart, and not nominally, you are safe, but not otherwise. You must have true repentance and real faith—or you are foolish builders.

Furthermore, seek an inwrought experience of Divine Truth. Ask to have it burnt into you. Why is it that people give up the Doctrines of Grace if they fall in with eloquent advocates of free will? Why is it they renounce the orthodox creed if they meet with a smart reasoner who contradicts it? Because they have never received the Word in the power of the Holy Spirit so as to have it sealed in their hearts. I tremble for our Churches, now that false doctrine is rife, because I fear that many are not established in the Truth. I pray the Lord for you, my dear Flock, that you may know the Truth by being taught of the Lord, for then you will not be led aside. The thieves and robbers will come, but as Christ's sheep you will not hear them. It is one thing to have a creed. It is quite another thing to have the Truth engraved upon the tables of the heart. Many fail here because Truth was never experimentally made their own.

Pray, moreover, that your faith may produce personal holiness. Do not believe yourself to be saved from sin while you are living in sin. If you can find pleasure in the lusts of the flesh, you are no child of God. If you are given to drunkenness—and, mark you, many professors are so, only they drink at home and are not seen in the streets—how dwells the Grace of God in you? If you delight in idle songs and frequenting of places of vain amusement, you need not be long in weighing yourself—you are found wanting already. If you were renewed in the spirit of your mind, you would no more love these things than an angel would.

There must be a newborn nature implanted, and where there is not this exemplified in holiness of life, you may build ever so high and prate ever so loudly about your building—it is a poor miserable shanty after all—and will fall in the last hurricane. Want of depth, want of sincerity, want of reality in religion—this is the want of our times. Want of an eye to God in religion, lack of sincere dealing with one's own soul. Neglect of using the lancet with our hearts. Neglect of the search warrant which God gives out against sin. Carelessness concerning living upon Christ—much reading about Him, much talking about Him—but too little feeding upon His flesh, and drinking of His blood—these are the causes of tottering professions and baseless hopes.

Thus have I tried to open up the parable—and I have not designed to discourage any sincere soul. My aim has been to say to you, "Make your calling and election sure. Build on Christ's love, sincerity, desire, the work of the Holy Spirit—and be not deceived."

III. So now I come, in the third place, to notice THE COMMON TRIAL OF THE TWO HOUSES. Whether your religion is true or not, it will be tried. Whether it is chaff or wheat, the fan of the Great Winnower will surely be brought into operation upon all that lies on the threshing floor. If you have dealings with God, you have to do with a "consuming fire."

Whether you are really or nominally a Christian, if you come near to Christ, He will try you as silver is tried. Judgment must begin at the House of God, and if you dare to come in to the House of God, judgment will begin with you.

By the way, let us note that if there are such trials for those who profess to be Christians, what will become of you who make no profession? If the righteous scarcely are saved, where will the ungodly and the wicked appear? If judgment begins with the House of God, what will the end be of them that believe not? Terrible thought! But to return. Trials will come to profession, whether it is true or false. If I do not mistake the reference in the text to rain, flood, wind—these trials will be of three sorts at least.

The rain typifies afflictions from Heaven. God will send you adversities like showers, tribulations as many as the drops of the dew. Between now and Heaven, O Professor, you will feel the pelting storm! Like other men, your body will be sick. Or if not, you shall have trouble in your house—children and friends will die—or riches will take to themselves wings, and fly like an eagle towards Heaven. You must have trials from God's hand. And, if you are not relying on Christ, you will not be able to bear them. If you are not, by real faith, one with Jesus Christ, even God's rain will be too much for you.

But there will also arise trials from earth—"the floods came." In former days the floods of persecution were more terrible than now, but persecution is still felt. And if you are a professor, you will have to bear a measure of it. Cruel mockings are still used against the people of God. The world no more loves the true Church today than it did in olden times. Can you bear slander and reproach for Jesus? Not unless you are firmly rooted and grounded. In the day of temptation and persecution the rootless plants of the stony ground are withered away. See you to this.

Then there will come mysterious trials typified by "the winds." The prince of the power of the air will assail you with blasphemous suggestions, horrible temptations, or artful insinuations. He knows how to cast clouds of despondency over the human spirit. He can attack the four corners of the house at once by his mysterious agency. He can tempt us in many ways at the same time, and drive us to our wits' end. Woe to you, then, unless you have something to hold to better than the mere sand of profession!

Where there is a good foundation trials will do no harm. But where there is no foundation they will frequently bring the man's profession down in ruin, even in this life. How many lose their religion at the very outset! Pliable and Christian both set out for the Celestial City, both aspiring to the crown of gold. But they fell into the Slough of Despond. And then one of them struggled out on the side nearest his own house, and went back to the City of Destruction. The other strove manfully to reach the further shore—the difference between the wise and foolish pilgrim was made manifest.

After Christians have proceeded further they will be tried in other ways. Infidelities often try Christians. I mean doubts about the essentials of the faith and all its doctrines. And those that are not well cemented to the Rock are easily moved to unbelief. This is the age of infidelities, but they who are on the Rock by a truthful experience are not moved. A Negro was

once told by a friend that some man had said the Bible was not true. Now, our poor friend had never thought anybody could doubt the Bible, but his quick way of disposing of the novel difficulty was, "Dat Book not true? Why, I take it into my house and I sit down and read it, and it make my heart laugh. How can it be a lie, dat make my heart laugh? I was a drunkard, a thief, and a liar, and dat Book talked to me and made me a new man—dat Book no lie." The very best proof in the world surely, at least to the man himself, if not to others.

We who have had our hearts made to laugh by God's Word cannot be laughed out of our faith. We have lived on the Word and proved its truthfulness by *experience*—and are therefore invulnerable to all attacks—while strangers to such experience are staggered. Where the heart is really grounded upon the Truth, you will find that heresies as well as infidelities have but little effect. The sound Christian is like a stone—if he is thrown into the pool of false doctrine, he may be wet by it—but he does not receive it into his inner self. Whereas the unsound professor is like a sponge, he sucks it all in greedily and retains what he absorbs.

How many there are who are tried by worldliness, and if their religion is but a mere profession, worldliness soon eats the heart of it as does a canker, and they become even as others! If, however, the Christian man's heart is right with God, he comes out and is separate, and the pride of life does not entrap him. In cases of backsliding, where there is a sound heart towards God, the backslider is soon brought back. But where the heart is rotten, the backslider goes from bad to worse. I was struck with a story of two men who were accustomed to give exhortations at meetings, who had fallen out with each other. One of their Brothers, who grieved to think two servants of God should be at differences with each other, went to reconcile them.

He called upon the first, and said, "John, I am very sorry to find you and James have quarreled. It seems a great pity, and it brings much dishonor on the Church of God." "Ah," said John, "I am very grieved, too, and what grieves me most is that I am the sole cause of it. It was only because I spoke so bitterly that James took offense." "Ah, ah," said the good man, "we will soon settle this difficulty, then," and away he went to James. "James, I am very sorry that you and John cannot agree." "Yes," he said, "it is a sad thing we don't, we ought to do so, for we are Brothers. But what troubles me most is that it is all my fault. If I had not taken notice of a little word John said, there would have been an end of it."

The matter, as you may guess, was soon rectified. You see there was at the bottom a true friendship between them, so that the little difficulty was soon overcome. And so where there is a true union between God and the soul, the backsliding will soon be recovered.

IV. To close. Having thus mentioned the common trials and the effects produced in this life, let me now remind you of the DIFFERENT RESULTS OF THE TRIALS in reference to the life to come. In the one case, the rain descended very heavily, and threatened to wash the house away, but it was built on a rock, and not only did the house stand, but the man inside found great comfort in it. He could hear the pelting torrent beating on the roof, and sit and sing. When the gusts came against the windows he would only be the more happy to think he had such a shelter.

Then came the floods. They would, if they could, have sapped and undermined the foundations, but they took no effect on the granite rock. And though the wind howled round the habitation, every stone was well cemented and all bound as with iron bands to the grand old Rock—and therefore the man was safe and happy within. And above all, he was grateful that he had built on such a Foundation. He could sit down and sing—

**“Loud may the troubled ocean roar,
In sacred peace my soul abides.”**

The Christian rests peacefully upon Christ. Troubles come one after another, but they do not sweep him away—they only endear to him the hope which is based upon Christ Jesus. And when at last death comes, that awful flood which will undermine everything that can be removed—it cannot find anything to shake in the wise builder’s hope!

He rests on what Christ has Done—death cannot affect that. He believes in a faithful God. And dying cannot affect that. He believes in the Covenant signed, and sealed, and ratified, in all things ordered well. He lays hold on the “shalls” and “wills” of an immutable God, all sealed with the blood of the Redeemer! Death cannot affect any of these. And when the last great trumpet sounds, and the last fire that shall try every man’s work of what sort it is comes forth from the Throne of God, the man who in true sincerity and with real experience has laid hold on Christ is not afraid of the tremendous hour.

What? Though the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long, and the dead awake, and the angels gather round the Great White Throne! And the pillars of Heaven tremble, and the earth is dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat—the man of God feels that the Rock on which he has built can never fail him, and the hope that Divine Grace has given him can never be removed. He smiles serenely amid it all.

But look at the case of the man whose hope is built on sand! He could hardly endure the trials of *life*. He almost fell under common temptation. He turned his coat during the hour of persecution. But sorer trials now await him. Some hypocrites have been bolstered up even in the last moments, and perhaps have never known that they were lost till they felt they were. Like Dives, of whom it is written, “In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” He had never lifted up his eyes before. He did not know his condition till he actually realized it in all its misery. But the most of men who have come under the sound of the Gospel, and made a profession—if they have been deceivers find it out at death—and it must be a dreadful thing to make that discovery when pain is sharp and parting is bitter.

Ah, dear Friend, if you are mistaken, may you find it out now, and not on your deathbed. May your prayer be, “Lord, show me the worst of my case. If my profession has been a mistake, O let me not build up and prop up a rotten thing, but help me to build aright upon the Rock of Ages.” Pray that prayer, I beseech you. Remember, if death should not teach you the whole Truth of your case, *judgment* will. There will be no mistake there, and no opportunity for repentance. This fallen house was never built again. There was no salvage from the total wreck. Lost, lost, lost—there is no word to follow. For once lost, lost forever! O dear Hearer, I bid

you, if you have a name to live and are dead, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life!

I pray you, if you are a seeker, be not put off with empty hopes and vain confidences. Buy the Truth and sell it not. Lay hold on eternal life. Seek the true Savior and be not content till you have Him, for if lost, your ruin will be terrible! Oh, that lake! Have you ever read the words, "Shall be cast into the Lake of Fire, which is the second death"? The Lake of Fire! And souls cast into it! The imagery is dreadful. "Ah," says one, "that is a metaphor." Yes, I know it is, and a metaphor is but a *shadow* of the reality. Then if the *shadow* is a lake of fire, what must the reality be? If we can hardly bear to think of a "worm that never dies," and a "fire that never shall be quenched," and of a lake whose seething waves of fire that dash over undying and hopeless souls—what must Hell be in very deed?

The descriptions of Scriptures are, after all, but condescensions to our ignorance—partial revelations of fathomless mysteries. But if these are so dreadful, what must the full reality be? Provoke Him not, my Hearers—tempt not your God! Neglect not the great salvation, for if you do, you shall not escape. Play not with your souls! Be not heedless and careless of the realities of eternity! But now, even now, may God hear your prayer as you breathe it from your inmost souls, and give you truly to be washed in the precious blood, and effectually saved by Him, in Whom there is fullness of Truth and Grace. Amen.

***"My God, I mark with fear
How many hopes decay,
And like the foolish builder's house
Fall in the trial day.
Perhaps amid this throng
You do a soul espy
Whose towering hopes are built on sand,
I ask, 'Lord, is it I?'
A thousand doubts arise,
I bring them all to You.
Am I unconsciously deceived?
Lord, search my heart and see.
O teach me deep to dig
Down to the solid Rock,
That when tornadoes round me sweep
My house may bear the shock.
Jesus, You only are
The sure foundation stone,
Firm as the eternal hills are You,
I build on You alone.
Cemented fast to You
No stone is laid in vain,
My hope defies the assaults of Hell,
The flood, the wind, the rain."***

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

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

AND WHY NOT ME?

NO. 2162

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 7, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will, be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”
Matthew 8:2, 3.***

MATTHEW has placed this miracle immediately after the sermon on the mount. In all probability some little time intervened in which our Lord had preached at Capernaum and had also healed the people in the street, as we read just now in the first chapter of Mark. It was not the object of Matthew to arrange his facts precisely in the order of time—he had another end in view. After the sermon on the mount he gives us remarkable miracles, as if to teach us that *our Lord's Words were confirmed by His works*. Our Lord was mighty both in word and deed. His kingdom comes not only with truth, but with power. He worked miracles that men might see with their eyes that the power of God was upon Him and might know that He spoke with Divine authority.

At this day, Beloved, it is even so. Power goes forth with the preaching of the Gospel. The Words of the Lord Jesus are spirit and life—they are in themselves full of authority and we ought to accept them with ready faith—but since we are slow to believe, the Lord continues to work as well as speak. The “signs following” are still to be perceived—blind eyes are opened, deaf ears are unstopped, hearts of stone are turned to flesh and the dead in sin are quickened. Conversion by Divine Grace follows the proclamation of the Doctrines of Grace, for the Word of God is with power. Beloved, we have beheld wonders of regenerating power in our own midst and therefore we are bound to believe in Jesus more and more. Blessed be the Divine power which confirms the Word!

Jesus is never known in the full authority of His Word until the Holy Spirit makes us feel the glory of His work within our hearts. We have the Word and we pray for more of the work. The Lord speaks to us graciously in the Gospel ministry. Oh, that He would now work with us, also, to His own glory! When our Lord spoke, His Words were winged in such a way that they flew far afield. He was heard, not only by the nearer company of His disciples and by a great multitude who gathered about Him, but His Words were carried home by the people as they returned to their cottages among the hills, or to their dwellings by the sea.

They flew abroad as doves whose wings were covered with silver and they lighted in strange places. His Words had so much pungency about them that they could not be forgotten. They had so much of force in them that they worked mightily on the minds of men and were repeated by

those who heard them. Among the rest, the Words of the Lord Jesus came to a poor leper who dwelt alone outside a city wall. We know little about him—even his name is not mentioned—but to him, also, the glad tidings of a Savior came. He spent much of his time in solitude, or in begging, for he could not follow the pursuits of men, nor earn his bread like other men. The disease of despair was upon him and none could help him in his trouble. He had heard of Jesus and, perhaps, on the edge of the crowd had heard Him speak. He felt that there was something Divine about the Preacher who spoke as never man spoke—this aroused hope within him—he came to Jesus and was healed. What was his name, or his descent, or previous history, we do not know. He ranks among the notable anonymous of earth whose names are written in Heaven.

No one among you knows where God's Word will fly this day—it may be blessed to some outcast in the bush who will read it and find mercy of the Lord. Our congregation is a singular one—made up of persons of every condition of life—from almost every country under Heaven! And in it there are specialties of character unknown to the preacher, but the Lord can bless all who hear it. God has brought them here and since the word that shall be spoken is a repetition of Christ's own Word and is the same Gospel which Jesus preached, we expect that it will fly far and wide and will call many a sin-sick soul to the great Physician's feet. The Lord grant it!

As I have often preached upon this leper, you are well acquainted with the story and must almost wonder that I should speak upon him again. I do so that I may dwell upon one single point of it which, I trust, may encourage souls to come to Jesus. I have a burning thirst upon me for the salvation of souls! Where is the man or woman who will give me drink by coming to my Lord? Note the special object of observation—"Behold, there came a leper." Upon this I have to say, in the first place, that *he came of himself*. Secondly, that *he came by himself*, having no comrade to cheer him in the venture. And thirdly, that *he was in himself regarded for coming*.

I. First, then—and this is the main point of this morning's discourse—HE CAME OF HIMSELF. Read in Scripture concerning the miracles of Christ and you will be struck with the way in which many were *led* to Him. A friendly hand conducted the blind, or conducted the little children. Some were bodily *brought* to Christ. We read of a paralyzed man who was "borne of four" and they let him down by ropes through the ceiling to the place where Jesus stood. Others could not come or be brought, but the Lord went to them where they were, on their beds, or waiting at the pool. But here is a case of a man who came by himself, on his own account.

I want you to note this because I am persuaded that we have around us those who have nobody to lead them to Christ. Nobody to pray for them. Nobody to persuade, exhort, or entreat them—and these may come through the direct operations of the Holy Spirit upon their souls. These are left outside the pale, dwelling on the other side of the line of Christian effort—but they are not beyond the Grace of God! This leper came of him-

self. Though none called him, he plucked up courage and it is written as a wonder—“*Behold*, there came a leper and worshipped Him.”

Note well that this man *knew in himself that his case was a terrible one*. I do not intend to describe the dreadful disease of leprosy. We have, on other occasions, viewed it as God’s appointed picture of sin. It was a living death, a source of misery, a center of defilement—and such is sin. Medical men are not clear as to whether the leprosy was ordinarily infectious. It is now believed that it is contagious to a certain degree, but there was no pressing sanitary reason why lepers should have been shut out from all society. The Lord, who intended leprosy under the old theocracy to be the picture of sin, ordained that when once a man was a leper, he should be regarded as unclean in himself and so polluting that every person and thing that he touched became unclean.

Hence the leper was dreaded in his every approach to his fellows. He was looked upon as dead while he lived and his case was viewed as beyond human help. Remember how the king of Israel cried out, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man does send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?” If a leper did recover it was regarded as a making alive, a resurrection from death. This man knew, even better than anybody else, in what a wretched and loathsome state he was. His disease was ever before him. Leprosy is awful to look upon—what must it be to feel? Leprosy is terrible in description—what must it be in actual endurance?

He knew that now, at last, he had come to the last stage of his malady, for Luke describes him as “full of leprosy.” He had come to the final stage and the disease was conspicuous upon him. His skin was foul and his joints were rotting. Very likely his fingers, his teeth and hair were gone and soon he must die. Such was the mass of moving death of which we read, “Behold, there came a leper to Him.” But he was not kept back by the fact that he was hopelessly and loathsomely diseased. Let us learn the lesson well. I earnestly pray that some poor guilty one, conscious of sin, horrified of himself, may now venture to come to Jesus! Though he feels the foul disease within him and fears that it has come to its worst, yet may he be emboldened to approach Him who can at once make him clean!

If you feel yourself to be a mass of loathsomeness and corruption, or, worse still, hardened and insensible in conscience, yet come to Jesus for healing! Even though you are truly described in our hymn as “self-aborred,” yet come to Him who will not abhor you! Come at once, saying, “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.” Let desperate cases come! Let hopeless cases come! I am imploring the Lord to let it be so. O my Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, I entreat you, plead with me!

Note with regard to this man, that *others gave him up as hopeless*. Persons hurried past him if he stood near the city gate. He was bound, himself, to warn them off by crying, “Unclear, unclean.” To him the sweets of friendship and all the comforts of domestic life were unknown—he was a castoff and a castaway. The rulers of his people had looked upon him and

pronounced him unclean and, therefore, he was banished from among men!

Is there such a one before me? Do your relatives shun you? Do people in decent society avoid you? Oh, that you had Divine Grace and faith to come to Jesus just as you are and fall at His feet and worship Him, for, rest assured, He can make you clean and give you a name and a place among His people! The hopeless are the very people that Jesus loves to save!

No one could or would take him to Jesus. He was too foul to be touched, too far gone to be the subject of hope. Here and there we meet with persons who have so often disappointed their friends that it is small wonder that they now keep them at a distance. Even an affectionate mother has said, "We have tried him many times, Sir, but it is of no use. We cannot help him any more for he has drained the family." The father almost prays to forget the prodigal and the elder brother wishes never to see him again. It is a hard case when it comes to that—but such hard cases there are. The world has in it men of whom society is sick. The profligate has been to this charitable person and to the other benevolent individual until everyone is weary of the peter-do-well and no one feels that he could associate with him without becoming himself suspected of vice.

By common consent he is judged to be unfit for a reformatory, but well worthy of a prison. No one reasons with him, entreats him, or prays for him. He floats over the ocean of life as an abandoned wreck. He has turned infidel, lately, and even his loving sister, who used to plead with him with tears in her eyes, now shudders when he comes near because his language has grown so sarcastic and blasphemous that the dear girl cannot bear it. Now that no man cares for your soul, how earnestly do I wish that you would care for it yourself! Oh that you would form the singular and saving resolve that you will go to the Lord Jesus on your own account and so frustrate all the evil prophecies which have been uttered concerning you!

Why will you perish, poor Soul? Why will you die? If there is such a person now before me, I pray from the bottom of my soul that he or she may now, with fixed determination, come to Jesus! O you angels, may you now have cause to cry out again, "Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him!" There is one hand which would gladly lead you to Jesus—I stretch it out to you this morning. There is yet one heart that would plead with you to seek salvation—and if there is not another in the world, yet come along with you, come just as you are—and show your misery to the Lord of Mercy! Men have written out your death warrant, but the Lord Jesus has not signed it and therefore it cannot be executed.

They call you a castaway, but the Lord gathers together the outcasts of Israel. His longsuffering in sparing your life means your salvation—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."***

Come, then, with all your sin about you! Repent of your transgressions and believe in Jesus, and you shall be clean! In this man's case *there was*

no precedent to encourage him. I do not find that our Lord had healed a leper up to that time. I do not think there was a case of the sort. Many diseases He had dealt with, but the Blessed One had not yet encountered “a man full of leprosy.” When there are plenty of precedents, there is a kind of paved way for us to travel—but this man had to make his own track. We can reason—“My father and my brother came to Jesus and were saved—why should not I?” This man could use no such argument. I wonder whether the poor creature had heard what Jesus said in the synagogue at Capernaum—it could not have been long before—“Many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.”

I wonder whether he drew any kind of comfort from that utterance? Perhaps not. In any case, he must boldly lead the way and be the first leper that came to Jesus. O my Hearer, if never such a sinner as you are has been saved, make bold to lead the way! Dare to approach the living Lord who can make you clean! Do not despair, even though you may not have heard of another sinner of your sort that ever was forgiven. As to the most of you, my dear Hearers, you and the leper must part company on this point. He had no precedents, but you have very many. You know that Christ has saved sinners all around you. Some of you have at home a brother who was as bad as yourself, but he is now converted. You have heard your father tell how far he went astray and yet the Lord brought him to Himself.

Many of us now present can assure you that, “This Man receives sinners,” for He received us. We can witness, assuredly, that He is abundantly able to save, for He has manifested that power in our cases. With these precedents, wherein the Lord Jesus has saved persons like yourself, come to Him, I pray you, and prove that He is the same now, as ever. Are you a drunkard? Many drunkards have been rescued from their degrading vice! Are you a thief? A liar? A Sabbath-breaker? Such were some of us—but we are washed and made clean! Yes, if you have been an adulterer, or a murderer—can I say worse?—“all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Men of the vilest sort have been saved! Why not come to the Lord with confidence, even as this leper came, and put your trust in Him?

Furthermore, *this man had no promise.* I do not find that Jesus ever said, “Come unto Me, you lepers, and I will heal you.” I do not know that any of His Apostles had been sent forth to preach, saying, “Come to Jesus, all you lepers, and He will cleanse you.” There was no promise to that effect, save that our Lord Himself is a consolidated promise. The very fact of His being here below is a mountain range of promises to our fallen race! Without any verbal promise, this man came and said, “Lord, if You will, You can.” My dear Hearers, I cannot say to any of you that you may not come to Jesus because there is no promise for you. Far from it! If there were no promise, I would exhort you to seek mercy as the Ninevites did when they said, “Who can tell?”

But the promises are plentiful as the stars. “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” “Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall find mercy.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Will you not be drawn by these promises and will you not come when such a promise as this stands before you—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? The blessed doctrine of Election does not hinder you, for all who come *are* elect! The sacred Truth of the new birth does not bar you, for he that believes *is* born again! I pray you, come and show yourself to the great Healer and He will not turn you away.

Again, *this man had no invitation*. Our Lord had not called him. He had never said, “Come, you lepers; come, and be healed.” There was nobody to command or persuade him to come. There was nobody to cheer him in coming, much less any to compel him to come! Of himself, constrained by a Divine impulse unknown to anybody else, this leper resolved to come and found himself welcome though he had not been expressly bidden. To you, my dear Hearers, I cannot say that you have no invitation, for we are always crying to you, Come, you weary and heavy laden. Come, for Jesus calls. “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Whoever will, let him come and take of the Water of Life freely.”

The invitations of mercy are sent out on a broad scale since we are bid to “preach the Gospel to every creature.” “Whoever will, let him come.” Yes, they of the hedges and the highways are to be compelled to come in! What shall I say? If you are lost, it will not be for lack of an invitation! If you turn your back on Christ, you shall not say in Hell that you were not entreated to come to Him! I implore you to come to Jesus even as this leper came and I pray the Holy Spirit to make my entreaties effectual with you.

This leper was bold in coming to Jesus because, having nobody to encourage him, *he must have felt himself ashamed as a lone man in the midst of the multitude*. Well he might, for he had no right to be there. Does anybody this morning say, looking round on this great audience, “Here am I, a stranger to everybody. Nobody knows me and if they did, they would not associate with me. I am out of place among the people of God”? Are you laboring under an awful sense of sin? Are you bowed down under your own unworthiness? Do you feel as one lost in a crowd? The crowd there was nothing very remarkable, but the leper’s coming to Jesus was a very notable fact, a scene worth looking at. Hence we see the word, “Behold!” He is coming! Yes, he dares to come! The crowd makes way and the leper falls at Jesus’ feet and worships Him, saying, “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.”

Glory be to God, the leper is at the feet of Jesus where infinite love and power are bending over him! O my Friend, will you not make a dash for it at this moment? You need not rise up and make any manifest demonstration—but you can in spirit bow at the feet of our Lord! Oh, that the Spirit

of God would move you to come to Jesus now! Never mind the crowd! You are put apart by your own feelings. Your broken heart has driven you into a solitary condition. Now come to Jesus before the crowd disperses! Though angels will see it and devils will see it, yet come! Oh, that I could cry—"Behold! Here is a sinner who now, at once, and in this place, casts himself at Jesus' feet!"

Grant it, O God! O God the Holy Spirit, work it and work it now, we pray You! And unto the name of Jesus shall be glory evermore! This is our first head—the leper came of himself, though no one aided or encouraged him.

II. Secondly, THE LEPER CAME BY HIMSELF. This is very unlike the case of the 10 lepers who came to Jesus in a company, concerning whom He asked the question, "Where are the nine?" It is easy to go where 10 are going, but harder to go alone. There are many things which people readily do in company with others that they would not venture upon as separate individuals. My Hearer, there is only one of you and when that one feels himself to be loathsome and vile, it seems a daring thing for him to come to Jesus by himself. Yet I trust you will so come.

Here I would enlarge by observing, first, that no doubt *the leper thought out this matter by himself*. Being often alone, he meditated upon what he had heard concerning this great Preacher and he considered both His doctrine and His miracles and drew his own conclusions. There is always hope for a man when he begins to think about the Lord Jesus—the worst of it is that so many hearers of the Gospel put their thinking out and do none of it at home. This man thought over the matter calmly, candidly and hopefully. And he drew from it a solid, manifest and practical conclusion with reference to himself. He did not rest in a general theory about all the world, but he found out a Truth of God which concerned *himself*.

Having done so, *he came to the conclusion that our Lord was Omnipotent to heal*. Mark well that he came to this conclusion with regard to *himself*. Is it, "Lord, if You will, You can make *lepers* clean"? No, it was a far more personal conclusion. "If You will, You can make *me* clean." That was the crucial point. Jesus could save him, even *him!* Long ago I believed that Christ could save my brothers and sisters—I never had a doubt about that. I never doubted our Lord's power to save anybody until I thought of myself—and then there seemed to be just one case which His Omnipotence did not cover. I did not see how Jesus was to save *me*. Singular as it may seem, when a man is under a sense of sin he will not deny the Omnipotent power of God's Grace as to all the rest of mankind—but secretly he will shut himself out from the range of mercy.

Strange cruelty to the self he loves so well! He thinks himself to be just over the border—just beyond the reach of Divine Grace. This man was not so foolish! He argued, "I am a leper. Yes, but God has healed lepers. I am a leper in the worst state, for I am full of leprosy—and with God all things are possible. This Man is sent of God and the power of God is with Him. Therefore I conclude that He can cleanse me if He will." It was well done of the leper. It is a fine thing to have come to such a rational and just con-

clusion. I wish every person here would come to that conclusion about his own soul! Though you must condemn yourself. Though the harshest expression I could use would not slander you in your own esteem, yet it comes to this, thinking it all over—"Christ can save you if He so wills."

You are not shut out by any Word of Scripture, or by any lack of love or power on the part of the Savior! If you are worse than others, the Infinite Grace of God will be seen all the more in your salvation! Jesus can save you—even *you!*

Still thinking the subject over, *he saw where the matter hinged*. Everything depended on our Lord's will. Some say that the leper doubted the willingness of Christ—I greatly doubt this interpretation of his words. He simply stated a great Truth of God. If Jesus only *willed* it, the leper could be made clean without His saying or doing anything! The whole work depended on the Lord's will that it should be done. His will was the spring of the healing power. Does anybody doubt this? In the work of salvation certain preachers are continually insisting upon the freedom of the *human* will. Truly with these I raise no quarrel—but I would have them equally insist upon the freedom of the *Divine* will.

Christ has a right to save whom He pleases and though He saves all who trust Him, this, also, is not without *His* will. He said to this man, "I will," and there is no instance in Scripture of a suppliant for healing to whom He said, "I will *not*." Yet His saving Grace lies under the control of His own Sovereignty—He is no man's debtor—He may do as He wills with His own. It is most certain that, "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy." This man, in his lonely thoughts, had struck upon this golden nugget of Truth! He saw that his hope lay in the will of Christ and where could it lie better?

I am afraid that in this matter he excelled some of you, for his own will was right enough, but I fear that, in the cases of some of you, your own will is not yet right with God. It goes without saying that the leper's will was in a right condition and therefore he appeals to Jesus. Is Jesus willing? There was no fear as to that matter! I want all seekers to know that your salvation can now be worked by the will of Jesus. He has made you willing to receive and He is assuredly willing to give. If you are saved it will not be because you *deserve* it, but because He freely gives where He pleases, according to the royal bounty of His heart. This man had found out a grand Truth of God when he saw that his healing depended upon the will of the Savior.

Then *he submitted himself to that will with joyful hope*. He could not know, of a certainty that he would be healed, for Jesus had not as yet spoken of healing leprosy—but he was positive that He could do it if He would. It is a great thing to believe in the Omnipotence of Jesus in the matter of salvation. We have a great advantage over the leper, for we know that He wills to save all sinners who come to Him. The leper set himself before Christ and said, in effect, "Here I am. You see what a wretched creature I am—no worse can ever come to You. But yet, if You will, You

can make me clean. I leave my case with You.” He prayed intensely, but it was rather in dumb show than in words—but Jesus knew what he meant.

This was the man’s practical conclusion from his lonely thinking and *he expressed it before the Lord in words all his own*. In the few words he used he borrowed nothing from any book of prayers, or manual of devotion. He was, in fact, a man of his own order, standing apart from all others. The result of his private thoughts was a brave avowal of his faith in the Omnipotence of Jesus. *He did homage to Jesus*. He kneeled before Him and worshipped Him. I believe that he did this with the full persuasion of His Deity, for I do not think he could have said, “If You will, You can make me clean,” unless he had believed that Jesus was God.

Our Savior did not say, “Rise up! You must not worship Me, for I am only a man and to worship Me would be sheer idolatry.” No. Our Lord did not repudiate Divine honors when they were offered to Him by His followers! He accepted them as a matter of right, since He counted it not robbery to be equal with God. This man trusted Him whom He worshipped and worshipped Him whom he trusted. With reverent, humble, importunate prayer he set forth his case and left it in the Savior’s hands. Oh, that my Hearers would imitate him! I groan in spirit till this is so. The leper came alone. He came not through persuading friends. I am afraid that some people join the Church because other people press them to do so—this is a mistake.

Some will say that they believe in Jesus because it will give pleasure to earnest friends—this is mischievous. The leper was under no excitement. He was not the fungus of a revival, but the fruit of Divine Grace! He did not go into an inquiry room and see all the rest zealous about Jesus and therefore become subject to a like feeling. No! He came alone and came deliberately! And he bowed himself at Jesus’ feet. I want any here who are quite unused to religious influences, who have no mother to put her arms around their neck and pray for them, no friends to explain the things of God to them, nevertheless to come to Jesus! You need a Savior! Do you feel that you do? Though not accompanied by others, yet come to Jesus! Come alone, and by yourself. Come at once to Christ and cast yourself at His feet.

The thoughtful individual Believer is often one of the best of converts, for he is most to be relied on. I like much those who are not imitators, but take their own course in coming to Jesus. Some are carried off their legs during a time of religious excitement and think they are converted when they are not. Some profess faith because their brothers and sisters and friends are doing so—but it is not sufficiently an individual matter of heart with them. I set the leper before you as an example of the courage which comes to Jesus by itself, whether others will come or forbear. I have kept to my one point up to now and I have all the while been praying the Lord to bring all my unconverted hearers to Jesus now.

III. I close by saying that THIS MAN HIMSELF WAS REWARDED FOR COMING. Our Lord saw to it that he came not in vain. Poor Soul! Suffering as he was and in dread of a terrible death, he no sooner began to come

to Christ than *our Lord regarded him with His sympathy*. He looked at him with a different look from what the leper had ever received before. When others glanced at the leper they went by as quickly as they could. And if some came face to face with him they turned away their eyes from the ghastly spectacle. Nobody *pitied* lepers in those days, for they judged them to be smitten of God. They were the objects of horror among men because they were viewed as objects of the wrath of the Most High.

But when Jesus saw the afflicted man, we read in Mark that, "He was moved with compassion." I do not think I could fully interpret the Greek word into English. I could hardly pronounce it, since there is such a complication of consonants in it. Did you ever see a man overcome with emotion? His heart seems to swell. His bosom heaves and tears burst forth. In our Lord's case His whole being was stirred. The depths of His spirit were agitated. He was moved—moved with a fellow-feeling. As soon as He saw the leper at His feet His very look said, "Alas, poor Soul, what have you suffered! Into what a state of loathsomeness are you brought! You are to men as a living dung hill, but I do not despise you, I love you. I sympathize with you."

Now, my Hearer, if you will come to Christ that is how He will meet you. If you sorrow, He sorrows for you. If you loathe sin, He loathes it more than you do and He has pity for the sinner. He is moved with compassion over your miserable state. As the man came, his lone coming was *rewarded by our Lord touching him*. Nobody else would have touched this man. Peter, James, John and all the rest would have drawn back their garments lest they should come into contact with a leper. As for the crowd, he had no difficulty in making his way, for they gave way before him and he had a ready gangway for himself. But now the Savior *touched* him! There was something wonderfully cheering in that touch!

I have heard of a lady who cared for poor crippled children. She found one which was so deformed, diseased, ill-humored and continually crying that no one felt able to love it. She was nursing the child, but the task was no pleasure to her, for, do what she would, the poor child seemed always to cry and always to act an unlovely part. The good woman pitied the child but could not love it. As she had the poor creature in her lap, she dozed and dreamed that Jesus came and bowed over her and told her that, as to her soul, she, also, was sick and loathsome in His sight—but yet He loved her and would manifest Himself to her.

When she came to herself, she looked at the poor, misshapen child and again felt an aversion to it because it was so wretchedly deformed, so disgustingly full of sores and so passionate and peevish. Under the power of the vision she had beheld, all her feeling of disgust went from her. She felt great tenderness of soul. She pressed the little one to her bosom and kissed its poor, blotchy face. The child opened its eyes with wonder, for it had never been kissed before—and by that kiss a new world was opened to it! The little one became a grateful, happy patient, and was no longer a burden to those who cared for it. How much may come of so little!

Even thus our Lord's personal touch of us heals us! His touch, in effect, said to the leper, "I do not loathe you—I will not keep away from you. I will come very near to you. I will bring a heavenly contagion to you and, instead of your communicating disease, you shall receive of My health." Jesus Christ the Lord will come to you, poor Seeker, and touch you and prove Himself to be your Brother and your Friend! Dear Soul, if *you* will touch Jesus, He will touch you! If you believe in Him, He will manifest Himself to you! And this morning, you that saw no image but your leprous selves when you came here, shall go home seeing no image but the Incarnate God glorified in saving you!

The Lord rewarded his submission with the Sovereign Word, "I will." As I have already told you, Jesus never says to a seeking soul, "I will not." If you but cast yourself at His feet and believe that He is able to save you, He will say, "I will." The, "I will," of an emperor may have great power over his dominions, but the, "I will," of Christ drives death and Hell before Him! It conquers disease, removes despair and floods the world with mercy! The Lord's, "I will," can put away your leprosy of sin and make you perfectly whole! Let there be no mistake about it—I mean you, my Hearer, even *you* upon whom I look at this moment. To you is the Word of this salvation sent!

As a reward to the man's faith, our Lord gave a cure and, to increase the wonder, an *immediate* cure. "Immediately his leprosy was cleansed." How so great a change could be worked we cannot tell. To dissect a miracle is absurd! Every part of the body had been long out of order, certain secretions had been poisoned and certain vessels destroyed. And yet that one command, "Be you clean," restored the leper's ruined frame, then and there! He that created can restore! Can God turn a sinner into a saint in a moment? He can. Niagara comes crashing down from the precipice of rock—could Omnipotence *reverse* those deeds and make them leap upwards? God can do all things! In the moral world He is as mighty as in the outer universe.

The heart is hard as adamant or as the lower millstone—can He make it soft? Yes, in a moment He can make it tender as bleeding flesh. Do you believe this? If so, submit yourself to the Divine energy and ask that this be done unto you! Only believe, without any sort of doubt, that Jesus is the incarnate God and therefore has all power over human nature to pardon and to cleanse. Jesus can save you though you stand between the open jaws of Hell! Jesus can save you though you are foulness itself, through lying soaked in the filthy lye of lust and unbelief. He can, with a Word, make you whiter than snow! Do you believe this? If you believe this, I say, test it by submitting yourself to Jesus that He may be a Savior to you. He will say, "I will, be you clean."

Now to close. I have set the gate of mercy wide open, will you not enter? Oh, that the secret power of the Holy Spirit may gently incline you! By God's help I have thrown out a big net and I hope some of you will be entangled in its meshes. I travail in birth for you this day till you are born unto Jesus! One thing we may say about this poor leper's case—he could

not be any worse if he came to Jesus and was refused—for already he was “full of leprosy.” He could be no loser by his appeal to Jesus! And you, my Hearer, if you will trust in Jesus, you can be no worse. You can but perish if you go to Him. But, Beloved, it is not possible for Jesus to repel a sinner who comes to Him! He has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Though he is a leper. Though he comes without precedent, without promise, without invitation—yet if he does but come the Lord can in no way or manner cast him out! The Gospel cry is, “Come and welcome!” Jesus loves to see men in health. He takes no pleasure in disease and pain. It is a joy to Him to cleanse and to make whole the souls of men. You will be a happy man if Christ saves you, but Christ will have the bigger share of the happiness, since this was the joy that was set before Him—for which He endured the Cross, despising the shame. Our Lord remembers well His wounds by which He procured our healing. He remembers the cruel tree by which He lifts us up from Hell. He remembers His agony and bloody sweat, His Cross and passion! And He has pity on the guilty for whom He died.

I pray that you, also, remember the sufferings of your Lord and trust Him—trust Him fully and alone. Look at once to Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forevermore—by that look you will live! At this moment worship Him! Bow at His feet! While yet in these seats prostrate your hearts before the Son of God and leave yourselves with Him, that He may give you eternal salvation! As surely as the Lord lives, if you, poor lonely one, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are saved! Go in peace and rejoice forever in the great salvation He has given you and look to Him yet more and more all the days of your life!

I remember that on January the eighth, many years ago, I looked to Christ and I am praying that this seventh day of September, I who looked may be the means of leading others to look to Him and live. Why not? Dear men and women out of Christ, why not look to Jesus now? My heart breaks for your immediate salvation! Spirit of the living God, draw them to Christ and to His name be glory forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 1:21-45.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—909, 509, 304.**

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SELF LOW, BUT CHRIST HIGH

NO. 2161

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 31, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.”
Matthew 8:8.*

THIS centurion was a worthy man from the human point of view, but he called himself unworthy when he turned towards our Lord. He was so excellent a man that the elders of the Jews, who were by no means partial to Roman soldiers, pleaded with Jesus that he was worthy. Had he been personally there, he would have repudiated their plea and he did so by the second party of friends whom he sent to our Lord. As one set of friends had said, “He is worthy,” another set of friends was bid to say, in his name, “Lord, I am not worthy.” The worthiest men in the world do not think themselves worthy—while the most unworthy people are generally those who boast of their own worthiness and, possibly, of their own perfection.

We should not have wondered had this man been proud, for he was one of the conquering race and the representative of a tyrannical power. If he were not a very great officer, but only the captain of a hundred men, yet it is not unusual for petty officers to be more haughty than their superiors. If a man is placed in a very high and responsible position, he is frequently sobered by his responsibilities—but a mere jack-in-office is usually greater than the emperor himself! However, this centurion was a man of gentle mold and said of himself, “I am not worthy.” He might have been proud of his popularity among the Jews. Few can bear to be surrounded with an atmosphere of esteem without beginning to esteem themselves much too highly.

He had built a synagogue for the Jews. That is a good thing to do, but it is very possible to build a synagogue and to become a great man in one's own opinion—and stand several courses of bricks higher in pride. Not so, however, this good man who had built a synagogue, but did not presume upon the greatness of his own generosity. He never mentioned it, but said, “I am not worthy that You should come under my roof.” He was a man used to command. He says to this man, “Go, and he goes. And to another, come, and he comes.” They that are known to be obeyed are apt to hold themselves at a high valuation—but this centurion had not fallen into the very common fault. He watched carefully over the sickness of his young servant and was earnest that he might be healed. He was a tender master as well as a liberal neighbor.

If we wished to pick out a truly worthy man, we need not go further than this Roman soldier, or we might fare worse and yet he said, “Lord, I

am not worthy.” Further, note that he did not say, “Lord, the room in which my servant sleeps is not worthy of You—and it is not right that You should climb to the attic where the boy lies sick.” He said, “I am not worthy that You should come under *my* roof”—not even into the best parlor, or the drawing room. It is my house and being such, it is the abode of one who has not dared to seek a personal interview with You and I judge it to be altogether unfit for Your entertainment. He was fearful of troubling the Lord and felt that to bring Him through the streets to his door was more than he could think of for a moment, when a word would suffice to work the miracle he sought.

Beloved Friends, my point this morning is this—I would call your attention to the happy blending of this beautiful humbleness with an extraordinary degree of faith. In his confession of sin he is unsparing—“Lord I am not worthy that You should come under my roof.” But in his confession of faith he is equally clear. “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.” It is a kind of vulgar error that a lowly esteem of ourselves must be connected with a very great diffidence towards Christ. I call it a vulgar *error*, for it is an error both common and baseless. The fact is that high thoughts of self go with low thoughts of Christ—and well they may, for they are birds of a feather. But low thoughts of self should always be associated with high thoughts of Christ—for they are *both* products of the Spirit of God and they help each other.

Our unworthiness is a foil to the brightness of our Lord’s infinite Grace. We sink deep in humility, but soar high in assurance. As we decrease, Christ increases. To make this point clear, I shall say, first of all, that *a sense of unworthiness is very desirable and commendable*. But secondly, that *a sense of unworthiness can be very wrongly used* and can even be made the occasion of grave sin. Then, thirdly, I shall add that *a sense of unworthiness finds a fit companion in a strong faith in Christ*. Of this the text supplies us with an instance. May the Holy Spirit help our meditations and make them truly profitable!

I. First, then, A SENSE OF UNWORTHINESS IS VERY DESIRABLE AND COMMENDABLE. Some of you are destitute of it. I dare say you think it a mean and miserable thing. You suppose it would injure your manliness, lower your self-respect and dampen your courage. Dear Friends, the manliness which feeds on sin is a poisonous fungus which grows out of the rottenness of a corrupt heart. May it be taken away from us! Any condition of mind which is founded on a falsehood must be an evil one—it is a bubble blown by ignorant conceit. Let us not desire more self-respect, manliness, or courage than will be consistent with the truth of things.

I commend a sense of our unworthiness because *it is a sense of what is true*. When a man thinks himself unworthy before the Lord, his thoughts are right. When he feels that he could not be saved by the merit of his own works, for his works are faulty and defiled, then he judges according to fact. Whatever result a thought may have upon us, whether it makes us happy or makes us sad, this is a secondary matter—the main point with

an honest mind must always be—Is it true? If it is a truthful thought, I ought at once to entertain it, cost me what it may. Should the truth create devastation within my soul and destroy all my fair hopes and promising fancies, it must be so, for the most painful effect of truth is better for me than the most flattering results of falsehood.

Better the suffering of truth than the kisses of deceit. The arrow which pierces the heart of self-conceit is a blessing! If you take a very lowly view of yourself, some may call you morbid but they know not of what spirit you are. Humility is healthy—lowliness is no disease. When we think worse and worse of ourselves, we are getting nearer and nearer to the truth. We are by nature depraved, degraded, guilty and worthy of the wrath of God. If any hard thing can be imagined against fallen man, it is assuredly true of him. What worse character can be given to human nature than that which is drawn by the pen of Inspiration in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? Oh, that God would make us lowly in spirit and fill us with a deep feeling of our own unworthiness—for this will only be revealing to us the truth and delivering us from the way of falsehood.

In the next place, note that *a deep sense of unworthiness is no proof that a man has grossly sinned*. It may be viewed in quite the opposite light—if the man had been heinously wicked his conscience would have lost its sensitiveness—and he would not, in all probability, have felt his unworthiness so keenly. He that has high thoughts of himself is not necessarily a man of clean life and, on the other hand, he that has very depreciatory thoughts of himself is not thereby proven to be worse than others. He that feels himself unworthy has something about him that God esteems. We are sure of this, for when the Lord seeks a lodging among men, though He might have His choice of palaces, He nevertheless deigns to say, “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Do not judge men by their estimates of themselves, or if you do, take this as your guide, that he that humbles himself is to be exalted and he that exalts himself is to be abased. He that is great, is little—let him that is little to himself be all the greater with you. God loves not those who boast—He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty.

I commend this sense of unworthiness because *it has a tendency to make a man kind to others*. He who thinks highly of himself, another man may think a nobody. Pride has no heart and will rather turn a sick servant out of doors than seek a physician for him. If a man is proud he will say, “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. I am not to be worried by having sick boys to look after.” Sympathy, tenderness and the valuation of others are strangers in the house of the proud—but they take up their abode with those who think themselves unworthy. Beloved, it is well to think little of yourselves, for then you will have more thought to spare for the sorrows of others. If you know yourself to be unworthy,

you will cheerfully recognize the claims of others and will feel that it is not beneath you to care for the poorest and most obscure.

There is some trace of a work of Divine Grace in your heart when you have a love to your neighbor because you feel that you are no better than he. This is infinitely better than to be so great that you can trample down the crowd in your imperial and imperious dignity and look down with contempt upon the many who have not attained to that eminent degree of honor which you suppose yourself to be enjoying. The great man, the very great man, the highly-deserving man, the person who is a right honorable and worshipful personage rides roughshod over his fellows and crushes them without compunction if they lie in his way and may hinder his design. But the consciously unworthy man, the man who feels that he owes everything to the mercy of God and must still depend upon that mercy and that mercy only, will be tender and gentle towards his fellow sinners and speak comfortably unto them.

We commend, again, this sense of unworthiness because *it makes man lowly towards the Savior*. Of all things that are contemptible, a proud bearing towards the Lord Jesus is the most hateful—yet it is by no means unusual. Some seem to fancy that Jesus is a servant at their beck and call. They talk about His salvation as though He *ought* to give it and they could claim it for themselves and all mankind. If we speak about the Sovereign choice of some unto eternal life, they begin chattering about injustice and partiality—as if any guilty man had a right to anything from the Lord of Glory—except the dreadful right to be punished for his sins! I think I hear the Master say, “May I not do as I will with My own?” Many of those who pretend to be the advocates of Divine Grace are the betrayers of it and snatch from its hand the silver scepter of its sovereignty.

Beloved, it is well in prayer to come to our Lord, not as creditors seeking a debt but as condemned criminals, begging for a free pardon. We have no claim on God. If He chooses to save us, it must be of His own Free Grace. Let us come humbly, saying, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. That You should die for me remains the greatest of all miracles in my esteem. That You should choose me and call me—and pardon me and save me—is a world of wonders at which my soul stands gratefully amazed! Why me? How could You look on such a dead dog as I am!” Our right state of heart, when dealing with our Lord Jesus, is that of the penitent washing His feet with tears, or of the leper who fell at His feet and worshipped Him. If we would come to the Savior of sinners, we must come *as sinners*. We must come as humble petitioners and not as those who proudly fancy that they have a claim upon the Grace of God.

A sense of unworthiness is exceedingly useful because *it puts a man where God can bless him*. “Oh,” you ask, “where is that?” The Lord will only act in conformity with His own attributes. God will always be God and as He will be God alone in Creation, so He will certainly be God alone in the *new* Creation. Our only right position before God is to know that we are undeserving and unworthy while He is holy and glorious. We must hear Him say, “I am God and beside Me there is none else,” or we shall

never look unto Him to be saved. If I am somebody and I stand up with my rights and my claims, God cannot bless me without conceding to me that which He never will concede! How dare I *claim* that which He calls a free gift!

How often have I made this place ring with that voice of the Lord, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"! Depend upon it, God will be God! And if you will not be saved without His leaving the throne of His Sovereignty, then you will perish without hope! He will be King and Lord in the work of salvation—you must take it as His free gift or die without it! If it is of Divine Grace it cannot be of *right*—the things are contradictory! Unutterably great is His pity! Immeasurable is His mercy—but He will have no pity for those whose proud self-will stands out against His Sovereign Grace! O Sinner, if you would be pardoned, you must confess that the Lord is King! Your touch of Jesus Himself must be like that of Thomas when he put his finger in the wound, and cried, "My Lord, and my God"!

You must have Jesus to be Lord and God to you or He will be nothing to you. Beloved, no man will yield to this till he has a thorough conviction of his own unworthiness. We are not worthy to be saved—if we were, it would be of *debt* and not of Grace. We are not worthy to receive any good from the hand of an offended God—if we were, we should make our appeal to justice, and mercy would not be needed! Come, dear Hearers, let us bow before the Lord and admit that He alone is King! Let us confess that we deserve nothing but His wrath—

***"If sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must pronounce You just in death.
And if my soul were sent to Hell,
Your righteous Law approves it well."***

It is assuredly so and therefore we put in no claim, but simply cry, "O God, be merciful to me."

This state of mind, once more, *makes a man in love with the simple Word of God*. This man, because he was not worthy, did not ask of Christ any mystic words or imposing ceremonies, nor even so much as a visit to his house. No, he was content that the Lord should speak the word! It is our proud human nature that so much sighs for finery and pomp—we would gladly go to Heaven by some royal road or glittering way—we want to be saved to music and perfected by paraphernalia! We would like to be forgiven, but we must have a visible priest in full canonicals—and we must have a decorated altar and a show of candles in the daylight! Gewgaws are needed to conceal the humiliation of being saved by pure Grace! But a soul that feels its own unworthiness cries, "Lord, save me in Your own way. Your Word is enough for me. Speak the word of command and it suffices me."

We read, "He sent His word, and healed them" (Psa. 107:20), and a sense of unworthiness will make us content to be saved in that most simple manner. Humble souls love a plain Gospel. I know what some are—they read a book which contains the Gospel and because it is very simple, they say, "This will do for my servant girl, or for the laborer in my field."

But for themselves they seek something more difficult to understand and consequently more flattering to their pride. Many people like a preacher who can confuse the Gospel for them—plain speech offends them. We are overdone with such folk in this generation. Certain people, when they hear what they cannot comprehend, say fervently, “What a wonderful discourse! I delight in a man of culture who raises the tone of preaching above what the lower classes can understand.” They are fools that talk so!

The more plain the word, the more likely it is to be the Word of God. Did not Paul say, “Seeing we have received this ministry, we use great plainness of speech”? The Gospel is not sent into the world for the *elite*, for the few choice souls that read the reviews. The Gospel is sent into the world for “every creature” and if it is meant for “every creature,” it must be made so plain that even non-readers may be able to comprehend it and persons with the least education, or none at all, may be able to grasp it. You, learned Sir, may like a highly-finished Gospel which only a half-dozen gentlemen like yourself can comprehend, but I like the common salvation, the good news for the crowd, the writing which he that runs can read. Does not your candor and humanity admit that it is well that the Gospel should be simple enough for the poor and the illiterate, since they need salvation as well as the educated? I would to God that a sense of unworthiness brought us all down from those pinnacles of the temple of vanity where we stand in mutual admiration, but in awful danger of a fall. Oh, that the heavenly Wisdom would make us willing to be saved like commonplace sinners—willing for Christ not to come to our house, but to give the word of command by which the miracle of Grace would be worked!

Now, Beloved Friends, I leave that point, only putting it thus—Do you know your own unworthiness? I do not ask you whether you have been racked with terrors, nor whether you have been tormented with doubts, nor whether you have been drowned in despair—that may be, or may not be. But are you willing to subscribe to this—that you are not worthy? That a sentence of condemnation may fitly be passed upon you and if you are saved it must be of Free Grace alone?

II. But now, secondly, I have to show you that THIS SENSE OF UNWORTHINESS CAN BE WRONGLY USED and is often perverted to ruinous ends. Yonder is a person who cries, “I hear the Gospel, but *I cannot believe that it is intended for me*. I cannot think I am aimed at in the proclamation of free forgiveness and gracious acceptance.” Friend, why not? “Well, I am unworthy.” Listen! Is there a man on earth who is not unworthy? Hear the words of Jesus—“Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

We are not sent to every *worthy* creature, but to “every creature,” worthy or unworthy! Are you not a creature? Well, then, the Gospel is to be preached to *you*. And do you think God means it to be preached to you as a mere form or a grim farce? Has it no relation to *you*? Do you believe after believing and being baptized according to the Divine command, God

will say, "I never meant that promise for you"? It is atrocious that you should think so! It is a new and grievous sin to imagine that the Lord would run back from His Word! You are unworthy. We grant it—but does that make God false? You are unworthy, more unworthy than you know—but does that prove the Lord to be untrue? Will He tantalize men by sending them a Gospel which is not intended for them? Will He put salvation before them and bid them believe in Jesus for salvation when He never means to give it to them even if they do comply with the conditions He has laid down?

Come, come! I will go with you as far as you like in your confession of your own unworthiness, but I cannot tolerate your making God unworthy because *you* are unworthy! He will keep His Word, however false *you* may be! Every soul that believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life. I have seen this same evil come up in the form of *doubt as to the mercy of God*. When a man's sin appears very great, he is apt to say, "God cannot have mercy upon *me*." Now, Sir, you shall be allowed to be the chief of sinners if you feel yourself to be so—but you cannot be allowed to deny the Omnipotence of God! You are sadly unworthy—but it is in the unworthy that Divine Grace finds its sphere of operation—and you must not limit the power of that Grace which comes to men through Christ Jesus. The Lord delights in mercy and do you doubt it? Do you dare say that He cannot have mercy on whom He will have mercy?

Why, that denies the whole body of Scripture throughout which He declares to us that, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." He testifies that, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Do you deny this? He puts it expressly, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You know these promises! Will you call them lies and so make *God* a liar? Your unworthiness must not be allowed to be used as an argument for the denial of God's glorious attribute of mercy. Does He not say—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"? Which is true, you or God? Depend upon it the lie is not with Him! Oh, let it not be with you—but now, even now, believe that His mercy endures forever and that where sin abounded Grace did much more abound.

Poor creatures have even gone the length of *doubting the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse them*. If you talk so, I must put my hand on your mouth—you must not say another word of that sort! Is it not enough that you have bespattered yourself with sin? Must you now asperse your Savior? Will you trample on the blood of Christ? Will you deny its cleansing power? As He is God as well as Man, our Lord's sacrifice has an infinite virtue in it and we cannot endure that you, guilty as you are, should add to all your former crimes this highest and most ungenerous iniquity of charging the blood of Christ with a lack of cleansing power! Will you call God a liar in regard to his own Son? O Sirs, if you perish it will not be because the blood has too little efficacy—it will be because you have not be-

lieved on the name of the Son of God—and will not come unto Him that you might have life!

We have known persons, under deep distress, *doubt the promise of God*. A great and sure promise, which obviously belonged to them, they have set aside, saying, “It is too good to be true. I cannot believe it because I am so unworthy.” Again I follow the same mode of reply—*you* may be a liar, but do not make God one! *You* may have made many promises which you have broken, but do not charge God with doing so! You have vowed that you would do this and that and you have forgotten your pledges and thrown your promises into forgetfulness—but dream not that God will do so! He is not a man that He should lie!

O Man, I pray you, if you feel as if you were on the brink of Hell, yet do not doubt God’s faithfulness to His promise! Do not cast a doubt upon His truthfulness—that would be a superfluity of naughtiness! I feel, sometimes, that even if I were lost, I must still believe God to be true. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Here, put the killing sword to my bare neck and let me die the death I deserve—but I will still believe that God is good and true! O Jehovah, You do keep Your Word! Such faith is not one jot greater than the Lord deserves of us, for He has never deceived us and He never will. Dear Heart, do take the promise of God to mean what it says and believe it.

Suppose somebody were to trust himself with Christ for salvation and were to believe God would, therefore, save him and yet he should not be saved—what then? I will not suppose such a case! But I will wait till you find me an actual instance and then I will consider how to answer you. Why, if a soul that trusted in the promise of God and fled to Christ for refuge could be sent down to Hell, the legions of the infernal Pit would exhibit him as a trophy of their victory over God! They would carry him on their shoulders and shout, “Here is a proof that God can lie! Here is a proof that Christ’s blood has failed to save a Believer! Here is a sinner that trusted God and, after all, was lost in the teeth of God’s Covenant and Oath!” Do you think that such a thing will ever happen? Let not such a blasphemous idea be tolerated in your mind for a moment! Take the promise as coming from God and, therefore, as assuredly true. Simply believe it, and be happy.

Some, because they are unworthy, *would deny the Lord Jesus the pleasure of saving them*. When Cato committed suicide, Caesar was sad that Cato should envy him the glory of saving his life. Perhaps if Cato had known what Caesar would have said, he had not been so swift with his sword. Beloved, will you deny Christ the pleasure of forgiving you? Will you go to Hell that you may spite the Savior by not suffering Him to save you? Will you look the eternal Father in the face and express a hate so malignant that you venture to say, “I would rather be condemned forever than be saved by the Grace of God?” I cannot believe it! Surely you are not such a madman! Come, come, Man! I will let you use the blackest language about yourself—you may paint yourself as almost a fiend and little better than the devil if this will please you! You shall sweep up Hell, itself,

for epithets, if you will, to set forth your own sin and misery! But, I pray you, touch not God! Deny not His mercy! Doubt not His faithfulness! Refuse not His love but submit yourself to His Saving Grace!

Remember how the Syrian messengers diligently observed whether anything would come from the King of Israel and when Ahab said, "He is my brother," they did, "hastily catch at it," and they said, "Your brother Benhadad." Oh, that you would hastily catch at the Word of Grace, for one word may be enough to bring you consolation! Remember how the Ninevites, when Jonah preached to them, repented on the bare hope of, "Who can tell?" They had not a word of promise to back them up in their confidence, but they ventured upon, "Who can tell but God may turn from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" Come, dear Heart, catch at the smallest hopeful thing. Have a trap for sunbeams as well as for hailstones. Take fast hold upon the sweet Words which God has said. Believe them to be true and risk all upon them. You will never believe better of God than you shall find Him to be.

Alas, there are some whose sense of unworthiness *turns to sullen rebellion*. I will not speak harshly of them, but I do know some few who frequent these courts, of whom I must say that they are their own jailors and tormenters. Like one of old, they must confess, "My soul refused to be comforted." There is another passage in the Psalms which says, "Their soul abhors all manner of meat." Who were these? David says they were fools. I do not say so much as that, dear Friends, of any of you—but I am solemnly afraid it would be true if I did say it. He that refuses all manner of meat is likely to starve and who is to be blamed for it? If you refuse the Bread of Life can we pity you if you die of hunger? To put from you the one and only salvation out of sullen hopelessness is as suicidal as if you stabbed yourself. Will you do so? Will you cry out, "I shall be lost. I know I shall! It is of no use preaching to me! It is of no use praying for me!"?

My dear Friend, are you really going to give yourself up in such an absurd way while you are yet in the land of hope? Here you sit in the dungeon and I stand before you with a free pardon—will you not take it? It is to be had for the asking—will you not ask for it? It is to be had by the willing receiver—will you not receive it? Then I solemnly tell you that if you remain obstinate there will soon be the rope about your neck and you will reap the due reward of your sin and folly. What? You still cry you are so unworthy? We *know* you are—yet a free pardon is granted you if you will accept it! "Oh, but I feel my unworthiness so terribly!" Would a man be hanged out of spite to the clemency of our gracious Queen? Would he choose to be executed because he felt unworthy to be pardoned? Will *you* be lost because you do not feel worthy to be saved?

Man alive, if I were you, I would say nothing against the Grace which would save me, but I would gratefully accept the loving pardon and the tender mercy of my Lord! I feel that it is no business of mine to plead for my own damnation! The devil and I have had many a skirmish and if there is anything to be said against my being saved, I have no doubt whatever that he will be particularly sure to say it. Therefore I do not go

into that line of business—there is no room for me—Satan will do all that can be done in that direction. I find it far more profitable to be picking up all the crumbs of comfort I can find in the form of reasons why I should be saved! In reading the Word of God I find these reasons are as plentiful as blackberries in autumn! God has said it, and I believe it—“He that believes on Him has everlasting life.” I believe in Jesus and I have everlasting life!

[Here came a shout of “Hallelujah!” “Bless the Lord!”] Yes, we can all of us join in that shout and bless God for His free love which has abounded towards us—which love we have seen and known, and tasted and handled. Well might we all join in one long hallelujah and make the streets ring with—“Blessed be the name of the Lord.” But the poor folk I am thinking of sit down and bite their nails and chew their lips and weep their eyes away—and never move an inch towards the one blessing which they need above all things! Let me warn such. Remember, a man may commit suicide as truly by refusing to eat as by taking poison—and you may destroy your own souls by refusing Christ quite as surely and guiltily as if you plunged into open rebellion against the Lord God and ran to an excess of riot. Think of this, I pray you.

III. But now, thirdly—and I am glad to proceed to this much more pleasing subject—A SENSE OF UNWORTHINESS FINDS A FIT COMPANION IN STRONG FAITH IN CHRIST. For, remember first, *when you have no faith in yourself there is more room in the soul for faith in Jesus.* If you have confidence in yourself, that bit of self is filled. But if you have no confidence in yourself, your soul is one great vacuum and you can hold more of Christ. The greater the emptiness, the more room for that which is to be the fullness! If you have no reason whatever why you should be saved except the Free Grace of God in Christ, then take that Free Grace here and now! God help you to do so and may nothing hinder you! Believe the more in Christ because you cannot, in any degree, believe in yourself.

Again, he that has low thoughts of himself *is on a vantage ground as to receiving saving Truth.* He who has true views of himself is likely also to discover the Truth with regard to the Lord Jesus and the Covenant blessings which come to us in Him. Everything depends, you know, upon the measure with which we calculate. If your yard is too short, or too long, everything will be inaccurate in proportion to the faultiness of your standard of measurement. When you have the right measure as to your own lost, ruined and undone condition, you will soon receive the right measure as to the Grace and ability of the Son of God who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him! Jesus is an almighty Savior—there is no horrible crime, no unmentionable offense—no damnable sin which He cannot forgive. There is no criminality or baseness of character which He cannot overcome and remove. “All power is given unto Him,” and in the salvation realm He is King of kings and Lord of lords—and nothing can resist His sway. Do you believe this? If so, trust yourself to Him, now, and the moment you do you will pass from death unto life!

This man, again, through his being so lowly, *had not the conceit to question and doubt.* Doubt is, in most cases, the daughter of pride. Think of a

man criticizing God! Job might possibly have done that while he heard of God by the hearing of the ear—but when his eyes saw Him he abhorred himself in dust and ashes. How dare we quibble at God's way of saving the guilty! It is impertinence! It is insanity! Let us have none of it. This lowly estimate of himself brought the centurion *away from dictating to Jesus how the blessing should come*. A great many persons we meet with are always mapping out courses for the Holy Spirit. They are willing to be saved if they can be saved by a certain mode. They will believe if they see signs and wonders, but no way else. Their peace must come in the way they have selected and in no other—their mind is made up as to how it ought to be.

The centurion might have said, "Lord, come under my roof and then I will believe. The token of Your Presence shall make me sure." He did not ask for signs, or wonders, or comforts. Lots of you here are waiting till you *feel* some singular feeling, or *see* some strange vision, or undergo a special *experience*. You cannot believe Christ's bare Word—you are too proud to be saved by that, only. O my Hearers, if the Lord shows you your utter unworthiness you will be willing to be saved in the simplest manner! You will then ask nothing but this one thing, "Lord, save, or I perish." If Christ had come to the centurion's house, he would have had a very remarkable experience. It would be strange for a Roman soldier to entertain the Savior of the world! But he did not ask for that remarkable experience and peculiar honor. You read biographies, or you hear Christian people tell how they were saved and you put your finger on certain memorable points and you say, "If ever I feel *that*, or see *that*, I will believe in Christ—but no way else."

Thus it seems that the Lord must bow to *your* will and not do as He thinks fit. Truly, the wind blows where it will and none of our dictation will have weight with the free Spirit or with the Sovereign Savior. If Christ had come to the man's house there would have been great joy in it—but he did not ask for that joy. Some will not believe in the Lord Jesus unless they feel great joy. But, dear Friend, is it right to resolve that if you feel no joy you will not believe in Him? No, rather, if you walk in darkness and see no light, trust in the Lord! If all within seems to be contrary to the fact of your salvation, believe in Christ and you are saved—and if every power and passion of your nature should vote you lost, you are *not* lost if you are simply hanging to the bare Word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This man was so brought down that *he was content with just a word*. "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." This is the point to come to. Are you content to believe God's bare Word and to be saved by God's Word alone? You would believe at once if I could work you a miracle, would you not? What would you believe? You would believe in me! And as I do not want you to believe in me, but in Christ, I will not work any miracle! Oh, but if you could feel some very singular emotion you would believe. What would you believe in? Why, in the singular emotion, that is all! You would not believe in God's Word. He that cannot believe God's Word without wonders really fixes his belief in the wonders and not

in God's Word! Take the naked Word of God, which is this—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." What though you neither sigh nor sing, though you neither have dreams nor doubt, though you have neither great comfort nor sharp conviction, believe in Jesus! Sinful, unworthy as you are, say, "This is all my salvation and all my desire. I accept the Lord Jesus as my All in All!"

And after all, *such faith is the greatest of faith*, for the Lord Jesus said, "I have not found such faith, no not in Israel." One man stands up and tells you the ground of his confidence and you learn that at such a time he heard a voice, or in such a night he dreamed such a dream, or during certain months he had an awful experience of fear of Hell, or at another period he felt such joy that he was carried clean away. Do not think less of the Believer who says—

***"My experience is only this—
I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All in All"?***

This last man's experience has the least of dross about it. I find written in the Infallible Book that if I trust the Lord Jesus He will perform His office of Savior upon me. I have trusted Him and He has saved me! "Is that all the witness you have?" asks one. What more witness do I need? I may be able to mention certain incidents which attended my conversion, but *these* are not my hope! I place no reliance upon what I have thought, or seen, or felt! If anybody could prove that I never saw and never felt and never heard anything of the kind, I should not be troubled about it, for one thing I know—I know that I heard that text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," and I did look and I was saved!

What is more, if I did not then look and was not then saved, I do not care two pence to contest the point, for I am looking *now* and therefore I am saved! That is the comfort—we have not to rely on a past faith, but still to go on believing! Looking unto Jesus always! Coming to Him always—that is the true position for peace. If I rest in Christ every day, the fruit of that believing will be seen every day. I must not only believe in Jesus, but keep right on believing. God help you to do so! Set side by side with a deep sense of unworthiness, a high appreciation of the power of Christ to cleanse you from sin and to make you holy, even as God is holy! Make progress in these two things. They will not be like the legs of the lame, which are not equal, but they will be much alike in their happy effect upon your life. Down with self, and up with Christ—

***"Thus while I sink my joys shall rise
Immeasurably high."***

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—

Matthew 8:1-13; Luke 7:1-10.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—100 (VERS. II), 597, 556.

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“A MAN UNDER AUTHORITY”

NO. 2434

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*“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof: but speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.”
Matthew 8:8, 9.*

WITHOUT any introduction, as we have just been reading Matthew’s record of this notable miracle of our Lord, I shall come at once to the text and, first of all, *work out the incident, itself*, and then, secondly, *make use of its lessons for our own practical purposes*. There is much to be learned from this narrative for our guidance at the present time.

I. First, then, let me WORK OUT THE INCIDENT, ITSELF.

A centurion, the commander of the detachment of Roman forces then placed at Capernaum, had a servant exceedingly ill. He was paralyzed, or palsied, but it was with that kind of paralysis which still leaves room for great pain. He was grievously tormented and yet palsied. This man of war was evidently a good master, thoughtful of his servants, and when he heard that the great Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, had come to town, he made the best of his way to Him and beseeched Him to heal his servant. The centurion did not ask Jesus to come down and heal him, but the Savior at once replied, “I will come and heal him.” This was more than the centurion had asked—he had pleaded for the healing of his slave—but he had not expected the personal Presence of the glorious Master!

You remember that on another occasion, a certain nobleman went to Jesus and beseeched him, saying, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus did not go down to the nobleman’s child, but He sent His powerful Word and healed him.

In this case, it was a servant, not a child, who was suffering and, as if the Savior would pay the greater attention where the rank was lower, He showed the condescension of His spirit by saying in this instance, “I will come and heal him. I, Myself, will come and undertake the cure that you request of Me.” See how the Savior grants more than we ask and also how very tender and considerate He is to the poor and needy! He would not have them think that He despises them and, therefore, while to the *nobleman’s* son a gracious word is sent, to the centurion’s servant the Lord proffers a gracious *visit*—“I will come and heal him.” Jesus is very tender and full of pity. He knows the soreness of human hearts in pov-

erty and sickness and He will not inflict upon them any unnecessary wound. No, He will, as it were, go out of His way by a superior gentleness to those who are of the lowest rank, that He may show that He is no respecter of persons after the manner of men.

Now, look what the centurion does. He had requested the Lord to heal his servant. He is very grateful for the kindness of the Savior in offering to come and heal him, but he is a true gentleman, so he will not put the Savior to any personal inconvenience. He feels that it is not at all necessary that the great Physician should take a journey to his house, so he says to Him, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof; but speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed.” The refining power of faith upon the manners of men is very wonderful! Roman centurions were usually rough, bluff fellows who cared for nobody. On many a hard-fought field they received their training for future service and they forced their way up from the ranks, not by competitive examinations, but by blows, cuffs, bruises and wounds.

Yet this officer, being a believer in Jesus Christ, is evidently softened—more or less civilized and cultivated by that very fact! You can notice it often, that the roughest men, the least educated of women, will have about them some of the most gentle and sweetest traits of character when they come to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So the centurion says, “My Lord, glad enough would I be of a visit from Your august Majesty, but I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, and it is not necessary for You to do so. You can heal my servant with a single word. Therefore, I pray You, speak the word, only, and my servant shall be healed.” It is this beautiful, thoughtful, gentlemanly feeling which I cannot too highly recommend, which led him to speak in this way—and what he said is remarkably instructive!

Let me, then, work out the incident in detail.

Notice, first, that *the centurion drew a parallel between himself and the Lord Jesus Christ*. He said, “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me,” or, as the Revised Version better renders it, “For I, also, am a man under authority.” Some have tried to shift the meaning, here, and to teach that the centurion meant to say, “I am under authority, only a secondary officer, and yet I can do so-and-so. You are not under authority, but great and powerful and, therefore, you can do much more.” But that is not the sense at all! The centurion meant that he was, himself, a man under authority, not merely a private individual, but a servant of Caesar! The uniform that he wore marked him out as belonging to one of the legions of the Roman empire! The insignia upon his uniform denoted that he was a centurion, a commander who derived his position and power from the great Emperor at Rome! He was “a man under authority.”

It is not to our great Master’s dishonor, but quite the opposite, that this centurion meant to say, “I recognize in You, also, a Man under authority,” for this blessed Christ of ours had come into the world commissioned by God. He was not here merely in His private capacity, as the Son of David, or as the Son of Mary, or even as the Son of God—He was here as the One whom the Father had chosen, anointed, qualified and

sent to carry out a Divine commission! This officer could see about the Person of Christ the marks of His being commissioned by God. By some means, I know not how, he had arrived at this very safe and true conclusion, that Jesus Christ was acting under the authority of the great God who made Heaven and earth! And he looked at Him, therefore, under that aspect—as duly authorized and commissioned for His work.

Now go a step further. He who is commissioned to perform any work is also *provided by the superior authority with the power to carry out that work*. A centurion, therefore, has soldiers under him. “I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me—men put under me for the carrying out of my commands—because my commands are authorized by the superior authority of Caesar.” So this man seems to say to Christ, “I believe that You are provided with due assistance for the carrying out of all the purposes for which You have come into the world. If I have an order to send,” he said, “I say to my servant, ‘Go,’ and he goes. If I want another to come, I say, ‘Come,’ and he comes. If there is something to be done, I summon one of the men under my authority and I say to him, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” He seems to say to the Savior, “You, also, commissioned and appointed of the great God, must have had servants appointed to wait upon You. You are not sent to a warfare at Your own charges. You are not left to do this work alone. There must be, somewhere about, though I perceive them not, soldiers under You, and servants under You who wait to do Your bidding.” You catch that idea, do you not? The parallel is very clear and I do not wonder that the Savior greatly admired the man’s faith which had enabled him to perceive this great Truth of God!

The centurion went, therefore, a step further in his argument. “I, a man duly commissioned, have under me servants to carry out my will, and *these servants of mine I keep well in hand*.” You know that there are masters who have servants to whom they say, “Go,” and they do *not* go, or to whom they say, “Come,” and they do *not* come—at least, they do not come very quickly! They must say, “Come,” or, “Go,” several times before the servants actually do come or go. And there are masters who may say, “Do this,” and they may again say, “Do this,” and they may yet, again, say, “Do this,” but it is not done! But this centurion was a man who knew how to manage men. He was a master, a real master—not in name, only, but in fact. He did not, within his domain, tolerate anything like delay. He said to Christ, “I say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or, ‘Come,’ and they come.” He did not allow anything like mutiny or the resistance of his will. He had his whole household so well in hand that when he said to his servant, “Do this,” he did it. This is the right kind of master and servants, in the long run, like a master who will be obeyed. The centurion was a disciplinarian of that sort, as kind as the sunlight, for he sought Christ’s aid for his sick servant, but also as true and firm as steel, so that, what he said was to be done, was to be done, and done at once!

He transfers that characteristic to the Savior. He does not, he *cannot*, do Christ the discredit of supposing that He has not His household well in hand—that He has servants who dare to trifle with His commands—that there are agencies which have broken loose from beneath His rule

and will go whichever way they please. “No,” he says, “Savior, commissioned of the Father, You have Your soldiers and Your servants, and I believe that You have them under such control and subject to such discipline that You have but to speak, and the act You order is done, or to command, and it stands fast forever.” I trust that none of us would dishonor the Savior by questioning the Truth of this parallel which the centurion so thoughtfully drew.

Once more, the centurion went a little further and implied that, as Christ had the power to perform the Divine Will and had that power well in hand, *he believed He was willing to direct all that power to the one objective of healing his servant*. I believe that many of you know that the Lord Jesus Christ is Almighty. You do not doubt that fact, but the question is—Is He Almighty to save *you*? You do not doubt that, if the Savior wills it, He can make your spirit whole, but you ask—Will He will it? Will He turn that power in our direction? It does not enter into the centurion’s head that there will be any difficulty in his case. “No,” he seems to say, “King of Kings, Omnipotent Master and Lord, You can, at once, direct an angel to fly to my servant, or You can bid the disease quit my dwelling, or You can speak to the palsy and the palsy, itself, will be *Your* servant and will fly away at once at Your command. You have only to put forth Your power upon my servant and he will at once be healed.”

I want you to believe, dear Hearts, that our Lord Jesus Christ, no longer here in the flesh, but risen from the dead, is clothed with power equal to that which He had in the centurion’s day! No, that He is clothed with even *greater* power, for after His Resurrection He said, “All power is given to Me in Heaven and in earth.” And then I want you to believe that He is prepared to turn all that power in *your* direction so as to work for *your* deliverance from spiritual death, *your* rescue from the power of sin, *your* help in the way of Providence, *your* guidance in the way of wisdom, or whatever, out of ten thousand things, may happen to be the need of this present moment! Oh, that He, who gave such faith as this to the centurion at Capernaum, would give like precious faith to many of you, that you, also, may glorify and bless His holy name!

Now observe that there was only one further thing which was on this centurion’s mind, and that was this. He looked upon Christ as a Master over all kinds of powers, powers sufficient for all His purposes. He looked at Him as having them all well in hand, so that He could have His own bidding done in a moment, and *he was anxious to keep his own place*. You ask me how I know this. I am sure it was so because, when the Savior was willing to come down to his house, he shrank from having such an honor conferred upon him! He seemed to feel that he was being put into a wrong position. He was, himself, only a servant, and he felt that, in the particular character which he was then bearing, he was not worthy that his master should come under his roof. So he said, “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.”

I think that this is the principal thing you and I have to do. When we think about our Lord Jesus Christ, we need not worry ourselves about how He will effect His purposes—how the decrees of God will be carried

out, or how His promises will be fulfilled. The principal thing we have to do is this—to be, ourselves, the Lord’s servants. And when He says to any of us, “Go,” to mind that we go, and when He says, “Come,” to see that we come, and when He says, “Do this,” to be sure that we do it! You would rule the seas? You had better rule *yourself*. You would purge the Church? You had better see to it that your own heart is purged! You would reform the world? Out with you! What have *you* to do with reforming the world till you have first washed your own hands in innocence? Get to your right place and do your own work and it shall be well with you. What are you, after all, but as a tiny worker on a little anthill? You have your one grain of wheat to carry and that is enough for you—do not worry yourself about all the concerns of the anthill! If you do, at least do not fret yourself about the whole planet on which you live, still less about the complete solar system, for what can you do with it if you worry you poor antship even unto death? No, but do your little share of work upon your own anthill! Carry your own grain of wheat to the general store so you shall have answered the purpose of your being and it shall be well with you. May God, even our Lord Jesus Christ, give us the Grace to set Him up very high as Lord and Master, full of power, wisdom and love—and then to set ourselves down very low and to ask that, as His servants, we may serve Him faithfully all the days of our life!

Thus I have, as best I could, worked out the incident, itself.

II. Now, secondly, I want to MAKE USE OF ITS LESSONS FOR OUR OWN PRACTICAL PURPOSES.

First, then, dear Friends, it seems to me that this little narrative should be used to urge us to *believe in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, even if He does not speedily come in the Glory of the Second Advent*. I am frequently talking with Christian friends about these evil days in which we live and of the mischief of the times in which our lot is cast. Certainly, it is not a very cheering subject, and generally I find that friends wind up with some such remark as this—“Well, the comfort is that the Lord Jesus Christ will come very soon. The defections in the professing Church, the blasphemies of the world—are they not among the special tokens that the end is hastening on? When our Lord comes, then all these difficult problems will be solved and all that grieves us will come to an end.” Yes, yes, all that I fully believe, and I look upon the Second glorious Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ as the brightest hope of His Church.

But, still, do you not think that a more practical and a more *God-honoring faith* would say, without putting aside the blessed hope of the Second Advent, “Yet the Lord Jesus Christ can deal with the present evils of the Church and of the world without actually coming into our midst.” He can say a word while yet remaining in the highest heavens and the splendors of the sacred worship of the New Jerusalem! He can speak a word, there, and so effect His purpose *here*. Does not that Truth of God seem to flow naturally out of the faith of this centurion? Our blessed Lord, there is no need that You should, at present, rend the heavens and, in majesty, come down! There is no need that You should literally touch the hills and make them smoke, and that the glory of Your Divine

Presence should consume Your adversaries! If it so pleases You, You can do Your bidding where You are, without disturbing this dispensation, without even working a miracle, allowing things to take their usual course and yet accomplishing Your supreme purposes!

Beloved, I want you to exercise this faith continually. You are, perhaps, in a little Church, and when that goes to the bad, you say, “Oh, well, we cannot make it better! We must wait till the Lord comes.” Not a bit of it! Begin to stir up His strength now, for He can work *before* that Second Advent, and work right gloriously, too! You turn over the newspaper, and you say, “I am weary and well near sick unto death of all this evil.” Yes, and so am I, but what then? “Oh,” you answer, “we had better go upstairs to bed and wait till the Lord comes.” Not at all! Let us go and sharpen our swords and attack the enemies of our Lord more earnestly than ever! We will yet have another battle or two before He comes! Who knows how long He may tarry?

But, whether He tarries or whether He comes soon, let us not be at all disquieted, as though His power could not be seen apart from His Second Advent! The power is given to Him in Heaven and in earth. Even *now* the name of Jesus is “high over all.” He is *now* the great attraction to men, the great destroyer of Satan! Let us not begin, then, to think little of our absent Lord’s present power, and to hang all our hopes upon His literal Presence among us! I say, again, that I am not depreciating that glorious coming of His—God forbid that I should do so! It is still our grandest hope! But let us not put it out of its place so as to make us at all dependent or distrustful about what our risen Lord is able to do for us even now! He can still do “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

I want you, next, dear Friends, *to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ’s unseen servants*. You look around, or you look abroad and try to find men who shall proclaim the Gospel vigorously during the next 20 years—and you say you cannot perceive them. No, nor do I. Now think a moment—when this centurion saw Jesus of Nazareth standing in the midst of His disciples, what did he see? He saw a lowly-looking Man—in appearance very much like other men, but certainly not attended by any court, or guarded by any soldiers! Yet he believed, concerning this Man, that He was surrounded by invisible bands who, in a moment, would do His bidding! I want you to think thus of your Lord. At this day, the Christ of God on earth is attended by all the servants that He needs for His great cause. The scoffers say, “Ah, the old Truth is dying out! Where can they find men of mind to preach it?” But our eyes, enlightened by *faith*, can see a great multitude who shall publish the same old Truth of God until Christ shall come! The mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha—there shall yet be found myriads of burning spirits to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ until He comes again!

I like that couplet—

**“Remember that Omnipotence
Has servants everywhere.”**

You cannot see them, but they are waiting for their Lord’s orders, and *He* can see them! He knows where He has put them and when He will call

them to Himself and bid them do His work! Therefore, let us not be in the least disheartened or discouraged because of what we see, or what we do *not* see. Let us rely upon the invisible—let us *expect* the unexpected! Yes, I *meant* to say, let us *expect* the unexpected. That which we cannot dream of as possible or probable, let us, nevertheless, believe shall be done, for God must be true, Christ cannot be defeated, Calvary never will and never can become, in any measure, a defeat! The death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, must accomplish the purposes for which it was worked out. Let us rest assured, then, that He has His servants waiting to do His bidding.

Now apply this subject a little more closely. I wish that some poor soul would even now *believe that the Lord Jesus Christ could save him at once with a single word*. I know you are apt to think that the conversion of men must be worked in some very particular and special way. Pictorial and descriptive accounts of striking conversions have been repeated so often that many people get the idea that the *scenery* is necessary to the effect! But I want you to put all such ideas away from your thoughts. If you needed any scenery, it is here before your eyes, but you do not need it. Otherwise, for a preacher to stand in this dense heat in the midst of 6,000 immortal souls is scenery enough for anyone who needs something striking! And if the Lord shall come to you and in a moment save you, there will be quite enough of the special and the particular in the mere fact that you are the subject of the Lord’s mighty working! But I want you to believe that this work of Divine Grace upon the soul has not to do with any particular position in which a man is found. The Lord Jesus Christ can save a man when he is in bed, when he is putting on his clothes, when he is walking the street, when he is at his business, or when he is not at his business, but indulging in sin! I could give many instances to show that there is nothing needed in the way of peculiarity of position in order for Christ to save.

When you are at home, you say to your servant, “Mary, go to such and such a place,” and Mary goes. Or you say, “Sarah, come here,” and Sarah comes. If there is anything to be done, you say, “Jane, do this,” and she does it. Yet you do not put a paragraph in the newspaper saying, “Here, on the second day of October, 1887, Jane So-and-So made a cup of tea for her mistress.” It is such a usual and ordinary thing in context with the duties of the household, is it not? Very well, just so is the work of conversion in context with the Church of Christ! Jesus, Himself, has but to speak the word and the great work is straightway done! The surroundings of the sinner do not matter at all to Him. He can now, under the present circumstances in which you are, come to you and pluck you out of death into life—out of darkness into light! Out of all your wanderings He can bring you home at once. If you truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are born of God. If you now, at this very moment, trust Christ with your soul, you have passed from death unto life! If, at this instant, you will have done with every other hope and just come and rest yourself upon the finished work of Jesus Christ, the Savior, you, John, Thomas, Mary, Jane, Sarah—whoever you may be—you are saved! I put it in a

very homely way just now, intentionally, for I want to bring it down to this point—that, just as the centurion said, “I have only to say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it,” so has Christ only to speak the effectual word of His Grace, and the devil will fly, sin will be removed, Grace will be infused and the soul will be saved! Oh, what a mercy this is!

To you who are the people of God I would apply this subject in this way. If it is as I have said concerning the sinner, that he must trust in Christ if he is to be saved, it is also true that you should *believe for your servants, your friends and your acquaintances*. Your children are still unconverted—have you ever prayed for them, believing in the power of Jesus Christ to convert them? One said, the other day, of a certain person, “It seems no use praying for such a fellow as that.” Of course it is no use to pray such prayers as *you* would be likely to present if you talk like that! When you have given a person up, and you have no further hope concerning him, what *prayer* can *you* offer for him? I want you, my Brother, my Sister, to believe, concerning your child, your brother, your friend, your unconverted neighbor, just as this centurion believed concerning his sick servant—that Jesus had but to speak the word and his sick servant would be healed!

“Oh, but the doctor says that this is a case of paralysis! He says that he will never get over it. It is impossible for him to be cured—the disease is complicated in such a peculiar way that we must give up all hope.” Ah, but this centurion does not look at the *patient*! He looks at the *Physician*! and he says, and says rightly, “Jesus can as easily bid this disease depart as I can bid my servant go when I wish him to start upon an errand.” Think not of the sinner, or of the greatness of his sin, but think of the greatness of the Savior! I am sure that if we preached with more faith in Christ, we would see more results. Perhaps you do not see conversions in your work because you keep looking to the people—looking to the sinners—looking to the hardness of their hearts. What has all that to do with Christ’s power to save? If this man, in addition to being paralyzed, could have had fever, leprosy, dropsy and all other diseases at once, it would not have mattered in the least to the great Physician, for when Christ comes on the scene, if you have one impossibility, He can meet it, and if you have 50 impossibilities, He can meet them all just as easily! Granted an Almighty Savior, what room is there for doubt as to what He can do?

I wish I could drive this Truth of God home into some who have been praying for others, but who have never prayed the prayer of *faith*. It is the prayer of *faith* that saves the sick! It is the prayer of faith that saves the sinful! It is the prayer of faith that makes everything of Christ and takes Him at His right valuation as being a Master of every situation! That is what you should do—make Jesus Christ Master of the situation and plead with Him in that capacity, and you shall not plead in vain, and your child, your friend, your servant shall yet be saved.

Let the practical close of this evening’s meditation be that we *believe in Jesus a great deal more than we have ever believed before*. If we have believed in Jesus, let us have still more confidence in Him. I think it is a

sad pity when a man preaches the Gospel with a doubt at the back of his throat. What good can come of his preaching? They sometimes charge us with dogmatism. We would be *more dogmatic* if we could be, for we speak what we know, and testify what we have seen! And if men receive not our witness, we cannot help that. We cannot change our witness because men do not care to receive it! Go forth, minister of God, and preach the Gospel as a *certainty*—and you shall *prove* it to be a certainty! If you preach it as a something which *may or may not* be true, it will paralyze you—and it will not profit your hearers! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I claim from every man to whom I preach that he should believe in Him, accept His great salvation and bow before Him! If you do so, dear Friends, you shall be saved! But if you will not, it is not left as a matter of choice with you—the Lord Jesus has, Himself, declared, “He that believes not shall be damned.” He will not allow us to trifle with Him! He is a Sovereign, He is the King of Kings, and Lord of lords and He calls upon us to kiss His feet, bow down before Him and acknowledge Him as our Lord and God!

Our chief business just now is not so much to think of what Christ can do in the great battle of the present, or what He will do in the dread conflict of the future, but of what *we* have to do, and I think that what we have to do is *to so believe in Christ as to be His obedient servants*. If He says, “Go,” let us go! If He says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,” let us come unto Him! If He says concerning any service, “Do this,” let us do it! And if, instead of bidding us do anything, He bids us *believe* Him, let us come and believe Him—for this will be our wisdom, this will be our happiness, this will be our Heaven—to be the obedient servants of Him who must be Ruler over all! God has decreed that this shall be His Glory—He set Him on His Throne expecting till His foes be made His footstool. If you choose to be His enemies, you shall choose it to your own destruction! But if you will come and bow before Him and be His servants, you shall find that Heaven and earth are waiting at His back to bless you—and you shall go from strength to strength beneath His loving and unfailing care!

The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 8:1-27.**

Verses 1, 2. *When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him.* Great multitudes often count for nothing—it is, here or there, *one* who is the notable individual. There may be a great company come up outwardly to worship, but it is the soul that comes into contact with Christ that is the most worthy of observation. There is no, “Behold!” when the great multitudes are mentioned by Matthew. But there is a, “Behold!” before the record of the leper coming to Christ—“Behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him.” Let us all be of the leper’s mind! Let us worship Christ! Surely we may do so, if only out of gratitude for having escaped

from so dire a disease, but, inasmuch as, spiritually, by nature that disease is upon us, we have good reason to come to Jesus as the “leper came and worshipped Him”—

2, 3. *Saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be you clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* Come, then, to Christ, even though your faith is very incomplete! There may be, as there was with the leper, an, “if,” about it, and an, “if,” about a very vital point, namely, concerning the Master’s willingness, but He will shut His eyes to that imperfection and only look at that part of your faith which is acceptable to Him, that is, your faith in His *power*. “You can make me clean,” said the leper, and Christ dealt with him upon the terms of that, “You can.” And as to the, “If You will,” He blotted that out by saying, “I will; be you clean.” So, sinner, come to Jesus, even though the doubting phrase, “If You will,” shall still linger on your lips. If the leprosy shall show itself even there, in your unbelief as to Christ’s willingness to cleanse you, yet come to Him and He will say to You, “I will; be you clean,” and it shall be with you as it was with the leper—“immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

4. *And Jesus said unto him, See you tell no man.* He will never say that to you or to me, but while He was here on earth, our Lord was very modest and retiring. He wished to conceal Himself as much as possible. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. He sets us an example of what true power is, for true power does not flaunt itself before the eyes of men, or advertise itself at every corner of the street—it longs rather to conceal itself, being well aware that it will have all the publicity that is necessary—for such wonders cannot be hid.

4. *But go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.* The man was to make his cleansing known in the legal way. Our Lord Jesus Christ was very scrupulous to observe the Law while it still stood and we, also, should take care not to observe that ceremonialism which has passed away, but diligently to keep that which still is of Divine authority and of present force.

5. *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion.* There came, doubtless, a great number of people when Jesus entered into Capernaum, but Matthew does not mention them. Yet he does say, “There came unto Him a centurion.” Notice how these *individuals* are brought out by the Scriptural narrative—“a leper”—“a centurion.” May there not also be some here who will come to Jesus and prove in their own persons, or in the persons of others for whom they shall pray, His power to bless and save? The Lord grant it!

5-8. *Beseeking Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof.* What a blessed thing it is to have that sense of unworthiness! Some are very flippant in the expression of their piety. After they have heard half-a-dozen sermons, they attain to perfect holiness! I wish that they were half as deeply *humbled* and knew half as much of themselves as this centurion did! “Lord, I am not worthy.” That

is a good lesson for anyone to learn. Still, when we can say, “Lord, we are not worthy,” do not let us, therefore, think that Christ may not come to us. Let us ask Him to come whatever we may be, for our lack of worthiness must not stint or limit the condescension of our Divine Master. However, in this case, albeit that the centurion seemed almost to decline the privilege of having Christ come under his roof, yet he gave to Jesus high honor by believing in the power of His word even without His Presence

8, 9. *But speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority.* He was, therefore, only a subordinate officer, for he was subject to his superiors.

9. *Having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it.* He left the Savior to infer what he meant, namely, that Christ, who acted under the authority of God, could readily speak to palsies and fevers, and say to them, “Go,” and they would go just as quickly as a soldier would obey his officer’s command. Brother, you are a Christian and you have known the Lord for 20 years—have you as much faith as this Roman centurion had? Do you believe that your Master’s word can remove sickness, that He can clear difficulties, that He can supply needs, that He can break bonds, that He can send, by whichever angel or man He chooses, whatever blessing He pleases? Oh, that we did all believe as truly as this man did!

10-12. *When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Some of the rank outsiders shall be brought in by rich mercy, while others, piously trained, nursed at the very gates of the Church, shall, nevertheless, for lack of faith in Christ, be utterly cast away!

13. *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the same hour.* Oh, pray for your friends, pray for your children, pray for your servants! And if you have faith like that of the centurion, according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you!

14, 15. *And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick of a fever. And He touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.* Peter had a wife, you see. Romanists say that he was the first “pope,” therefore the first pope had a wife and, mark you, if other popes had had wives, there would not have been any declaration of “infallibility,” for there is no man who will believe himself to be infallible if he has someone near enough to remind him that he is not! But one evil usually goes with another—so it is recorded here that Peter had a wife as a kind of incidental rebuke of the sin of compulsory celibacy that was yet to be committed by priests and “popes”!

16. *When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick.* Was not that centurion a kind of prophet? He had not long spoken about Christ’s command over this man and that before Christ had an opportunity of putting His words to the test, Jesus cast out devils, and cast out sicknesses—

17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.* That is an amazing quotation and it teaches us that Christ has power to heal because He “Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.” Am I not to understand, from the context, here, that Jesus Christ’s power is to be seen in His suffering, in His humiliation and especially in His wounds and in His death? He would have had no power to meet our maladies if He had not, Himself been compassed with infirmities for our sake! O blessed Master, You teach us where power lies—not in grandeur, but in self-sacrifice! Not in personal glory, but in personal humiliation!

18-24. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead. And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea.* We may go where Christ goes and yet we may get into danger! Never judge the rightness of your path by the Providence which attends it. You may have safe sailing to the *port of destruction* and you may have a rough voyage when you are bound for Heaven! “When He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea”—

24. *Insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep.* Weary with His toil, He lay down to rest. There was His *Humanity* serenely confident and, therefore, sleeping through the storm! There was the *Glory* of His innocence—“He was asleep.” And there was also the majesty of His Deity, only waiting for the moment when He should arise and still the tumult of the winds and waves.

25-27. *And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish! And He said to them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?* Glory be to His blessed name! Amen.

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

A BLESSED WONDER

NO. 936

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 12, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed,
Verily I say unto you,
I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”
Matthew 8:10.***

You remember that we commenced this morning's sermon by observing that Jesus is not reported to have marveled either at the gigantic architecture of the Temple, or at the wonderful discipline of the Roman army, or at the profound knowledge of the rabbis. He only wondered twice, according to the record, and on both of those occasions he marveled concerning *faith*—once at the absence of it, and once at its presence.

In the case which we spoke of this morning, He marveled at the unbelief of His fellow townsmen. In the narrative before us, He marveled at the faith of the centurion. From this we learn that we ought not to be so engrossed with the wonders of science and of art, or even with the wonders of creation and of Providence, as to become indifferent to the marvels of Divine Grace. These should occupy the very highest place in our estimation. The seven wonders of the world are nothing when compared with the countless wonders of Grace.

That man must be foolish who does not admire the works of God in Nature. He is frivolous who does not trace with awe the hand of God in history. And he is even more unwise who despises the masterpieces of Divine skill and wisdom which are to be seen in the empire of Divine Grace. In the kingdom of God the wise man only wonders once in his life, but that is always—fools think not so, but they are void of understanding. The museum of Grace is richer than that of Nature. A heart broken on account of sin is a far greater wonder than the rarest fossil, whatever it may tell of ancient floods of the sea or convulsions of the land.

An eye that glistens with the tears of penitence is a greater marvel than the falls of Niagara, or the fountains of the Nile. Faith that humbly links itself to Christ has in it as great a beauty as the rainbow, and the confidence which looks alone to Jesus, and so irradiates the soul, is as much an object for admiration as is the sun when he shines in his strength. Talk not of the pyramids, the Colossus, the golden house of Nero, or the temple of Ephesus—for the living temple of God's Church is fairer far. Let others glory in the marvels they have seen, but it is mine to say unto my Lord, “I will praise You, for you have done wonderful things. Your love to me was wonderful. Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.”

Consider well the work of God within the human heart. Consider well the faith which lies at the beginning and foundation of spiritual life, and you will have as good cause for wonder as the Savior had when He marveled at the centurion's faith. The peculiar point for admiration may not be the same, but all faith has in it admirable elements, and like its Divine Author, may be called "wonderful."

I shall speak upon what there was that was so remarkable in the centurion's faith, making practical remarks in a kind of running comment as we pass along. And then if there should be any fragments that remain to be gathered up, we shall try again to apply them in the same style of personal application.

I. What was there, then, about the centurion's faith so remarkable that Christ wondered at it? Methinks the first point was THAT THERE WAS SUCH FAITH FOUND IN SUCH A PERSON. The Lord seemed to imply this when He said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." As if He might have expected to find it in Israel, among an instructed people, among a people to whom the oracles had been committed—but He could not have expected to find it in a Gentile, in a Roman, in a soldier—in one who was apparently an unlikely subject for spiritual influences.

From this I gather that the most astonishing and acceptable faith may be exercised by the most unlikely persons. Here was a Gentile believing, a Gentile believing far better than one of the seed of Israel. Rich Grace thus brought the far-off one into the full blessing of the kingdom. Here was a soldier believing, a Roman soldier believing in the Lord! Roman soldiers in Judea were not as our armies are—a guard protecting their native hearths and homes. They were the servants of tyrants, treading down the liberties of the Jewish people, and obnoxious, of course, in the highest degree to the Jews.

And yet for all that, though the soldier's trade in those days was oppression, and his wages were plunder—here was a soldier believing in Jesus Christ! And, to increase the wonder, this believing legionary was not a common soldier merely, but one who occupied a position of responsibility, bringing to him no small degree of honor and of respect. Alas, the honors of this world are seldom helpful to belief. When a man receives honor of men, he too often finds it impossible to receive the Gospel as a little child. All these things met in the centurion, and yet he was not only a Believer, but a surpassing Believer, even to a marvel, so that Christ wondered at his faith!

My dear Friend, though you should happen to be in the most unlikely circumstances of body and of mind for you to be converted and to become a Christian, yet I see not what hinders your being so converted if the Lord blesses the Word. If you have been brought up altogether apart from the influences of religion, yet remember, so also was this centurion, and he became a master Believer. Why should not you? Though the ground of your heart has as yet never been tilled and remains like the virgin soil of

the primeval forest, yet my Lord may get a gracious crop out of your heart not many days after the tillage of the Law and the sowing of the Gospel shall have been tried upon you! For by His gracious touch He can turn a barren heath into a fruitful field.

Though you feel tonight as waste as the moorland, yet you need not despair. Though now dewless as Gilboa, He can water you as plenteously as Hermon itself. The barren woman shall yet keep house, and the desolate shall rejoice in her children. Nature's death may yet yield to the Spirit's life.

Perhaps you follow a calling which is supposed to be inimical to religion, but even then, despair not. Why should not the Master call you by His Grace, and constrain you to leave the calling, as Matthew left the receipt of custom? Or else through the power of Grace within you, enable you to exercise your calling without sin? You have, perhaps, never read the Bible—why should you not begin now? It is possible that you have been a disbeliever in it, yet there are such arguments in its favor—I am not about to trouble you with them just now—but there are among them *living* arguments which may convince you before you are quite aware that your prejudice is being removed.

Some of us have tasted and handled of the Word of Life, and are witnesses of the power which comes with the Gospel. We are, ourselves, living witnesses of what it can do in breathing peace into the soul, and in putting sin away! And I see not why you also should not prove it and rejoice in it. Yes, and even distance others in the race of Grace. That tinker playing cat on Sunday, on Elstow Green, did not look a likely man to write the Pilgrim's Progress, and yet John Bunyan did it. That blaspheming sailor cast ashore on a slave-trade settlement on the coast of Africa, and there made a slave himself, did not look as though he would become a minister of evangelical godliness, whose name should be sweet and full of savor to after generations, and yet such was John Newton!

There is no reason, because of the darkness of the past, why the future should not be bright, for there is One who can blot out sin and pass by transgression and iniquity. However hostile your nature may be to the Gospel and to spiritual Truth, there is power in Jesus Christ to change that nature, and to cause you, the most unlikely person, to become a leader in His camp—a mighty trophy of His Sovereign Grace. Is it not written, "I was found of them that sought Me not. I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me"? "I will call them My people, which were not My people. And her Beloved, which was not Beloved"?

Surely angels rejoiced when they heard the Roman legionary say, "Speak the word, and my servant shall be healed." Surely the disciples, as they clustered around the Master, said one to another, "What strange work of Grace is this, that this soldier should stand here and speak better than any of us concerning the Truth and the power of the Lord Jesus!" I do pray to see some in this place become equally remarkable trophies of

Christ's power! I do expect to see throughout this, our country, the most unlikely persons converted. The great trumpet shall be blown and great sinners shall find that the day of their redemption has come. From the east and from the west, the far-off ones shall gather to the feast of love, while the astonished Church shall cry, "These, where have they been?"

The Church could not have thought that Saul of Tarsus who once persecuted the Church would have become her chief Apostle, and yet so it was! And so it shall be still while the King sits on His Throne. He will yet come down again and take out of the ranks of the enemy the stoutest hearted men, and make them bow their knees before His majesty, and afterwards He will enlist them beneath His own standard, and send them forth conquering and to conquer.

The prey shall be taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered. Grace shall yet more abound where sin abounded. As in the present case, the marvel of Grace shall be the more memorable because of the singularity of the person enjoying it. May God make YOU such a person, and such a wonder, too!

II. The next point concerning which our Lord may have marveled was THE SUBJECT OF THE CENTURION'S CONFIDENCE. He had a servant who was struck with palsy. This was a disease which, at that time at any rate, if not at present, was reckoned to be utterly incurable. In the case of this servant the disease was of the most aggravated kind, for he was "grievously tormented." The strength of his constitution battling with the paralysis caused an unusual agony.

It had come to a climax, for he was at the point of death. Though a cure of the palsy had never been heard of, and was a most astounding miracle if ever worked, this man believed that Christ could heal the palsy and could at once restore his servant to perfect health. Yes, here was a faith which took an impossibility into its hand and threw it aside—faith which knew that all things were possible with an Omnipotent Savior—faith which saw in Christ that Omnipotent Savior, and therefore raised no question as to His ability or willingness.

Dear Hearers, this is the kind of faith I would that we all exercised. I will suppose, dear Friend, that tonight your case, your *sinful* case, is like that of the centurion's servant's *physical* case. You believe your sin to be incurable, that is to say, unpardonable. You think, also, that if it were pardoned as to the past, yet you would be sure to go back to it again, as a dog returns to his vomit. You therefore look upon your case as being an utterly hopeless one. O not so! Not so! He who can heal the drunkenness that lies in one, or the tendency to lust that lurks in another, can cast out any and every sort of sin, and cast it out with a word.

There is no transgression too black for His blood to wash out the stain, and there is no propensity to sin too strong for His Spirit to control and at last destroy. Cures of all cases of spiritual disease are possible with Him.

The blackest sinner may yet become the brightest saint. At the gates of Hell you may sit tonight in your moral filthiness, and yet not only at the gates of Heaven may you yet stand in the brightness of holiness, but within those gates you may yet be enclosed in the perfection of spotlessness with all the rest who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

The centurion's faith was this—he believed that there were no impossibilities with Christ—and he left his palsied servant in those gracious and mighty hands. And, my Friend, your faith, if it is to save you, must do the same. It must take your case at its worst, and yet believe that Christ can save even to the uttermost. Your sin has been aggravated—confess it! Your sin is in its own self unpardonable—Justice writes it with a pen of iron—and no tears of repentance or endeavors after reformation can blot it out. Only Sovereign Grace, fresh from the altar of atoning sacrifice, can make an end of sin. Confess all this!

You are far gone from hope—confess it! Your natural estate is perilous, no, deadly—confess it! Make out your case to be as bad as you can conceive it to be—it is so—and when you have done so, say, “But for all that, I believe that God in Christ Jesus can forgive me, and I rest my guilty soul at the foot of the Cross where expiation was made for sin. I believe that Jesus there put my guilt away, and thus I have peace with God.” If you believe that you are a *little* sinner, and that therefore, because of the moderate degree of your guilt, Christ can save you, you know nothing about it. But if knowing your sin to be great, heinous, aggravated, damnable—and you can still come to Jesus—you do glorify His name.

If you do avow yourself to be the chief of sinners, and yet do believe that He can save you, and rely upon Him to do it, you have a marvelous faith—a faith that will bring you to Heaven. Not to forget the guilt of our sin, and then trust Jesus—but to *remember* our sin with more shame and grief than ever, and yet to trust in the cleansing blood of Jesus—this is faith, this is the wonder of the skies! Be of good cheer, O Sinner, if all your reliance leans on the Mediator. In spite of ten thousand times ten thousand accusing sins, you are a saved man! O that others like you would place their dependence upon the same sin-forgiving Savior!

May the Eternal Spirit draw them now to Jesus, and give them immediate salvation by precious faith in a precious Christ. Faith is the vital point, the one necessary matter—may it be worked in you now. Faith can soon remove the difficulties which stand in your path, and make you a straight road to Glory, for it is a wonder-worker, and all things are possible to it—

***“It says to the mountains, Depart,
That stand between God and the soul.
It binds up the broken in heart,
And makes wounded consciences whole.
Bids sins of a crimson-like dye
Be spotless as snow, and as white,***

And makes such a sinner as I

As pure as an angel of light.”

III. Thirdly, another wonder was THE ENERGY OF THIS MAN’S FAITH WHICH LED HIM TO DEAL WITH THE CASE IN SUCH A BUSINESS-LIKE WAY. Alas, alas, the hackneyed form which most men’s religion assumes! They take it up at second-hand, or they cut and shape it after somebody else’s fashion. Not so this man. I do not know that he had ever had a religious acquaintance, but falling in probably with some of the books of Scripture, he read them, and he discovered that Jesus Christ was what He professed to be—the Son of God and the Savior of men.

Having come to this conclusion, he at once trusted in Him as a matter of fact, not as a matter of profession. And having trusted in the Savior, he acted upon the trust in a business-like common-sense manner. He sat down and he considered with himself thus—“I am a captain. I say to a soldier, Go, and he goes. I say to another, Come—he comes. I appoint my servant who waits upon me to do certain business, and he does it. Now, this Jesus Christ is a far greater commander than I am. All the powers of nature must therefore be under His check and control. He will only have to *say* a thing, and it will be done.

“If He were to bid the heavens be clothed in blackness, they would don the sackcloth, and if He were to command the clouds to disappear, and the sun to shine or to stand still, the obedient sun would know its Master, and yield a willing homage to Him.” The centurion, according to the best rules of argument, was led to this conclusion—and his practical mind made immediate use of the inference. That Jesus can accomplish His will with a word is only what you and I ought also to infer from His nature and office, and that He is ready to exercise that power is clear from His Character and His promises.

“Well, then,” said the centurion, “I have but to go and ask Him, and if His heart is moved with my piteous story, He will only have to say it in one single word, and, bad as my servant’s case is, he will be cured at once, and I shall be the happy master of a healthy servant.” Now, that was fine reasoning. That was treating fact as fact, and not as we too often do, as if it were pious fiction. This godly soldier was no mere theorist, no superficial holder of an unpractical creed, but a doer of the Word, a genuine matter-of-fact Believer in what he held to be true.

Now, I do pray that each one here may be able to treat the Gospel as a matter of business. Treat it as a matter of fact, and may none of you trifle and toy with it, nor think it to be a mere subtlety for the consideration for theologians, a theme of dispute for theorists and men who merely think and talk. I pray you make the one thing necessary the first and true business of your lives. If anything is real, surely eternal salvation must be. Your condition before God is not a subject for cloudland. It belongs to the common-sense, practical, everyday, life-business of men.

See, now, how it stands. You have broken God’s Law. You are guilty. God must punish you. Eternal Justice demands it. But the Lord Jesus

came into the world to provide a way by which, without dishonor to God's Justice, sin may be forgiven. That way was Substitution. Christ stood in the sinner's place, was punished with the sinner's punishment, and bore the wrath of God for sinners. But for what sinners? For all sinners? No, but for such as will trust Him. I, then, being guilty, come and trust Him. I see good reason to do so. He is God, and He was appointed by God to be a Propitiation for sin.

What God appoints, and God delights in, I may truthfully and confidently accept. I do accept Him. I do now trust my soul with Jesus. Then I am saved. My sin has gone. My iniquity has ceased to be. I am a saved soul. Come and reason thus with yourself. Oh, I pray the Holy Spirit to help you to do so. Let this be the subject of your soliloquy, "If I were Omnipotent, as Christ is, it would be as easy for me to move a mountain as a mole hill. And therefore is it as easy for Him to take away my great sins as another's little sins. If there is a universal cleansing fluid, it will take out great spots as well as little spots, and therefore the blood of Christ can wash out my great sins as well as the lesser sins of other people.

"One stroke of the hand, and the bill is receipted. It is as easy to write a receipt for a bill of fifty thousand pounds as for a bill for ten pence. So if Jesus Christ, who has already paid Believers' debts, calls me pardoned and absolved, it is done. He has the power to do it, and I rely upon the merit of His atoning blood." O that you would now do so! And I will add, O that you would do so now! These Sundays, how they are flying! Your time, how it is passing away, and with your time your opportunities for finding mercy!

It does not seem long ago since we were in the depth of winter, and now we are getting near the longest day in summer, and soon the wings of time will bear us again into months of frost and snow. How long halt you between two opinions? Are these delays to continue forever? Will you always go on hearing about these things, but never attending to them? I do pray you by the flight of time, by the certainty of death to each of you, and your ignorance of its appointed hour—seek the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near. Lay hold of eternal life. And, like the centurion, come and put your trust in Jesus to save you. And though your faith will be marvelous, yet the honor shall be all to Him, and the glory to His blessed name.

IV. I will pass on. Another point of wonder in the centurion's faith was THAT HE DID NOT ASK FOR A SIGN. Many of the great ones of old, when God was about to fulfill a promise, needed to be strengthened for service by a sign. Gideon was a man of great faith, yet he needed first to have the fleece wet when all was dry around, and then to have the fleece dry while the threshing-floor was wet. He needed to hear the soldiers' dream of the barley cake that tumbled upon the tent of Midian. He wanted signs and wonders or his heart would have fainted.

With many others the desire for signs and wonders has been a great barrier to simple faith. Now the centurion did not say as Naaman did, "I thought He would surely come and put His hand over the place and recover the paralytic." No, he did not need Jesus to come to the house and say a word, or offer prayer, or even to touch the sick with His hand. "No, Master," said he, "there is no need for You to come. My servant is far away, lying sick and near to death. You need not stir an inch—say in a word, and he will be healed. Distance is nothing to You. Your word at a mile's distance can cure as well as your touch."

Oh, but this was grand faith! He wants no visible sign! His spiritual eyes see the invisible, and his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord! His unshattering faith requires no crutch. He wants nothing, but only prays that the Master will say the word! I do not think he expected to hear the Lord speak that word aloud, for in Luke he is described as praying Jesus not so much to say a word as to "say *in* a word." Perhaps he remembered the language of the Psalmist when he sang, "He sent His Word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions," and he looked to that same creating and almighty Word for the restoration of his servant.

Now, Brethren, transfer this to yourselves. I pray the Holy Spirit that many here may have the faith which does not crave for signs and wonders. "I could believe," says one, "that I were saved, if I felt some marvelous work of the Law within my heart. I have heard of others who have been ready to despair, and have been tempted to commit suicide. If I felt as they felt I could then think that there was Divine Grace for me." Ah, poor Simpleton. You know not what you say. Be glad to be delivered from such dreadful things as these, for if some have come out of them to Christ, I am afraid that some have been brought by them to the halter or to some other suicidal death.

Do not desire the terrors of Hell, but accept the tender mercy of our God whereby the Dayspring from on high has visited us. Horrors and dreads, if you felt them, would not help you! Believe me, they would do the very reverse. "No," says another, "I should like to feel an extraordinary sensation. If under the sermon tonight I should be struck down, as I have heard some have been in the Irish revivals. If I felt some remarkable physical, mental, or spiritual emotion such as I have never experienced before, I should say that this was the finger of God." My dear Hearer, why be so foolish? God's Word tells you that if you trust Jesus Christ you are saved. Is not God's Word enough?

Will you not take the assurance of God without laying down this and that as a condition for your Savior? Some of you talk and act as if the great God must do what *you* like, or else you will not believe Him! I have known persons who were once in the habit of giving away roast beef and other gifts to the poor at Christmas time, but who have given up the doing of it because of the picking and choosing of those who came to receive the

gifts. One woman actually took back her meat because she wanted a piece of beef for boiling, and would have a boiling piece or none at all.

I have not wondered when persons who have been charitable and have not been allowed to do as they will with their own, that they have ceased to distribute their alms as before. Reason teaches us that when we receive benefits we are not to dictate to our benefactors. And is God, when He saves your soul, to let a beggar like you be a chooser about the way in which it is to be done? Are you to exact this and exact that, or else you will not condescend to be saved? This is infamous pride! Be ashamed, I pray you, be ashamed to indulge in it any longer. No longer demand new proof of God's truthfulness in the form of feelings and excitements. God's Word is worthy of your trust.

If you had these remarkable feelings, what would their evidence amount to if you looked at them as a mere man and not as a fanatic? If you were to meet an angel tonight, and he were to tell you that you would go to Heaven, you would have no reason to believe him, unless you believe in Jesus Christ. An angel who gave you any comfort while you remain an unbeliever would be a devil, even though he shone like an angel of light. But if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are baptized, you have God's Word for it that you are saved, and what do you need an angel's word for? Is not the word of Jehovah sufficient? Is a creature's testimony necessary to make the Lord's word worthy of credence?

No, say others, but we should be comforted if we could dream remarkable dreams. Now, what could there be to assure the soul as to its salvation in the vain and frolicsome motions of the mind when they are free from the bridle of reason? Dreams may sometimes happen to come true, but nine times out of ten they are nonsense. If good doctrine and wise warning are brought home to the heart by a dream, it should have none the less our most earnest heed. But if presumption should have a thousand visions to back it, it would be none the less dangerous. It would be a dreadful thing to hang one's confidence upon such a fragile thing as a dream.

No, no, Sir. You have God's Word, and will not believe it because you pretend that a dream would help you, and confirm your confidence. As if God were not to be trusted so well as your dreams! O be not so foolish, but like this centurion say, "Speak the word only." Brethren, we must accept the bare Word of God in Christ Jesus as the basis of faith, for no other foundation is to be depended on for a moment. Not your *feeling*, but His promise must sustain you. Can you not consent to this? If you will do so you shall have peace. If you will come to God like that, you shall see many signs and many wonders, before long, of a better sort than you have ever dreamed of.

Your joy shall be like a river, and your peace shall overflow. But you must first come without these things. Come, and take God at His Word, and do Christ the honor to believe in Him without anything to corroborate

what He says, and you shall find the blessing coming to you afterwards. This was a remarkable point in the centurion's faith—that he believed without demanding a sign.

V. Fifthly—one very remarkable point in this good man's faith was HIS CONVICTION THAT CHRIST COULD CURE HIS SERVANT AT ONCE, "Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." Ordinarily a successful combat with disease requires time. The surgeon must drive out from his strong entrenchments the fiend of disease, must chase him from one defense to another, and perhaps even then he may fail to dislodge his foe.

It may be many months or even years before some forms of disease can be eradicated. But the centurion believed that the word of Christ could remove the palsy, and do so at once. And why not? Omnipotence knows nothing of time any more than of any other of the hindrances which impede mortal progress. To the eternal God time is nothing. To Him a thousand years are as one day, and on the other hand, one day is as a thousand years. The faith that saves lays hold on this Truth that Christ Jesus who is now at the right hand of God can, in a moment, save the soul.

The dying thief did not imagine that his salvation would occupy a month. He simply said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," and the answer was, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise"—saved *that day*, saved at once. The pardon of sin is not the result of weeks of fasting, and months of repentance, and years of mortification. The sinner's eyes look to Christ and the sinner's sin is gone at once—

***"The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through Christ's blood."***

The new birth of the soul—the regeneration of our nature by the Holy Spirit—is not a work requiring a long period of time. It is in a moment that the Spirit of God visits our hearts and turns the stone to flesh. It may seem as though I talked without consideration, but yet I speak the words of Truth and soberness when I say that if the Lord puts forth the fullness of His power, sinners sitting in these galleries or in this area, might be saved before that clock ticks again. Who shall restrain the Lord and say what He can, or cannot, do?

All things are possible with Him, and we will therefore add, that if each one of you tonight were led to put his trust in Jesus, what I said was possible would be literally done. You would all retire, each one saved, and saying, "Blessed be the name of the Lord who has taken us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and set our feet upon a rock, and put a new song into our mouths, and established our goings!" O that You would do this, good Lord, that Your name might have praise!

VI. Once more. One other point of wonder. THROUGHOUT THIS WHOLE STORY THE CENTURION'S DEEP HUMILITY WAS CONSPICUOUS, BUT THAT DEEP HUMILITY, INSTEAD OF WEAKENING HIS FAITH, ONLY STRENGTHENED IT.

Pride is the associate of presumption, but humility is the companion of assurance. He who thinks that it needs but little Grace and power to save him, that he is, in fact, better than most, and as good as any, cannot believe at all. He may be able to *presume*, but he is unable to *believe*. Doubtless, presumption would grow well in the soil of his heart, but a broken heart, alone, becomes a believing heart, and an assured heart must first be a humble heart.

The centurion had done good service for the Jews. He loved their nation and had built them a synagogue. They thought a great deal of him, but he thought very little of himself. He said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof." I am not only not worthy of the blessing I ask, but not worthy that You should come into such communion with me as to tread my floor. Deeply humbled was the man, and you, also, must have a humbled spirit to become a Believer. I have met with a great many who, when they have felt a sense of their sin, have said directly, "I cannot believe in Christ."

Then you fancy, do you, that if you had *less sin* you could believe? No. I tell you it is not so. If your sense of sin is a hindrance to faith, your sense of righteousness would be infinitely more a barrier. To believe that I shall be saved because I am not a sinner is not faith. But to know that I am one of the very worst of sinners, and very guilty and very vile, and yet I place my trust in Jesus—this is faith. I do love, when I look at my sins, to look at the Cross, too. If I have been of service to God, and the Holy Spirit has helped me to do some good thing for the Church, it is scarcely faith to say that I then am at peace. Why, that is *seeing*, not believing!

But when I see my imperfections, and bemoan my follies, and lay my mouth in the very dust, and, by God's Grace can say—"Notwithstanding all this, I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him"—that is faith. And I pray God that you may exercise it every day. If my sins were worse than they are, or if I could have a deeper apprehension of them, I would nevertheless rejoice that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. And, by His Grace, from that rock of confidence my soul should not remove.

My Brethren, do not imagine that to have faith in Christ you have to work yourselves up into the idea that there is some good thing in you which can recommend you to Christ. You are sailing on the wrong tack altogether when your trust leans on *self*. Faith is to come to Christ *blind*, and believe that He can open your eyes. It is to come to Him *poor*, and believe that He will make you rich. It is to come to Him as having *nothing* of your own, and take what He has to be yours forever and ever. It is, in fact, to see *death* written on the creature, and to find life in Him—corruption written on your best righteousness, and to count it to be as dross and dung—and *then* to take Jesus Christ to be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, your redemption, and your all.

I have thus, I trust, set forth what faith is in as simple a way as I know how to speak, and yet, simple as this statement is, if any of you do so believe, there will be glory brought to God by it—for no man ever did believe except the Holy Spirit led him to believe. “What?” says one, “such a simple thing as that?” Permit me to observe that it is the simplicity of faith that makes it difficult. If it were difficult there would be many who would attempt it. But because it is nothing but—“Believe and live,”—proud hearts will not yield to it. It is as simple as the first elements of spelling, and because it is so, men cannot understand it, for their pride must surround it with mystery.

Men would desire to be wise, and therefore they puzzle themselves with that which a child may understand. What is wanted for a man to know Christ is for him to get his conceit of education winnowed out of him. I mean that what he *thinks* to be education must be all pulled away—that he may be made like a little child—to sit down at Jesus’ feet and trust Jesus as a child believes its father’s word. It is not going up that most of you want, but pulling down. It is not getting good, it is feeling you are *not* good which is the main matter for most of you to look to. It is not being better in your own esteem—it is being utterly undone in your own esteem—which will make you ready for Christ.

This you need, and when you have it I believe you will then come and cheerfully lay hold on this blessed, this simple way of salvation! It is suitable to the vilest, and yet suitable to the most moral. It is fitted, as one said once, to poor old women who are on their dying beds, and equally fitted to the most profound of philosophers—fitted for the poor, fitted for the rich—fitted for me, fitted for you. O that you would have my Lord to be your strong refuge!

May my Lord and Master grant that He may also marvel at your faith, dear Friends. And, though you had none when you came into this Tabernacle, may you go out rejoicing because the Lord has visited you, and helped you to believe in His name. Amen.

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HEAVEN AND HELL

NOS. 39, 40

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
IN A FIELD, KING EDWARD'S ROAD, HACKNEY**

***“And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
Matthew 8:11, 12.***

THIS is a land where plain speaking is allowed and where the people are willing to afford a fair hearing to anyone who can tell them that which is worth their attention. Tonight I am quite certain of an attentive audience, for I know you too well to suppose otherwise. This field, as you are all aware, is private property. And I would just give a suggestion to those who go out in the open air to preach—that it is far better to get into a field or a plot of unoccupied building ground than to block up the roads and stop business. It is, moreover, far better to be somewhere under protection, so that we can at once prevent disturbance.

Tonight I shall, I hope, encourage you to seek the road to Heaven. I shall also have to utter some very sharp things concerning the end of the lost in the pit of Hell. Upon both these subjects I will try and speak as God helps me. But I beseech you, as you love your souls, weigh right and wrong this night. See whether what I say is the Truth of God. If it is not, reject it utterly and cast it away! But if it is, at your peril disregard it, for as you shall answer before God, the great Judge of Heaven and earth, it will go ill with you if the words of His servant and of His Scripture are despised!

My text has two parts. The first is very agreeable to my mind and gives me pleasure. The second is terrible in the extreme. But since they are both the Truth, they must be preached. The first part of my text is, “I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven.” The sentence which I call the black, dark and threatening part is this—“But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”

I. Let us take the first part. Here is a MOST GLORIOUS PROMISE. I will read it again—“Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven.” I

like that text because it tells me what Heaven is and gives me a beautiful picture of it. It says it is a place where I shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. O what a sweet thought that is for the working man! He often wipes the hot sweat from his face and he wonders whether there is a land where he shall have to toil no longer. He scarcely ever eats a mouthful of bread that is not moistened with the sweat of his brow. Often he comes home weary and flings himself upon his couch, perhaps too tired to sleep. He says, "Oh, is there no land where I can rest? Is there no place where I can sit and, for once, let these weary limbs be still? Is there no land where I can be quiet?" Yes, you son of toil and labor—

***"There is a happy land
Far, far, away"—***

where toil and labor are unknown! Beyond yon blue sky there is a city, fair and bright—its walls are jasper and its light is brighter than the sun! There, "the weary are at rest and the wicked cease from troubling." Immortal spirits are yonder who never wipe sweat from their brow, for, "they sow not, neither do they reap." They have not to toil and labor—

***"There on a green and flowery mount
Their wearied souls shall sit—
And with transporting joys recount
The labors of their feet."***

To my mind, one of the best views of Heaven is that *it is a land of rest*—especially to the working man. Those who have not to work hard, think they will love Heaven as a place of service. That is very true. But to the working man, to the man who toils with his brain or with his hands, it must always be a sweet thought that there is a land where we shall rest. Soon this voice will never be strained again—soon these lungs will never have to exert themselves beyond their power. Soon this brain shall not be racked for thought—I shall sit at the banquet table of God. Yes, I shall recline on the bosom of Abraham and be at ease forever! Oh weary sons and daughters of Adam, you will not have to drive the plowshare into the unthankful soil in Heaven! You will not need to rise to daily toils before the sun has risen and labor when the sun has long ago gone to his rest! You shall be still, you shall be quiet, you shall rest yourselves—for all are rich in Heaven, all are happy there, all are peaceful! Toil, trouble, travail and labor are words that cannot be spelled in Heaven! They have no such things there, for they always rest.

And mark the *good company they sit with*. They are to "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Some people think that in Heaven we shall know nobody. But our text here declares that we "shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." Then I am sure that we shall be aware that they are Abraham and Isaac and Jacob! I have heard of a good woman who asked her husband, when she was dying, "My dear, do

you think you will know me when you and I get to Heaven?" "Shall I know you?" he asked. "Why, I have always known you while I have been here—do you think I shall be a greater fool when I get to Heaven?" I think it was a very good answer. If we have known one another, here, we shall know one another there! I have dear departed friends up there and it is always a sweet thought to me that when I shall put my foot, as I hope I may, upon the threshold of Heaven, there will come my Brothers and Sisters to clasp me by the hand and say, "Yes, you loved one, and you are here!" Dear relatives that have been separated—you will meet, again, in Heaven. One of you has lost a mother—she is gone above. And if you follow the track of Jesus, you shall meet her there! I think I see yet another coming to meet you at the door of Paradise—and though the ties of natural affection may be, in a measure, forgotten—if I may be allowed to use a figure—how blessed would she be as she turned to God and said, "Here am I and the children that You have given me." We shall recognize our friends—husband, you will know your wife! Mother, you will know those dear babies of yours—you marked their features when they lay panting and gasping for breath. You know how you hung over their graves when the cold sod was sprinkled over them and it was said, "earth to earth, dust to dust and ashes to ashes." You shall hear those loved voices again! You shall hear those sweet voices once more, you shall yet know that those whom you loved have been loved by God! Would not that be a dreary Heaven for us to inhabit where we would be alike, unknowing and unknown? I would not care to go to such a Heaven as that. I believe that Heaven is a fellowship of the saints and that we shall know one another there. I have often thought I should love to see Isaiah. And as soon as I get to Heaven, I think I would ask for him because he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest. I am sure I would want to find George Whitfield—he who so continually preached to the people and wore himself out with a more than seraphic zeal.

O yes, we shall have choice company in Heaven when we get there! There will be no distinction of learned and unlearned, clergy and laity—but we shall walk freely, one among another. We shall feel that we are Brethren. We shall—"sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." I have heard of a lady who was visited by a minister on her deathbed and she said to him, "I want to ask you one question, now I am about to die." "Well," said the minister, "what is it?" "Oh," she said, in a very affected way, "I want to know if there are two places in Heaven, because I could not bear that Betsy in the kitchen should be in Heaven along with me, she is so unrefined." The minister turned round and said, "O, don't trouble yourself about that, Madam. There is no fear of that, for until you get rid of your accursed pride, you will never enter Heaven at all." We

must all get rid of our pride! We must come down and stand on an equality in the sight of God and see in every man, a Brother, every woman, a Sister, before we can hope to be found in Glory! Yes, we bless God, we thank Him that He will set down no separate table for one and for another! The Jew and the Gentile will sit down together. The great and the small shall feed in the same pasture and we shall “sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven.”

But my text has a yet greater depth of sweetness, for it says that, “*many* shall come and shall sit down.” Some narrow-minded bigots think that Heaven will be a very small place—where there will be a very few people—who went to *their* chapel or their church. I confess I have no wish for a very small Heaven and love to read in the Scriptures that there are many mansions in my Father’s house. How often do I hear people say, “Ah, ‘strait is the gate and narrow is the way and few there are that find it.’ There will be very few in Heaven. There will be more lost.” My Friend, I disagree with you. Do you think that Christ will let the devil beat Him? That He will let the devil have more in Hell than there will be in Heaven? No—it is impossible! For then Satan would laugh at Christ. There will be more in Heaven than there are among the lost. God says that, “there will be a number that no man can number who will be saved.” But He never says that there will be a number that no man can number that will be lost. There will be a host beyond all count who will get into Heaven! What glad tidings for you and for me! For if there are so many to be saved, why should not *I* be saved? Why should not *you*? Why should not yonder man over there in the crowd, say, “Cannot I be one among the multitude?” And may not that poor woman, there, take heart and say, “Well, if there were but half-a-dozen saved, I might fear that I should not be one. But since many are to come, why should not I, also, be saved?” Cheer up, disconsolate! Cheer up, son of mourning, child of sorrow—there is still hope for you! I can never know that any man is past God’s Grace. There are a few that have sinned that sin that is unto death and God gives them up—but the vast host of mankind are yet within the reach of Sovereign Mercy—“And many of them shall come from the east and from the west and shall sit down in the kingdom of Heaven.”

Look at my text, again, and you will see where these people come from. They are to “come from the east and west.” The Jews said that they would all come from Palestine, every single one of them—every man, woman and child—that there would not be one in Heaven who was not a Jew! And the Pharisees thought that if they were not all Pharisees, they could not be saved. But Jesus Christ said there will be many who will come from the east and from the west. There will be a multitude from that far off land of China, for God is doing a great work, there, and we

hope that the Gospel will yet be victorious in that land! There will be a multitude from this western land of England. From the western country beyond the sea, in America. And from the south, in Australia. And from the north, in Canada, Siberia and Russia. From the uttermost parts of the earth there shall come many to sit down in the kingdom of God! But I do not think this text is to be understood so much geographically as spiritually. When it says that they “shall come from the east and west,” I think it does not particularly refer to nations, but to different kinds of people. Now, “the east and the west,” signify those who are the very furthest off from religion. Yet many of them will be saved and get to Heaven! There is a class of persons who will always be looked upon as hopeless. Many a time I have heard a man or woman say of such a one, “he cannot be saved—he is too abandoned. What is *he* good for? Ask *him* to go to a place of worship—he was drunk on Saturday night. What would be the use of reasoning with *him*? There is no hope for him. He is a hardened fellow. See what he has done these many years? What good will it be to speak to him?” Now, hear this, you who think your fellows worse than yourselves—you who condemn others—you are often just as guilty! Jesus Christ says, “many shall come from the east and west.” There will be many in Heaven that were once drunks. I believe, among that blood-bought throng, there are many who reeled in and out of taverns half their lives, but by the power of Divine Grace they were able to dash the liquor cup to the ground! They renounced the riot of intoxication—fled away from it—and served God. Yes! There will be many in Heaven who were drunks on earth. There will be many harlots—some of the most abandoned will be found there!

You remember the story of Whitfield’s once saying that there would be some in Heaven who were “the devil’s castaways”? Some that the devil would hardly think good enough for him and yet whom Christ would save? Lady Huntingdon once gently hinted that such language was not quite proper. But just at the time there happened to be heard a ring at the bell and Whitfield went downstairs. Afterwards he came up and said, “Your Ladyship, what do you think a poor woman had to say to me just now? She was a sad profligate and she said, ‘O Mr. Whitfield, when you were preaching you told us that Christ would take in the devil’s castaways and I am one of them’”—and that was the means of her Lady’s salvation! Shall anybody ever prevent us from preaching to the lowest of the low? I have been accused of getting all the rabble of London around me. God bless the rabble! God save the rabble! But suppose they *are* “the rabble!” Who needs the Gospel more than they do? Who requires to have Christ preached to them more than they do? We have lots of those who preach to ladies and gentlemen—but we need someone to preach to the

rabble in these degenerate days! Oh, here is comfort for me, for many of the rabble are to come from the east and from the west! Oh, what would you think if you were to see the difference between some that are in Heaven and some that *shall* be there? There might be found one whose hair hangs across his eyes, his locks are matted—he looks horrible—his bloated eyes start from his face, he grins almost like an idiot, he has drunk away his very brain until life seems to have departed so far as sense and being are concerned! Yet I would say to you, “that man is capable of salvation”—and in a few years I might say, “look up yonder, see that bright star? Can you see that man with a crown of pure gold upon his head? Do you notice that being clad in robes of sapphire and in garments of light? That is the same man who sat there a poor benighted, almost idiotic being! Yet Sovereign Grace and mercy have saved him! There are none, except those, as I have said before, who have sinned the unpardonable sin, who are beyond God’s mercy—fetch me out the worst and I would still preach the Gospel to them! Fetch me out the vilest, I would still preach to them because I recollect my Master said, “Go you out into the highways and hedges and *compel* them to come in, that My house may be filled.” “Many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven.”

There is one more word I must notice before I have done with this sweet portion—that is the word, “*shall*.” Oh, I love God’s “shalls” and “wills”! There is nothing comparable to them. Let a man say, “shall”—what is it good for? “I will,” says man—but he never performs. “I shall,” he says—and he breaks his promise. But it is never so with God’s “shalls”! If He says, “shall,” it shall be! When He says, “will,” it will be! Now He has said, here, “many *shall* come.” The devil says, “they shall *not* come,” but, “they shall come.” Their sins say, “you can’t come.” God says, “you shall come.” You, yourselves, say, “we won’t come.” God says, “you will come.” Yes, there are some here who are laughing at salvation, who can scoff at Christ and mock at the Gospel! But I tell you, some of you shall come. “What?” you say, “can God *make* me become a Christian?” I tell you, yes, for herein rests the power of the Gospel. It does not ask your consent, but it gets it. It does not ask will you have it, but it *makes you willing* in the day of God’s power! Not against your will—but it makes you willing. It shows you its value—and then you fall in love with it and straightway you run after it and have it! Many people have said, “we will not have anything to do with religion,” yet they have been converted. I have heard of a man who once went to Chapel to hear the singing. And as soon as the minister began to preach, he put his fingers in his ears and would not listen. But by-and-by some tiny insect settled on his face so that he was obliged to take one finger out of his ear to brush it away.

Just then the minister said, “he that has ears to hear, let him hear.” The man listened. And God met with him at that moment to his soul’s conversion! He went out a new man, a changed character. He who came in to laugh, retired to pray! He who came in to mock, went out to bend his knees in penitence—he who entered to spend an idle hour, went home to spend an hour in devotion with his God! The sinner became a saint. The profligate became a penitent. Who knows but that there may not be some like that here! The Gospel needs not your consent—it gets it. It knocks the enmity out of your heart. You say, “I do not want to be saved.” Christ says you shall be. He makes your will turn round and then you cry, “Lord, save me, or I perish.” Ah, might Heaven exclaim, “I knew I would make you say that.” And then He rejoices over you because He has changed your will and made you willing in the day of His power!

If Jesus Christ were to stand on this platform, tonight, what would many people do with Him? “O!” some say, “we would make him a King.” I do not believe it! They would crucify Him, again, if they had the opportunity! If He were to come and say, “Here I am, I love you, will you be saved by Me?”—Not one of you would consent if you were left to your own will! If He should look upon you with those eyes before whose power the lion would have crouched. If He spoke with that voice which poured forth a cataract of eloquence like a stream of nectar rolling down from the cliffs above—not a single person would come to be His disciple! No, it needs the power of the Spirit to make men come to Jesus Christ! He, Himself, said, “No man can come to Me except the Father, who has sent Me, draws him.” Ah, we need that. And here we have it. They shall come! They shall come! You may laugh, you may despise us. But Jesus Christ shall not die for nothing! If some of you reject Him, there are some who will not. If there are some who are not saved, others *shall* be. Christ *shall* see His seed! He *shall* prolong His days! And the pleasure of the Lord *shall* prosper in His hands. Some think that Christ died and yet that some for whom He died will be lost. I never could understand that doctrine. If Jesus, my Surety, bore my griefs and carried my sorrows, I believe myself to be as secure as the angels in Heaven! God cannot ask payment twice. If Christ paid my debt, shall I have to pay it again? No—

**“Free from sin I walk at large,
The Savior’s blood’s my full discharge!
At His dear feet content I lay,
A sinner saved and homage pay.”**

They shall come! They shall come! And nothing in Heaven, nor on earth, nor in Hell can stop them from coming!

And now, you chief of sinners, listen one moment while I call you to Jesus. There is one person here, tonight, who thinks himself the worst soul that ever lived. There is one who says to himself, “I am sure I do not

deserve to be called to Christ!" Soul! I call you! You lost, most wretched outcast—this night, by authority given me of God—I call you to come to my Savior! Some time ago, when I went into the County Court to see what they were doing, I heard a man's name called out and immediately the man said, "Make way! Make way! They call me!" And up he came. Now I call the chief of sinners, tonight! And let him say, "Make way! Make way doubts! Make way fears! Make way sins! Christ calls me! And if Christ calls me, that is enough"—

***"I'll to His gracious feet approach
Whose scepter mercy gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch
And then the suppliant lives!
I can but perish if I go—
I am resolved to try
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die!
But, should I die with mercy sought,
When I, the King have tried,
That were to die, (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died."***

Go and try my Savior! Go and try my Savior! If He casts you away after you have sought Him, tell it in Hell that Christ would not hear you. But *that* you shall never be allowed to do! It would dishonor the mercy of the Covenant for God to cast away one penitent sinner. And it never shall be while it is written, "many shall come from the east and west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven."

II. The second part of my text is heart-breaking. I could preach with great delight to myself from the first part. But here is a dreary task to my soul because there are gloomy words here. But, as I have told you, what is written in the Bible must be preached whether it be gloomy or cheerful. There are some ministers who never mention anything about Hell. I heard of a minister who once said to his congregation—"If you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be sent to that place which it is not polite to mention." He ought not to have been allowed to preach again, I am sure, if he could not use plain words! Now, if I saw that house on fire over there, do you think I would stand and say, "I believe the operation of combustion is proceeding yonder!" No, I would call out, "Fire! Fire!" And then everybody would know what I meant. So, if the Bible says, "The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness," am I to stand here and mince the matter at all? God forbid! We must speak the Truth as it is written. It is a terrible Truth, for it says, "*the children of the kingdom shall be cast out*"! Now, who are those children? I will tell you—"The children of the kingdom" are those people who are noted for the externals of piety, but who have nothing of the internals of it. People whom

you will see with their Bibles and Hymn Books marching off to Chapel as religiously as possible, or going to Church as devoutly and demurely as they can. They look as somber and serious as parish ushers—and fancying that they are quite sure to be saved—though their heart is not in the matter, nothing but their bodies. These are the persons who are “the children of the kingdom.” They have no Grace, no life, no Christ—and they shall be cast into outer darkness!

Again, these people are the *children of pious fathers and mothers*. There is nothing that touches a man’s heart, mark you, like talking about his mother. I have heard of a swearing sailor whom nobody could manage, not even the police. He was always making some disturbance wherever he went. Once he went into a place of worship and no one could keep him still. But a gentleman went up and said to him, “Jack, you once had a mother.” With that, the tears ran down his cheeks. Jack said, “Ha! Bless you, Sir, I had. And I brought her gray hairs with sorrow to the grave—and a pretty fellow I am, to be here tonight.” He then sat down, quite sobered and subdued by the very mention of his mother. Ah, and there are some of you “children of the kingdom” who can remember your mothers! Your mother took you on her knee and taught you early to pray—your father tutored you in the ways of godliness. And yet you are here, tonight, without Grace in your heart—without hope of Heaven. You are going downwards towards Hell as fast as your feet can carry you! There are some of you who have broken your poor mother’s heart. Oh, if I could tell you what she has suffered for you when you have, at night, been indulging in your sin! Do you know what your guilt will be, you, “children of the kingdom,” if you perish after a pious mother’s prayers and tears have fallen upon you? I can conceive of no one entering Hell with a worse place than the man who goes there with drops of his mother’s tears on his head and with his father’s prayers following him at his heels! Some of you will inevitably endure this doom. Some of you young men and women shall wake up one day and find yourselves in outer darkness while your parents shall be up there in Heaven, looking down upon you with upbraiding eyes, seeming to say, “What? After all we did for you? After all we said, are you come to this?” “Children of the kingdom,” do not think that a pious mother can save you! Do not think because your father was a member of such-and-such a Church that his godliness will save you!

I can suppose someone standing at Heaven’s gate and demanding, “Let me in! Let me in!” Why? “Because my mother is in there.” Your mother had nothing to do with you. If she was holy, she was holy for herself. If she was evil, she was evil for herself. “But my grandfather prayed for me.” That is no use—did you pray for yourself? “No. I did not.” Then

grandfathers' prayers and grandmothers' prayers and fathers' and mothers' prayers may be piled on the top of one another till they reach the stars, but they can never make a ladder for you to go to Heaven. You must seek God for yourself—or rather God must seek you. You must have vital experience of godliness in your heart, or else you are lost, even though all your friends were in Heaven. That was a dreadful dream which a pious mother once had and told to her children. She thought the Judgment Day was come. The great books were opened. They all stood before God. And Jesus Christ said, "Separate the chaff from the wheat. Put the goats on the left hand and the sheep on the right." The mother dreamed that she and her children were standing just in the middle of the great assembly. And the angel came and said, "I must take the mother—she is a sheep—she must go to the right hand. The children are goats—they must go on the left." She thought, as she went, her children clutched her and said, "Mother, can we part? Must we be separated?" She then put her arms around them and seemed to say, "My children, I would, if possible, take you with me." But in a moment the angel touched her—her cheeks were dried and, now, overcoming natural affection, being rendered supernatural and sublime and resigned to God's will, she said, "My children, I taught you well. I trained you up and you forsook the ways of God—and now, all I have to say is, Amen to your condemnation." Thereupon they were snatched away and she saw them in perpetual torment, while she was in Heaven.

Young man, what will you think, when the last day comes, to hear Christ say, "Depart, you cursed"? And there will be a voice just behind him, saying, "Amen!" And as you inquire from where came the voice—you will find it was your mother! Or, young woman, when you are cast away into outer darkness, what will you think to hear a voice saying, "Amen!" And as you look, there sits your father, his lips still moving with the solemn curse! "Ah, children of the kingdom," the penitent reprobates will enter Heaven, many of them! Publicans and sinners will get there. Repenting drunks and swearers will be saved. But many of "the children of the kingdom" will be cast out! Oh, to think that you who have been so well trained should be lost while many of the worse will be saved! It will be the Hell of Hells for you to look up and see there, "poor Jack," the drunk, lying in Abraham's bosom while you who have had a pious mother are cast into Hell simply because you would not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but put His Gospel from you and lived and died without it! That were the very sting of all, to see ourselves cast away, when the chief of sinners finds salvation!

Now listen to me a little while—I will not detain you long—while I undertake the doleful task of telling you what is to become of these "child-

ren of the kingdom.” Jesus Christ says, they are to be “cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

First, notice, they are to be *cast out*. They are not said to *go*. But when they come to Heaven’s gates, they are to be cast out. As soon as hypocrites arrive at the gates of Heaven, Justice will say, “Here he comes! Here he comes! He spurned a father’s prayers and mocked a mother’s tears. He has forced his way downward against all the advantages Mercy has supplied. And now, here he comes. Gabriel, take the man.” The angel, binding you hand and foot, holds you one single moment over the mouth of the chasm. He bids you look down-down-down. There is no bottom—and you hear coming up from the abyss, “sullen moans and hollow groans. And shrieks of tortured ghosts.” You quiver, your bones melt like wax and your marrow quakes within you. Where is your might, now? And where are your boasting and bragging? You shriek and cry, you beg for mercy! But the angel, with one tremendous grasp, seizes you fast and then hurls you down, with the cry, “Away, away!” And down you go to the pit of Hell that is bottomless—and you roll forever downward-downward-downward—never to find a resting place for the sole of your feet. You shall be cast out.

And *where are you to be cast to*? You are to be cast “into outer darkness.” You are to be put in the place where there will be no hope. For, by, “light,” in Scripture, we understand, “hope.” And you are to be put “into outer darkness,” where there is no light—no hope. Is there a man here who has no hope? I cannot suppose such a person! One of you, perhaps, says, “I am thirty pounds in debt and shall be sold up, by-and-by. But I have a hope that I may get a loan and so escape my difficulty.” Says another, “My business is ruined, but things may yet take a turn—I have hope.” Says another, “I am in great distress, but I hope that God will provide for me.” Another says, “I am fifty pounds in debt. I am sorry for it—but I will set these strong hands to work and do my best to get out of it.” One of you thinks a friend is dying. But you have a hope that perhaps the fever may take a turn—that he may yet live. But in Hell there is no hope! They have not even the hope of dying—the hope of being annihilated! They are forever—forever—forever lost! On every chain in Hell, there is written, “forever.” The fires there blaze out the words, “forever.” Up above their heads, they read, “forever.” Their eyes are galled and their hearts are pained with the thought that it is “forever.” Oh, if I could tell you tonight that Hell would one day be burned out and that those who were lost might be saved, there would be a jubilee in Hell at the very thought of it! But it cannot be—it is “*forever*.” They are “cast into outer darkness.”

But I want to get over this as quickly as I can, for who can bear to talk thus to his fellow creatures? What is it that the lost are doing? They are “weeping and gnashing their teeth.” Do you gnash your teeth now? You would not do it unless you were in pain and agony. Well, in Hell there is always gnashing of teeth. And do you know why? There is one gnashing his teeth at his companion and mutters—“I was led into Hell by you! You led me astray, you taught me to drink the first time.” And the other gnashes his teeth and says, “What if I did, you made me worse than I would have been in later times.” There is a child who looks at her mother and says, “Mother, you trained me up to vice.” And the mother gnashes her teeth at the child and says, “I have no pity for you, for you excelled me in it and led me into deeper sin.” Fathers gnash their teeth at their sons and sons at their fathers. And, I think, if there are any who will have to gnash their teeth more than others, it will be seducers, when they see those whom they have led from the paths of virtue and hear them saying, “Ah, we are glad you are in Hell with us! You deserve it, for you led us here.” Have any of you, tonight, upon your consciences the fact that you have led others to the pit of Hell? O may Sovereign Grace forgive you! “We have gone astray like lost sheep,” said David. Now a lost sheep never goes astray, alone, if it is out of a flock. I lately read of a sheep that leaped over the parapet of a bridge and was followed by everyone of the flock. So if one man goes astray, he leads others with him. Some of you will have to account for others’ sins when you get to Hell, as well as your own. Oh, what “weeping and gnashing of teeth” there will be in that pit!

Now shut the black book. Who wants to say any more about it? I have solemnly warned you. I have told you of the wrath to come. The evening darkens and the sun is setting. Ah, and the evenings darken with some of you. I can see gray-headed men and women here. Are your gray hairs a crown of glory or a fool’s cap to you? Are you on the very verge of Heaven, or are you tottering on the brink of your grave and sinking down to Hell?

Let me warn you, gray-headed men and women—your evening is coming! O poor tottering gray-head, will you take the last step into the pit of Hell? Let a young child step before you and beg you to consider. There is your staff—it has nothing of earth to rest upon. And now, before you die, think about this night. Let 70 years of sin start up. Let the ghosts of your forgotten transgressions march before your eyes. What will you do with 70 wasted years to answer for, with 70 years of criminality to bring before God? God give you Grace this night to repent and to put your trust in Jesus!

And you middle-aged men and women are not safe—the evening lowers with you, too! You may soon die. A few mornings ago I was roused early from my bed by the request that I would hasten to see a dying man. I hurried off with all speed to see the poor creature. But when I reached the house he was dead—a corpse. As I stood in the room, I thought, “Ah, that man little thought he would die so soon.” There were his wife and children and friends—they little thought he would die, for he was hale, strong and hearty but a few days before! None of you have a lease on your lives. If you have, where is it? Go and see if you have it anywhere in your chests at home. No! You, too, may die tomorrow! Let me, therefore, warn you by the mercy of God. Let me speak to you as a brother may speak. For I love you, you know I do, and would press the matter home to your hearts. Oh to be among the many who shall be accepted in Christ—how blessed that will be! And God has said that whoever shall call on His name shall be saved—He casts out none that come unto Him through Christ!

And now, you youths and maidens, one word with you. Perhaps you think that religion is not for you. “Let us be happy,” you say —“let us be merry and joyous.” How long, young man, young maiden, how long? “Till I am twenty-one.” Are you sure that you will live till then? Let me tell you one thing—if you do live till that time, if you have no heart for God, now, you will have none then! Men do not get better if left alone! It is with them as with a garden—if you leave it alone and permit weeds to grow, you will not expect to find it better in six months—but worse. Ah, men talk as if they could repent when they like! It is the work of God to give us repentance. Some even say, “I shall turn to God on such-and-such a day.” Ah, If you felt aright, you would say, “I must run to God and ask Him to give me repentance *now*—lest I should die before I have found Jesus Christ, my Savior.”

Now one word in conclusion. I have told you of Heaven and Hell. What is the way, then, to escape from Hell and to be found in Heaven? I will not tell you my old tale again, tonight. I remember when I told it to you before—a good friend in the crowd said, “Tell us something fresh, old fellow!” Now really, in preaching ten times a week, we cannot always say things fresh. You have heard John Gough and you know he tells his tales over and over. I have nothing but the old Gospel—“he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” There is nothing here of works. It does not say, “he who is a good man shall be saved,” but, “he who believes and is baptized.” Well, what is it to believe? It is to put your trust entirely upon Jesus! Poor Peter once believed and Jesus Christ said to him, “Come on, Peter, walk to Me on the water.” Peter went stepping along on the tops of the wave without sinking. But when he looked at the waves, he began to

tremble and down he went! Now, poor Sinner, Christ says, “Come on, walk not in your sins, come to *Me*.” And if you do, He will give you power! If you believe on Christ, you will be able to walk over your sins—to tread upon them and overcome them. I can remember the time when my sins first stared me in the face. I thought myself the most accursed of all men! I had not committed any very great open transgressions against God. But I remembered that I had been well-trained and tutored and I thought my sins were thus greater than other people’s. I cried to God to have mercy, but I feared that He would not pardon me. Month after month I cried to God, but He did not hear me—and I knew not what it was to be saved. Sometimes I was so weary of the world that I desired to die—but then I remembered that there was a worse world after this and that it would be an ill matter to rush before my Maker unprepared. At times I wickedly thought God a most heartless tyrant because He did not answer my prayers and then, at others, I thought, “I deserve His displeasure. If He sends me to Hell, He will be just.” But I remember the hour when I stepped into a place of worship and saw a tall thin man step into the pulpit—I have never seen him from that day and probably never shall, till we meet in Heaven. He opened the Bible and read with a feeble voice, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God and beside Him there is none else.” Ah, thought I, I am one of the ends of the earth. And then, turning round and fixing his gaze on me, as if he knew me, the minister said, “Look, look, look.” Why, I thought I had a great deal to *DO*, but I found it was only to *LOOK*. I thought I had a garment to spin out for myself—but I found that if I looked, Christ would give me a garment. Look, Sinner—that is to be saved! Look unto Him, all you ends of the earth, and be saved! This is what the Jews did when Moses held up the bronze serpent. He said, “Look!” And they looked. The serpents might be twisting round them and they might be nearly dead—but they simply looked and the moment they looked, the serpents dropped off and they were healed! Look to Jesus, Sinner. “None but Jesus can do helpless sinners good.” There is a hymn we often sing, but which I do not think is quite right, it says—

**“Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.”**

Now, it is no *venture* to trust in Christ, not in the least! He who trusts in Christ is quite secure. I recollect that when dear John Hyatt was dying, Matthew Wilks said to him, in his usual tone, “Well, John, could you trust your soul in the hands of Jesus Christ, now?” “Yes,” he said, “a million! A million souls!” I am sure that every Christian who has ever trusted in Christ can say, “Amen,” to that! Trust in Him! He will never deceive you. My blessed Master will never cast you away!

I cannot speak much longer and I have only to thank you for your kindness. I never saw so large a number so still and quiet. I really think after all the hard things that have been said, that the English people know who loves them—and that they will stand by the man who stands by them. I thank everyone of you and above all, I beg you, if there is any reason or sense in what I have said, think about what you are and may the blessed Spirit reveal to you your state! May He show you that you are dead, that you are lost—ruined. May He make you feel what a dreadful thing it would be to sink into Hell! May He point you to Heaven! May He take you as the angel did of old and put His hand upon you and say, “Flee! Flee! Flee! Look to the mountain! Look not behind you! Stay not in all the plain.”

And may we all meet in Heaven at last. And there we shall be happy forever!

P.S. This sermon was watered by many prayers of the faithful in Zion. The preacher did not intend it for publication, but seeing that it is now in print, he will not apologize for its faulty composition or rambling style. Instead thereof, he would beg the prayers of his readers that this feeble sermon may all the more exalt the honor of God by the salvation of many who shall read it. “The excellency of the power is of God and not of man.”

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

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

THE CHIEF PHYSICIAN AND THE CENTURION'S SERVANT NO. 1422

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 30, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Jesus said unto him I will come and heal him.”
Matthew 8:7.*

*“And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go your way; and as you
have believed, so be it done unto you.”
Matthew 8:13.*

THE centurion of Capernaum is an example to us in a matter which bears upon the collection appointed for today, which, you know, is for hospitals. This good soldier feared for the sick and was anxious for the recovery of his palsied servant. Every employer should take a sympathetic interest in his domestics when they are ill, but in some cases this is not thought of. “If they cannot do their work, they must go”—this is too often the language used about them—and they are driven out of the house as soon as possible. I do not say that masters and mistresses are often cruel, but I fear that some of them are none too kind.

Among religious persons, kindness towards man should be as manifest as piety towards God. The centurion had done what he could to benefit, religiously, the people among whom he dwelt, for the elders of the Jews said, “He loves our nation and he has built us a synagogue.” But he combined with a desire to benefit the soul, a sincere desire for the welfare of the body. This was apparent in the interest which he took in his, “boy,” his personal servant, or young valet. God has joined body and soul together and they ought not to be divided in our deeds of charity. This captain's sympathy with his suffering valet was shown by practical action.

He did not say that he felt for him and then go off to the guardroom and keep clear of the sick youth. Nor did he merely stand and watch him in his pain to see how he would fare, but he *did* something—he went out, he called together the elders of the city, he summoned his choice friends to him—in fact, he made the whole circle of his acquaintances feel a sympathy with him concerning the illness of his servant. Then he sent these elders and friends to the best Physician of the age and, I think, also followed at their heels, himself. He used the surest means within his reach and appealed to Him to whom none ever appealed in vain!

From the centurion I gather that we must not be content with loving our people and building them synagogues, but we must also build them hospitals and dispensaries! Find them preachers, by all means, but find them surgeons, too! We may not forget the *soul*, but we must also remember that the soul dwells in a body liable to many disorders. We may become just a little too spiritual—so spiritual as to spirit away the very Spirit of Christianity! God grant us Grace to be as tenderly considerate of

suffering humanity as this centurion was and we probably shall be so if we have as strong a faith and as deep a humility as he had.

Our Lord, Himself, in our text, sets us an example which may plead with us on behalf of hospitals today! He was here upon the high errand of our redemption, yet He did not consider it at all derogatory to His Divine purpose to be continually engaged in healing diseases! For three years He walked the hospitals—He lived all day long in an infirmary, for all around Him, at one time, they laid the sick in the streets—and at all times physical evil in some form or other came in His way. He put forth His hands, or spoke a word and healed all sorts of maladies. This our Lord did very readily, for it was part of His lifework. “I will come and heal him,” He said, for He was a physician in constant practice and would be around at once to see the patient.

“He went about doing good” and in all this He would let His people know that He intended not to bless one part of man alone, but the whole of our nature, taking upon Himself not only our sins, but our sicknesses! Jesus means to bless the body as well as the soul! And though for this present time He has left our body very much under the power of sickness, for still the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness. Yet He foreshadows in His healing miracles the Resurrection, when He shall raise us perfectly healed and the inhabitant shall no more say, “I am sick.” Every restored limb, opened eye and healed wound is a token that Jesus cares for our flesh and blood and means that the body shall share the benefits of His death by a glorious resurrection!

As in our Lord's life His teaching was always connected with healing, He would have the Church, also, take a very deep interest in the bodily sorrows of the people as well as in their spiritual needs. It will be a very great pity if ever it should be thought that benevolence is divorced from Christianity, for up to now the crown of the faith of Jesus has been love to men. It is, indeed, the glory of Christianity that wherever it goes, it erects buildings altogether unknown to heathenism—hospitals, asylums and other abodes of charity! The genius of Christianity is pity for the sinful and the suffering.

Let the Church be a healer like her Lord—at least if she cannot pour fourth virtue from the hem of her garment, nor “say in a word” so that sickness may fly—let her be among the most prompt to help in everything that can relieve pain or assist poverty. So ought it to be, for, “as Jesus was, so are we, also, in this world.” Did He not tell us, “As the Father has sent Me, even so send I you”? We cannot too diligently study His Character, for He has left us an example that we may follow in His steps. Since we cannot practice the healing art, let us give support to those whose whole time is spent in it, that *they* may be able, without fee or reward, to watch over the sick poor. And let none among us act the tightwad when the blind, the crippled and the lame cry to us as they did to our Master of old!

This said, I desire to pass on to my subject which is of a spiritual kind. I want you to mark the development of the faith of the centurion and, side by side with it, the growing manifestation of our Lord's power. Both are seen in the narrative. The centurion had evidently heard about Christ.

Perhaps the healing of the ruler's child had satisfied him that Jesus was the Messiah. He had attended at the synagogue. I cannot doubt that a man who had built a synagogue would be sure to go to it—and there he had learned of the Coming One—foretold by Prophets and expected by saints. This Anointed One was to work wonders among mankind and especially wonders of *healing*.

Thus he had gathered that Jesus was the Christ and he believed in Him as having power to heal his sick servant. The first practical result was that he humbly sent the elders with the urgent request to “come and heal him.” He believed that Jesus, if He were present, could restore the dying youth. He had thought it over and his faith had reached as far as that of Mary and Martha when they said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died.” In effect he said, If You will come here, great Master, my servant will not die. He therefore cried, “Come and heal him!” Observe that our Lord's answer was exactly proportioned to the measure of faith in the prayer—“I will come and heal him.”

“You cry, ‘Come and heal him!’ I reply, I will come and heal him.” So far so good. But the captain's faith is to be seen in a still clearer light. He has been considering the matter still further and his humility leads him to feel that he ought not to expect Jesus to come to his house. Why should he trouble the Master to leave the crowd and to cease preaching, to come and attend to *his* servant? He is grieved to think that he should have proposed a visit—he feels himself unfit to entertain One so holy and so great and, therefore, he sends off his friends, post haste, to offer humble apologies and to beg the Master *not* to come!

He has, at the same time, advanced in his belief in Christ's power, for he says in effect, “There is no need that You should come—only *will* it—merely *say* the word and the healing is worked. For I, also, am a man under authority, deriving authority from being under it and I have only to say to one soldier, go, and to another, come, and my will is done. I have no need to execute my own wishes personally, for my will governs my troops and each man is eager to do my bidding. So, great Master, stay where You are. Go on with Your other work and only *will* to bless me and it will be enough. Your desire will be accomplished without fail. Oh great Emperor of all the forces of the universe, bid Your triumphant eagles fly this way and the foe will vanish before You.”

Here was growing faith and, side by side with it, was a clearer manifestation of the Master's power! Our Lord Jesus, then and there, wills that healing power should go forth—He moves no further towards the house where the palsied patient lies, but rather He turns around—and in obedience to the wish of the centurion He walks away! Yet the miracle is worked! The paralytic child has risen from the bed, the captain's heart is gladdened—and those who came to plead stand in the house to praise the Lord!

Awe-struck by the finger of God so near and so manifest, what could they do but bless the Lord who had visited His people? That is the story and it proves that our Lord Jesus Christ is Omnipotent in the *physical* world! He can do what He wills and though at this present time we do not appeal to Him for miraculous cures, it were well if we trusted Him more

upon that point, for all of the power which dwells in medicine and all of the skill which is found in physicians is only effective through His tender mercy! We know, however, that our Lord is Omnipotent in the moral and spiritual world—and there, today, He displays His most sublime feats of power and wisdom! We are going to think about this and may the Holy Spirit make the meditation useful to us.

I. The first thing I invite you to consider is THE PERFECT READINESS OF OUR LORD JESUS for works of mercy. The centurion was concerned about his servant, just as you and I are, I hope, today concerned about certain poor souls which lie paralyzed by sin. We mourn over them and if we could heal them we would gladly suffer any self-denial or suffering. If we could bring our neighbors to Christ, it would be the utmost joy to us—their perishing souls are, to some of us, as a burdensome stone—a load heavy to bear. How can we endure to see them die? The mass of working men around us, yes, and the majority of our wealthy neighbors are under the power of the Wicked One!

To them the things which are seen are the only objects of their thoughts. They will not regard the Gospel of Christ, or eternity, or judgment, or Heaven, or Hell. The privileges with which our country is so largely endowed are treated as if they were of no value whatever—Sabbaths, Bibles, the Gospel and the Throne of Grace are despised. This is mournful, indeed! Brethren, we must go to Jesus about this evil thing and it may help us to do this if we now think of His great willingness to bless servant, child, or any other person whom we may bring before Him in prayer!

That willingness we shall see, first, if we notice that He did not cavil at the pleas which the Jewish elders urged on behalf of the centurion, though they must have been very distasteful to His mind. They said, “He is worthy for whom You should do this.” That was *not* the right style of pleading with Him who came to save the lost and bless the undeserving in the freeness of His Grace! The elders said, “He loves our nation and he has built us a synagogue,” and so on. Poor souls, they were doing their best and using the kind of argument by which their own hopes were sustained.

Our Lord regarded the *spirit* of their intercession rather than the *form* in which they offered it and though the plea, laying so much stress upon human *merit*, might very well have warranted Him in saying, “hold your peace, for you are damaging rather than helping the case,” our Lord was so willing that He raised no question. From afar He read the heart of the centurion and He knew that the good man's advocates were altogether misrepresenting His views and feelings! The last thing in the world that the lowly-minded soldier would have pleaded would have been personal worthiness! His own words were, “I am not worthy”!

Had he known that his advocates would have talked in that fashion, he would never have allowed them to speak on his behalf. If the centurion could have been there, he would have said, “Your words cut me to the quick, for I am not worthy. What little I have been able to do, I cannot boast. I have done no more than I ought to have done! Do not speak to my Lord in such a way.” But Jesus was so willing to go that He put up with

all the blunders of the elders and responded to their request, "I will come and heal him."

Beloved, very likely you and I make quite as great mistakes when we pray—we fancy we pray very correctly, but I wonder what our Lord thinks of our prayers? Surely He has often to pick out the meaning of our hearts from among the errors of our lips! But so willing is He to bless us, that if there is first a willing mind, it shall still be accepted, for He rejoices to hear every prayer which seeks healing for sin-sick souls! His willingness is seen, next, in the fact of His so cheerfully granting the first prayer in the form in which it was put. They besought Him that He would, "come and heal" the servant.

Now, that was not exactly the best form in which to put it. Certainly it was not that which commended itself to the more mature thoughts of the centurion. Why should Jesus go? He could heal the patient without moving from the spot! Was there not a considerable measure of unbelief about the elders' prayer? Yet our blessed Master took the prayer just as it was and He seemed to say, "I see the measure of your faith and I will give you the blessing as you are able to receive it." The Lord is very generous to come down to our capacities. If He were always to act according to His own Divine standard, we should be greatly dazzled—but we should be afraid to draw near to Him! He condescendingly lays aside the splendor of His majesty to act as well as to speak to us after the manner of men—and then we see the sweet voluntariness of His Grace and the cheerful willingness of His spirit to do us good.

If we cannot receive a blessing in any other than a second-class way, we shall have it in the way in which we can take it. As our faith can get no further, He will do the wonder according to the manner in which our scanty thought is able to conceive and ask and receive. Oh what a willing Friend we have in Christ! He bows the heavens and comes down, meeting the weak in his weakness and the fainting in his faintness. He comes answering prayers, not only according to the riches of His Glory, but according to the poverty of our infirmity!

Notice further that when the centurion sent a fresh deputation of his choice friends to say to the Master, "Trouble not Yourself, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof," our Lord did not quarrel with the change of the prayer. Some people would have said. "What is it that you want? First, I am to come and when I am almost there I am met with a request *not* to come—what do you mean? This is not respectful and I will not come." Our gentle Jesus spoke not so. Oh, no—such talk might come from you and from me who are so great in our own esteem—but never from Him because He is so much greater than we are! He thought not of Himself, nor of His own dignity.

Let us imitate His meek and quiet spirit. When you are trying to do good, you will often be put about by the whims of those whom you would benefit. You will find that when you do what people ask you, they are not satisfied. Many adults are like sick children who are always cross and fretful. We must humor these poor hearts as our Lord did. He was so willing to bless that He seemed to give *carte blanche* to those who asked of Him! "Yes, you shall have the blessing whichever way you like, so that you

are but to receive it. It shall be given to you according to your faith." Our Lord shifted His movements without pressure and would go to the house or not, just as the centurion's faith might lead him to pray!

Blessed, forever blessed, is our most gracious Savior who never wearies of us, nor takes offense at our childish changes! The Savior's willingness to bless this centurion's servant was very manifest from the fact that He did not impute an ill motive to the centurion when he bade Him refrain from visiting the house. There was no mistrust about our Lord. He knew too much, both of man's evil and of the sincerity of those in whom His Grace was placed, to suspect and to interpret harshly. Ignorance and selfishness are mistrustful, but love thinks no evil. If there are two ways of understanding a sentence, my Brothers and Sisters, and one is better than the other, always read it in the kinder way if you can. Never put hard constructions upon words and actions.

You and I might have said in the case before us, "You see, he does not want me in his fine house. He is a centurion and thinks much of himself and I am wearing a poor garment and, therefore, he does not want me in his villa to disgrace his halls. He is a captain, a man in authority, having soldiers under him. His pride forbids my approach and, therefore, I will have nothing to do with him." But no, it was not in the Master's heart to think thus bitterly, but as at the first He had said, "I will come and heal him," so now, when genuine humility requests him *not* to come, He turns around, but works the miracle all the same!

Brothers and Sisters, our condescending Savior must be very willing to bless men since He takes the true meaning of their prayers where others would write a harsh interpretation. Be not afraid to approach Him however unworthy you are, for He will put the best construction upon your broken petitions and interpret them always to your gain! His disciples may severely criticize one another and may criticize you, but they have learned no hard words in His company. Nor did He object at all to the comparison which the centurion made. "I also," said the centurion, "am a man under authority."

If you were to read that expression with dark spectacles, you might make a great deal of mischief out of it. A caviler might say, "How dare he even, for a moment, compare himself to the Son of God? How can he draw a parallel of which he is one side and the blessed Lord the other? What impertinence!" Brethren, our Lord was no critic. No, among the brotherhood of fault-finders you never see the Christ of God! When He has to deal with sincere people, He picks no holes, imputes no motives and dwells on no mistakes. The centurion did not wish to make his metaphor go on all fours and our Lord did not treat him as if he did. Many a time have some of us had to suffer from this mode of attack, but never from our Master, nor from those who imitate Him.

He took the meaning of the centurion's illustration and He admired it, for, indeed, it was a grand and beautiful idea to set forth our Lord Jesus as the great Emperor of the universe to whom all things are under rule and to whose faintest word each form of force, whether good or evil, is sure to render obedience! He showed that he had rightly estimated Christ and enthroned Him as He should be enthroned in the place of unlimited

sovereignty and power! The Master did not, therefore, for a moment, object to anything he said. No, but the prayer had been offered that the servant might be healed and the prayer was granted! The faith had been exercised which believed that Christ could heal—and that faith was honored! Our Lord did exactly as the prayer requested Him. He came when He was asked to come. He stayed when He was asked to stay. He spoke the word when He was requested to speak the word. He healed when He was asked to heal! In all things He yielded Himself entirely to the centurion's wish to show His cheerful alacrity in benefiting the suffering boy and in answering his master's prayer.

Come, then, dear Friends, we may be quite sure of our Lord's sympathy, though we are not praying about a sick boy, but pleading for our sinful neighbors! He loves sinners better than we do, for they have cost Him more than they have ever cost us—even if we have spent nights in watching and prayer on their behalf. To Him it is committed of the Father to save the lost and His zeal to accomplish the work never flags! Therefore we may be sure that our pleading and efforts will touch a kindred chord in His heart!

II. Secondly, an equally interesting topic is before us in THE CONSCIOUS ABILITY OF OUR LORD. You have seen His perfect willingness, now behold His boundless power! I do not know how it affects your minds, but that sentence from the lips of Jesus, "I will come and heal him," has a strange majesty about it to my soul. It is the word of a king wherein there is power. Perhaps the most majestic word that was ever uttered was, "Light be"—no sooner was it heard than the eternal darkness fled and light was!

But surely this is scarcely second in grandeur, if second at all! Its sound is as much the voice of the Lord as that which scattered the primeval shades—"I will come and heal him." Yet this royal and powerful word was spoken as a matter of course. Our Lord Jesus did not deliberate, but the healing words flowed from Him as naturally as the perfume from the flowers. "I will come and heal him"—it is an utterance resolute, true, clear, comprehensible, unconditional and to Him, natural and commonplace—though to us Divine! It shows, dear Friends, our Lord's conscious ability to deal with all manner of evil since He was not at all puzzled by this intricate case!

Almost any other physician would have felt some measure of perplexity. The case is described as that of a man sick of the palsy and yet "grievously tormented." How could that be? Paralysis can hardly be connected with acute pain. It brings numbness and so ends sensation, at least such is my impression. Some interpreters think the disease must have been a form of tetanus, but there is no mention of tetanus in either account. It was a palsy and yet he was "grievously tormented." I know nothing about it, but I have read that there is a period in which paralysis may turn into apoplexy and the patient may suffer extreme agony. If so, this may explain the mystery. However, though the case perplexed many, it did not perplex the Lord Jesus, for He said, "I will come and heal him."

Now, my Brother ministers, have not you and I a great many cases coming in our way which tax our experience and make us feel at a loss? I

have had, during this week, to deal with several tempted ones whose difficulties have pointed to a monarch, or, would have had none if had had borrowed from my Lord. Some experiences are a tangled skein—we cannot follow the thread—and so far as we *do* follow, its knots and snarls are our chief reward. See how Jesus sweeps away all debates with, “I will come and heal him.” All the complicated phenomena of human disease He comprehends and, along the dark labyrinth of human experience, His mighty word makes a way for itself! Undisturbed and even undelayed, the eternal energy enters the soul, for Jesus says, “I will come and heal him.”

Neither did the extremity of the case at all dishearten Him, for this poor man was ready to die, so Luke tells us, just on the verge of expiring. Yet Jesus says, “I will come and heal him.” It does not matter to Jesus what the stage of the disease may be! A common physician would shake his head and say, “Ah, you should have sent for me before. I might have done something at an earlier date, but the sufferer is now beyond all human help.” Poor *souls* are *never* beyond the reach of the Divine Healer and so He says without a word of doubt, “I will come and heal him.” Yes, had He been *dead*, Jesus could have said and could have done the same! “I will come and heal him” is a word for all emergencies!

Beloved, let us never hesitate to hope in prayer because the persons for whom we plead are such great and horrible sinners and so very far gone in crime! So long as they are not actually in Hell, let us firmly believe that Christ can save them and, verily, if we can believe in our great Savior with mighty faith, we shall yet hear Him say of many a reprobate and outcast, “I will come and heal him.” I again remark that our Lord speaks of this healing as quite a matter of course, for His language is after the manner of speech which men use when they know that they are at their work and can do it as soon as they have it before them.

A person asks a workman to repair a lock or a window and he answers, “Yes, I will come and attend to it.” He means that he can do it, it is his profession and it is as easy to him to do it as to come. So can our blessed Master save a sinner as easily as His Spirit can come to that sinner—and we all know that His Spirit is a free Spirit—and like the wind, blows where He wills! Jesus could come to the centurion's house and He could as easily heal as He could come. “I will come and heal him”—the work is simple enough to the Divine Redeemer to whom nothing is impossible! No disease of sin can baffle the Savior or even cost Him special effort to eject it! Look to Him, you ends of the earth, and prove for yourselves that none are beyond His mercy's reach! Oh that all who hear me this day would make a like trial of His healing might!

As for the method of procedure, our Lord, in His conscious power, treats the *modus operandi* as a matter of indifference. He grants the first petition as it was presented to Him and will come and heal the servant. But when He is requested not to come, He quite as willingly says, “According to your faith so be it unto you.” He could heal as well at a distance as near at hand! Present or absent, it was all the same to Him! A touch, a word, a *thought* could do all that was needed. It *was* so and it is so *still*, for our blessed Lord saves sinners in all sorts of ways. He can save them in their pews under the preaching which they have heard so constantly, or

He can meet with them in their lonely chambers, reading some godly book! Or He can wound their hearts by a loving word spoken during a walk with a friend.

We have known Him call men, by His Grace, right out of the paths of sin, wounding them with secret arrows when they were at ease and secure in the service of the devil! Where no means of Grace, as we call them, were present, yet have sinners been smitten at heart and have been turned to God by that heavenly influence of the Spirit which remains the supreme miracle of the present dispensation! Saul of Tarsus was not on his knees in prayer, but hastening to shed innocent blood—and yet the Lord brought him down and made him seek salvation. Beloved, our Lord knows how to reach inaccessible persons! They may shut US out, but they cannot shut HIM out!

This should much encourage us in pleading for souls which are out of our usual line of action. When we plead with Jesus, let us never bind Him down to ways and means of *our* choosing, but let us leave to Him the method of salvation! Jesus was so conscious of His power that you never find Him uttering an expression of wonder, or manifesting the slightest surprise when His will is done and a notable miracle is worked! No, but He *did* marvel at the centurion's faith and on another occasion He marveled at the people's unbelief! He is so in the habit of doing it and He is so *able* to do it that it is no wonder that Christ saves sinners!

You and I will wonder and throughout eternity we will declare that wonder, singing with rapture and surprise the loving kindness and pardoning power of Christ Jesus, but He does not wonder. Virtue goes out of Him almost unconsciously, for He is so full of power that He can bless on all sides and scarcely know it! Even as the sun shines north, south, east and west and never wonders at its own shining, or as a fountain sends forth its sparkling drops and never stops to admire itself, or to marvel at its own flashing flow, so does Jesus readily, easily, out of His very Nature scatter pardon and salvation on all sides! He marvels at our faith! He marvels more often at our unbelief—but to Him His own power is not a thing of wonder at all!

Beloved, I want you to get fast hold of this thought if you can, and I beg you to hide it away in your hearts—that Jesus Christ is, beyond measure, able to save! We do not half believe it! We think we do, but we do not even a tenth believe it, for when we meet with a rather hard case we are ready to give it up in despair. Despairing persons we too soon leave in their gloom—and even melancholy men and women we are shy of, we wish we had never seen them, instead of believing up to their point—and believingly interceding until we see them happy in Christ! If we meet with a horrible blasphemer, or a foul person, or a bloated drinker, we feel quite out of our latitude and in the land of monsters! Whereas it is with such cases that our Lord is much at home and we ought to pray most about such persons—and to be most confident that the Gospel was meant to meet their grievous ills. Is there not a great Savior for great sinners?

III. We shall close by a third equally interesting point of great practical value. I have spoken of our Lord's willingness and power. Now we will note THE ABIDING METHOD OF OUR LORD JESUS. The first method men-

tioned here was, "Come and heal him." Jesus then went about doing good, but He does not now vouchsafe His bodily Presence, or give physical tokens of His being near to anyone. If any say to us, "Lo here," or, "Lo there," let us not believe them, for Jesus is not, now, upon the earth—He has gone up on high. We do not now pray, "Come and heal him," in the sense of expecting a vision or revelation of Christ after the flesh to those whom we love. We believe that He will come one day, a second time, and heal the sicknesses of this poor world, but till then we know Him not after the flesh, neither do we seek any personal coming.

The other and permanent mode of our Lord's action was that He should speak the word and so perform the cure. "Say in a word and my servant shall be healed." That is the style of our Lord, today and throughout the whole of this dispensation. The healing energy of Jesus is now seen, not by His personal *Presence*, but by the power of His Word in answer to the prayer of faith. This is henceforth His fixed and abiding method of cure—the Word rendered effectual by believing prayer.

Now, I want you to notice that this mode of operation is outwardly similar to the Lord's usual and natural way of exercising His power in Nature and in Providence. Though clearly it is one of the highest forms of supernatural action, it may not at first seem to be so. Look at this—when Jesus stands at a bedside, bows over the sick child and touches his little hand and he is healed, the deed is notable and is a great miracle. But will it not seem to you to be even a greater display of power, if possible, that Jesus should remain at a distance and not see the suffering one, nor even speak so as to be heard in the darkened chamber—and yet His mere *will* shall be able to quicken life and restore health? It is a very clear display of supernatural power, is it not?

This healing by volition, or by a single word? Yet it does not seem so striking, somehow, to half-opened eyes when you look at it from the grosser point of view, for this is just how the good God is working every day in Nature and in Providence, achieving His purposes by His silent will and by those echoes of His creating voice which still linger among us. When but a little while ago your fields were bare and your gardens desolate, if the Lord had suddenly come forth in awful glory and caused snow and ice to fly before Him and had then benignly touched the valleys and the hills and covered them with grass and corn, you would have exclaimed, "This is a great miracle!" But in truth it is an equally great display of power that the deed is done, though by less glaring processes!

The will of the Lord transforms the clods of the valley into an army of wheat ears and clover balls! His quiet wish reddens the clusters of the vineyard and ripens the fruit of the garden! Is not this, also, a marvel of power? Though the Lord has not come forth riding upon cherub wings, nor has He spoken audibly in commanding sentences, yet the secret energy of the eternal Word is evermore going forth to give us seedtime and harvest, cold and heat. What more Divine form of miracle is to be desired? I believe that when we rise to the possession of a fully developed faith we shall see ourselves to be daily compassed about with the Omnipotence of God and shall look on every tiny blade of grass and upon the insect which balances itself on it—and the dewdrop that decorates it—as being quite as

manifestly the finger of God as when the Nile turns to blood, or the dust of Egypt becomes flies!

To the Believer, miracles have not ceased, but the common course of Nature teems with them! The power of the Word of God in answer to the prayer of faith is now our Lord's way of blessing and this method exactly suits the wish of true humility. Humility says, "I am not worthy that God should do anything for me which would attract attention to me or make me seem honored above others." The lowly soul hears of one who was saved through a dream or a vision and he feels that he is not worthy to be thus favored! No, my Friend, and you need not wish for it, the Word of the Lord is enough and that Word is near you at this moment—in your mouth and in your heart—you have but to hear and your soul shall live!

If I were pleading for the conversion of a sinner I should feel hampered by my own unworthiness if I believed that salvation necessitated a bodily manifestation of my Lord or some extraordinary display of power before men's eyes. But if my Lord will save by His *Word*, only, then do I venture to ask with confidence! Here is no parade of power, but quiet Divine energy and this the meek of the earth delight in! I am sure that it pleases faith better than any other way. Oh that the power of the Word might be displayed at this time! Oh my Lord, how I desire of You that You would save thousands and I would be glad if it were done without me, without any of Your servants, if only You would say in a Word and by Your Holy Spirit cause a *nation* to be born in a day!

Certain professors eagerly pine for a great stir—they will not believe that the kingdom of God prospers unless thousands crowd into our assemblies—and unless great excitement reigns and all the papers are ringing with the names of famous preachers! They like it all the better if they hear of persons being thrown into fits during the meetings, or read of men and women falling down, or screaming under excitement and I know not what besides. They can believe in Christ's power if there are signs and wonders, but not otherwise! That is going back to, "come and heal him." But we are content to abide by the second mode. Can you not believe that by each one of us making the Gospel of God to have free course, our Lord can effectually save men by His Word?

Quietly, without observation, without signs or wonders, Jesus will bless believing testimonies and answer believing prayers! Strong faith is well content with the Lord's settled and usual mode of action and rejoices to see Him save men by His Word in answer to the prayer of faith. It is perfectly reasonable that we should expect our Lord to display His healing power in this way. What the centurion said was full of forcible argument. He said, "I am a captain of a troop. I do not have to go about from place to place to do everything personally. No, I remain in my quarters and issue orders, and I am sure of their being carried out. I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Is it not clear that the far greater Captain of our salvation does not need to come forth bodily in order to save any? His Word will suffice! Give Your order, O Immanuel! Speak to the powers of darkness and the captive sinner shall be free! Speak, and the human will must yield to You and the human heart must receive You! Is it not so? My Brothers and Sisters, we

do not believe enough in our Lord! I come back to that—we do not believe enough in what is so perfectly reasonable! If we will but speak our Master's Words and let it go forth, with less and less of our own words to cripple and hinder them, souls must be saved! Do you not believe in the plain preaching of the glad tidings? Do you not believe in the rams' horns?

O children of Israel, do you despise the rams' horns and do you long for horses and chariots and battering rams and mighty engines of war? Remember Jericho and how, by God's own appointed, though simple means, the huge walls rocked to their fall? Will not the Lord's own means suffice still? Oh, Believers, do you need anything this day except the simple preaching of the Gospel? If so, you are departing from the point where your faith ought to remain, since it still pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe! "The world by wisdom knew not God," and never will know God! Trust not philosophy, but stand by the old, old story and pray the Master to work by it as in former ages. You need no new word to be spoken, only let the Living Word be filled with power and souls will be healed!

Now, if anyone here will try in his own case this Divine method of healing, it will succeed in his instance as in that of the centurion's servant. If you, dear Hearer, will believe the power of Christ and trust Him to save you, you shall certainly obtain eternal life and that at once! Can you heartily believe in Jesus as you find Him revealed in Scripture? Can you be content without strange feelings, without remarkable terrors, without dreams or visions? Can you be content simply to trust your Savior? You shall be healed immediately, yes, this very moment—before this rain shower has ceased the showers of Everlasting Grace shall have fallen upon you! You must not ask the Lord to come by some singular feeling within you, but just to speak while you are hearing and the miracle of Grace will be worked!

Let me add once more—if you who are converted long to see others saved, you will be wise to keep to the established method. Pray, believe and then *expect* the Lord to work by His own Word in answer to your prayer! The centurion rose to this method. He began lower by desiring a personal visit, but he grew up to this plain, simple, yet glorious way! Can you not do the same? Seek no marvels, but test the power of the Gospel upon your friends. Do not ask the Lord to go out of His way, but beseech Him to apply His Word with power to those whose eternal welfare lies near your heart. Bring your loved ones under the sound of the Gospel and entreat the healing Lord to put forth His power thereby and your desire shall be accomplished!

Alas, if the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth? If He were to come now and ask us all to put into the collection box what faith we have—when He opened it, would it come to the eighth part of a farthing? Yet every man among us that is a Believer ought to have an inexhaustible treasure of golden faith! Lord, we believe! Help You our unbelief! Lord, increase our faith! Amen.

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FIRST HEALING AND THEN SERVICE

NO. 1836

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 19, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.”
Matthew 8:14, 15.*

This event took place at Capernaum, but Peter’s residence was at Bethsaida, for we read, “Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.” How came Peter to have a house at Capernaum? Poor fishermen do not often have two houses. May not the conjecture be highly probable that, finding the Lord Jesus Christ was frequently at Capernaum, Peter thought it best to have a dwelling there, that he might always be present when the Master was preaching and that he might do his best to entertain Him between visits? I like to think that the servant changed his place of abode for his Master’s sake. Would it not be well if many Christian people had some little consideration when they are choosing a house, as to whether it will be convenient for the hearing of the Word of God? Do you not think that a great many professors look chiefly for every other kind of advantage and, when they have virtually made their choice, they *afterwards* enquire into the very important item of their nearness to a place where they may worship God, enjoy Christian fellowship and be useful?

There are some in this congregation who have moved to this part of town to become members of an earnest, prayerful Church. Such Believers feel that the first consideration in life must be the health of their souls, the benefiting of their children and their usefulness in promoting the cause of Christ. When they have made the selection of a house in that way and for that reason, they have found a blessing resting upon them according to the promise, “Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Some who have forgotten this rule and, like Lot, chosen the well-watered plains of Sodom, have lived to regret their choice. Although the house may be commodious and the position convenient, these advantages will not make up for losing the means of Grace and missing opportunities of holy service. When Mephibosheth lived at Lodebar, the place of no pasture, David fetched him up to Jerusalem where he, himself, delighted to dwell. It would be well for many a limping Brother if he made a like change.

Thus, before we actually cross the threshold of Peter’s house, we learn a lesson. Our Lord Jesus Christ had been having a heavy day—He had

been to the synagogue and He had preached and had worked miracles. He had moved in the midst of a great throng and now, as the Sabbath was drawing to a close, He needed refreshment—and it was most convenient that Peter had a house into which the Lord could go. I do not suppose it was a stately mansion. Probably it was little better than a hut, for Peter was only a fisherman. But the Lord Jesus made it honorable enough by entering it. Where the king is there, the palace is!

Though our Lord went to Peter's house to rest, He did not find it free from trouble. It was a hospital before He made it a palace. Peter's wife's mother was on her bed prostrate with "a great fever." Typhus of the worst kind was burning out her life. However good a man may be, he will not escape trial in the flesh. You may have a house full of sanctity and full of sickness at the same time. We find it true, while we are here, that "the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness." The regenerated spirit has risen into life, but the body lingers under the power of death and its attendants, pain and weakness. Certain persons attribute all sickness to the devil and impute special sin to those who are grievously afflicted. This teaching is as false as it is cruel! "Whom the Lord loves He chastens."

I can bear witness that some of the saintliest persons I have ever known have been bedridden for years—and others in whom the very image of Christ was conspicuous, from whose lips all the country round gathered up the choicest sentences of holy experience—have been invalids for 20 or 30 years at a stretch. Our sicknesses are of the Lord's appointing however painful they may be and we may, without doubt, say, as David did, "The Lord has chastened me sorely." "Lord, he whom You love is sick," is still a Truth of God! Even Peter's house, though it was the abode of a chosen saint, and a leading Apostle whose very shadow would one day heal the sick, had a terrible fever in it which threatened death. Yet Jesus came where the fever polluted the air. If the disease had come, the Great Physician had come also! We are not alarmed at the Cross if Christ comes with it!

Notice, with regard to our Lord's entering the house of Peter, that He came there with His three most favored disciples. If you read the statement given by Mark in his first chapter, you may be somewhat surprised to discover Peter, James and John there. We read—"When they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John." Whether Andrew was there or not I cannot tell—he was joint proprietor of the house—but he is not mentioned as being there. Whenever you see Peter, James and John present, together with the Lord, you may look for special wonders. These were the men who beheld the Lord's exceeding Glory on the Mount. These were nearest to the agony of Gethsemane. These were admitted to behold the raising from the dead of the young maiden when the Lord sent away all the gathered company. To this most select triumvirate did Jesus display Himself as He did not to the rest of the Apostles—and much less to the world! Did not the Savior thus give us notice that the healing of Peter's wife's mother was a choice mani-

festation of His power and Grace—and was intended to convey a lesson to the choicer spirits among His followers? I think so and, therefore, I shall so use the incident. To you who love Jesus much and live in special nearness to Him, there is a voice from the bed of her who rose from the fever to minister to her Lord! You, also, are called from your weakness that you may pay personal service to Him who heals all your diseases!

Yet though Jesus and Peter and James and John were there, nothing is before you but a family group, a scene in a house. True religion displays its greatest marvels around the domestic hearth. A fisherman's mother-in-law becomes an historic person through the Lord's touching her. What glory Jesus casts upon common things! With what grandeur He invests a room in a poor man's house! A fisherman's hut becomes the headquarters of the Captain of our salvation! He heals a woman within its doors and, before long, "all the city was gathered together at the door." O that we may see the same—our own dear ones saved—and then the whole city awakened to seek Divine healing!

We will arrange our discourse under the headings of four observations.

I. First, let us observe that **IT MAY BE WE HAVE SOME IN OUR HOUSE WHO NEED THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS.** One in Peter's house could not as yet minister to Christ, for she needed that Christ should minister to her! She was sick of a great fever and quite prostrated by it, so as to be altogether unable to rise. Let us think whether we have not some about us who are *spiritually* sick in a way which may be likened to a great fever.

What would the fever represent? Those who are in a fever represent, *spiritually*, those who are *on fire with sin*. The original word for "fever" bears a close relation to the word, "fire." The world's great poet speaks of "the fiery fever." A burning heat inflames the body, quickens the pulse to an unnatural pace, parches the mouth and tongue and dries up the entire system. Those who have a fever in their souls are hot after sin, dried up with evil desires, inflamed with evil lusts. What unhealthy energy many even show in the indulgence of their passions, or in the pursuit of their ambitions—they are so inflamed with their desires that their life is consumed! Have we not seen some whom we dearly loved, afflicted with this fierce distemper?

Touch upon certain points and we discover that they are diseased in reference to them—they are in such an inflamed state of mind they cannot be made to think coolly or judge calmly and they grow excited and angry. Their touch is that of a fevered hand. Their whole nature is burning with the fire of sin. Such persons are not always inflamed thus—they are frequently gentle and tractable—so much so, that we are filled with hope concerning them! Often fever is intermittent—the patient is hot at one time and cold at another—and in many sinners the fever of sin is intermittent in its symptoms. They are not always drinking—sometimes they are sober for a long period and express themselves as deeply penitent for former falls. What pleasant company, what fine genial spirits they are at such times! The fever returns and nothing can restrain them—they drink,

even, to delirium! Alas, the misery which is thus caused! Others are gentle and loving for a season—then they suddenly give way to anger and there is no telling what they will say or do. When once the fever is on them, they become as inflamed as ever!

We know persons from whom the heat of the fever is so long gone that we think, surely, they are healed, but, alas, their cool times are only a pause between the attacks—and the evil returns with increased energy! Their goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew—it comes hopefully, but it disappears utterly. We have mistaken the period between the fever fits for the calm of a cure, but it has not turned out to be so. They have, perhaps, been even worse after their hopeful times than they were before! Like he from whom the evil spirit went out on his own accord, only to return, again, and bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself to enter in and dwell there. Have you not such cases under your own roofs, or among your next of kin—poor souls inflamed with the terrible heat of sin?

These fevered people are *frequently very restless*. It is one effect of the fever that the man cannot lie long either on this side or on the other, but turns to and fro. Even his sleep is broken—neither by day nor by night can he find rest. He is dried up and feels as weak as if he were brought into the dust of death and utterly dissolved. His experience is not so much *pain* as something *worse* than pain—an utter absence of rest. Have you not friends who, in this sense, are feverish? I had almost said I hope they are so, if they are, indeed, under the power of sin—there are signs of *life* where unrest abounds! We know young men with happy homes who cannot be content. They seem resolved to break their mothers' hearts and their fathers know not what to do with them. Nothing pleases them, they are always unsettled. They have been put to half-a-dozen businesses, already, and have left each one of them—they are now longing for a foreign country, or for enlistment in the army, or for *anything* other than their present calling.

We have known them go to the colonies and come back again, finding nothing there. A sea voyage was to cure them, but, alas, a sinner on land is a sinner at sea! The malady is inward and needs change of *self* rather than change of *place*. Under the influence of the fever of sin, men wish and do not know what they wish. They are like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, or as waves of the sea driven with the wind and tossed about—no part of them seems to be at rest—a sort of madness possesses them. Above all, there is a restlessness about them in reference to sin. They sin, but they are not pleased, and after they have sinned, they are eaten up by remorse, a remorse, however, which is not practically operative—for they go back to sin, again, flying like the moth to the candle where they have already burned their wings. Such persons often become irritable towards their friends when checked in their wrong doing and even become, at last, like Pashur in the book of Jeremiah—a terror to themselves and to their friends!

I may be treading upon tender ground in all this. I believe my words are true to the letter. I shall ask Christian people who have not this heavy trouble to be very thankful and to pray to God for those who have. With those dear friends who have to endure the sore affliction of having such in their family, I desire to sympathize and to encourage them to bring these feverish spirits to the Lord Jesus by prayer and faith—that in them the parable of the prodigal may be literally fulfilled.

One symptom of a fever is that a man *loses appetite for that which would be good for him*. Some of our unconverted friends have no taste for the Gospel. We cannot easily induce them to come to hear it. If you could get them under the sound of the Word of God, you would sit and pray and even agonize for them while the Truth was being preached! But, alas, they will not come near! They have no taste, no liking, no care for heavenly things. The thing they most require is that for which they have the least desire! Yet, fear not, *Jesus* can give them appetite and everything else which is necessary to a perfect cure!

On the other hand, a fevered patient often *feels a great thirst* which he cannot, by any means, satisfy. He longs to drink and drink again, and with all his drinking the heat is not abated. Sometimes the sick man *has an appetite for what he must not taste*. He craves after the most injurious and even unnatural things! He prefers foods which would be most pernicious. So is it with unconverted ones when under the full power of sin—they are eager enough to hear a godless lecture, or to listen to opinions which are the opposite of the Truth of God! They would go through any hardship to indulge their passions and sacrifice any amount to be allowed their desires. As the horseleech cries, “Give, give,” so is sin insatiable! Sin can never yield satisfaction to the soul of man—as well might the thirsty hope to relieve their anguish by draughts of brine.

As it is with cups of wine, so is it with sin—one makes room for another. He that has sinned will sin. It is an awful part of the punishment of sin that it grows into a habit and increases in intensity as it is indulged. I may rightly say of the black well of sin, “He that drinks of this water shall thirst again and thirst more.” Sin is a thing of rapid propagation and never abides alone. You cannot retain one sin in the house by itself, for it will, before long, produce a numerous progeny, a generation of vipers—many as the hairs of your head! What a dreadful thing it is for a man to have a fever upon him which makes him thirst for that which increases his thirst!

But the worst point in the case of the sinner is this, that this fever of his *will prove fatal*. This son, daughter, husband, or wife of yours will perish through the fever of sin if it is not cured! A great fever is a great danger—and so is sin. In our Lord’s days, men did not know how to deal with fever as well as now and, therefore, those who were taken with it were doomed. This poor woman would have died if Jesus had not interposed—thus is it with the sinful ones whose cases we deplore.

I have thus described the disease. What shall we do with it? Let us see what the disciples did.

Mark says, “And *they told Him about her at once.*” I would earnestly persuade you to do the same. Take the case of the person who is laid upon your heart and spread it before the Lord. Go over the matter in detail. Not for *His* information, but to excite your own prayerfulness. Look the matter in the face, making no excuses for the sinner and, in all truthfulness, tell the Lord what ails the sinful one. Pour out your heart before the Lord and sorrow over the lost one, even as Samuel mourned over Saul, only with better hope. Tell the case to Jesus just as you would mention a physical case to a doctor. He is ready to hear it all and to consider it. Make a *confidant* of Jesus! Do not go and complain all over the neighborhood, “My boy does this,” or, “My husband does that,” for you may increase the evil in that way by incensing the person against yourself and your religion. You may tell Jesus all about it, without restraint. No harm can come of such a relation. It will be a relief to your own mind and it will be the most proper way of engaging your Lord to help you.

Luke tells us, “*they besought Him for her.*” After you have stated the case to your Lord, then plead with Him! Plead His promises and plead His Nature. Plead the need of the case and the glory which a cure will bring. Let it be no cold prayer, but a warm, hearty, intense entreaty. Do not wrangle with sinners about religion, but wrestle with Christ about *them*. Beseech the sinners for Christ, but never fail to beseech Christ for the sinners! When little can be done with men, you can still do much with Jesus. It will be of very little use to be always worrying them with, “you should not do this,” and, “you should not do that.” But it will be of infinite service to go and say, “Lord, have mercy upon these poor souls who know You not.” Never give over praying for your prodigals as long as there is breath in their bodies—no, not even if they curse you for doing so!

We find, also, that when they had thus told Jesus of her, and had besought Him, then they *brought Him into the chamber*, so that we read in our text, “When Jesus was come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever.” They seemed to say, “Lord, this is all we can do. We would have You look upon the dying woman and consider her. There she is.” Can you not, by faith, so realize the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ that you see Him viewing the lost estate of those for whom you are concerned? Your friend is fevered with sin, but Jesus sees it. Your boy is restless, but Jesus watches Him. Your daughter is likely to perish, but Christ looks upon her! Every day let your importunate prayers keep them under Christ’s eyes! Bring unto Jesus all your sinful ones! Lay them at His feet. Leave them in His Presence. When you have done all this—when you have told Him of her and besought Him about her and brought Him to the house to look upon her—then you may expect His healing touch and saving Word! That is our first remark.

II. Secondly—THE MINISTRY OF JESUS MUST PRECEDE THE MINISTRY OF THE SAVED ONES. We anxiously desire that these friends of ours who are now sick of the fever of sin should yet become the servants of Christ and should minister to Him. I can imagine the joy of that anxious mother over yonder if she should ever be privileged to hear her boy preach

the Gospel—that boy who has even been known to swear! What delight would fill the wife’s bosom if she could hear her infidel husband engage publicly in prayer! Some of you are now thinking of certain gifted persons who are using all their abilities *against* the cause of Christ and, “Oh,” you say, “if they might be converted, my heart would dance with delight!” This is a right desire, but do not indulge it unwisely. Do not ask them to do anything for Jesus while they are unregenerate. Healing *must* come before serving!

When a person is “lying sick of a fever,” do not ask her to rise and wait upon the Lord Jesus Christ. No—*His* ministry to Peter’s wife’s mother preceded *her* ministry to Him! She was “lying,” that is, prostrated by the terrible malady. As a body greatly weakened seems to cling to the bed and almost sink into it, so was she. She was like a crushed thing, or a sheep cast upon its back in a trench—and so she was powerless to do anything. Thus is it with the sinner. What can he do for Christ? “When we were yet *without strength*, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.” There is no strength in an ungodly man with which to serve God! He has no faith and, “without faith it is impossible to please God.” He has no love and even if a deed were done rightly, yet if there were not *love* as the *motive*, it would not be acceptable with God.

The sinner, in fact, has no spiritual life and if he should *try* to do good works they would be dead works and could not please the living God. Out of a foul spring no clean waters can come and out of a corrupt heart no acceptable works can proceed! Christ must give us strength and cause us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure, for without Him, we can do nothing.

Moreover, this sick woman was *utterly unfit* to do anything for Jesus and His disciples with a great fever upon her. Everywhere she went, she would spread the contagion of her malady. Everything she touched would be infected—any food she prepared would be nauseous even to think upon! Let her stay in her bed, by all means, and let none go near her unless they are compelled to do so, for fever soon seizes upon fresh victims! So you that are ungodly cannot serve Christ, for everything you do is defiled—you cannot lay your hands, even, upon holy things without polluting them! Your thoughts are feverish, your words are feverish, your acts are feverish and, therefore, we cannot invite your cooperation in the work of the Lord. You would do more hurt than good, if, as sinful men, you pretended to render service to a holy God! Such is your natural depravity that you would spread infection all around, even if you attempted to minister to the Lord Jesus.

What is more, a person sick of a fever, if in her feverishness she were to arise and wait upon guests, would get no good, but run terrible risks. Persons in fever must not be exposed to drafts, or be driven to exert themselves. Every doctor would judge it to be most injurious to a person in a high state of fever to attempt to work. I solemnly believe that unconverted people get hurt when they attempt religious duties. To preach with an unrenewed heart must be to pronounce one’s own death warrant! If unre-

newed men come to the sacramental table, they eat and drink condemnation to themselves! And if they, in any way, make a profession of faith, they are enacting a falsehood in the sight of high Heaven, seeing they have no such faith. “Unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes?” No, you must stand back, you that have never been washed in the blood of the Lamb! You cannot minister to Christ while the red fever is on your brow. He who has seraphim for His servitors wants not feverish services from souls diseased with iniquity. King Jesus wants no slaves to swell His train! You must be, first, freed from the yoke of sin and *then* you shall become the servants of the Lord!

Listen to me, any fevered ones who are here, while I briefly describe how the Lord Jesus Christ ministered to this woman!

He ministered to her by *His Presence*. His being in the room with her meant that salvation was come to her house. Beloved, believe that Jesus Christ is here! To His ministers He has said, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” I want you to know that He is not shut up within the heavenly gates, but He is *here* and His power to save is present in the midst of this assembly—and will be present in your room when you go home and fall upon your knees!

The next thing that blessed this woman was *His look*. “Jesus saw her.” There is more, here, than appears upon the surface. You know what a physician means when he says, “I will come and see your sick child.” He does not mean that he will barely look at it—he intends to search into the matter, study it, and see what can be done. Will you try to think that the Lord Jesus Christ sees you—that He reads your heart, knows your secret thoughts, hears your secret groans and notes your inward desires? He perceives the power which sin has over you, the difficulty you find in coming to Him—He sees it all and knows how to deal with it. Not only is Jesus near at hand, but He is present with His eyes open, observing all that ails you. And He sees it with a mind which is deeply sympathetic and a heart quick to relieve!

The next thing the Lord Jesus Christ used was *His touch*. This is the healing point. He “took her by the hand and lifted her up.” There was a contact established. Oh, that glorious Doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ! There is healing in it! I do not mean in the *doctrine*, but in the *fact*, itself, that the Lord Jesus Christ took our flesh and became Man, “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” Thus He touches us and heals us! Had He not been Man, He could not have died. And had He not died, we must have died forever. God in Christ Jesus is very near to you, poor Soul! He is so near to you that if you, by faith, touch the hem of His garment, you are saved! If you believe in the Lord Jesus, He is in contact with you—His cool hand is grasping your fevered hand and as your fever dissolves into Him—for “He Himself bore our sicknesses”—His health flows into you so that you may arise and minister unto Him! Contact by faith with Jesus Christ our Lord is the ordained means of salvation!

And there was, beside this contact, another form of power—our Lord spoke to the fever. *His word* is a word of might. If the touch of our Lord

represents incarnation, His word represents resurrection, for by hearing the voice of the Son of God shall all the dead arise from their graves! His word is quickening and where it falls, it proves itself to be a living and incorruptible seed! By the word of the Lord, even by the Gospel of Jesus, the fever of sin is driven out of men and women. Oh, that the Lord Jesus may now speak to you by these lips of mine—speak with almighty power to your hearts! Oh, that you, poor sin-sick Sinner, may hear the word of the Lord with your inner ears, for such hearing is eternal life! God help you so to hear.

There is healing for you and I warn you, again, that you must have this healing before you can work for Jesus. Your Lord must begin with you before you can begin with Him. Do not go blundering out of the Tabernacle and say, “I will take a class in the Sunday school” “I will try to preach.” “I will give my money to the Lord’s cause.” No—stand back till you are healed—weep and pray and agonize till you are healed! You must *receive* from Jesus all He has to give before you can give anything to Him!

This may sound harsh to you who mean well, but God forbid that I should bolster you up in a zeal for God which is not according to knowledge. Aliens cannot stand in the Lord’s courts—you must be made Israelites before you can be priests unto God! First, salvation, then service.

III. Thirdly, it is plainly taught in the text that STRENGTH TO MINISTER COMES WITH HEALING. “Immediately she arose and ministered to them.” Fever causes extreme weakness and when it leaves the patient, he is, for a considerable length of time, greatly debilitated. The cures of Nature are slow. But when Jesus cures, He does it at once. Though He uses only a touch and a word, yet He cures so perfectly that no weakness remains! The woman did not lie in bed a week or two and feed upon nourishing diet and so recover her strength. No, *then and there* she arose from her bed, girt her garments about her, and went about the duties of the household! Is it not wonderful to see her hasten to the kitchen to prepare the evening meal for the Lord Jesus Christ and His friends? With gratitude beaming from her face, she placed each dish upon the table and brought forth water with which her guests might wash their feet. The moment the Lord Jesus Christ saves a soul, He gives that soul strength for its appointed service!

I want to call your attention to this, that her service was *immediate* service, rendered on the spot, without delay. Some of you have been converted during our late special services—let me bid you serve the Lord at once, even as the Lord has served you. “What, get to work directly?” Yes, *immediately*, for there is something very beautiful about that which is done by new converts. Oh, the beauty of that first look of love! Oh, the sweetness of those first notes of praise! Oh, the power of those first sentences of testimony! I do not find any fault with our dear old saints—there is a richness and maturity about them—but still, my soul desires the first ripe fruits! There is a pungency of flavor about the first berries of Grace and even a kind of tartness about them which makes their taste all the more perceptible to those who are dull and careless! Give me fruit with the

dew of the morning upon it! New blood in the veins of the Church is a great promoter of its health and vigor! The first fruits are, in some respects, the best fruits! I would not have a converted person wait a week before trying to do something for Jesus. Run as soon as you find your feet!

But notice that what this good woman did was very *appropriate*. Peter's wife's mother did not get out of bed and go down the street and deliver an address to an assembled multitude. Women are best when they are quiet. I share the Apostle Paul's feelings when he bade women be silent in the assembly. Yet there is work for holy women and we read of Peter's wife's mother that she arose and ministered to Christ. She did what she could and what she should. She arose and ministered to Him. Some people can do nothing that they are allowed to do, but waste their energies in lamenting that they are not called on to do other people's work! Blessed are they who do what they should do. It is better to be a good housewife, or nurse, or domestic servant, than to be a powerless preacher or a graceless talker. She did not arise and prepare a lecture, nor preach a sermon—she arose and prepared a supper—and that was what she was fitted to do.

Was she not a housewife? Let her serve the Lord as a housewife. I do not say that if you were converted a week ago you are at once to preach. No, but you are to minister to the Lord in the way for which you are best qualified—and that may happen to be by a living testimony to His Grace in your daily calling. We greatly err when we dream that only a preacher can minister to the Lord—for Jesus has work of all sorts for all sorts of followers. Paul speaks of women who helped him much and, assuredly, as there is no idle angel, there ought to be no idle Christian! We are not saved for our own sakes, but that we may be of service to the Lord and to His people—let us not miss our calling.

When healed of her fever, Peter's wife's mother had strength to perform a *suitable* ministry, such as the peculiar occasion required. She did, for Jesus and the three companions, that which was necessary then and there. Jesus had had a hard day's preaching and that is hungry work—He had spent a heavy day in healing and that is exhausting work—and now He needed to eat and, therefore, He came into Peter's house. The principal worker there was laid aside, and so our Lord did not ask for refreshment. He always thought of others before Himself and though He was faint and hungry, He put back His own needs till He restored health to the fevered woman. This being done, the next necessary thing was that the wearied Preacher and Physician should be refreshed—and this, the grateful woman attended to. When our Lord sat on the well and talked with the woman of Samaria, He was faint and weary and asked for a drink. But the claims of Nature, He put aside till He had preached the Gospel to her. *Then* came the disciples with the meat which they had bought. On this occasion at Peter's house, the refreshment was ministered by her who had just left her bed. "She arose and ministered to them."

Now, dear Friends, you that are converted may minister to Christ in a way which is as necessary as the service of His ablest preachers and pastors. There is something for you to do which will be a refreshment to Him

and to His servants. He condescendingly permits it and will graciously accept it. You can personally minister to a personal Christ. You cannot do everything, but you can do *something* that will be acceptable to Him. You may, you can and you ought! Ministry to Jesus is practicable, permissible, acceptable and *obligatory*. You owe your very life to Him. Come, spend that life in His service! Immediately, this very day, minister to Jesus! If you have only been saved this day, yet there is something incumbent for the day and, in its place, it is as necessary to the glory of God as the ministry of cherubim and seraphim! Now then, do it! I will not urge you because I can see in my last head something that will move you to it.

IV. THE DESIRE TO MINISTER ALWAYS ARISES OUT OF HEALING.

Here was a woman, a poor woman, an old woman, a widow woman—one who had just been sick—and she desires to minister to Christ at once. She can do it and she does it! How do you think she was moved to this? Was not it that *strength naturally suggests* activity as soon as you get it? When you are very prostrate, you do not want to do anything. You feel as if you must lie still—there is no power in you and there is no industry in you. But persons who have recovered, need something to do. Sometimes they try to do more than they can, such is the suggestion of revived strength.

Now, if the Lord has given you spiritual life, that life will need to work! If He has given you light, that light will shine. “Now candle, do not shine.” Will the candle take any notice of you? No, it cannot help shining if it has been lighted! If Christ has given you His Grace and it is in you as a well of living water, it must flow out that others may drink! It is no use saying, “Water, do not flow—fountain, cease.” The fountain cannot help it! It must send forth its streams—as it must be so with you. The strength God has given you in Christ suggests *activity*.

And then the *gratitude for the strength impels you to activity*. How can a man be still when Christ has spoken for him and delivered him? We read in the paper, some time ago, that the King of Italy, to his great honor, appeared in a court of law on behalf of a man brought up under charge of causing a death. The King had seen the accident and he came forward as a common witness in the court to say that the horse had mastered the driver and the man was not to be blamed. I do not know the name of the man, but I feel pretty sure that Jacobi or Antonio, whoever he may be, if ever King Humbert wants somebody to speak up for him, will find a friend in him! He will say, “My King came into court and spoke for me, and I will, as long as I live, speak up for him.” Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is an Advocate for you—therefore, be an advocate for Him! Can you ever be silent for Christ, now that the Lord Christ has redeemed you from the curse of the Law and the penalty of sin? I tell you, if you can be quiet and do nothing for Christ, I am afraid you have never tasted of His love and Grace.

Once more, I think I may say that those who are healed by Christ are sure to do something for Him of the right sort because *their former habits will assist them*. I do not mean by this, that *sinful* activity can ever help us into *holy* activity, but I do mean that we can turn our old habits to ac-

count for Jesus. I believe that Peter's wife's mother was a particularly nice old lady. There is rather a prejudice against a wife's mother, but if Peter found it the proper thing to have her living in the house, I am sure she was a specially good woman. I have a picture of her in my mind's eye—a dear old soul, always busy and happy. When there was nothing else to do, she would mend the stockings, or do any commonplace work. She was always busy. You never had to ask her to work—she did it of her own accord. At cooking the meals and preparing everything for the house, she was perfectly at home, never grumbling, never complaining, never setting the husband against the wife, but always looking out to do everything that possibly could be done to make the household go along in all its concerns with oiled wheels.

When she had the fever, she did not like to be laid aside and so, the moment she is restored, there she is, at it again! The ruling passion is strong, now that death has been removed. She begins to serve Jesus, for she had *always* been serving *somebody*. When Jesus came into the house with Peter, James and John, she could not bear to think that there was nothing for supper. But the moment she felt well, away she went to the kitchen and, with all the utensils of her cooking craft, she began to prepare the best meal in her power! You people who, when you were not converted, were always active, ought to be doubly active now! In the family, do all for the Lord Jesus Christ. Those commonplace things—sweeten and flavor them with love for Him! Reverence Him and glorify Him in all that you do. Is there not something you can do for your neighbor, something you can do for your children, some part of the Lord's work you can undertake?

As for you young men who have been so restless, so vigorous, so dashing in sin—it seems to me that this habitual energy ought to be placed under consecration to Christ. A horse that has no mettle in it is easily managed. Still, a horse with a little mettle, though he may kick and plunge—and do a great deal of mischief—is all the better horse when he is broken. If he is under proper management. If he answers to the bit, you like the mettle! So it is with a man when he is converted. If he had mettle in him that led him to kick and plunge when he served the devil. If he did so much mischief and damage against the Kingdom of Christ, he is the very man to pull well in Jesus Christ's chariot! I pray the Master, therefore, that He will come and heal that young man of his fever and make his blood cool within him this day, and restore him, by His Grace! Oh that the Lord would touch all sick folk and make them healthy! Then when all are healed, let us rise to serve Him who has served us—and unto Him be glory forever and ever! Amen and amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 8:1-17.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—108 (VER. II),
116 (SONG II), 116 (SONG III).**

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

HELP FOR YOUR SICKNESS

NO. 2124

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

***“When evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, He took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.”
Matthew 8:16, 17.***

IT was the evening—in all probability it was the evening of a Sabbath day. The Jews were so tender not to break the Sabbath that they did not even bring forth the sick to the Savior until the evening was come. The Savior would gladly have healed them on the Sabbath, for that was to Him a high day for holy work—but they did not think it right—and so they kept back their sick till the day was ended. If any of you have thought that the time has not come for you to approach the Savior, you have labored under a great error for He would not have you delay for a single hour! But I hope you are now satisfied that you have waited long enough and that at last the evening is near in which you should come to Jesus. God grant that any superstition which has kept you back may be removed and may this be the set time, the hour of Divine Grace to your souls!

Whether it was a Sabbath evening or not, the day had been spent by the Savior in diligent labor, for our Savior took care, when the people would listen to Him on the seventh day, to preach with all His might. As soon as the sun was up, He began to proclaim saving Truth. He was tired when evening was come and He might have sought rest, but instead of that they brought out the sick to Him to heal and He must close up a weary day by a yet more arduous task. Until darkness had covered the earth He must continue, still, to scatter blessings right and left. At this hour our blessed Master has laid aside all weariness and now at eventide He is waiting to bless. Whatever has been done during the day, yet if some poor, weary soul has spurned the Divine voice through all the former hours, He is still waiting to save before yet the sun has quite gone down.

When evening was come they brought unto Him those that were sick. We are in like case. Let us put up this prayer to Him, “O You who did bless the sick in the evening, come, now, and bless us while all is cool and still and let us find Your salvation!” What a strange sight that evening saw! They brought forth to the Savior those that were possessed of evil spirits and those that were sick. They brought them on their mattresses and laid them in the streets. It must have been a very difficult thing to bring out some that were possessed because they struggled and raved—but nevertheless they brought them. The streets were turned into a hospital and in the still evening air you could hear the cries of those poor creatures who were possessed of evil spirits and the moans of those in acute pain.

It was a sad sight, a piteous sight, to look upon—and as far as Christ's eyes could see, every nook and corner were occupied with these sick people. But what a glorious thing it must have been to see Him, the Divine Physician, with tears of pity in His eyes and yet with beaming joy on His Countenance! He was suffering intensely all the while because of their suffering and yet joyous because He was able to bless them. You see Him go along and lay His hands on one sick man and he leaped up from his bed! And you hear Him speak to another and the foul spirit flees—and he that was madness itself becomes calm and rational!

See Him cast a look over yonder and with that *glance* He expels the fever! Hear Him speak a word to one far away and with that *word* He dries up dropsy or opens a blind eye! It was grand to see the Savior thus fighting with Satan and with foul diseases and everywhere victorious! That was one of the happiest evenings that ever ended a day in Palestine! I want you to feel that we can have its parallel tonight. We have Jesus *here!* We have been seeking Him. There are some here who dwell with Him. Jesus is here and the sick folk are here and He is just as able to heal tonight as He was in days gone by.

I am going to speak about *His works of healing* and to draw encouragement from them. And then we shall go into *the explanation of His power to heal* which is given us in the second verse of our text—"He took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses."

I. Let us notice, first, OUR LORD'S WORKS OF HEALING. On that occasion and on many others He cured *all sorts of sickness*. I think I am right in saying that there is not in the whole list of diseases one which the Savior did not heal. They may be known by new names, for they say the doctors have invented a dozen new diseases lately—but they are only old diseases to which they have given new names. Our great grandfathers died of diseases the names of which they never knew, or else they had other names than those which are given to them now. But as man has always been much the same, most diseases have continued as long as the human race.

We have to be very grateful that leprosy, which was the great scourge of the Jews, is almost extinct now. But in our Savior's day it seems to have been exceedingly common. And leprosy and all forms of disease came under the Savior's power and became deaf at His word. Now the parallel of that is this—Jesus Christ can forgive *sins* of all sorts. There are different grades of sin. Some are exceedingly defiling and loathsome. Other sins are scarcely hurtful to the general commonwealth and so are often almost unnoticed. Yet any sin will ruin a soul forever. It may be *thought* to be little, but as a little prick with a poisoned arrow will heat all the blood and bring on death, so is sin such a venomous disease that the least of it is fatal.

But from whatever kind of sin you are suffering, I would encourage you to come to Jesus with it—be it what it may. Is yours an extreme case? Have you been grossly guilty? Come with it, then, for our Lord healed the worst diseases. On the other hand, have you been kept out of gross sin from your early youth? Have you been preserved from outward vice? It

may be that your chief sin is the forgetting of God and living without love to Christ—a deadly sin, let me tell you—but bring it to the Savior! Have you been idle? Have you been proud? Have you been lascivious? Have you been untruthful? Have you been profane? Have you been malicious? I cannot tell, but God—who can read your heart as readily as we read a book—knows.

But whatever the sin may be, remember that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Oh, hear this and look up to the Savior and pray Him of His great mercy to exercise the healing art of His redeeming love on you, this evening, now that the sun has set! They brought to Jesus all sorts of diseases.

Note, next, that Jesus can deal with *special cases of devilry*. Possession with evil spirits was probably peculiar to that age. I sometimes think that when the Savior came down on earth, the devil had the impudence to ask to be let loose, that he and all his servants might come on earth and, in person, might meet the Savior. Satan is still busy, going about, seeking whom he may devour—but not exactly in the particular way in which he raged in Christ’s day. He cannot take possession of men’s bodies as he did then. So the Savior met Satan foot to foot and face to face—and the devil made a poor fight of it—for whenever the Lord Jesus made His appearance, the devil wanted to be off! And if he did not want to go, the Savior soon moved him by saying, “Come out of him.”

Like a whipped dog he did not dare to make a sound, but fled. A whole legion of demons were glad to get into a herd of swine and ran violently down a steep place into the sea to escape from the frown of our Lord! Satan found somebody that was more than a match for him! The parallel to that is this. There are some men that we meet with in whom the devil evidently reigns—and there are such women, too—for when women are bad, they can be bad and there can be no mistake about it. The devil can make more mischief out of a woman than out of a man when he thoroughly gets possession of her.

Well, whether men or women, there are some who might be called “the devil’s own.” One man is a drunk—there is no stopping him—he must drink on. He seems to be infatuated by it. He takes the pledge and abstains for a little while but, by-and-by, the devil gets hold of him again and he goes back to his taps. Though he has drunk himself into delirium tremens and to Death’s door, yet still he gives way to this loathsome vice. Others are possessed with the devil of lasciviousness and it does not matter what they suffer—they will always be defiling themselves—ruining body and soul by their iniquity.

We know persons who seem to have a devil in them in the matter of passion. They are but a little provoked and they lose all command of themselves. You would think that they ought to be put in a padded room in Bethlehem Hospital and kept there till they cooled down—otherwise they might do mischief to themselves and to others. Surely some men, who can scarcely speak without swearing, have the devil in them! How one’s blood runs chill, in going down our streets, to hear how commonly

our working men degrade themselves with filthy conversation! It is not exactly cursing—it is less honest and more vile!

Is there any hope for such? These are the very people in whom Jesus Christ has often displayed His healing power! I could tell you tonight of lions that have been turned to lambs—men of furious passions who have become gentle, quiet and loving—men of profane speech who would be shocked at the very remembrance of what they once said and whose voices have been often heard in prayer. I could tell you of men and women, too, who loved the wages of iniquity and lost their character and defiled themselves—but they are washed and they are sanctified! I have blessed the name of God when giving the right hand of Christian fellowship to ransomed ones to whom we could not have given our right hand a little while ago, for it would have been wrong to join with them in the wickedness of their pursuits.

Oh, yes, my Master still casts devils out of men! If there are any such here tonight, let your cry for help go up to our blessed Master! Come again, great Lord, and cast out the evil spirit from men and get to Yourself the victory in many a heart, to the praise of the glory of Your Grace! The remarkable point about this miracle-working was that *all were healed and there was never a failure*. When a man brings out a patent medicine he publishes verifications of the efficacy of his product. He gets a number of cases and he advertises them.

I suppose they are genuine. I should not like to be hanged if they were not. I suppose, therefore, they are all accurate and authentic. But there is one thing which you never knew a medicine advertiser to do—he never advertises the *failures* of the medicine. The number of persons that have been induced to buy the remedy and have derived no good from it—if these were all advertised it might occupy more room in the newspaper than those who write of a cure! My Lord Jesus Christ is a Physician who never had a failure yet—never once! Never did a soul wash in Christ's blood without being made whiter than snow! Never did a man, besotted with the worst of vice, trust in Jesus without receiving power to conquer his evil habits!

Not even in the lowest pit of Hell is there one that dares to say, "I trusted Christ but I am lost. I sought His face with all my heart and He cast me away." There is not a man living that could say that unless he dared to lie! Not one has with heart and soul sought the Savior and trusted in Him—and then had a negative from Him. He must save you if you trust Him! As surely as He lives He must save you, for He has put it, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." I will repeat it—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." You have never come if He has not received you for He must save those who trust in Him.

Notice that *His word was the sole medicine He used*: "He cast out the spirits with His word." No other medicine, no charms, no long performances, no striking of His hand over the place—He spoke and it was done! He said to the devil, "Come out of him," and it came out. He said to the disease, "Go," and away it went! In that way the Lord saves men today—by His Word. While I am speaking it tonight, or when you

shall be reading it, His Word will be the power of God unto salvation. I am glad that you are here to hear it, for faith comes by hearing. I shall be glad if you diligently read it, for reading is a kind of hearing and many are brought to the Savior that way.

Jesus Christ does not need to put you through a long “purgatory” and keep you for months getting ready to be saved. He has only this night to open your ears to hear His Word and when you hear it He can bless it to your soul so that you shall live and your sin shall die! And you shall become changed and renewed by His matchless Grace. I speak His Word tonight, praying that He will make it effectual as He has done before—and to Him shall be the praise! We have the same medicine tonight that Jesus used for we have His Word. We have got Himself here in answer to the prayers of His people and we have the same sort of sick people here—therefore we *expect* to see the same wonders worked!

II. May God give you a hearing ear and save you while I speak, secondly, of OUR LORD’S PERSONAL POWER TO HEAL! Why was it that He was able to save? We are pointed to the secret of His power by these words, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, He took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.” Christ was able to heal the diseases of men because He *bore them Himself*.

Do not think that our Lord Jesus was actually diseased—He suffered greatly but I read not that any disease was upon Him. Probably there was no man in whom there was less tendency to natural disease than in Him. His pure and blessed body was not subject to the diseases which are brought upon men through sin being in them. How, then, did He take upon Him our sicknesses and our sorrows? First, *He bore our sicknesses by intense sympathy*. When Christ looked at all those sick people, He did, as it were, take all their sicknesses upon Himself. You know what I mean. If you talk with a person who is very ill and you feel for him, you seem to lay his pains upon yourself and then you have power to comfort him.

When I am seeing troubled people, I enter into one sorrowful case after another till I am more sad than any of them. I try as far as I can to have fellowship with the case of each one in order to be able to speak a word of comfort to him. And I can say, from personal experience, that I know of nothing that wears the soul down so fast as the outflow of sincere sympathy with sorrowing, desponding, depressed ones. I have sometimes been the means in God’s hand of helping a man who suffered with a desponding spirit—but the help I have rendered has cost me dearly. Hours after, I have been myself depressed and I have felt an inability to shake it off.

You and I have not a thousandth part of the sympathy that was in Christ. He sympathized with all the aggregate of human woe and so sympathized that He made His heart a great reservoir into which all streams of grief poured themselves. My Master is just the same today. Though He is in Heaven He is just as tender as He was on earth. I never heard of anybody losing tenderness by going to Heaven. People get *better* by going there—and so is Christ—if it were possible, even more tender than when on earth.

Think of this. Somebody might not sympathize with you, poor Sinner, but Jesus does! You would not like to tell some people what you have done, for they would turn upon their heels and give you a wide berth—but it is not so with Jesus. He looks upon sin not with the eye of a judge, but with the eye of a *physician*. He looks at it as a disease and He deals with it that He may heal it. He has great sympathy with sinners though He has no sympathy with sin. He takes the sinner's sorrows to Himself. "Ah!" says one, "no man cares for *my* soul." Dear Friend, man or woman, whoever you may be—One greatly cares for you and He speaks to you tonight by these lips. Oh, that these lips were better fitted to be used by Him!

He says, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." He bids you take of the Water of Life freely. He is ready at this moment to bestow salvation. "Nobody knows my case," cries one. But Jesus knows it. He knows that dark spot in it. He knows that hard core which will not go away. He knows that filthy thing which you remember tonight and shiver as you remember it. He knows it all and yet He says, "Return, you backsliding daughter." He bids the vilest of the vile come to Him for He still has sympathy with them.

Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sicknesses by His championship of our humanity. Satan misled our first parents and the powers of darkness held us captive. In consequence of sin we have become sick and infirm and liable to suffer. Now, when our Lord Jesus came on earth, He as good as said, "I am the Seed of the woman and I have come to bruise the head of men's adversary." So Christ, in that respect, took upon Himself all the consequences which come of sin. He stood forth as the Champion of fallen manhood to fight Satan and cast him out of men's bodies—to battle with disease and to overthrow the evil which lies at the root of it—that men might be made healthy.

He is still our Champion. I delight to preach Him to you, you suffering, you sorrowing, you sinful, you lost, you castaways! One has come who has taken up your cause—the sinner's Redeemer, next-of-kin to man—who has come to avenge him of his adversary and to buy back his lost inheritance. Behold in Jesus the Champion of sinners, the David who comes and defies the Goliath that has long afflicted men! Oh, I wish you would trust our glorious Champion! Remember how He met the adversary alone and vanquished him? "It was on that dark, that dreadful night." The enemy sprang upon Him in the garden like a lion and the Savior received him on His breast.

He brought the Savior to His knees but there He grasped the lion, hugged him, crushed him, tore him and flung him from Him! Our Samson, sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground—and though He had won that victory He afterwards bowed His head and gave up the ghost. He lives again, however—and He is *now* the Champion of the cause of all the suffering, the sorrowing and the sinful—if they will but come and put their case into His hands! He Himself took our sicknesses and our infirmities by championing our cause and standing in our place to fight our battles! Give Him *your* cause! Trust *your*

soul in His hands and He will redeem *you* out of the jaw of the Lion, yes, out of the very mouth of Hell!

But here is the pith of the whole matter. The reason why Jesus is able to heal all the mischief that sin has worked is this—because *He Himself took our sin upon Himself by His sacred Substitution*. Sin is the root of our infirmities and diseases and so, in taking the root, He took all the bitter fruit which that root did bear. Oh, proclaim it again and again and every day! And shout it in the dead of night and tell it in the glare of noonday! Proclaim it in the market and shout in the streets and everywhere that God took sin from off the back of sinners and laid it on His innocent and only-begotten Son!

O mystery Divine, never to be known if God had not revealed it, and not even now to be believed if God Himself had not assured us of it! He laid sin upon Christ! “All we, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Harken, then, you guilty ones! Hear how freely God can forgive and yet not injure His justice. If you trust Christ you may be sure that you are among the number of those whose sins were laid on Christ. He was punished in your place!

Now, if Another was punished in your place it is not just that you should be punished, too. And therefore the very justice of God requires that if Christ suffered in your place, you should not suffer. Do you see that? “But did He suffer in *my* place?” I must answer this question by another, “Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Will you trust your soul with Him?” Well, if you do, your transgressions are not yours, for they were laid on Him. They are not on you, for, like everything else, they cannot be in two places at one time. And if they were laid on Christ, they are not laid on you.

“But what did Jesus do with the sins that were laid on Him? Can they not come back to us?” No, never! For He took them to the sepulcher and there He buried them forever. And now, what do the Scriptures say? “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions; and, as a cloud, your sins.” “You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.”

Our sins are gone! Christ has carried them away. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Believers are the seed for whom the victory has been gained. They are the seed to whom the promise is sure. It is not to those who are of *works*, but to those who are of *faith*. Those that are born-again of the Spirit of God through faith which is in Christ Jesus—these are “redeemed from among men.” Suppose I owed 10,000 pounds? If a dear friend should call on my creditor and pay that 10,000 pounds for me, I should then owe the creditor nothing. I could meet him with a smiling face.

He may tomorrow morning bring his account books if he likes and say, “There, you see, there are 10,000 pounds down there against you.” I would joyfully answer, “Yes, but look on the other side. You have been

paid. Here are the words at the foot of your bill, ‘Received in full of all demands.’” Now, when Jesus took the sins of Believers upon Himself He discharged them by His death—and every man that believes has the receipt in full in our Lord’s Resurrection! “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” Yes, those that believe in Christ have the complete forgiveness of every sin! As for me, I like to sing with Kent—

***“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast
And O my Soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come here’s pardon too!”***

All blotted out at once with one stroke of the sacred pen—obliterated once and for all! God does not again lay to the charge of men what He has once forgiven them. He does not forgive them half their sins and visit them for the rest—once given, the blessing is irrevocable! As it is written, “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He never draws back nor repents of what He has done. He saves and the salvation which saves is everlasting salvation. Now I see why Christ can heal!

Dear Heart, you have come here tonight full of the disease of sin and you are saying, “Will He heal *me*?” Look to Him! Look to Him! Look to Him! The morning that I found Christ I did not think to find Him. I went to hear the Word as I had heard it before, but I did not hope to find Jesus then and there. Yet I did find Him! When I heard that there was nothing to be done but simply to *look* to Jesus—and when the exhortation came so sharp and shrill and clear, “Look! Look! Look!” I looked and I bear witness to the change that passed over me—such a change as though I died and rose again! And such a change, my Hearer, shall pass over you if you believe—

***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for you.”***

God give you the look and give you the life, even now, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

***PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 53.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—410, 568, 296.***

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HOPEFUL, YET DOUBTFUL

NO. 2361

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 20, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1888.**

*“And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master I will follow
You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him, The foxes
have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but
the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.”
Matthew 8:19, 20.*

“A CERTAIN scribe”—“One scribe”—it is said in the original. Perhaps to mark the noteworthy fact that he should be a scribe, and yet should wish to be a disciple of Christ. The Lord has some of His own in every class of men. You may go as low as you will, but Grace can go lower! You may look as high as you please, but Grace can rise higher! In Heaven we shall find a multitude of those who were considered to be the base people of this world and, here and there, we shall find a king. So there was one scribe, a certain scribe, who desired to be a follower of Christ. Let us not despair of anybody. If God has not shut them out of our commission and He certainly has not, for He has bid us preach the Gospel to every creature, then let us not shut them out from our hopefulness, but let us expect to see even “a certain scribe” coming forward and declaring, “Master, I will follow You wherever You go.”

I. We have no time for any preface, tonight, so we shall go at once to our first point which is that here is SOMETHING VERY HOPEFUL. A certain scribe said unto Jesus, “Master, I will follow You wherever You go.”

Note, first, that this was a *very respectful* speech. The scribe addressed the Lord as, “Master.” “Master, I will follow You wherever You go.” It was not a flippant speech. There was no absence of reverence. He evidently looked up to the great Miracle-Worker who had been healing the sick in the streets on that long evening, and he called Him, “Master.” Jesus said, on another occasion, “You call Me, Master and Lord, and you say well; for so I am,” and this scribe began his religious confession well, whatever that confession may have turned out to be, by addressing Christ as Lord. I do not like those professed converts who are irreverent and I think that they condemn themselves out of their own mouth when they begin to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ as if He were some common Person of their acquaintance—and as if faith and repentance and all that appertains to godliness were a thing to be joked about. That will not do. There is something hopeful about this scribe in that he speaks in respectful and reverent tones to the Lord Jesus.

There is still more hopefulness in the fact that his words are *very enthusiastic*. They go upon wheels and the axles of the wheels are hot with

speed—"Master, I will follow You wherever You go." His utterance is earnest, it is hearty, it is enthusiastic! And from a scribe, too, a man of pens and ink, a calm, quiet letter-man. To see him on fire is something really remarkable! I do not like those converts who have no enthusiasm. If they do not burn at first, what will they do afterwards? If in their first love there is no zeal, no holy flaming fire, what shall we make of them, by-and-by? It is well to see, in those who have newly come to Christ, even if it is possible, a little too much enthusiasm! We can very well put up with *that*. There is a novelty to the soul that begins to see the Light of God—a novelty in the Light, itself, which suggests to it something sparkling and brilliant—and we do not wonder if the words of confession that the newly converted utter should burn and glow. There is something very hopeful, then, in the reverent tone and in the enthusiastic spirit of this man's utterance.

We are also greatly pleased and expectant of the best results when we notice that he was *very ready*. I do not know that he had been pressed by anybody to become a follower of Christ. There had been, so far as we know, no distinct call given to him, but he had readily responded to that call which is really in Christ, Himself, and in the miracles He worked. When any man is blessed, there is a voice in that blessing to others who need the same favor. All the sick are called when some sick ones are healed and this man had a quick ear and, apparently, a very obedient spirit, so he delayed not, but made haste to avow his allegiance to Christ. The Savior was going down to the boat and about to leave the multitude. The scribe might not, perhaps, see Him, again, so, at all risk of intrusion, he comes to Jesus and says, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go." We like to see this readiness in those who have newly come to Christ!

And one also likes what this man said because it was so *very resolute*—"Master, I will follow You." Hear how he says it—"I will follow You." There is no, "if," no, "but," no merely, "I hope and trust so," but, "Master, I am decided that whoever else may hesitate, I will follow You. I am determined, whatever others may do, that I will be Your follower. I will follow You." And surely, he who is not resolute when he enters upon the heavenly war, courts defeat! You must draw your sword from the sheath! You must say, "Set down my name, Sir," to the man with the writer's inkhorn, and you must begin straightway to cut a lane through your foes, for only he who is resolute and determined will take the Kingdom of Heaven, of which our Lord said, "the violent take it by force." We are glad to see the strong determination, the firm decision of a clear-cut man who comes right straight out from his old associates and says with all his heart and soul, "Master, I will follow You."

Then observe, with congratulation and hopefulness, that this man's declaration was *very unreserved*—"I will follow You wherever You go." "If You go to sea, I will go with You! If You land on the other side, where You will be confronted by men possessed of devils, I will follow You wherever You go." There is something of the unreserved loyalty of Peter when he said, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison and to death." So this scribe makes no exception of any kind, but says, "I will follow You wherever You go." Oh, if he had only meant it in its highest spiritual

sense, what a blessing this man would have had resting upon him! Of the glorified spirits above it is written, "These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes"—

***"Foremost of the sons of Light,
Nearest the eternal Throne."***

May we be among those who always follow Christ, keeping at His heels through floods or flames, to whom it is imperative that they should do what He does, and be what He is in His humiliation, that they may be like He in the day of His appearing in Glory! I like a convert—do not you, my Brothers and Sisters, also delight in a convert—who can use such language as this, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go"?

The best thing that I can say about this man's utterance is that it was *very right*. I am about to show you that *he* was not right, but the *words* he used were right! He said, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go." Is not this what Jesus has a right to expect of us? Will He ever be satisfied with less than this? Unless our heart takes Him for better and for worse, in life and in death, do we really take Him at all? Is not this what the Holy Spirit would work in us, that we should follow the great Master wherever He goes? Is not this the one need of the present age, the lack of fidelity to Christ in everything? Are not many aiming at originality? Are they not too much striking out paths for themselves? Have we not been told, over and over, again, that we are to be "independent thinkers"? Is not the position of sitting at Jesus' feet looked upon with contempt by many? Jesus, Himself, said that the Words that He spoke were not His, but He spoke what His Father told Him. *He was no original thinker*, but He was the great translator of the thoughts of God to men!

But men disdain this in the pride of their scientific knowledge. Professing themselves to be wise, they thus become fools! Still, this is the point to which we come back and may God bring His Church there, and bring you and me there, to say with heart and soul, without reserve, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go." The voice of the Virgin, at the first miracle at Cana of Galilee, spoke a word which it is well for us to always obey, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." That was at Christ's first miracle and we would see many miracles if we would give heed to that Word of God! But because we do not act as He bids us, the water is not turned into wine and we lack that special brightness, glory, fullness and sweetness in life which would come of complete obedience to Him. What Jesus commands, let us, by His Grace, delight to do! Where Jesus leads, let us rejoice, by His Grace, to follow!

So far I have shown you that in the utterance of this scribe, there is something very hopeful. But our blessed Master is not deceived by glitter. He looks for gold. He does not seem to answer this man's words—it is a way that Christ has, you will notice, all through the Gospels—that often He does not reply to men's words. You and I have to do that, but Jesus read their thoughts and He answered their thoughts rather than their words. So He read this man's thoughts and we, too, may read them, reflected in the reply which Jesus gave him—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head."

II. By this answer, Jesus showed us, I think, that there was SOMETHING WHICH NEEDED TESTING. That will be the second part of my subject.

Note, first, that this man's resolve to go with Christ was very sudden. Perhaps, therefore, it was the fruit of excitement. It was a very exciting evening—a hospital in the street—a great Physician instantly healing all kinds of disease! There were shouts of joy on all sides—lame men leaping like harts—and the tongues of the dumb singing! Well, I do not wonder if some people did not quite keep their heads and, though this man, now, with intense enthusiasm cries, “Master, I will follow You wherever You go,” perhaps, after all, it is only the result of excitement. You know, Beloved, that nature can do nothing in the *spiritual* realm, yet nature can make a wonderful imitation of Grace. But the child of nature, however finely dressed, is a dead child and not a living one. “You must be born again,” is the Word of Christ to all who would enter His Kingdom. It is not at all a difficult thing to take nature, especially some natures that are kindly and well-disposed and have much that is amiable about them, and to so work upon them that Nature cries, “I will follow Christ.” And, indeed, there is so much about Christ that is naturally beautiful, so much that is sweetly attractive, that we have known plenty of instances of individuals, quite destitute of spirituality, who have been in love with Jesus Christ with a natural love for the natural excellences of His Character!

And there have been some who have been prepared to go a long way and, as they thought, prepared to go *all the way* with Christ, but who, nevertheless, did not really and savingly know Christ at all! They only saw the outer Christ, but the true Christ, the *spiritual* Christ, they had not perceived. They could not have spoken to them what Jesus said to Peter, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven.” They had had no such Revelation and this man had no Divine call. At least there is no mention of any—he had no *effectual calling*, no inward drawing, no work of the Spirit of God that we can perceive at all. And so he suddenly breaks out with an enthusiasm that is, after all, but the effort of nature. It is well known to everybody that water will, of itself, rise as high as its source, but it will not rise any higher. Human nature will rise as high as human nature—no higher. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” You watch and you fancy that there will be some wondrous birth and that human nature, in her throes, will bring forth something very superior to herself, but she cannot—“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”—and nothing more! The offspring of the flesh cannot rise beyond its parentage. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” So, Brothers and Sisters, sudden conversions may be genuine conversions, but, on the other hand, a supposed conversion may be only an apparent change—the fruit of excitement, the working of an excitable nature—but not the work of the Spirit of God at all.

Next, there was reason for testing the scribe's utterance because it was *very unconsidered*. He had probably not thought about the matter at all and, without consideration, cried out, “Master, I will follow You wher-

ever You go.” He had jumped to this decision and, perhaps, being unconsidered, it may have been based upon ignorance. The man did not appear to know the *poverty* of the Christ. He professed that he would follow Jesus anywhere, but he was not aware that the Great Physician, who had worked such mighty wonders that evening, had not a place where He could lay His head. When the scribe was once enlightened upon *that* point, apparently he dropped the matter, altogether, and gave up all thought of being a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus.

My dear Friends, I want you to be so converted to Christ that when you come to read your Bible through, you will not find anything there that you will kick at! I want you to be so converted to Christ that when you are further instructed in the Gospel, you will take it all in and say, “Just so. I am Christ’s disciple and I am prepared to accept whatever He teaches me.” Why, there were some who were, for a time, with Christ, but who went back and walked no more with Him when they heard certain Truths which He uttered! Such people as those are poor converts. They cheat our hopes! They bring discredit upon the Church to which they join and, therefore, it is necessary for us to say to all who are thinking of following Christ, “Search the Scriptures, read the Word and realize what you are doing. Do not put on the uniform of our great Captain without knowing what His service will involve. We do not want to entrap you as sergeants enlist half-drunken clowns! We wish you to take the oath of allegiance to the great King, knowing something of what it means. Otherwise we shall be disappointed in you and you will be disappointed in yourselves when you come to know more of our great Master and of His service.”

Note further, the reason for testing this utterance lay here—this man was evidently *very self-reliant*—“Master, *I will follow You wherever You go.*” What a great, “I WILL,” there is there! There is no prayer for Grace or guidance. There is no dependence upon a greater than himself! It is simply, “I will.” You know, “I will,” is for God to say—but when *we* say, “I will,” it must always be, “*cum grano salis,*” with a grain of salt, and that salt must be, “If You will help me to do so.” But nothing of that dependence upon Divine support appears here and, consequently, the scribe’s declaration is unsatisfactory.

That which is said by one who is self-reliant may prove to be untrue. In Simon Peter’s case, there was truth at the bottom of what he boastfully said, but there was not enough truth to keep him steadfast when a silly maid put a plain question to him and he denied his Master. But in the case of some boasters, there is not even sincerity in what they say! They think that they are sincere, but their utterance is very shallow. There is not depth enough in it for it to be honestly called a heart-word. It is but a lip-word and of little or no real value. Oh, my dear Friend, I told you how glad I was, just now, to hear you say that you would follow the Lamb wherever He goes, but I am very sorry if I have to feel that in what you have said, there is more of dependence upon *self* than of reliance upon God, for you will break down, as this man did, as soon as ever the Lord tested him by saying, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.”

Notice, again, this man was *very obtrusive and bold* in his declaration of loyalty to Christ—"I will follow You wherever You go." I am loath to judge him for being so outspoken, but, at the same time, it is possible, when persons are so very loud in their profession, that there may be much of self-interest in what they say. I wonder if this man thought, "Well, now, I am a scribe. If I join that company, I shall be a leader! I perceive that they are only fishermen, the bulk of them, and if I come in among them, I shall be a great acquisition to that little band. I shall no doubt be the secretary." Perhaps he may have thought that there was something to be made out of such a position—there *was* one who thought so. Remember him who had the bag and who kept that which was put therein? Did this scribe think so? Or had he an idea that Jesus really was the Messiah and that following Him, he would be joining One who would be a great King, who would have a splendid retinue and so, if he cast in his lot with Him, no doubt he would sit on one of the 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel? He who could heal the sick at that rate was evidently a great Man and some shadow of His greatness would rest upon His followers. Oh, if you try to join the Church of Christ from any such motives as these, may the Lord, by His good Spirit, readily detect you and touch your conscience—and let you know that you are not such as He invites to follow Him!

This man's confession of faith was also *very daring* and, as I have shown you, this would have made it very commendable if it had been genuine. But it was very temporary. It did not last long. Some have said that there was in it too much attachment to the Person of Christ rather than to the *teaching* of Christ. I like not the distinction, but still, I have no doubt that many converts do what is worse than that—they have an attachment merely for the *preacher*. Oh, how many come to join Churches because such and such a preacher speaks well, and he has charmed them with that interesting story, or with that excellent metaphor, yes, and they like him for his work's sake and for his godliness and so, when the good man dies, or is removed, do we not often see that flocks are scattered and many go back to the world? It must be because their faith stood in the wisdom of *man* and not in the power of God! Surely, it must be so, that they based even their confidence in Christ upon confidence in His minister! Oh, I pray you, keep clear of that fatal mistake! In no respect, I trust, would you rely upon *me*—if you did, you would be foolish to the last degree! Let not your reliance be upon the preacher—what is he at the best but as a trumpet set to his Master's mouth? The music lies not in the *instrument*, but in Him who uses it and produces a certain sound through it. Let your trust be only in Jesus and in that glorious Gospel which He came to preach! Yes, which He worked out upon the Cross when, as the Lamb of God, He took away the sin of the world.

Thus I have shown you that there was something in this man's declaration that needed testing. I am sorry that I have not time to work out the subject from other points, for they are well worthy of notice, especially by ministers and those who have to see many enquirers after salvation.

III. But now, thirdly, and very briefly, here is SOMETHING TO REMEMBER. Jesus said to this enthusiastic person, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head."

Remember this, then, *you must expect to fare like your Lord*. He said to His disciples, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." "If they have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" If you follow Christ, you must go at night where He goes, to Olivet, where the dew shall saturate your garments. You must go with Him to Vanity Fair, to be hunted unto the death! You must expect to be called mad! You must reckon upon being even charged with being a drunk and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! Are you ready for this? There is no going to Heaven without wearing, for Christ's sake, a fool's cap and a fool's coat. You will find, if you seek honor, here, that you may possibly get it, but it will do you no good, for when you die, the honor which you obtain by unfaithfulness to Christ will clothe you with shame and everlasting contempt! See, then, what Jesus expects His followers to be—they must be willing to share and share alike with Him, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.

Notice next, and remember it well, that *the Lord Jesus does not want any but real disciples*. You know how it is with some. They want to make up a good number and to report that so many have been converted and so many have joined the Church. Oh, that desire after big figures! What mistakes and misery it leads some people into! But Jesus does not want to count this man unless he is one who can be rightly counted as really made His follower—so He speaks to him discouragingly and testingly. He tries and tests him—and the man goes his way. The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask you to become His follower unless you mean to be wholly His! Body, soul and spirit—through and through, out and out! You must be His, or else you cannot be a follower of Christ at all. Hear that and remember it well.

Then, notice, that *a little more instruction may sometimes drive some disciples back*. The Savior hardly said more than a sentence to the man and he was gone! Let us take care to instruct our converts. It will act as a sieve and prevent much deception. Tell them all about the trials they will have to endure. Bid them count the cost. Set before them the difficulties of the way and the need of a Higher Power than their own to help them through.

There is one other thing that I would like you to remember—*that which drove this man away was the real reason why he ought to have stayed with Christ*. O Brothers and Sisters, why do we love Christ, if we do love Him? Why, because, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor! What? Shall we leave Him because He gave up everything for our sakes? Shall we leave Him because He had not even a hole like a fox, or a nest like a bird? Shall we leave Him because He was despised and rejected of men? Shall we leave Him because He was scourged and spit upon? Shall we leave Him because they crucified Him? No, these are the bonds that bind us fast to Him and will not let us go—

***“His visage marred with sorrows great!
The vinegar and gall—
These are His golden chains of love,
His captive to enthrall.”***

And if men leave the Savior because of those very things that ought to bind them to Him, then it is not Christ who is at fault—they must have all the blame laid upon themselves—and they must bear it to their everlasting confusion! Yet no doubt there are many who *do* forsake the Cross because it is the Cross—and leave Christ because of the shame He endured for the sake of sinners. What is that but to quit Jesus because He is Jesus? Do not do it, I beseech you! But if you do, then will you be discovered and unmasked—and your fine professions of allegiance and all your pretty resolutions will be blown away like chaff before the wind!

IV. Bear with me a minute or two more while I finish by saying that here is SOMETHING FOR PERSONAL CONSIDERATION. I will only throw out hints and will not enlarge upon them.

There are a few questions that I am going to ask. The first is, *Would it not be better to always do than to promise?* The scribe said, “Master, I will follow You wherever You go.” That sounded well, but suppose he *had* followed Christ wherever He went—that would have been much better! Next time you are going to make a vow, pause a while. Vows are entangling things. Next time you think of giving a promise, stop a little. You had better perform the promise rather than make it and then break it—is it not so?

The next question is, *Would it not be better to always pray than to promise?* Instead of saying, “Master, I will follow You wherever You go,” suppose the scribe had knelt down and said, “Master, lead me. Take me for a disciple. Draw me with bands of love and hold me fast even to the end”? That would have been better! A resolve is well enough in its way, but it may prove to be lame, weak and broken-backed. But a prayer—ah, God hearing it, you have girded yourself with Omnipotence and you are, indeed, strong!

Now for another question. *Is Jesus worth the price?* Is not Jesus worth following to poverty, to shame, to death? Oh, some of us have had to ask this question! For the Truth of God’s sake, we must lose friendships, we must bear contempt, we must expect to be misunderstood. But is not Jesus worth it all? Say, is Jesus worth our going to prison, or worth our suffering the rack, or worth our being burnt at the stake? I truly believe that some modern Christians do not hold any doctrine for which they would think it worth while to suffer even a toothache! I fancy that they almost think so themselves by the ready way in which they go on to something else! Would they not be fools if they did die for *their gospel*? It is not worth the killing of a fly, for there is nothing in it! But is Christ worthy of anything we have to bear for His sake? Is He, or is He not? If you can honestly say, after calculating and reckoning it all up, “Yes! Yes! Those things that were gain to me, I count loss for Christ! Yes, I count, I reckon, I estimate all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” If it is really so, then go on following your Lord, for you have counted the cost. If not, do not begin to build what you cannot finish and what is not worth your while to finish.

And, next, what do you say? *Are the spiritual and heavenly rewards of following Christ a sufficient recompense?* What if you should never make a penny by following Christ, but should lose everything that you have? What if you should never get any comfort out of it for the present, but often be in the dark and have a world of soul-conflict as the result of it? Say, do you believe that to be a Christian, to have a spiritual life, to have communion with God in prayer will be enough for you without anything else? Do you think that Heaven, the sight of the King, the sitting on the Throne of God with Him and the everlasting Glory will make amends for all this? Would you fling the world away, as though it were a child's ball? Yes, would you throw *ten thousand worlds* away, as so many rotten apples, glad to get rid of them, if you might but have your God, your Heaven, your All? You are the stuff of which Christ's soldiers are made if you can say all that from your heart! But, if you cannot, may God renew you, for you know not, yet, what Moses knew when he counted even the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt! It was not reigning with Christ, but even His *reproach* that Moses esteemed to be greater riches than the treasures in Egypt!

The last question is, *Does Grace enable us to take Christ with all the consequences?* Does the Holy Spirit at this moment sweetly constrain your heart to say, "Yes, yes, after every consideration has had due weight with me, if Jesus will have me, I will follow Him wherever He goes"? Do you feel that this is not the voice of nature, but the cry of Grace within you? Is it because He has loved you with an everlasting love and washed you from your sins in His own blood? Is it because His Spirit has reached you, changed your likes and dislikes and made you love the things which you did once despise? If so, then, my Brother, my Sister, Christ gives you His hand, tonight, and you may take it, never to let it go, again, for who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Will *you* also believe in Him, dear Friend? Will you trust Him? Will you take Him to be your Leader and your Lord forever? God make it to be so this very night! God make this your birth-night, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—639, 646, 659.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 8:16-34; 9:1.

Verse 16. *When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His Word, and healed all that were sick.* It was the evening after the Sabbath. They did not venture even to bring out their sick till the day of rest was ended. And the Savior, saying nothing about their lingering superstition, began to work mightily among them. "He cast out the spirits with His Word." What a power there is in the Word of Jesus! There is nothing like it for the casting out of devils. All our philosophies will not do what it does! The enemy will say, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" He cast out the evil spirits with His Word, and healed all that were sick."

17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, He, Himself, took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.* It does not look like a fulfillment, except upon the wondrous principle of the power of Substitution. Jesus takes the sickness and, therefore, He removes it from us. He heals our infirmities because He took them upon Himself. Is it so, do you think, that every miracle of healing that Christ worked took something out of Him? We remember that when the woman with the issue of blood was cured by touching His garment, Jesus said, “I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.” Was it so that He suffered while He was thus relieving the suffering? It was the joy of His heart to bless mankind, but every blessing that He gave was very costly to Him. I think that Truth lies embedded in the Evangelist’s declaration.

18. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.* This, again, looks like a *non sequitur*. You and I would have said, “If there are great multitudes about us, let us speak to them while we are here.” But then, again, you see, we may not always judge by the apparent usefulness of the present moment. We have to consider the rest of our career. Our Savior knew that the governors of the country were very jealous and that if people came together in large numbers, they might suspect insurrections and revolutions—and they would be there with their troops—and many innocent folk might be slain, and, speaking after the manner of men, His work of usefulness might be quickly brought to an end. Therefore, when He saw the great multitudes, He judged it wise to go elsewhere. Besides, He was no lover of popularity—He looked upon it as a shadow which necessarily followed Him rather than as a thing to be sought after. This He showed in the intense humility of His spirit and in that love of solitude which was so natural to One who walked in continual fellowship with God. Sometimes we shall really do more by apparently, for the moment, doing less.

19, 20. *And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.* We hear no more of this man. Our Savior’s faithfulness probably dismissed Him.

21. *And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me, first, to go and bury my father.* Now this man was a disciple, mark you, and, according to Luke, the Lord had said to him, “Follow Me,” yet he urged this plea, “Suffer me, first, to go and bury my father.”

22. *But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me and let the dead bury their dead.* Nothing, not even the duties of filial love, must be allowed to come in conflict with the command of Christ, “Follow Me.” I take it that this is not so much a word to the common disciple as to a disciple called out to a special ministry—“Your ministry is to be your first, your main, your *only* occupation—‘follow Me: and let the dead bury their dead.’ Let the politicians attend to the politics; let the reformers see to the reforms. But, as for you, keep to your own work and follow Me.” When God’s ministers come to this point, that they have to win souls, and that this is their *only* business, then souls will be won! There are plenty of dead people to bury the dead! There are plenty of moral people to see after the or-

dinary affairs of morality. As for us, let us follow Christ and keep to our one business!

23. *And when He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him.* He went first and they followed afterwards. If the boat is the type of the *Church*, then Christ is the first on board. He is the Captain and the disciples make up the crew—"His disciples followed Him."

24. *And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but He was asleep.* What? A tempest where Christ is? Yes, it is generally so. If all seems very calm, you may question whether Christ is there, but when He goes into the boat and His disciples follow Him, it is not remarkable that the devil comes after Him. "The boat was covered with the waves." That sea of Galilee lies very deep, indeed, and it is surrounded by lofty crags and yawning chasms that act like funnels to the wind, so that to this day it is very dangerous for those who are on it in a boat. "The boat was covered with the waves: but He was asleep." Here is the weakness of humanity and here is, also, the strength of faith. Jesus went to sleep because that boat was in His Father's hands and He would take care of it. "He was asleep."

Sometimes the best thing that we can do is to go to bed. You are worrying and troubling yourself and you can do nothing—go to sleep, Brother. It is the climax of faith to be able to shake off all care and to feel, "If the Lord cares for me, why should I not sleep?" Remember what Alexander the Great said of his friend, Parmenio? "Alexander may sleep, for Parmenio watches," and surely we, who have a far greater Friend than Parmenio, can say at any time, "We may sleep, for God watches." "He was asleep." To sleep was the best thing that Jesus could do to renew His bodily energies and to prepare Himself for the time when His efforts would be needed for the deliverance of His disciples from danger.

25, 26. *And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He said unto them: Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?* The disciples might have answered, "Lord, how can you ask us why we are fearful? The boat is covered with waves, the sea threatens to swallow it and all of us up." Still, they might have thought, "If Christ is on board the boat, will He allow it to sink? Can He be drowned? We carry Christ and all His fortunes—is not our vessel thus insured beyond all risk? He may well say to us, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?'"

26. *Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.* "A great calm." No ordinary stillness of the sea, but it was a great calm, as the tempest had been great which had preceded it! What? And all of a sudden, too? Storms sob themselves to sleep through lengthened intervals of fretfulness, but when Jesus gives the word of command, the storm is gone at once. "There was a great calm."

27. *But the men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?* They did not yet know their Lord—nor do we. Perhaps we have to go to sea to learn more of Him—I mean that troubles and trials of a greater sort than we have known, before, may yet have to come to be our schoolmasters to teach us who Jesus is. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." You

landsmen are thankful for your quiet, but you do not see so much of Jesus as others of His disciples do—you must go to sea to be able to cry, “What manner of Man is this?”

28, 29. *And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?* They knew that there is a time when He will judge them and when their torment will begin. Say what you please, sin in men or devils will be followed with *torment*—with sorrow indescribable, unutterable—and these devils knew it and they were obliged to confess the Truth of God! They were afraid lest Jesus had come to inflict upon them the penalty of their evil deeds before that Last Great Day.

30. *And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.* The owners of these animals had no business to have any swine there—swine were forbidden in that holy country—and they should not have been kept there.

31. *So the devils besought Him, saying, If You cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.* What a wonderful creature a man is as compared with an animal! A *legion* of devils could be packed away into these *two* men, but they needed a whole *herd* of swine to contain them all! How much greater is a man than a beast, that is to say, how much more capable of spiritual influence for evil as well as for good!

32. *And He said unto them, Go.* Jesus never wastes words on devils! He is always short and sharp with them—“Go.”

32. *And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.* The proverb has it, “They run fast whom the devil drives,” they run to destruction, even as these swine perished in the waters!

33, 34. *And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus.* You feel that they are going to worship Him, or at least to ask Him to come and teach them the way of salvation! Nothing of the sort.

34. *And when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.* And there are many, still, who try all they can to get Christ to go away from them. Woe be to them if He grants their desire!

Matthew 9:1. *And He entered into a boat, and passed over, and came into His own city.* I think I see the departing sail—love, hope and peace melting away upon the distant horizon—and the Gergesenes left to perish! O God, do not so with any of us! Say not, “Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone.”

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COMFORT FOR THE FEARFUL NO. 2852

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 18, 1877.

*“He said unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”
Matthew 8:26.*

THE winds were howling, the waters were roaring and the disciples thought that the little ship must surely be engulfed in the raging sea, so they awakened their Master from His sorely-needed sleep and cried to Him, “Lord, save us! We are perishing.” Note well the first words that He speaks to His frightened followers. Generally, when a man is in trouble, it is best, first, to help him out of it if we can, and then to give him any rebuke that he may deserve. Yet we may be quite sure that our Lord Jesus Christ followed the wisest order in every case. Being awakened because there was danger, He dealt first with the chief cause of danger—what was that? Not the winds or the waves, but the disciples’ unbelief! There is always more peril, to a Christian, in his own unbelief than in the most adverse circumstances by which he may be surrounded. Our Lord did not first rebuke the winds and waves—and then speak to the disciples—He first dealt with the chief peril by rebuking their unbelief.

I think I may venture to say—though to Omnipotence all things are possible—that it was an easier task for Christ to calm the winds and the waves than to still the tumult raised by doubt in His disciples’ minds. He could more swiftly cause a calm to fall upon the stormy surface of the Galilean lake than upon the perturbed spirits of His terrified Apostles. The mental always excels the physical—the ruling of hearts is a greater thing than the governing of winds and waves. So, Beloved, when we have to battle with trouble, let us always begin with ourselves—our own fears, mistrusts, suspicions, selfishness and self-will—for the chief danger lies there. All the trouble in the world cannot harm you as much as half a grain of unbelief! Poverty cannot make you as poor as mistrust can and sickness cannot make you as sick as unbelief can. The greatest evil to be dreaded is that of doubting your Lord. May God grant you Grace to take this estimate of unbelief and, because Christ first rebuked that—and *then* the winds and the waves—so do you first seek to have yourself under proper control, so that, afterwards, you may be able to overcome your difficulties, whatever they may be! He who is, by the Grace of God,

enabled to master his own soul, need not doubt that he shall also be master of everything that opposes him!

I am going to try, as the Spirit of God shall help me, to minister consolation to any who are suffering through fear. And I shall speak, first, *to those who are Christ's disciples* and who know that they are His. And then, secondly, I shall speak to *those who would not like to say that they are not His disciples, but who yet dare not say that they are*—the many who would gladly be His, but who hardly dare to hope that He is willing to have them as His disciples. To them I shall say, as Christ said to His Apostles, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”

I. So, first, I shall apply the question in my text to **THOSE WHO ARE REALLY THE LORD'S PEOPLE**, those who are in the boat with Christ, His disciples who follow Him, and stay near to Him—“Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”

First, *why is it that you doubt His love?* He brought you on to this stormy sea—He bade you take ship and He knew all about this storm coming on. Do you think, because of your present experience, that He does not love you? You dare not utter such a calumny! Look back at your past life and see how patiently He has borne with you. Your slowness in learning has not made your Divine Teacher angry, but He has still gone on teaching you. Do you remember when He first called you, by His Grace, and what you were when He called you? Do you recollect what you have been since He called you? Yet He has still continued to love you and has not cast you away. Look back, I pray you, upon the many times in which He has appeared for you, bringing you through very severe trials and sustaining you under very heavy burdens. After all this, do you mistrust Him? Can you do so? Will you imitate the language of the unbelieving Israelites and say, “Is it because there were no graves on shore that the Lord has brought us out upon this stormy sea?” Do you suspect that He has brought you thus far encouraging you with many hopes, allaying your fears and supplying your necessities, that He might overwhelm you with disappointment?

Has He been trifling with you in all this, exciting desires and expectations in you which, after all, are not to be fulfilled, but you are to be left to perish? Oh, no! Each Believer can confidently sing—

***“Can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?”***

It is impossible that He can have done this! It is altogether unlike He and inconsistent with all His past treatment of us, and with His well-known Character. Come, child of God, you know that He loves you! The proofs and pledges of that love rise up before your memory, so you cannot think that He will suffer you to be cast away! Will He allow your present troubles to destroy you when so many others have not been able to hurt even a hair of your head? Trust in His love and dismiss your fears!

Let me turn to another side of this Truth. *Do you doubt your Lord's power?* These disciples ought not to have done so, for they had lately been eyewitnesses of many remarkable displays of His power. Had they

not seen Him cast out devils? Had they not been with Him when a touch of His had healed the leper, when, another time, the laying of His hand upon the fevered brow had raised the sick one from her bed? Had they not come fresh from a mass of miracles where, in the crowded street, He had dealt out healing to all manner of sufferers? How could they doubt His power when, before their own eyes, they had seen it so wonderfully displayed? Is He Master of devils and not of winds? Can He cast out diseases and not lull to sleep the roaring billows? It was both absurd and wicked for them to think of setting a limit to His unbounded power!

And now, you, dear child of God, after the experience you have had of His goodness, and after what you know the Lord did for you by His redeeming love in ages past—dare you say that He has not power to deliver you now? Is anything too hard for the Lord? You say that you are poor, but can He not supply your need? Are not the cattle upon a thousand hills His own? Does He not claim the silver and gold as His treasure? He can feed the universe! He has done it these many centuries and He is still doing it. The commissariat of the whole universe has depended upon His perpetual benevolence and care—and yet, from day to day, the hosts of birds, beasts, fishes and insects are still fed! And will not He, who supplies the needs of all living creatures by simply opening His hand, find food enough for His own child? Will you doubt His power? Is your case a very peculiar and difficult one? Do you draw a line and say, “This, God can do, but that, He cannot do”? Is that right? Is it reasonable? Admit that He is Omnipotent—and He is Omnipotent whether you admit it or not—and you have done away with difficulties. O you with little faith in God’s power, why do you doubt? He can—He will help you if you will but trust Him to do so!

Perhaps, however, your doubt may touch another point. *Have you any suspicion of God’s wisdom?* Possibly these disciples may have thought, “It was very unwise of our Master, just at eventide, to bid us cross this lake, which, lying low in a hollow surrounded by hills, is subject to very sudden and fierce gusts of wind that can catch a ship and twist her round so that no steersman can tell how to cope with the various currents and winds which are so extraordinary in their course. It was unwise of Him to bring us here.” Yet, if they did talk like that, they ought to have known better, for they had sat at His feet and listened to the wondrous wisdom which poured from His lips. They knew that He was supremely wise—how, then, could they doubt?

And do you, O child of God, think that the Lord is dealing unwisely with you? Dare you charge the All-Wise Jehovah with folly? Whatever Infinite Wisdom does, must be right. You err continually—what are you but a mass of mistakes? What is your life but a constant repetition of floundering and blundering? But He who has shown His marvelous skill in creation and His wondrous wisdom in Redemption, and also in Providence—do you think that He miscalculates, or misses the mark He aims at, or that He can in any way err? Oh, cast away this dishonoring reflec-

tion upon the Lord, as you hear Him say to you, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”

There are some other things which might very well have smitten the consciences of these fearful followers of Christ. Among them were these considerations which I suggest to you as worthy themes for your meditation. It is true that it was a terrible storm, but, *they were in the same boat with their Lord*. Whenever a foaming billow smote the ship and agitated the hearts of the disciples, it moved their Master, also. He had to bear all the tossing of the waves, the wild leaping of the vessel from the billow’s base to the billow’s crown. He must have felt it just as much as they did. If the little vessel went down with them, it must go down with Him, also, for they were in the same boat. How this thought ought to have lulled their fears to rest! And, Beloved Christian, do you not know that he that believes in Jesus is sailing in the same ship with Him? Remember how Paul writes, “For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.” “Because I live,” said Jesus, Himself, to His disciples, “you shall also live.”

It was a bold saying of one that he had trusted Christ to save him, so he knew that he could not be lost. “But,” asked someone, “suppose, after all, that you are lost?” “Well, then,” he replied, “Christ would lose more than I would, for while I would lose my soul, He would lose His honor. If He did not save one who trusted Him, He would lose His Character as Savior! He would lose the most precious jewel in His crown and that can never be.” No, he that believes in Him shall never be ashamed nor confounded, world without end! He can never be either unable to save, or unfaithful to His promise to save all who trust Him. Well does Dr. Watts write—

***“His honor is engaged to save
The meanest of His sheep—
All that His Heavenly Father gave
His hands securely keep.”***

Another reflection is that although they were in a great storm, *the power that made the storm was the very power to which they had to trust*. There was not a single blast of the tempest but Jehovah’s might had sent it, nor did a single wave leap up, in apparent wrath, but with God’s permission or at His command! It was His power, outside the vessel, that was putting them into peril and they ought to have known that the same power would be exerted to deliver them. It is the same in your case—you are in great trouble, but does trouble spring out of the ground? Does it come by chance? No, God’s hand is in it all! I know men talk of the laws of nature, but the laws of nature have no force in themselves—the whole force that carries out a law of nature is a Divine force. So, your difficulties are of God’s sending, trials of God’s making and they are all still in the hands of the All-Powerful One to restrain, or mitigate, or increase, or direct according to His own will.

You have often heard, I daresay, that pretty little story which I cannot help telling again because it drops in so appropriately here, of the woman, on board ship, who was much disturbed in a storm, while her hus-

band, the captain, was calm and restful. She asked him why he was so placid when she was so distressed. He did not answer in words, but he took down his sword and held it to her breast. She smiled. He said, "Why are you not afraid? This is a sharp sword, with which I could slay you in a minute." "Ah," she replied, "but I am not afraid of a sword when it is my husband who wields it." "So," said he, "neither am I afraid of a storm when it is my Father who sends it and who manages it." Now, since all the trials and troubles of this mortal life are as much in the hand of the great God as that sword was in the hand of the good woman's husband, we need not be afraid of them, for they are all in His power! When He rides aloft in His chariot, and the skies tremble at the sound, why should you tremble, even you timid ones?—

***"The God that rules on high,
And thunders when He pleases.
That rides upon the stormy sky
And manages the seas.
This awful God is ours—
Our Father and our love."***

It is only the flash of His spear when you see the vivid lightning and only the roll of His majestic voice when you hear the thunders peal! Therefore, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"

There was another thing that ought to have kept those disciples from being afraid, and it was this. Suppose they had sunk? Still, having put to sea at His command and with Him on board—*all would have been well with them*. I have heard of a sailor who was very calm in a storm and someone asked him, "Why are you not afraid? Can you swim?" "No," he said, "I cannot swim, but if I were to sink to the bottom of the sea, I should only sink into my Heavenly Father's hands, for He holds the waters in the hollow of His hand." That is a sweet thought and if the worst comes to the worst with you, my Brother—if what we call, "the worst," should come to you, my Sisters—well, you would only die. You would go as low as the grave, but, blessed be God, you would never go any lower and, in due time, even your body will come up again from that grave and, reunited with your soul, be "forever with the Lord!" "Therefore, comfort one another with these words." But suppose you should die? Your soul will then leap away from death into eternal life in a moment! Death would end all your troubles, rid you forever of all your burdens and you would be at Home, to go no more out forever, so you may well say, with good old John Ryland—

***"Come, welcome, Death!
I'll gladly go with you!"***

There was one other reason why these disciples ought not to have been at all alarmed and that was *because their Master was asleep*. "Oh," you say, "I do not see what comfort that was to them." Well, let me tell you what happened to me, one night, when I was on board ship. In my sleep, I started because I thought I heard something slip. Something had slipped—it was the anchor that had been cast overboard. I called out to one who slept near me, "What is the matter?" He said, "There is some-

thing the matter, I feel sure.” “Why?” I asked, and he replied, “Because the captain is up.” It was in the middle of the night, but the captain was up, so I was also up very soon and saw that the captain was up and that the sailors were quietly getting out a boat. If my friend had told me that the captain was asleep, I might have slept on, for I would have said, “It is all right if he is asleep. I need not trouble myself to know what is the matter.” But when I heard that he was up, I thought it was time for me to be up, too! If you were on board ship and saw the captain busy heaving the lead, and doing it very deliberately and quietly, you would say to yourself, “I do not know what is wrong, but I feel sure that there is something the matter, the captain seems so anxious.”

But if, at any time, you were at sea and you said to another passenger, “Where is the captain?” and the reply was, “Oh, he is in his berth, sound asleep!” You would say, “Oh, then, it is all right!” Why did the Lord Jesus Christ go to sleep in a storm? Why, because He knew that all was right! Why should He not go to sleep? The great loving heart of Christ would not have rested if His children had been in any danger. It was because there was no danger, either to Him or to them, that He went to sleep! Perhaps you are saying to yourself, “I have not had any wonderful deliverance from this trouble. I have had, in times gone by, but now the Lord does not seem to work any great marvel for me.” No, because there is not any need for it. An old version of the eighteenth Psalm says—

***“On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad.
And so delivered He my soul—
Who is a rock but He?
He lives, blessed be my Rock!
My God exalted be!”***

When the Lord thus descended from above, you may depend that there was some great danger threatening one of His children—otherwise, He would not have come at such speed as that.

And you may rest assured that if He does not come thus to help you, it is because there is really not any urgent need for His interposition, as you are not in any great danger. Possibly the Lord sees that it will be best for you to bear your troubles a little longer, for you are getting good out of them. He means to leave you in the furnace for a little while because He can see that your dross is being taken away—but if the good metal in you were being injured in the slightest degree, He would lift you out of the furnace immediately! There is no serious harm happening to you and, therefore, the Lord does not intervene. I hope that you can now see that the sleep of Jesus ought to have given rest to the minds of His disciples. But it did not and He had to say to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”

Thus I have spoken to the Lord’s own people. May the Holy Spirit graciously bless the word to them!

II. Now I want your attention, for a short time, while I speak to THOSE WHO CANNOT SAY THAT THEY ARE CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

There is a story told of Dr. John Owen who was then Mr. John Owen, that he had been for two or three years in great distress of mind. He went to London, hoping to hear a very famous Divine, but, on arriving at the Meeting House, he found that the doctor was not preaching. A man, whose name Mr. Owen never knew, preached from the text from which I am now preaching—"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" He was a man of no great ability, but it pleased God that night, to break John Owen's fetters by means of the remarks that were made by the stranger-preacher, which were exactly suited to the condition of John Owen's mind at that time. And so, that mighty master of theology, perhaps the grandest of all English Divines with whom God has ever favored, was brought into Light and liberty through the instrumentality of that stranger-preacher. I wish that the few minutes I can now spend in addressing you, could be as fruitful as his message was on the occasion. If only one of you is brought into the Light of God, I will bless the name of the Lord—but I long for very many to be thus blessed!

You are seeking Christ, dear Friend, and longing to be saved, but, for lack of faith, you are still in trouble of soul. What is your real condition? Perhaps you say, "*I labor under a deep sense of sin, I have been exceedingly guilty.*" Possibly, some one sin specially troubles you, or, more probably, a number. It may be that you know that you have sinned against Light and knowledge, and you are aware of the peculiar provocation of having sinned, as you have done, after enjoying Christian teaching from your youth up. You feel that there is some special aggravation about your transgression and you say to yourself, "I can scarcely believe that there is pardon for me."

My dear Friend, I put it to you, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Did not Jesus Christ come into the world to save sinners? Is there any sin which He is not able to forgive? It is true that there is a sin which is unto death, but you have not committed that sin, or else you would be in a state of death—and would have no desire to be saved. But if you have any spiritual life, so that you long to be saved, you have not committed that unpardonable sin—and all other sin and blasphemy can be forgiven unto men if they repent of it and trust the Lord Jesus Christ. I am afraid that you do not think enough of the greatness of the Savior, that He is God as well as Man. Consider the dignity of His Person as God over all, blessed forever, yet, nevertheless, stooping to bear human sin! Think of your sin as much as you will, but think much more of the Sin-Bearer and His vicarious sufferings. Weep at the remembrance of your guilt, but weep on Calvary, weep with the wounds of Christ before you!

And oh, I pray you, do not do my Lord the great dishonor to say that He cannot forgive you! It is you who will not believe in Him! It is certainly not with Him that the difficulty lies. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. It is not possible that you are beyond His ability to save!

There have been other persons saved, and many of them, who have sinned just as much as you have done—but even if there had not been any such, yet recollect that if you are a sinner beyond all others, your case presents an opportunity for Christ to exceed everything that He has ever done—and He would delight in that. He delights in mercy, so, if you are really what you suppose yourself to be, namely, something altogether extraordinary in the way of guilt, then there remains room for Christ to show in you the extraordinary power of His Grace! I pray you to believe that He can do this. Trust Him to do it and you shall find that He both can and will.

Possibly someone says, “*My difficulty is not so much concerning the power of God to pardon, as concerning the strong propensities to sin which I find dwelling in me.* How can they be conquered? I have resolved, a great many times, to overcome them, but I find my sin to be like Samson—it is not to be bound with new cords and green leather straps, for it breaks loose from all its bonds! I cannot think that I can be saved with such an impetuous temper, or such a proud spirit,” or whatever form your sin happens to take. Now beloved Friend, it is well that you should see this difficulty, but is not He who is mighty to save, quite able to grapple with it? Have you forgotten that text, “Behold, I make all things new”? Do you not know that the Spirit of God has been given that He may take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh? Have you never read the Covenant of Grace which says, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” Is anything too hard for the Lord in this matter? I tell you, if you are near akin to a devil, He can make you into something more than an angel! And if your lusts and corruptions seem to have a strength that seems to you to be well-nigh omnipotent, yet is the power of the Holy Spirit able to cast out all this evil and to overcome the devil within you! A strong man armed may keep the house, but when a stronger than he shall come, then shall he be driven forth and be made to know who is his Master. Believe that Christ is stronger than your sin and come and trust yourself to Him, O you of little faith!

“*But,*” says another, “*my trouble is that I cannot find anything in me that Christ can work upon.* I perceive in my sister, who is saved, some traits of character that I think admirable. I perceive some redeeming feature in all converted people, but I do not perceive anything of the kind in myself. I seem to be weak where I ought to be strong, and strong where I ought to be weak! I am all that I ought *not* to be, and nothing that I should be.” Ah, my Friend! I want you to believe—to do my Lord Jesus the honor to believe—what He has a right to claim from you, namely, that He can deal readily enough with your case, for yours is just the typical case that He came to save! You remember God’s ancient law concerning the leper who was to show himself to the priest? It was the priest’s duty to examine him, from head to foot, with careful eyes. While he was

surveying him, he came upon a place, perhaps the size of the palm of his hand, where the flesh was perfectly healthy. There was no sign of leprosy in it whatever—and the priest said, “This is a fatal spot, you are unclean; you must be put away outside the camp.” Then He examined another leper and, looking him all over, though he seemed covered with scales of leprosy, yet the priest found that he had a little place, perhaps the size of the top of his finger, which was quite clear of the disease. The man said, “I have always thought there was hope for me, for you see that little spot, there is no leprosy there.” But the priest sorrowfully shook his head and said, “You are unclean. You must be put outside the camp.”

There came another leper, who said to the priest, “It is scarcely necessary for you to examine me, for, from the crown of my head to the sole of my feet, I am covered with this loathsome disease. There is not a speck or spot in me that has not the disease everywhere.” So the priest looked and he could not see one healthy place and, therefore, he said, “You are clean; you may go wherever you like.” I suppose it showed that the man’s constitution had been strong enough to throw the disease out. I infer that was the rationale of it, physically, but, anyhow, according to the Law of the Leper, the man was clean and, my Friend, if, on looking yourself all over, you can perceive no good whatever, or anything like good. And if the Great High Priest, even the Lord Jesus Christ, can see no good in you, He will pronounce you clean the moment you come unto Him and trust in Him! This may seem strange to you, but it is the very essence of the Gospel, even as Joseph Hart sings—

**“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large!
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.
But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small—
As soon as we have naught to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all.”**

Well, now, you who thus condemn yourself, should see that your very condemnation of yourself gives you hope of salvation! Why, the devil himself, I should think, would hardly dispute with some of you the fact that you are sinners. On the contrary, he has often been to you, and said, “See what a great sinner you are!” For once, he spoke the truth, though he did even that with an evil intention. If he says that to you, say to him, “Yes, Satan, you have proved that I am a sinner, but that is ‘my hope of salvation, for it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’” He who condemns himself, God absolves. He who is shut up in the prison of the Law, so that he cannot escape. He who writes his own death warrant, signs it and feels that he deserves to die—he is the man for whom the Lord Jesus Christ sets open the door of mercy and says, “Come unto Me, for I have absolved you. You are a free man. Be of good comfort. I died to redeem just such souls as you are.” So again I say, “O you of little faith, why do you doubt?”

Another case I would like to meet is that of one who says, "*Oh, but I have such a lack of sensibility!* I am afraid I do not feel humble enough. Some sinners weep, but I cannot. Some have upon them an awful horror of great darkness, but I have not. I wish I had." Dear Friend, do you think that would help Christ to save you? Oh, then, you do malign my Lord who needs no help from you! He can save you, stony-hearted as you are. If there is no sensibility, or anything else that is good about you, He can give you all this, or save you just as you are! Do not think that He needs your assistance. What can you do, poor fool? I cannot help calling you, "fool," if you think that you can do *anything* to help Him to save you! A righteousness like His—would you patch your rags upon it? Blood like His—would you bring some bottles full of your tears to add to the merit of His great Sacrifice? I tell you that the purest tear you have ever shed would stain His precious blood! You will need forgiveness for that tear if you *dream* that there can be any merit in it to add to the merit of His blood.

"Ah," says another, "*but I have to mourn my feebleness in prayer.* I know some who have found Christ because they seemed to lay hold of Him at the Mercy Seat, but I cannot. I can hardly touch the hem of His garment." Well, then, do that—and if you do, you shall be healed! A little genuine faith ensures the death of all your sin. Do you think that Christ asks great things of you? Listen, Man—though Christ bids you look unto Him, and live, it is *He that first gives life to that eye* of yours or else it never could have looked unto Him. There is nothing good in you—it is all in Christ. From first to last, it is Grace, Grace, GRACE! And Grace, you know, takes no payments, for it would mar its glory and its freeness if it took from you anything from a thread to a shoelace. Be you only emptiness and Christ will be your fullness!

"*But I do not fret,*" you say. Well, then, be so empty that you are even empty of feeling! Your feelings cannot save you, but Christ will give you all the feeling that you need. Come unto Him just as you are and trust Him for everything. You are like a child who has done something very wrong and his father says, "My Child, I will freely forgive you." The child says, "I cannot believe it. I have been so wicked. I need to do *something.*" The father says, "My dear Child, I love you so that I have freely forgiven you. I can forgive all, I can forget all and I have done so." The child says, "But I know if anyone had offended against me as I have done against you, I could not forgive and forget." "No," the father says, "but, my Child, my ways are not your ways, nor my thoughts your thoughts." The child still cannot believe that his father loves him so as to be ready to forgive him—but if he would believe that and just throw himself on his father's bosom with the cry, "Father, I have sinned," oh, what ease of mind he would at once feel! Out with your confession! Let not sin be smoldering in your bosom any longer. Tell the Lord how guilty you are! Tell Him that you deserve His utmost wrath! Tell Him that you could not complain even if He should destroy you, but tell Him that you do cling to Christ and to the promise of pardon made in His Word. Say to Him—

***“You have promised to forgive
All who in Your Son believe.
Lord, I know You cannot lie—
Give me Christ, or else I die.”***

That is the thing to do. God help you to do it! Believe over the head of your sins. Believe over the head of your sensibility and, I charge you, do not look at anything but Christ! When you look on your sins, instead of looking at Christ, you make an antichrist of your sins. And when you look on your faith and say, “I do not think that my faith is enough,” if you look at your faith instead of looking to Christ, I say, “Away with your faith!” Away with everything but what Christ has done, what Christ is and the boundless love of the great forgiving God whose heart yearns over you, and who cries, “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together...for I am God, and not man.” “O you of little faith, why are you so fearful!” Trust your God and live!

But, lastly, I hear someone else say, “*My trouble is concerning the difficulties of a Christian life.* How can I, if I begin to be a Christian, hold on to the end?” Dear Friend, I will not deny that there are difficulties and that they are very great, much greater than you imagine. But your holding on is not the great matter—it is Christ who will hold you on! Your perseverance in Grace is no more to be your own act, apart from Christ, than is your first hope in Him. You are to look to Christ to be Omega as well to be Alpha, to be the Z as well as to be the A of the Christian Alphabet—and if you come and cast yourself upon Him, it is not His custom to cast away any who come to Him, neither at first nor yet afterwards. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” And He will do the same with you. He will subdue your corruptions. He will drive out your iniquities and present you, at the last, “faultless” before His Father’s Throne! Oh, I can talk about this, but after all, it is only the Lord and Giver of Grace who can drive away your unbelief! May He do so now—and to His dear name shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 125.**

Verse 1. *They that trust in the LORD shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.* I noticed, in one of the reports of the survey of Palestine, that it is said that albeit every building upon Mount Zion has been demolished, and not one stone has been left upon another, yet the mountain, itself, is immovable and remains the same as ever. Mount Zion itself cannot be removed, but abides forever—and the child of God, by faith in Jesus, cannot be moved by fear, nor removed by sin, but abides forever! We abide in Christ and Christ abides in us—and this makes us like Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but abides forever. If any of you are tossed to and fro, or are changeable, so that you

do not know your own minds, may the Lord deliver you from such a state as that! It is faith that makes us steadfast.

2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even forever.* Here is security as well as stability! The mountains stand like sentinels around the central hill of Zion, so the city is well guarded and God protects His own people against adversaries of every kind. And He will continue to do so “from henceforth even forever.”

3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.* God does not completely screen His people from trial. They sometimes feel the rod of the wicked in the form of slander, oppression, opposition and persecution, but they shall not always feel it—“The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.”

3. *Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.* If too heavily oppressed, they might do wrong in order to escape from oppression and God will not have that. He will not let His people be tried above what they are able to bear! He knows that the tendency of poverty and suffering might be to provoke them to sin—therefore He will not let the rod of the wicked rest upon them—lest they put forth their hands unto iniquity.

4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.* God is always good to His own people. This prayer is also a prophecy that it shall be well with those that fear the Lord—

***“In time, and to eternal days
‘Tis with the righteous well.”***

5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.* There are still such people who profess to be all right, yet they are not, for, after apparently going a little way in the straight road, they turn aside unto their crooked ways. Well, what shall happen to them?

5. *The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* They chose the same way, so they shall share the same end! What a sad end for those who once stood side by side with the saints, to be led out to execution side by side with the workers of iniquity!

5. *But peace shall be upon Israel.* In the 1st and 2nd verses of the Psalm, they are said to be *like* Salem. In this last verse, they are said to *have* Salem, that is, peace—“Peace shall be upon Israel.”

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

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

WITH THE DISCIPLES ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE NO. 1686

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 6, 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this,
that even the winds and the sea obey Him!”
Matthew 8:27.*

*“And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another,
What manner of Man is this, that even the wind
and the sea obey Him?”
Mark 4:41.*

THIS story of the storm upon the lake is wonderfully full of spiritual interest. Not only does it, literally, show to us the Divine power of our blessed Master in lulling the storm, rendered the more conspicuous by being placed, side by side, with the human weakness which made Him sleep in the ship upon a pillow, but, spiritually, it is a kind of ecclesiastical history, a miniature outline of the story of the Church in all ages. No, the teaching ends not when you have read the incident in that light—it also contains a suggestive forecast of the story of every man who is making the spiritual voyage in company with Jesus.

Notice, first, how it is a kind of ecclesiastical history. There is Christ in the vessel with His disciples. What is that but a Church with its pastor? We see in the Church a vessel bearing a rich cargo, steering for a desired haven and fitted out for fishing on the road, should fair opportunity occur. Her being upon a sea shows her to be here below, subject to trial, suffering, labor and peril. I scarcely know of any more apt picture of a Church than a ship upon the treacherous Galilean sea with Jesus and His disciples sailing in it.

After a while a storm comes—this we may safely reckon upon. Whatever ship makes a fair voyage, with a favoring wind, the ship of the Church of Jesus Christ never will. She has her calms, but these last not forever—her sail is sure to be weather-beaten at one time or another—and the occasions are seldom far apart. The vessel which has Jesus for its Captain is destined to feel the tempest. Christ has not come to send peace on earth, but a sword. This is His own declaration and He knows His own intent. Every sail of the good ship which bears the flag of the Lord High Admiral of our fleet must be beaten with the wind and every plank in her must be tried by the waves.

To Christ's Church there are many storms and some of them of the most terrible character. Of heresy—ah, how near to wrecking has she been with the false doctrines of Gnosticism, Arianism, Popery and Rationalism! Of persecution she has constant experience, but sometimes exceedingly vehement has the hurricane been. In the early stages of Church his-

tory, the pagan persecutions of Rome followed thick and fast upon each other and when Giant Pagan had emptied out all his fury, there came a worse tyrant whose magical arts raised hurricanes of wind against the good ship—there sat, at Rome, a harlot who persecuted the saints exceedingly—being drunk with their blood.

Then there raged a cyclone which almost drove the boat out of the water and drenched and well-near drowned her crew—a fierce cyclone beat upon the royal vessel, so that the waves threatened to swallow her up! Tears and blood covered the saints as with a salt and crimson spray! Hers was no pleasure trip—she went forth like the lifeboat, fashioned for the purpose of riding out the storm. The true ship of the Lord was, and is, and will be in a storm until the Lord shall come—and then there shall be for it no further wave of trial, but the sea of glass forever!

Note, again, that while this storm was roaring worse and worse, the Lord was in the ship, but He seemed to be asleep. So has it often been. No Providence delivered the persecuted. No marvelous manifestations of the Spirit scattered the heresy. The Christ was in the Church, but He was in the back part, with His head upon a pillow, asleep. You all know the portions of Church history which this illustrates.

Then came distress. The people in the vessel began to be alarmed. They were afraid that they should utterly perish. And do you wonder at it when the peril was so great? That distress led to prayer. Mighty prayer has often been produced by mighty trial. Oh, how slack has the Church been in the presentation of her spiritual offering until the Lord has sent fire upon her and that fire has seemed to kindle her frankincense so that it has begun to smoke towards Heaven! Prayer was produced by distress and prayer brought distress to an end!

Then the Master rose up and displayed His power and Godhead. You know how He has done so in reformations and revivals time after time. He has chided the unbelief of His trembling saints and then He has hushed the winds and the waves—and there has been a time of peace for His poor, weather-beaten Church—a period free from bloodshed and heresy, an era of progress and peace. The Church has a history which has many a time repeated itself. If you take an interest in the navigation of that wondrous vessel which carries Christ and all His chosen, you will never have to complain of lack of incidents!

But I think I said that the story of the storm upon the lake is an admirable emblem of the spiritual voyage of every man who is bound for the fair havens in company with Jesus. We are with Christ, happy with Him and sailing pleasantly—will this last? Right speedily comes a storm. The ship rocks and reels. She is covered with the waves. It looks as if our poor rowboat will sink to the bottom! Yet Jesus is in our hearts and that is our safety. We are not saved by seamanship, but by having on board the Lord Paramount who rules all winds and waves—and never yet lost a vessel that bore the Cross at its masthead!

Sometimes within our hearts He seems to be asleep. We hear not His voice; we see but little of His face—His eyes are closed and He, Himself, is hidden out of sight. He has not altogether left us, blessed be His name, but He appears to be asleep. Ah, then the ship rocks, again, and we reel,

again, and we wonder that He can still sleep! Then are we driven in awe at alarm to prayer, to which we ought to have betaken ourselves long before! It may be that we have been busy with ropes and tackle, strengthening the mast, furling the sail, doing all kinds necessary work and, therefore, leaving undone the most necessary work of all, namely, seeking out the Master and telling Him the story of our peril.

We pray not till we are forced to our knees, sad sinners that we are! The boat will go down! She will go down! And now it is that we, also, go down to the cabin and begin to wake Him up with, “Master, save us! We perish!” Then you know what happens—how the gentle rebuke passes over our spirit and we are humbled. But the grander rebuke is heard by the winds and waves—and they are quieted and sleep at the Master’s feet—and in us and around us there is a great calm. Oh, how profound the peace! How blessed the stillness!

We were about to say, “Would God it would last on forever,” but as yet tranquility cannot be perpetual. Our perils of waters will be sure to repeat themselves. Often we go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters, so that we see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. Hear how a poet sings the story—

***“Fierce was the wild billow
Dark was the night!
Oars labored heavily
Foam glimmered white!
Trembled the mariners
Peril was near
Then said the God of God—
‘Peace! It is I!’
Ridge of the mountain wave,
Lower your crest!
Wail of Euroclydon,
Be you at rest!
Sorrow can never be—
Darkness must fly—
Where says the Light of Light—
‘Peace! It is I!’
Jesus, Deliverer!
Come You to me!
Soothe You my voyaging
Over life’s sea!
You, when the storm of death
Roars sweeping by,
Whisper, O Truth of Truth!—
‘Peace! It is I!’”***

On this occasion I will not further call your attention to the storm, or to the calm, but I beg you to observe the feelings of the disciples about the whole matter. The text says that, “The men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!” God evidently thinks much of His people’s inward feelings, for they are recorded here and in many other cases. The report of what these poor fishermen *felt* is as carefully made as the record of what their Lord and Master *said*, since this was necessary to set forth the intent and purpose of their Lord’s utterances. God often regards the external action as a mere husk, but the

feeling of His people is the innermost kernel of their life-story and He prizes it.

Some men practice introspection so much that they grow, at last, to make a kind of fetish of their inward feeling. This is wrong. Yet there is an error on the other side in which we cease to make conscience of our feelings and think them to be a matter of no consequence, as if there could be real life without feeling. I will cry up faith as much as anyone—but there is no need to depreciate all the other Graces, and especially all the emotions, in order to do honor to faith! We may honor the heir and yet see no reason for slaying all the rest of the royal seed. We must both feel aright and believe aright—and it is sometimes good for us to have a lesson about how to feel towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

Though feeling must be *secondary* to faith, yet it is far from being unimportant. At this time I shall principally talk about three feelings towards Christ. First, the men marveled. We will dwell upon that—marveling at Christ's work. Secondly, if you will turn to Mark, the fourth chapter and the 41st verse, you will see that Mark describes the feeling of the men as, fearing “exceedingly.” That shall be our second head—awe-stricken at His Presence. Thirdly, we see them, in our text, admiring His Person, for they said, “What manner of Man,” or, more correctly, “What kind of Person is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!”

I. First, then, MARVELING AT HIS WORK. May I ask you to indulge, for a little while, the feeling of wonder? You believe in Jesus Christ and you are saved. Salvation comes not by wondering, but by *believing*. But now, having been saved, having passed from death unto life—and having been preserved for years upon the sea of life in the midst of many storms and, at this moment enjoying a great calm and restfulness of spirit, I invite you to marvel. What wonderful things Jesus has done for me! It is in my power, if I choose, to waste my time in reading romances, but I care nothing for them, for my own life is to me more romantic than romance!

The story of God's goodness to me is more thrilling than any work of fiction could possibly be! I am speaking to some here who I am sure will join with me in acknowledging that there is a freshness, a novelty, a surprise power about the dealings of God with us which we do not meet with anywhere else! Well do we sing in our hymn—

***“I need not go abroad for joys—
I have a feast at home,”***

and we can also add that we need not go abroad for *wonders*, for we have a perfect museum at home in our own experience! John Bunyan, when he was describing the experience of his pilgrim, said, “Oh, world of wonders! I can say no less.” And so it is. The life of the godly man, on the God side of it, as he receives Grace from Jesus, is a gallery of heavenly art! He is an exhibition of Divine skill and power, a wonderland of mercy—

***“Still has my life new wonders seen
Of loving kindness rare!
A monument of Grace I stand,
Your goodness to declare.”***

Let us think for a minute or two of the parallel between us and these disciples as to wonderment. Consider, first, that the instantaneous and profound calm was contrary to Nature. The Galilean Lake lies in a deep

hollow, much below the level of the ocean, and in the sides of the cliffs and hills which shut it in, there are valleys and openings which act as funnels, down which, blasts of cold air from the mountains often rush upon a sudden. When the time of storm is really on, the Lake of Galilee is not tossed about like an ordinary open sea, but is rent, torn, heaved up and almost hurled out of its bed by down-driving hurricanes and twisting whirlwinds! No sailor knows which way the wind will blow except that it blows all ways at once and particularly downwards—as if, with a direct downdraft from Heaven, it blows vessels into the water—and soon, changing its course, lifts them into the air!

Any mariner who is not used to that strange, wild sea, would soon lose his head and despair of life. It is like a boiling cauldron—the spirits of the vast deep stir it to its bottom! Yet this billowy lake, in a moment, was turned to glass by the words of Jesus—a fact far more wonderful to witness than to read about! Such a change in the uproarious elements was altogether contrary to Nature and, therefore, “the men marveled.” Now, Beloved, look back upon what your life has been. I do not know exactly where you begin your life story. Some commence in the slime pits of Sodom—in vice and drunkenness. Others begin with wandering on the dark mountains of infidelity, or among the hogs and sloughs of Phariseism and formality.

However it may have been, it is a miracle that you should have been made to fall at Jesus’ feet and cry out for mercy through His precious blood! That you should give up all trust and confidence in self and, at the same time, should turn away from favorite lusts which you once reveled in, is such a wonder that nobody would have believed it, had it been prophesied to them! Certainly you never would have believed it, yourself—and yet it has taken place—and other unlooked-for changes have followed it. Why, you have lived, since then, in a way that would have been once condemned by yourself as utterly absurd! Had an Oracle informed you of it, you would have ridiculed its forecast. “No,” you would have said, “I shall never be *that!* I shall never feel *that!* I shall never do *that!*”

And yet, it has been so with you. The boiling cauldron of your nature has been cooled down and quieted—and an obedient calm has succeeded rebellious rage. Is it not so? I can only say that if your religion has never produced a wonder, I wonder that you believe in it! If there is not something about you, through Divine Grace, which quite surprises yourself, I should not be amazed if, one of these days, you wake up and find that you have been self-deceived! Far above Nature are the ways of Grace in men! And if you know them, they have produced in you what your natural temperament and your worldly surroundings never could have produced.

There has been fire where you looked for snow, and cool streams where you expected flames. A growth of good wheat has been seen where Nature would have produced nothing but thorns and briars. Where sin abounded, Grace has much more abounded, and your life has become the theater of miracles and the home of wonders!

These men marveled, next, because the calm was so unexpected by reason. The ship was near going to pieces! A gust of wind threatened to lift her right out of the water and the next threatened to plunge her to the

bottom of the sea! The weary fishermen certainly did not look for a *calm*—there were no signs of such a gift! When they said, “Master, we perish,” I do not know what they thought their Lord would do, but they assuredly never dreamed that He would stand up in the back part of the ship, and say, “Winds and waves, what are you doing? Your Master is here. Be still.” That was beyond their nautical experience and their fathers had never seen such wonders in *their* day. They could not hope that in a moment they should be in a profound calm!

Now, may I ask you to wonder a little at what the Lord has done for *you*? Has He not done for you what you never expected? To speak for myself, I never reckoned upon standing here to preach to thousands of God’s people. When I was first brought to Jesus I had no such hope. Why should I be taken from the school and from the desk to lead a part of His flock? I wonder more and more that by His Grace I am what I am! Some of you, when you sit at the Communion Table, may well feel that the most wonderful thing about it is that you should find a welcome place at the Lord’s own festival. Did some of you expect, a year ago, that you would be here, now, on a Thursday night, listening to a talk about Jesus Christ?

Why, you hardly know how you got here! You can scarcely tell the way by which the Lord has led you to be a lover of the Gospel. Look at your inner feelings, as well as your outward position—are you not often made the subject of desires, of longings, of groanings and, on the other hand, of enjoyments, of sweet and precious endearments, of high and gracious expectations which utterly surprise you as you remember what you used to be? Are you not “like them that dream” when you think over the Lord’s loving kindness? And if others say, “the Lord has done great things for you,” does not your heart chime in with all its bells and ring out notes of joy, “The Lord has done great things for us, of which we are glad”? Come, indulge your wonder! Admire and marvel at the exceeding Grace of God towards you in working contrary to Nature, contrary to all reasonable expectations and bringing you to be His dear and favored child! Marvels of mercy, wonders of Grace belong unto God Most High!

Besides this, the idea of a storm which should immediately be followed by a great calm was a strikingly new experience. These fishermen of the Galilean Lake had never seen it after this fashion before. We read in the Old Testament of some, to whom it was said, “You have not gone this way before,” and certainly the same might have been said to these disciples. “You have been in storms, but you never before, in your lives, were one minute in a storm and the next in a calm.” It must have been enough to make them weep for joy, or, at least, it must have led them to hold up their hands in glad astonishment! The deliverance worked by their Lord was so fresh, so altogether new that marveling was natural!

Well, now, Brothers and Sisters, to come back to ourselves, again—have you not often experienced that which has astounded you by its novelty? Are not God’s mercies new every morning? I address some of you who have been 40 or 50 years in the ways of God—do you not find a continual freshness in the manifestations of God’s goodness to you, both in Providence and Grace? Let me ask you, has religious life been to you like mounting a treadmill, monotonous, wearisome, uniform? If so, there is

something wrong about you, for while we live near to God, we dwell under new heavens and walk upon a new earth! When a man travels through the Alps on a bright sunshiny day, all things are as new, as though born that morning—that drop of dew on the grass—he never saw before! That drifting cloud has newly arrived upon the scene. Never before has the traveler seen the face of Nature radiant with the same smile as that which now delights him.

Has it not been so with you in the journey of life? Have not all things become new and remained new since you were born anew? Has not Grace been heaped upon Grace, so that each new experience has excelled its predecessor? Still have I beheld fresh beauties in my Master's face, fresh glories in my Master's Words, fresh assurance of His faithfulness in His Providence, fresh joy in my Master's Spirit as He has dealt graciously with my soul! I know that it is so with you and I want you to marvel at it, that God should take so much trouble to manifest Himself to poor creatures that are not worth His treading on—that He should devise a thousand things most rare and new for such insignificant insects of a day as we are. Glory be to His blessed name, it may well be said of us, "The men marveled and said, What manner of Person is this who deals so with His people?" "Who is a God like unto You? What is man that You are mindful of Him? And the son of man that you visit him?" These three things made the disciples wonder.

There was another. I should think that it was a great marvel to them that a calm was sent so soon after the storm. Man needs time, but God's Word runs very quickly. Man travels with weary feet—the Lord rides upon a cherub and does fly, yes, He flies upon the wings of the wind! The particles of air and the drops of water were all in confusion through the storm, rushing as if chaos had come, again, rising in whirlwinds and falling in cataracts! Yet they did but see the face of their Maker and they were still! In one single instant there was a calm! Have not you and I experienced instantaneous workings of Divine Grace upon our spirits? It may not be so with all, but some of us, at the first instant of our faith, lost the burden of sin in a moment! Our load was all gone before we knew where we were. The change from sorrow to joy was not worked in us by degrees, but in a moment the sun leaped above the horizon and the night of our soul was over.

Has it not been so since? We have been, in the midst of God's people, as heavy as lead and without power to enjoy a Truth of God, or to perform a holy act. The hymns seemed a mockery and the prayer an empty form—and yet, in a single moment, the rod of the Lord has touched the rock and the waters have flowed forth—and by the very means of Grace which seemed so dull and powerless, we have been enlivened and comforted! We have blessed the Lord that we ever came to the place. I do not know how it is that we undergo such sudden changes. Yes I do—it is because God works all good things in us and He is able to accomplish, in an instant, that which we could not effect in a year! He can, in a moment, change our prison into a palace and our ashes into beauty. He can bid us put off our sackcloth and put on the wedding garments of delight. As in the twinkling of an eye, this corruptible shall put on incorruption, so in an instant our

spiritual death can blossom into heavenly life! This is a great wonder. Go and marvel at what the Lord has so speedily done for you.

And then, to think that it should have been so perfect! When a storm subsides, the sea is generally angry for hours, if not for days. A great wind at Dover, yesterday, would make the Channel rough for some time. But when our Lord Jesus makes a calm, the sea forgets her raging and smiles at once! In fact, "He makes the storm a calm, so that the waves are still." The winds hush all their fury and are quiet in an instant when He bids them rest. And oh, when the Lord gives joy and peace and blessedness to His people, He does not do it by halves! "When He gives quietness, who, then, can make trouble?" There is no such thing as a half-blessing for a child of God. The Lord gives Him fullness of peace—"the peace of God which passes all understanding." He causes him to enjoy quiet, through believing, and He enables him to rejoice in tribulation, also, for tribulation works blessing to the souls of men.

I feel that I cannot speak as I could wish, but I shall finish this division of the discourse by saying that one point of wonder was that the calm was worked so evidently by the Master's Words. He *spoke* and it was done. He poured no oil upon the waters. His will was revealed in a Word and that will was Law. Not an atom of matter dares to move if the Divine fiat forbids—the sovereignty of Jesus is supreme—and His Word is with power. Now, dear Friend, I know that there must have been very much that is wonderful in your life as a Christian, but do not think yourself the only partaker of such wonderment! Let us all sit down and enquire, each one, "Why is this to *me*? Why *me*, Lord? How can such great Grace be shown to *me*? And how can the Son of God stoop to look at me and take me into marriage union with Himself and promise that I shall live because He lives—that I shall reign because He reigns?"

Sit down, I say, and believingly marvel, and marvel, and marvel, and never leave off marveling! And let me drop one little word into your ear. Is there something that you need of God concerning which unbelief has said that it is too wonderful to be expected? Let that be the reason why you *shall* expect it! There is nothing to a Christian so probable as the unexpected—and there is nothing which God is so likely to do for us as that which is above all we ask or even think! God is at home in wonderland! If what you need is a commonplace thing, perhaps it may not come. But if it strikes you as a marvel, you are in a fit state of heart to honor God for it and you are likely to receive it!

Do not think that because between you and Heaven, if you reach it, there will be a giant causeway of marvels, therefore you will never get there! But, on the contrary, conclude that the God who began to save you by so great a miracle as the gift and death of His own dear Son, will go on to perfect your salvation even if He has to fling into the sea a thousand heavens to make stepping stones for you to tread upon so you can reach His Presence. "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?" Therefore expect wonders!

These men marveled—expect to keep on marveling till you get to Heaven—and to keep on marveling when you are in Heaven and through-

out eternity! Wonder will be a principal ingredient of our adoration in Heaven! We—

***“Shall sing with wonder and surprise
His loving kindness in the skies.”***

I have been somewhat long on this first head. I will therefore give you a little, and only a little, upon the second.

II. Let us now see how the disciples were AWE-STRICKEN AT OUR LORD’S PRESENCE. Mark says that “the men feared greatly.” They feared greatly because they found themselves in the Presence of One who had stilled the winds and the waves! Brothers and Sisters, it is well to cultivate that holy familiarity which comes from nearness to Jesus and yet we ought always to be humbled by a sense of that nearness. Permit me to remind the boldest Believer that our loving Lord is still God over all! He is to be honored and revered, worshipped and adored by all who draw near to Him. However much He is our Brother, He says, “You call me Master and Lord, and you do well, for so I am.”

He is all the greater because of His condescension to us and we are bound to recognize this. Whenever Jesus is near, the feeling of holy awe and solemn dread will steal over true disciples. I am afraid of that way of being so familiar with Christ as to talk of Him as, “dear Jesus” and, “dear Lord,” as if He were some Jack or Harry that we might pat on the back whenever we liked. No, no. This will never do! It is not such language as men would use to their prince—let them not, thus, address the King of kings! However favored we may be, we are but dust and ashes—and our spirit must be chastened with reverence.

When Jesus is near us, we ought to exceedingly fear because we have doubted Him. If you had been suspicious of a dear friend and had indulged hard thoughts about him and, all of a sudden you found yourself sitting in the same room with him, you would feel awkward, especially if you understood that he knew what you had said and thought. Oh, you will feel ashamed of yourself, my Brothers and Sisters, if Jesus shall draw near to you! The wisest thing you can do in such a case is to say, “My Master, my Lord, since You favor me with Your Presence, I will first fall at Your feet and confess that I doubted You; that I thought that the stormy wind would swallow up the vessel and that the waves would devour both You and me. Forgive me, Master, forgive me for having thought so evil of You.”

Whenever we are near to Christ, one of the first feelings should be that of great humiliation. Let us fall at His feet and confess how ill we have thought of Him. Brethren, we have been so foolish as to fear His creatures, paying to them a sort of worship of fear, as if they had more power to harm than Jesus had to help! We clothe wind and sea with attributes which belong only to God—and look upon our trials as if they tried the Lord, too—and vanquished Him because they vanquish us. Are we not, because of this, smitten with dread in the Presence of the Christ? And then the next feeling should be—since He has come to me, this Mighty One who has worked such marvels for me, let me try to order myself aright in His Presence.

I notice whenever the Lord Jesus Christ is very present in this congregation how carefully everybody sings. I notice about tune, time and tone a difference from the singing which is usual and even from that singing which comes of having an acquired skill in music. Though it may seem a trifle, yet I cannot help observing that when people come to the Communion Table, as a matter of routine they frequently behave roughly, walking noisily and looking about, or else they sit like statues, with a chill propriety of posture and vacancy of countenance. But you will notice that fellowship with Jesus affects the glance of the eyes, the thoughts of the soul and, consequently, the movements of the body. When a man is truly conscious that Jesus, the Wonder-Worker is near, he fears exceedingly.

If ever you say to Jesus, "You know that I love You," mind you, put, "Lord," before it—"Lord, You know all things"—for He is still your Lord. Where Jesus is, there is godly fear, which is, by no means, the same as slavish fear. Every true child has a reverence for his father. Every true daughter has a loving respect for her mother. So is it with us towards our Lord Jesus. We owe so much to Him and He is so great and so good—and we are so little and so sinful—that there must be a blessed sense of holy awe whenever we come before Him. Indulge it. Indulge it now! You know how John puts it—"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

Why, that is the man who leaned His head on the bosom of Christ! Yes, that is the man who fell at His feet as dead. If your head has never leaned upon the bosom of the Lord, I should not wonder if you can hold it up in His Presence! But when it has once lain there, in confiding love, reposing upon boundless Mercy, then that head of yours will lie in the dust uncrowned if God has honored it—for it will be your delight to cast your crown at His feet and give Him all the Glory! O, reign forever, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Conquer me, my Lord! Subdue me perfectly! Make dust of me beneath Your feet! If You shall be but the tenth of an inch the higher for my downcasting, Oh, my Master, and my Lord, with joy I would shrink to nothing before You, that You may be All in All! May this be your feeling and mine. The men feared exceedingly—let us fear, also, after a believing sort.

III. Now to close. The third thing is ADMIRING THE PERSON OF Jesus, for these men who marveled, and who feared exceedingly, admired the Person of Him who had set them free from the storm, saying, "What manner of Person is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" Come, let us admire and adore the Nature of Christ which is altogether beyond our comprehension! The winds and the sea obeyed Him though He had slept like other *men*. When His head was that of an infant, the crown of the universe was about His brow! When He was in the carpenter's shop, He was still the Creator of all worlds! When He went to die upon the Cross, a myriad of angels would have come to rescue Him if He had but willed it. Even in His humiliation He was still the Son of the Highest, God over all, blessed forever!

Now that He is exalted in Heaven, do not forget the other side of the question—believe that He is just as much Man, now, as when He was here—as truly a Brother of our race as He is God over all, blessed forevermore. Let us now give our hearts to admiration of Him in His complex

Nature which is beyond comprehension. He is my next of kin and yet my God—at once my Redeemer and my Lord! We may each one cry with Job, “I know that my next of kin lives, and that He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth. And though, after my skin, worms devour this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

Because He lives as my Kinsman—there is the sweetness of it and because He is my God—there is the Glory of it! He is both tenderly compassionate for my infirmities and gloriously able to overcome them. He is a complete Savior because He is both Human and Divine. Come, my Soul, bow down in wonder that God should send such a Savior as this to you! A person asked me the other day whether I had seen a book entitled, “Sixteen Saviors.” I answered—“No, I have not and I do not want to know of 16 saviors. I am perfectly satisfied with One.” If all who dwell in Heaven and earth could be made into saviors and the whole were put together, you might blow them away as a child blows away thistle-down! There is this one Savior, the Son of Man, and yet the mighty God—and He cannot be moved! Joy then, my Brothers and Sisters, and rejoice in the Nature of your blessed Lord!

Next, rejoice in His power which has no limit, so that even the winds and the waves obey Him. The winds—can they have a master? The waves that cast their spray upon the face of princes—can they acknowledge a sovereign? Yes, the most fickle of elements and the most unruly of forces are all under the power of Jesus! Joy and rejoice in this. Little, as well as great, yon Atlantic that divides the world and that little drop in the basin of Gennesaret are alike in the hands of Jesus! The power of God is seen in a falling mountain when it crashes village, but it is as truly present when the seeds are scattered from the pod of the gorse, or a rose leaf falls upon the garden walk. God is seen when an angel flashes from Heaven to earth and is He not seen when a bee flits from flower to flower?

Jesus is the Master of the little as well as of the great! Yes, He is King of all things and I joy, this moment, to think that even the wicked actions of ungodly men, though they are not deprived of their sinfulness, so as to make the men the less responsible, are, nevertheless, overruled by that great Lord of ours who works all things according to the counsel of His will! In the front I see Jesus leading the van of Providence. Behind He guards the rear. On the heights I see Jesus reigning King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In the deeps I mark the terror of His justice as He binds the dragon with His chain. Let the universal cry of “Hallelujah” rise unto the Son of God, world without end!

Sit down and admire and adore His unlimited power—and then conclude by paying homage to that sovereignty of His which brooks no question, for the winds and waves did not only perform His will, but, as if they were waking into life and rising into intelligent knowledge of Him, they are said to *obey* Him—from which I gather that Christ is not only the forceful Master of unintelligent agencies, but that He is the Sovereign Master of things that can obey Him—and He will be obeyed. Ah, you may bite at Him and hiss at Him, but as the viper broke his teeth against the file, yet hurt it not, so shall the ungodly exercise all their craft and all their strength—and the result shall be shame and confusion of face to them.

The kingdom of our Lord and Master is, by some, thought to be a long way off, and His cause is despaired of by faint-hearted men. But He that sits in the heavens laughs at the impatience of saints as well as at the impiety of sinners, for He knows that all is well! Out of seeming evil He produces good and from that good a better, still, and better still in infinite progression! All things move towards His eternal coronation! As once every atom of history converged to His Cross, so does it today project itself towards His crown—the Lord Jesus comes to His well-earned Throne as surely as He came to the shameful Cross! He comes and when He comes, it shall be as when He rose in the ship and rebuked the winds, and the men marveled—for all storms of raging passion, conflicting opinion and fierce warfare shall be hushed—and He shall be admired in His saints and glorified in all them that believe! Even unbelievers shall marvel at Him and say, “What manner of Person is this, that even earth and Hell obey Him and all things are subject to His sovereign power!”

Happy are the eyes that shall see Him in that day with joy! Happy are the men who shall sit at the right hand of the Coming One! Oh, Beloved, your eyes and mine shall see it if we have first looked to the Redeemer upon the Cross and found salvation in Him! Courage, Brothers and Sisters, let the waves dash and the winds howl—the Lord of Hosts is with us—the God of Jacob is our refuge! All is safe because of His Presence and all shall end gloriously because of His manifestation! The Lord bless you, in tempest and in calm, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 8.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—243, 222.**

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GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN NO. 3016

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1906.

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

***“And, behold they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”
Matthew 9:2.***

***“And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come near unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you.”
Mark 2:3-5.***

***“And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when He saw their faith, He said unto Him, Son, your sins are forgiven you.”
Luke 5:18-20.***

[Other sermons upon this miracle are as follows—No. 2,337, Volume 39, THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT and No. 2,417, Volume 41, FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THIS man was paralyzed in body, but he was very far from being paralyzed in mind. From the little we know of him, he would appear to have been earnest, resolute, energetic and persevering. You very seldom find persons attempting more for you than you, yourself, desire—and if the four men who carried this paralytic person were so zealous in getting him under the Lord’s notice, we may be morally certain that he, himself, was even more set upon it. His bearers would never have gone the length of breaking up the roof and letting him down upon the heads of the crowd unless he had urged them to do so. He was something more than passive under such heroic treatment! If he did not suggest the plan, he evidently entered into it most willingly.

Suppose it to be your own case, my dear Hearer. Are you not persuaded that if, broken in spirit, you were to say to your friends, “let me alone, my case is hopeless,” few would dream of exciting themselves to desperate efforts on your behalf, but would let you lie in your apathy, according to your request? It is a rule that you must, yourself, be energetic if you are to make other people energetic on your behalf and, therefore, it seems to me that this man had a resolute and intense

spirit—and had such influence over his friends that he inspired them by his eagerness, having first won them by his importunity. He besought them to aid him in what had become a necessity of life—he must see Jesus. He must be brought before the great Healing One, somehow or other, and because of his personal eagerness and pressing importunity, his friends made up their minds to help him.

We may yet discover a little more about this palsied man and it will not be mere conjecture, for, by certain rules established by observation and experience, we may often learn much of a character from very small circumstances. Our Lord Jesus was accustomed to address the persons who came to Him very much according to their mental condition. When one poor man, half imbecile in spirit, was brought to him, He asked him, “Will you be made whole?” He was so listless as barely to have the will to be restored and Christ’s saying, “Will you be made whole?” is evidence to us that even the poor creature’s wishes had begun to slumber. Take it as a general rule that while Christ regarded the onlookers and spoke with some view to them, yet, in the main, His first thoughts were concerning His patient and He generally spoke with an eye to that patient’s case. I gather, therefore, from the fact that Jesus said to this man, “Son, be of good cheer,” that he was very greatly depressed in spirit and unhappy—and when He added not, “Your palsy shall be removed,” but “Your sins are forgiven you,” we are quite safe in concluding that the cause of the man’s sadness was his sin, for which beyond all things else he desired pardon! Our Lord went straight to the root of the mischief—the man was sad, and so He cheered him. The man was sad about his sin and so He granted him forgiveness. His palsy would, secondarily, be a fountain of bitter grief to the sick man and, therefore, the Savior dealt with it in the second place. But first and foremost, over and above all grief for his infirmity, was his painful sense of unforgiven sin. It is not likely that he told his bearers about that, for they might not have been able to sympathize with such a spiritual necessity—to them he spoke of his affliction, not of his repentance, for while they would pity him for his palsy, they might have ridiculed him for his guilty conscience. The Lord, however, knew the heart’s grief without telling—He read it in the sufferer’s looks. The great Sin-Forgiver knew right well that earnest gaze which meant, “Be merciful to me, a sinner,” and He met that wistful glance with a smile and the cheering words, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

I suppose that the patient was a young man, for the word, “Son,” would hardly have been spoken by our Lord to a man older than Himself. I gather that he was a man of childlike faith, for Jesus did not call people His “sons and daughters” unless there was something of the childlike spirit about them. He was evidently a man of simple-hearted faith who fully believed that Christ could forgive his sin and so it happened to him, after the rule of the Kingdom, “According to your faith, be it unto you.”

The case stood thus—The paralyzed man was burdened with sin, weighed down and oppressed in conscience. This urged him to seek the Savior. “I must see the Christ,” he said. His passionate earnestness extracts a promise from the neighbors that they will take him to Jesus.

He begs them to do it now. But the Lord could not be reached, for a dense crowd shut Him in. "I must see Jesus," cries the man. His friends reply, "You cannot rise from your bed." "Carry me upon it," cries he. "But we cannot get in." "Try," he says. They reached the door and they cried, "Make room. Here is a man sick of the palsy who must see Jesus." They are gruffly answered, "Plenty of other poor men want to see Him. Why should everybody give place to you? What is the use of pushing? There is no room for that bed here! What folly to drag a sick man into all this pressure and heat! The Prophet is speaking—you will interrupt Him. Away with you!" The bearers cannot enter. They plead and they push, but all in vain.

"Then," cries the resolute man, "take me up the back stairs. Get me to the top of the verandah and let down the bed through the ceiling. Run any risk for I must get to Jesus." Possibly his friends object and state the difficulties of the procedure suggested. "Why," says one, "you will be hanging over the people's heads, for there will be no room for you when we let you down." "Try it," he cries. "If I am let down from the top, there will be no fear of my not reaching the ground! They cannot push me up again, or keep me on their heads! They must make room for me." His earnestness having been ingenious, now becomes infectious! His bearers smile at his eagerness and enter into it with zest. He will give them no rest till his desire is accomplished—and so they break up the tiling, and let him down before Jesus, with the glad result described in the Gospel, "Jesus said to him, Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."

We have before us, *first, a doctrine*—the doctrine that it is one of the grandest comforts in the world to have your sins forgiven you! "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Secondly, we have before us *a question*. May everyone of you have the honesty to ask it and to answer it in your own case. The question—Have I had my sins forgiven me? For, if so, I have a right to be of good cheer and to be as merry as the birds in spring. But if not, I am destitute of the greatest comfort which Christ, Himself, can speak to a sinner's heart.

I. Dear Hearer, let us give our hearts at once to THE DOCTRINE. It is plainly taught us here that the pardon of sin is one of the richest comforts which the Lord can give to a man.

It is so, first, because *the pardon of sin removes the heaviest sorrow which a man can feel*. Some know little about this grief. May the Lord cause them to mourn with broken hearts or they will perish in their sins! Those of us who have known the burden of sin can tell you that it is a crushing load. Thoughtful persons who have seen things in their true light—honest persons who refuse to be flattered, pure-minded people who long to be right with God—all these will tell you that a sense of sin is, of all miseries, the most sharp and disquieting. To know that you have sinned against light and knowledge with special aggravations is as a hot iron to the flesh and as a serpent's venom in the blood. There is no rest day or night to a soul which carries this Hell within it—

***"Sin, like a venomous disease
Infests our vital blood!
The only balm is Sovereign Grace,***

And the Physician God.”

I speak what I know from personal experience and I only say what many a hearer knows, too, within his own soul. Once let conviction flash in upon the soul and the world loses its fascinations—the music hall, the ballroom and the theater are robbed of their enchantments—even business wearies and domestic joys are deprived of sweetness. A sense of sin spoils all. Guilt on the conscience hangs over everything like a funeral pall. It drowns all music with its prophetic knell and withers every green herb beneath its burning feet.

Sin, sin—what direr ill than you are, can even Satan, himself, beget? A man infected with a deadly disease is never at ease. Whatever garments he may put on, or at whatever tables he may feast, he is still unhappy because he has the arrows of death sticking in him! Such is a man conscious of sin. Nothing can please him. Nothing can ease him till his sin is removed. But when sin is gone—when he knows that he is pardoned, he is as a bird set free from its cage!

A great fire raged one night in a village and a large thatched mansion, in which a man of God resided, caught fire. It blazed furiously, but he and his wife and the most of his children escaped. Judge of their horror when they counted them over, to discover that one little one was missing. Nothing would content them while that dear child was in the burning house. “Mr. Wesley,” his neighbor might say, “we have saved your chest of drawers. We have saved your valuable books from the house.” “Ah, but,” the good man would have said, “my boy is in danger.” What his wife thought of it, when she recollected that little John would be burned to death, I need not tell you. But when, at last, he was lifted out of the window and brought to his parents’ arms—then be sure that the good man would gather his whole family about him and bless the Lord, even though all his substance was consumed. Now, when a sensible man’s soul is in danger, nothing can content him. He prospers in business, his happy children play around him—but what of these while his soul remains in deadly peril? When once, through pardoned sin, his soul becomes like a brand plucked from the burning, then his daily troubles lose all their weight and his heart is full of joyful song! It is clear to every experienced man that the pardon of sin is an immense comfort because it removes the bitterest cause of distress and alarm.

Next, forgiveness of sin is a comfort of the first order, for, indeed, *it is altogether indispensable*. You may possess every luxury, but you cannot be solidly happy until sin is forgiven. “Why!” says one, “I am really happy and yet I am not pardoned.” Yes, but it is a remarkable thing that happy people of your kind are never pleased while they are quiet. They must get up an excitement and dance, or fiddle, or drink, or play the fool in some sort—or they are not happy. I call that real happiness which I can enjoy by the hour together in my room, alone, calmly looking into things and feeling content. I call that real joy which I feel when I wake up at night and, though full of pain, can lie still and bless God for His goodness. It was said of old, “Philosophers can be merry without music” and so can the saints of God! But the ungodly, as a rule, cannot enjoy themselves without external objects to raise their spirits. The truly happy man is

satisfied from himself. A spring within him of Living Water quenches his thirst so that he never feels the drought.

A man cannot be really happy till his sin is pardoned, because sin brings, more or less, a sense of condemnation. Picture a man in the condemned cell. Try to make him comfortable. We provide him with a dainty supper, we sing him gladsome glee, we exhibit fine pictures to him—but he is condemned to die tomorrow and he loathes our feast and our fineries. Bring in a thousand pounds and make him a present of it. He looks at the golden sovereigns and he says, “What is the use of these to me?” Tell him that a rich man has left him heir to a wide estate. “Yes,” he says, “but how can I enjoy it? I am condemned to die.” He is always in his dreams hearing his death-knell and picturing to himself the dreary scene when he is to be launched into eternity. If you could only whisper in his ear, “Her Majesty has granted you a free pardon,” he would say, “You may take away the feast, I feel too happy to eat! All the gold in the world could not make me more delighted than I am now, as a pardoned man.” When men have come out of prison, after they have been shut up for years, everything has been a joy to them. Though they went home, perhaps, and found everybody dead whom they once knew, and saw their own hair turned gray through having lain so long in a moldy den, yet the sweets of liberty made the stones of the streets shine as if they were made of gold and the fields seemed like fairyland to them! Such is the joy of pardon when it comes from our God. A man must have forgiveness, or else everything will be emptiness to him—but when he is absolved, he goes forth with joy and is led forth with peace!

Pardon of sins makes all our sorrows light. If a condemned man is permitted to live, he will not ask whether he is to live like a gentleman or like a peasant. When some kind-hearted men struggle to get the life of a condemned criminal spared, the man’s friends think of nothing but his life. When a judge sentences a man to penal servitude for life, it may be thought a hard sentence, but you never hear of complaints when a condemned criminal has his life spared—if we find that he is to be kept a prisoner as long as he lives. The heaviest punishment seems nothing *if life is spared*. You heave a sigh of relief to think that the gallows will bear one less sad fruit and you forget all about the servitude or the imprisonment which the convict will have to endure. So, depend upon it, if you get sin pardoned and so are saved from the eternal wrath of God, you will make no bargain with God whether you have meat to eat and raiment to put on, or are left hungry and naked! No, Lord, I will shiver in a beggar’s rags with full content if I am but pardoned. I will dwell in prison with a dry crust for my food if I am but delivered from Your wrath! Thus it is clear that the blotting out of sin takes the sting from every other sorrow.

Let me add that it makes death, itself, light! I remember the story of a felon, in those days when they used to hang people for very little, indeed. A poor man, who had committed some offense, was condemned to die. While he lay waiting for the sentence, the Lord sent a choice minister of the Gospel to him and his heart was enlightened so that he found Christ.

As he was on the way to the gallows, what, do you think, was this man's cry? He was overwhelmed with joy and, lifting up his hands, he said many times, "Oh, He is a great Forgiver! He is a great Forgiver!" Death was no terror now that he had found forgiveness through Jesus Christ! Poverty repines not when sin is removed! Sickness frets no longer when conscience is at ease! It may cost you many a pang to feel yourself melting away in consumption, but what does it matter, now that your transgression is forgiven? Every breath may be a labor, every pulse may be a pang, but when sin is forgiven, the Lord has created such a spring of joy within the heart that the soul can never faint!

Yet again, dear Friend, remember that *the pardon of sin is the guarantee of every other blessing*. When Christ said, "Your sins are forgiven you," was there any question at all as to whether that paralytic man would be healed? Certainly not, for the love which had forgiven the sufferer's sin was there to prompt the Savior to say afterwards, "Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." So, dear Friend, if your sin is pardoned, it is true concerning you that no good thing will God withhold from you who walk uprightly, and that all things work together for good to you who love God, to you who are the called according to His purpose. Everything between here and Heaven is secured by the Covenant of Grace for your best benefit. And you can sing—

***"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure!
Death has no sting beside—
The Law gives sin its damning power
But Christ, my Ransom, died."***

You shall never have a need but God will assuredly supply it since He has already bestowed on you the major blessing—the all-comprehending blessing of forgiveness! Covenant mercies follow each other like the links of a chain—"Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies; who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." Do you think that God forgives men their sins and then leaves them to perish? Such cruel "mercy" would be more worthy of a demon than of the Deity! Pardon is the pledge of everlasting love and the pledge will never be forfeited!

"Alas," cries one, "perhaps, after the Lord has forgiven me, He may yet turn again and punish me!" Listen—"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." That is, God never repents of what He does in the way of Grace. If He forgives, He forgives once and for all and forever! It would be blasphemy to represent God as making a transient truce with men instead of an eternal peace! The Lord casts the iniquities of His people into the depths of the sea and their transgressions He remembers against them no more forever. Is not this a blessed act of Grace? It secures the removal of all the evil results of sin and is the guarantee of all that will be needed this side of Heaven, yes, and of Glory, forever! If you do but hear Jesus say, "Your sins are forgiven you," you may also hear Him say, "Be of good cheer," for there is everything in the fact of pardon to make your heart dance for joy!

We will not linger longer upon the doctrine, but make our meditation personally practical by pressing home the work of self-examination.

II. So, now, let us consider THE QUESTION, *Are you forgiven?*

Has God, for Christ's sake, forgiven you? "Ah," cries one, "do not judge us!" I shall not attempt to do so, but I would beg you to judge yourselves. "We cannot be sure of our salvation," answers another. Can you not? Then you ought to never be happy, for a man who is in doubt about a matter so vital as this, which involves his all, ought never to enjoy a moment's peace! How can we rest in fear of Hell, in danger of eternal wrath? Do you not long for certainties? A great novelist began a favorite story with the sentence, "What I need is facts." In that short sentence, he expressed the longing of many a thoughtful soul—many of us feel that we need indisputable facts. Our proverb has it, "Fast bind, fast find." Prudent men will take double care about this weightiest of all concerns and will not be content till they are infallibly cured. I will help you to answer this question by remarking that there is a way by which we may know if we are not forgiven.

We may know that we are not forgiven if we have never felt that we need forgiveness. Where guilt has never been perceived, it has never been removed. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If I feel that I am as good as most people and, perhaps, a little better. If I try to justify myself and think of gaining Heaven by my own endeavors, then I am under condemnation! God has never healed the man who was never wounded, nor has He made the man alive who was never dead. If you have never been humbled before God so as to acknowledge your sinnership, then you are still abiding under His wrath. Think of that, I pray you, you who are at ease, wrapping yourself about in the garments of your own merits! "Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," you may be sure that, in God's sight, "you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Dear Friend, I hope it is not so with you.

Again, *he has never been forgiven who does not at this moment hate sin.* Jesus never came to save us *in* our sins, but to save us *from* our sins—and wherever He takes away the guilt of sin, He also kills the love of it. Sin never seems so black as when we see it put away by Jesus' blood. At the sight of the Cross, we grow angry with ourselves for having slain our Lord by our transgressions. Never dream that you can be pardoned and then be allowed to live as you did before—the very wish to do so would show that you were still under condemnation.

Again, *you are not forgiven if you have never sought Christ and His atoning blood.* If you have labored by other means to procure mercy, you have not found it, for no one else can give it but the one appointed Mediator. Can your "priest" grant you pardon? Did you offend the priest? Then the priest can forgive you for offending him, but he cannot forgive you for offending God! None but God in Christ Jesus can blot out sin and you must go to Him—and if you do not, you are not forgiven, whatever you may dream.

Once more, *have you forgiven everybody else?* This is a home question to some minds, but remember how necessary it is to answer it.

If you do not forgive everyone his brother his trespasses, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you. There it stands, “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us.” If you cannot pardon everyone, no matter how grievous the offense, neither has God pardoned you. A malicious heart is an unrenewed heart. A revengeful spirit is clean contrary to the Spirit of God who passes by transgression, iniquity and sin. This Truth of God may be little preached, but Holy Scripture makes it very prominent and you will be most unwise if in any measure you ignore it. You are not forgiven if you cannot forgive!

Let me now help you, by some positive test, to see whether you are forgiven. Only one is needed—*you are pardoned if you are a true Believer in Jesus Christ*. It is written, “Jesus seeing their faith”—that is, the faith of the four bearers, and the faith of the man who lay upon the bed—said unto him, “Your sins are forgiven you.” The poor palsied man so believed in Jesus that his very face beamed with confidence when he came into Christ’s Presence and so Jesus, seeing his faith, said to him, “Your sins are forgiven you. “Do *you* believe in Jesus? I know that you believe that Jesus Christ is God and a great Savior, but is this a mere matter of doctrine to you, or do you really believe in him? You know what it is to believe in a man so that you can trust him and leave your affairs in his hands—do you believe in Jesus in this way? That is the faith which saves. When a man believes in Christ so as to commit himself to Christ for salvation, he believes rightly, for believing is but another word for trusting, relying, depending upon!

Do not trifle with this question. It is my hope that you can answer, “Yes, unless I am awfully deceived, I am trusting the blood and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I am so trusting Him that I endeavor to follow in His footsteps and to copy His example.” Then you are saved, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Dwell on that word, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” If you really trust Christ, though you have only done so during the last hour, your transgressions are put away and your iniquity is covered, for He *immediately* pardons them who come to Him. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” If you have confessed your sin to Him and trusted in Him, you are most assuredly cleansed by His blood!

Now for my last word. It is this. Jesus said, “Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” Come, then, *let us be of good cheer for our sins are forgiven*. Let us be happy. Let us be merry in the Lord. Let us begin to sing for very joy of hearts because our sins are forgiven us for Christ’s sake! We are very poor, but our sin is forgiven us. We are very weak, but our sin is forgiven us. We are, perhaps, getting very old, and near to our end, but our sin is forgiven us. We are full of infirmity and vexed with temptations, but our sin is forgiven us for His name’s sake! “Son, be of good cheer,” said the Savior, and shall we be otherwise? What if our room is a very small one—what does it matter—if our sin is forgiven? “Ah, but there is a sick one at home!” “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” You know how the Master, when the disciples found another source of joy, turned them back to this, “Notwithstanding in

this, rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven.” And so, when you find a multitude of troubles, follow the same good advice!

Does someone say, “I am head over heels in trouble, for I am in great straits”? Let me lay my hand upon your shoulder and say, “Brother, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” “Oh, but I have very little to live upon!” True, but you have this comforting message, “Your sins are forgiven you.” Be of good cheer—your Lord bids you to be so, for your sins are forgiven you!

If you are not happy, it will be disobedience to Christ, for He commands you to “be of good cheer.” It will look as if you did not value the blessing that cost Him His blood. “Your sins are forgiven you.” It cost Him His life to buy you this redemption—are you going to groan when you get it? No doubt you are pleased to give good things to poor persons and, if so, you like to see their gratitude. I gave something, not many days ago, to a man and he just put it in his pocket and walked off without a word, as if he would say, “I thought you would have given me at least ten times as much.” I thought, “If I had seen the way you would take it, my Man, I would not have been in such a hurry with your gift.” When you give your children a little treat, you like to see them pleased and thankful. But if they sit down and fret over your kindness, you are disappointed and are in no great haste to indulge them again! Our Heavenly Father’s gifts must be valued and delighted in—if He has forgiven us our sins, let us be happy!

“Son, be of good cheer.” Have some regard to the outside world, for, if they are pardoned men and women with gruesome countenances, they will infer that there is not much comfort in the Grace of God, after all. “My wife,” says one, “declares that her sins are forgiven her, yet I am sure when there is a little trouble in the house she is more downhearted than I am.” “There,” cries a woman, “my husband tells me that his sins are washed away, but he grumbles and murmurs till we are all made miserable by him!” Do not let it be so. If you have a cross to carry, let us bear it joyfully for Christ’s sake. If we have work to do for Christ, let us do it with delight. Let us live to music. Let us march to Heaven to a gladsome tune, rejoicing in the Lord because our sins are forgiven! And let each one of us say—

***“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King!”***

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MARK 2.

Verse 10. *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was heard that He was in the house. And straightaway many were gathered together, so that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them.* It is a very singular fact that although man, in his natural state of heart, is opposed

to the Gospel, yet he is drawn to hear it. Even though he abhors it, yet oftentimes he cannot help listening to it. Wherever Jesus Christ is, whether He is present in Person, or in the preaching of the Word, it will be certain to be heard abroad and multitudes will come to hear. The grandest attraction either in or out of Heaven is still the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ!

3-5. *And they came unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And then they could not come near unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, your sins are forgiven you.* In Luke's account of this gathering, we read that "the power of the Lord was present to heal them," and when we ask, "Why was that power so remarkably present?" we think that one reason was because there were persons present who were anxious about the good of others. And, today, wherever four persons come together praying for some poor soul, you may rest assured that the power of the Lord will there be present to heal. I do not think that so much of the success of sermons depends upon the preacher as upon those model hearers who are all the while praying for a blessing and who are making other members of the congregation—those who are converted—the constant subject of their supplication. Christ blessed this man because of the faith of the four who carried him and, possibly, because of his own faith.

Notice that our Lord did not at first say to the sick man, "You are healed of your palsy," but He said, "Your sins are forgiven you." This was laying the axe at the root, because sin is at the bottom of sorrow—and where sin is pardoned, even the effects of sin will be removed.

6-9. *But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts. Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and take up your bed, and walk? Whichever is spoken, Omnipotence is implied. The Presence and Power of God, alone, could give efficacy to either sentence, but to Him, the one is as easy as the other.*

10-14. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (He said to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto you, Arise, and take up your bed, and go your way into your house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all, so that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying they never saw anything like this before. And He went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of customs, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed him.* There is a change in the method of displaying Christ's power, but His power is always the same. To the palsied man, He said "Arise, and take up your bed, and walk." But to the man engaged in a calling which degraded him, Christ said, "Follow Me" and, "he arose and followed Him." Blessed be God, we still have in

our midst the living Lord who is as able to work miracles of mercy today as when He was upon the earth! And we have not merely to exhort, to persuade and to entreat, though we have to do all that, but we have also to speak with authority in the name of this glorious Son of God and to command men to repent and believe in Him! He is with us, by His Spirit, to make His Word mighty, so that, to this day, palsied men do arise and walk—and sinful men are led to turn from evil and to follow Christ.

15-17. *And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in Levi's house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples: for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto Jesus' disciples, How is it that He eats and drinks with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He said unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* For ordinary Christians to associate with those who are like the publicans and sinners of Christ's day might be dangerous, for, "evil communications corrupt good manners," and Christians should be careful as to the company in which they are found. But for Christians to go among such people to try to do them good is Christlike! The Church of Christ always fails in her duty when she looks upon any class of persons as being beneath her observation, or too far gone for her to reach. Our Lord's mission was to find out and to supply the needs of mankind—and He seems to have paid particular attention to the very worst of men because they needed Him the most. And His Church should always be guided in her choice of work by the necessity of the objects that need her care. And Brothers, you and I who are in the ministry will do well to choose not that sphere in which we may be most happy and comfortable, but that one in which we are most needed. If I were a lamp and had my choice of where I would be hung, I should prefer to be hung up in the darkest place in London where I could be of most service. And I think that everyone of us would make just such a choice if we judged rightly and desired to be where we were needed and to do as the Savior did when He was on the earth.

18-20. *And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and said unto Him, why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.* While Christ was with His people in Person, they could not help having joy and gladness. But when He was gone from them, they must lament His absence.

21, 22. *No one sews a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up takes away from the old and the tear is made worse. And no man puts new wine into old bottles: else the new wine does burst the bottles and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.* The bottles were made of skin and the wine put into them must be of a suitable port. To prescribe

fasting to His disciples while He was making them glad with His personal Presence would have been incongruous and absurd. And there are some things that we ought not to expect from young Christians—and other things that we ought not to expect from old and mature Christians. We should not expect to find new wine in old bottles, nor old wine in new bottles. “A place for everything, and everything in its place,” is not only a rule for the home and the merchant’s counting house, but it is also a rule which should be observed in the Church of Christ, for God, as a God of order, always puts things in their proper places and in due order.

23. *And it came to pass, that He went through the corn fields on the Sabbath; and the disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.* They had offended the Pharisees by not fasting and now they were offending them again in a similar way, though with reference to a different matter!

24. *And the Pharisees said unto Him, Behold, why do they on the Sabbath that which is not lawful?* According to some Rabbis, you might pick an ear of wheat on the Sabbath, but if you rubbed it between your hands, they said that was a sort of thieving which was a kind of labor that must not be performed on the Sabbath. They made all sorts of ingenious restrictions, too ridiculous for us to quote. These disciples were, therefore, according to them, chargeable with sin because they had plucked ears of corn and had performed the operation of threshing them on the Sabbath. And we have some of that sort of folk living now who take the smallest matter, which is altogether insignificant, and in which there is neither good nor harm, and magnify and distort it—and then make a man a grave offender all for next to nothing. We have learned not to be very much troubled by anything that they choose to say.

25-28. *And He said unto them, have you ever read what David did, when he had fled, and was hungry? He and they that were with him? How he went into the House of God in the days of Abiather the high priest, and did eat the showbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.* He has made it to be no longer a day of bondage, but a day of blessed rest and holy service for God! Works of necessity, works of piety and works of mercy are not only allowed to be done, but are *commanded* to be done upon the Sabbath.

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

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

THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS

NO. 3227

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1910.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 2, 1872.

“Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”
Matthew 9:2.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon concerning the man sick of the palsy are as follows—#2337, Volume 39—THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT; #2417, Volume 41—FIRST FORGIVENESS, THEN HEALING and #3016, Volume 52—GOOD CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN—
Read/download all these sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST did not say to the palsied man, “Be of good cheer, your palsied limbs shall be made strong and well again.” But before He had cured *that* terrible malady, He bade him be comforted because his sins were forgiven—as if that would be a sufficient reason for rejoicing even if he should remain palsied! If he should be carried away from the Presence of Christ upon his bed just as helpless as when he was let down from the roof into the middle of the crowded room, that would be quite a secondary matter compared with the all-important fact that his sins had been forgiven. David truly wrote, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,” and he is blessed even though he is sick of the palsy, or suffering from all the diseases to which flesh is heir! You remember, too, how the Prophet Isaiah wrote, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “Comfort, you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her”—what? What shall be the special cause of comfort to the Church of God?—“that her warfare is accomplished, that her *iniquity is pardoned.*” She might be in great trouble and distress. Her land might be trodden under the feet of invaders. Her sons and daughters might be fainting in her streets, but as her iniquity was pardoned, she had good ground for comfort! To quote another instance that is a close parallel to our text, our Lord said to the woman in the city who was a sinner—who had washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed them, and anointed them with ointment—“Your sins are forgiven...Go in peace.” And, truly, when sin is forgiven, we may go in peace!

This is the subject upon which I am going to speak—whatever there may be to cause us sorrow, if our sins are forgiven, we have good reason to be happy. First, I shall try to show you that *the pardon of sin brings true happiness.* Next, that *those whose sins are forgiven ought to be happy.* And thirdly, a solemn warning in conclusion that *there is no true happiness for unpardoned souls.*

I. First, then, as Jesus said to the man sick of the palsy, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you,” we learn that **THE PARDON OF SIN BRINGS TRUE HAPPINESS.**

Time would fail us to show all the ways in which the forgiveness of sin is a perennial fountain of consolation, but note, first, that *it is one of the surest signs of Divine favor*—anyone who is in the enjoyment of it, certainly has abundant reason for being glad! God may give a man great riches, but that would not, in itself, be a token of favor. It might even be quite the opposite! God may give a man great success in his enterprises, but that, also, may be no evidence of favor. God may even permit a man to have his heart’s desire and to be filled with this world’s follies and pleasures—yet that might be a proof of Divine wrath rather than of the Lord’s favor. He may have said concerning him, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” But if a man’s sins are forgiven, there is no doubt about God’s favor in his case!. That brief sentence, “Your sins are forgiven,” is a clearer token of the favor of God than vats bursting with new wine or barns packed to the roof with golden grain! If your sins are forgiven you, you have the King’s guarantee to prove that He loves you!

Forgiveness of sin is also *a proof of Divine Election*—not merely a sign and token of God’s present, favorable regard, but an evidence of that ancient favor which God had in His heart towards His chosen even from eternity! There are many common mercies that God gives freely to all sorts and conditions of men. “He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” But the pardon of sin is a special blessing reserved for His own peculiar people, whose names He wrote in the Lamb’s Book of Life and whom He gave to His Son in the Covenant of His Grace—and whom Christ reclaimed by His precious blood when He “loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” These are the people in whom God takes a peculiar delight—and these are they whose sins are forgiven them for Christ’s sake!

If you, my Brother or Sister, are one of these highly-favored ones, then you have good reason to be happy! Think for a minute or two upon *what this pardon is*, and then you will see what cause you have for happiness. Isaiah tells us that Jehovah has laid upon Christ the iniquity of all His people so that this crushing burden has been removed from all of us who are truly His—and surely he who has had such a load taken off his heart and conscience must be a happy man! In Psalm 85:2, we read, “You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people, You have covered all their sin.” If we have believed in Jesus, our sins are covered even from the sight of God by the Propitiatory Sacrifice of Christ, and they are so concealed from our own eyes that we no longer think of them as condemning us! Can any of us realize that this is our case and yet remain unhappy? In Isaiah 44:22, we read, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins.” You have sometimes seen the clouds dissipated and scattered so completely that not a vestige of them can be seen—that is how our sins are driven away by God—so shall we not be happy? Sometimes the pardon of sin is called the casting of sin behind God’s

back into the depths of the sea. At another time it is said that, “the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none. And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” And then there is that wonderful description of the work of “Messiah the Prince” which Gabriel gave to Daniel, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins.” What stronger expression than that could ever be used? If it is Christ’s work “to make an end of sins,” we may be quite sure that He will do it and that there will be an end of them for all who believe in Him! Therefore let our hearts dance for joy as His gracious Spirit assures us that our sins are as completely annihilated and put away as if they had never been committed!

Observe, also, that the pardon of sin *completely changes a man’s position in relation to God*. Before he was forgiven, he was in the position of a condemned man—the wrath of God was abiding upon him. If his conscience had been awakened and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, he felt that the sword of Divine Justice was drawn from its sheath and hanging over his head as by a single hair. I remember well the time when neither night nor day had I either peace or comfort. I knew that God must be angry with me because of my sin and that I was, “condemned already,” because I had not savingly believed on His only-begotten Son. But the moment a man’s sins are forgiven, his spirit begins to rejoice in God, his Savior! Then his days are full of peace and he can fall asleep at night without fearing death, even should the silent messenger come for him before he wakes! He is no longer the slave of sin and Satan, but a free man in Christ Jesus! He is no longer a rebel, hiding here and there to avoid arrest by the officers of Divine Justice, but he is welcomed as the King’s own son and received with loving embraces into his Father’s bosom! Surely there is no greater comfort under Heaven than a sense of sin forgiven and of reconciliation to God by the death of His Son! An earthly courtier whose whole life at court depends upon his monarch’s favor, feels that if his sovereign frowns upon him, his position is imperiled and all his joy has departed. But when he again basks in the sunshine of his sovereign’s smile because his offense has been forgiven, then is his life once more filled with happiness. Even so is it with us—in past days, we were under the frown of our great Lord and King and we were in utter misery—almost in despair. But now that His smile rests upon us and He has forgiven us all our transgressions, we can sing, yes, and even dance for joy of heart that our sins and iniquities He will remember against us no more, forever!

The pardon of sin also *makes a change in all that surrounds the one who is forgiven*. That is a terrible text of Scripture, “I will curse your blessings: yes, I have cursed them already,” and many a man has realized in his own life the truth of that Divine declaration! The whole world, as far as it is loyal to its great Creator, is against the man who is the enemy of God, even as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. But to the man who is at peace with God we can say, as Eliphaz said to Job, “You shall be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of

the field shall be at peace with you.” Paul was not a whit too positive when he wrote, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Deliverance from sins seems, to the forgiven man, to cause such a change in everything around him that the things which he used to regard as curses now appear to him as blessings, just as before his blessings (as he called them) were transmuted into curses! Blessed is the man who has had his sins forgiven! He is the man who can truly say, “The winter is past, the rain is over and done; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come.” And it is to him and others like he that the Lord says, “You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” The saved man is such a happy man that like John Bunyan, when he was converted, he wanted even the crows in the field to share his joy!

In the pardon of sin, too, blessed be God, *there is a reversal of the sentence which had been pronounced upon us as sinners.* As I speak of this great fact, I cannot help remembering the time when I would have cheerfully given my eyes, or anything else that was dear to me, if I might but have been assured that my sins were all forgiven. The dread of the wrath to come filled my spirit and I knew not how soon I might be summoned to appear before the bar of God to hear the sentence that my sins had merited. I felt that I would willingly lie in prison and have nothing but bread and water for my sustenance if I might only have my sins blotted out. And now, trusting to the atoning Sacrifice of Christ, I know that my sins are all forgiven for His sake, I find my tongue quite inadequate to tell of the joys I have experienced and still feel through knowing that the sentence justly passed upon me has been reversed! So now, instead of fearing that the messengers of Divine Justice will arrest me and drag me off to the eternal prison, I join in Paul’s triumphant challenge to Heaven, earth and Hell, and cry, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” There is no Hell for a pardoned sinner! God may chasten him as his loving Father, but He will never condemn as his Judge. No penal wrath can fall upon him, for it is contrary to Jehovah’s righteous rule to punish those whom He has absolved. The day of wrath has passed for him and his portion is now unspeakable joy and bliss which will culminate in indescribable bliss and glory forever and ever!

Sometimes—and it is true in the case we are now considering, when persons who have been disgraced for high treason have been pardoned by their sovereign, the disgrace is removed and their estates, which had been sequestered, are restored to them and, in like manner, *all that we had lost by our treason against the Most High is restored to us.* It is true that we find not a literal earthly paradise such as Adam had, but we can walk with God quite a closely as he ever did and in the Person of our

Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we can have closer communion with God than our first father enjoyed in his unfallen state! Our soul has fruits to feed upon such as Adam never tasted! We drink from a fountain whose streams are more precious than the river that watered the Garden of Eden! In fact, as we often sing—

***“In Christ, the sons of Adam boast,
More blessings than their father lost.”***

Christ has restored to us all that we lost by sin and has added new blessings which Adam never had. So that now, as Dr. Watts truly wrote—

***“All things are ours—the gifts of God—
The purchase of a Savior’s blood
While the good Spirit shows us how
To use and to improve them, too.”***

Or, as Paul wrote under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “All things are yours; whether...the world, or life, or death, on things present, or things to come, all are yours and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”

I will only mention one other thing that clearly shows that the pardon of sin brings true happiness. It is this. *To many of us, it is the greatest joy we know to be able to do anything that brings glory to God and extends His Kingdom on earth.* But, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we could not have done this if our sins had remained unforgiven! We would have been incapable of proclaiming the Gospel to others if we had not proved its sweetness ourselves. I always feel that I can make Paul’s language my own and say, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this *Grace* given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Many of you, my Brothers, can say the same. Others of you can apply the spirit of the Apostle’s words to your Sunday school teaching, your house to house visitation, your tract distribution, or any other form of service by which you seek to win souls for Christ and so to bring glory to God! It is most blessed work in which you are engaged, but you could never rightly have engaged in it if you had not yourself first enjoyed the blessedness of the man “whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” What is there of Covenant blessing, what is there of experimental godliness, what is there of fellowship with God, what is there of foretaste of the eternal bliss that we could have known if, first of all, the Lord had not forgiven us all our iniquities? This, which is, in itself, a choice blessing, includes many other choice blessings and, therefore, it should make all those who possess it supremely happy!

II. The second part of my sermon is an application of the first part—what I have been saying to you is true, therefore carry it out! Which means that **THOSE WHOSE SINS ARE FORGIVEN OUGHT TO BE HAPPY.**

First, of all, *is it not most becoming that they should be happy?* Remember our Savior’s parable of the prodigal son? He comes home in rags, but he is lovingly welcomed by his father’s warm embrace and fond kisses. His rags are taken off and the best robe is put in their place! The

fatted calf is killed and there is general rejoicing throughout the house! Now imagine, if you can, this newly-received prodigal sitting down and weeping amid the joy of all around him. I can conceive that his tears flowed copiously enough at first—when he found himself so graciously forgiven and was made to feel that he was at home once more—yet, surely even those must have been mainly tears of joy though some bitter drops of grief for the past wasted years must have been mingled with them! I think that day he could not even have a headache for the joy of his heart must have driven away all his aches and pains! And if, before, he had been footsore and weary with his long journey from the far country, the exhilaration and delight of such a homecoming must have revived and refreshed him! When “they began to be merry,” surely there was not one there who was happier than he was! And, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we are in the same position as he was! Now that God has pardoned us, shall we sit as mourners at the great Gospel feast to which we have been so lovingly welcomed? Angels are rejoicing over us! Shall we be moaning and groaning, sighing and crying, murmuring and complaining? All our fellow Christians are glad to hear that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious—shall they rejoice over us and shall not we rejoice?

“Oh, but, I am so poor!” says one. I am sorry it is so with you, my dear Friend, but shall a sense of your poverty have more power over your mind than a sense of God’s forgiving love? “Ah, but I have a sick one at home!” sighs another. I admire your sympathetic feeling, but shall that be permitted to outweigh your feeling of gratitude to God for saving your soul from everlasting destruction? Is there anything in the world that is worthy to be compared with the incalculable mercy of forgiven sin? What if I am poor? Yet I am forgiven! What if I am sickly? Yet I am forgiven! What if I shall soon die? Yet I am forgiven! Our sin being forgiven, the very sting of death is drawn and, therefore, we can sing, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Then next, *have we not the very best reason for rejoicing?* John Bunyan rightly says that any man who wears the flower called “heart’s ease” in his bosom is a happy man. But where does that flower grow except in the garden of forgiveness of sin? The heart is heavy when sin is resting upon it, but it is light and joyous when sin is removed. I would bear any affliction rather than be burdened with a guilty conscience—would not you, too, my Brothers and Sisters? As long as conscience is clear and cleansed, other matters are of small account and we need not fear even the devil himself. The principal element in true happiness is a heart at peace with God, and a pardoned sinner has that! Then ought he not to show it in his very face? Ought not his whole manner to be blessedly joyous because he is at peace with God? The Lord, Himself, says that such a man is blessed, and can His verdict be set at nothing? Shall He say that you are blessed because He has forgiven your transgression and covered your sin—and will you bow your head as if you were a bulrush and that He had forgotten you? When God’s declaration is that those who

are forgiven are blessed—and when He bids them be glad in Him and even shout for joy—it must be right for them to do as He commands! And it would be wrong for them not to do so! O you pardoned ones, pray the Lord to enable you to shake off the gloom that now enshrouds you and to give unto you “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”!

Ought we not to cultivate this blessed flower of true Scriptural happiness far more than we do? I find myself frequently depressed in spirit—perhaps more so than any other person here—and I find no better cure for that depression than to trust in the Lord with all my heart and seek to realize afresh the power of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus and His Infinite Love in dying upon the Cross to put away all my transgressions! As I gaze upon the Incarnate God there made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him, streams of comfort flow into my soul from His many wounds! I could sit at Calvary and weep, but I could not sit there without singing! It is strange, yet is it true that in the hour of our greatest grief, we soon find comfort in the place where grief reached its climax. Calvary was the very summit of sorrow for our dear Lord and Savior, yet it is the death of sorrow to His people! And the Cross which caused Him unspeakable agony, brings consolation and joy to all who put their trust in Him! If we meditated more upon what Christ did to procure peace and pardon for us, we would more fully rejoice over the Redemption that He bought for us when He gave “His life a ransom for many.” And if we more clearly realized what the pardon of sin really means and how many other precious blessings are bound up in the same bundle with it—if we continually sought to live as pardoned men and women ought to live—we would find that nine out of ten of the things that depress us would be driven away like clouds before a Biscay gale!

And mark, Beloved, that *this source of joy will always abide with us.* “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you,” is a message that always gives comfort and joy. While we are young, perhaps we are foolish enough to look elsewhere for happiness, but when we grow old and cares and sorrows increase, happy, indeed, are we if we have the happiness that comes from pardoned sin! If we are rich, we are apt to look to our wealth for consolation, but when we are brought down to penury, what a source of happiness it is to us if our sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake! The Believer’s sins are pardoned when he is most joyous on the top of Tabor, but they are equally pardoned when he is in Doubting Castle in the clutches of that grim old tyrant, Giant Despair! He who has once looked by faith to Jesus Christ and Him Crucified is pardoned anywhere—and pardoned everywhere, pardoned at all times—and pardoned under all circumstances! The comforts that spring out of growth in Grace, are variable, but the comfort which arises from the forgiveness of sin is always full, rich and true! If we are forgiven, we ought to be glad and rejoice all our days—and we should be specially joyful whenever the time comes for us to die! We need have no fear about departing out of this world, for we are not going into the Presence of an angry God, but to

meet Him who has forgiven all our sins! We shall gather up our feet in the bed as some dear ones who were with us lately did when it was time for them to go—and we shall defy the last enemy and bravely pass through his dominions, not fearing arrest, there, because we have received that plenary absolution which is a passport even through the realm of death!

If we enjoyed this happiness as we ought, I really do not know what there is that would distress us because the joy of being forgiven would override and overtop any sorrow that could come upon us in *any* conceivable circumstances! Our sin being pardoned, there is no cause for our heart to be troubled. The greatest grief is gone, the master-sorrow is removed. Dear children of God, let me press upon you and also upon myself the duty of maintaining a sacred cheerfulness of spirit. Let not the men of the world be truthfully able to say of us that we are a sad and mournful lot of people! If any people under Heaven have a right to be happy, we have! When all the joys of this life grow dim, ours begin to burn more brightly. I can understand a man in business who only lives to make money, being crushed when he becomes a bankrupt. But I cannot understand your being like that, my dear Brother, if you live to glorify God in your business and in everything else! I can comprehend a worldly man saying, “I have nothing left on earth now that my darling is dead.” But I cannot comprehend your saying it, my Brother or Sister, for your sins are forgiven! And now, however God may deal with you, His strokes are gentle and tender, not at all like those that you deserved to have when you were unrepentant and unforgiven! Let all of us who believe in Jesus not only ask that His joy may remain in us, but also that our joy may be full. I wish we could all be so calm, so confident in God, so joyous under all circumstances, that all around us would be compelled to ask, “What is the secret of these peoples’ happiness? They have no immunity from trouble—they have as much to vex and annoy them as we have! What is it that makes them even glory in tribulation?” I wish they might often be obligated to ask that question, so that we could give this answer—“Those whose sins are forgiven ought always to be happy—that is the secret of our continual joy.”

III. Now we must close with the sorrowful reflection that FOR THE UNFORGIVEN, THERE IS NO TRUE HAPPINESS.

An unconverted man may have what he calls, joy, but it is the joy of madness! If He were rational and thoughtful and saw things as they really are, he could not have any real joy as long as he remained unpardoned. Suppose, Sinner, you are in trouble. These are only the first drops before the great storm of Divine Wrath that awaits you! And that sickness of yours, that bereavement, that poverty—these are only the beginning of that awful hurricane that will break upon your devoted head! I cannot say to you, “Be of good cheer in your trouble,” for there is worse trouble to come to you. “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”

Perhaps you tell me that you are not in trouble or, on the contrary, you are exceedingly prospering—everything you touch seems to turn to

gold. You invite me to pay you a visit and are proud to show me over your princely mansion, your spacious grounds and your lovely gardens. But my principal thought is, "How will you like to leave all this?" As I see how anxious you are to add field to field, and farm to farm, I cannot help remembering what God said to a man who seemed to have been very much like you—"You fool! This night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall these things be which you have provided?" What a terrible change it must have been for the "rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day," when, "in Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom, and cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." And what a terrible change it would be for you, my Friend, to go from all your riches into Hell! Yet I do not know whether it makes much difference to you if you are rich or if you are poor so long as you are unforgiven!

Possibly your heart is hardened and you mean to brazen it out before God and, like Belshazzar, you would even send for the sacred vessels out of the Temple and mingle blasphemy with your Bacchanalian festivities! Then I would remind you of the mysterious handwriting upon the wall, "TEKEL. You are weighed in the balance and are found wanting." You may be very bold just now, but before long you will be made to crouch in terror before God when He lifts up His rod to smite you! Whether you are hardened or not—whatever your condition may be—I see no road to happiness for you as long as you are unpardoned! There is nothing in life or in death, in time or in eternity, that can comfort a man whose sins are not forgiven! And there is nothing that you can ever do which will give you true comfort while you remain an unforgiven sinner. You may give up certain sins and make some sort of reformation, but as long as all your old sins continue unpardoned, you will not even have started on the right road! No, there is no hope for you until you fall prostrate before the Throne of God, confessing your guilt and beseeching His mercy! *Do it now.* Now, while He sits upon the Throne of Grace and stretches out to you the silver scepter of His mercy! Come and bow at His feet and cry, "O Lord, for Your dear Son's sake, blot out all my iniquities," and He will do it and do it now! If you will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, now, you shall go out of this house perfectly forgiven—and in your soul you shall know that you are forgiven, for the Spirit of God shall bear witness with your spirit that it is so! Come, then, to the Fountain filled with precious blood—for there your sins can be all washed away!

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," and He will say to you as He said to the man sick of the palsy, "Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." God grant that it may be so with many here, for Jesus sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 62.**

[The Exposition belonging to the above Sermon is too long for the space available so it has been transferred to Sermon #3228, (next sermon) Volume 56—"OH, HOW HE LOVES"—
Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Verse 1. *Truly my soul silently waits for God: from Him comes my salvation.* Waiting upon God, if not true and sincere, is only a mockery. It is also an insult to the Lord and, so far from bringing us a blessing it would only bring us a curse! The Hebrew has it, "Truly my soul is silent before God," for faith asks no questions, raises no objections, starts no difficulties, but is content to wait quietly in God's time, believing that all will be well. David meant, "My soul in silence waits only upon God: from Him comes my salvation and from no other quarter—not from the Assyrians, nor from the Egyptians, nor from my own might or wisdom, but from God alone." I hope that we have not only come up to this service in our bodies, but that we have brought our souls, also, to wait upon God. It is unutterably sad when we go to a place of worship and leave our souls somewhere else. Soul-worship is the very soul of worship, but worship without the whole heart and soul is soulless and dead!

2. *He only is my rock and my salvation.* [See Sermon #80, Volume 2—GOD ALONE THE SALVATION OF HIS PEOPLE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.* He may be moved as an old oak is moved in a storm—its branches are shaken, but its trunk stands fast—and its roots get all the firmer grip upon the soil! He may be moved like a ship which is tossed, but which still does not drag its anchor, so He can truly say, "I shall not be greatly moved."

3. *How long will you imagine attacking a man? You shall be slain, all of you. As a bowing wall shall you be, and as a tottering fence.* David's enemies were very many, yet see how he speaks of their enmity—"How long will you imagine attacking a man?" He speaks as if it were nothing but imagination—it would never come to anything more. And, blessed be God, they who think of destroying God's people do but imagine what will never come to pass! Their dreams shall never become facts. Saul and his sons, and his servants were slain upon Mount Gilboa—and the Prince of Darkness and all his hosts must fall before the arrows of our conquering King. "As a bowing wall shall you be." You have, perhaps, sometimes seen a wall which has a mass of earth pressing upon it on the other side and, therefore, it bows out through the excessive weight and through its own weakness. So have you seen a fence which totters and is ready to fall. The wood has grown rotten, the nails have dropped out and the old posts have perished in the ground. These are true pictures of the enemies of God's people. They are bowing walls—a child may push them over! They are tottering fences—at the blast of God's breath in His wrath, they shall be blown to the ground at once!

4. *They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.* This has been the typical character of the enemies of God's people in all genera-

tions—oily words on their tongues, but sharp daggers in their hearts! If they would speak as they feel, then they would be easily recognized, but they do not and, therefore, are they like wolves in sheep's clothing. The Lord deliver me from all such enemies! Blessed be His name! If we truly wait upon Him, we shall be delivered from them all in due time!

5, 6. *My Soul, wait you only upon God,* [See Sermon #144, Volume 3—WAITING ONLY UPON GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defense, I shall not be moved.* Some people only pray if they are in a good frame of mind, but we ought to pray to get ourselves into a good frame of mind! That is what David did. You notice that he improves as he goes on. In the second verse, he says, “I shall not be greatly moved,” but now, in this sixth verse, he says, “I shall not be moved.” His faith grows as he prays and as he praises! And we, also, ought not only to pray when we feel most in the spirit of prayer, or to sing when our hearts are merry, but sometimes, like David, we may strengthen our faith while we pray and we may sing our griefs away till the spirit of praise shall fill our souls!

7, 8. *In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times.* Say, with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” “Trust in Him at all times,” even when He seems to be angry and hides His face from you. “Trust in Him at all times” even in the stormy and dark day. It is among the many excellences of faith that it can see in the dark, that it can walk abroad in foul weather, that it can ride at anchor in a storm and that when lions are in the way, it makes nothing of them! Well, then, troubled Christian, trust in Him now, at the present time! Leave your cares, sorrows and afflictions in this House of Prayer and go away with a song in your heart, if not in your mouth. “Trust in Him at all times”—

8. *You people, pour out your heart before Him.* The Prophet Jeremiah bade the people pour out their heart “like water before the face of the Lord”—not like oil, some of which clings to the glass, but like water which runs away to the last drop. So, Sinner, pour out your whole heart before the Lord, for this is the way to be saved! Bring your heart all full of sin and sorrow—turn it upside down, pour the whole of its contents out at the foot of the Throne of Grace—and then wait until God fills your heart with peace and joy!

8. *God is a refuge for us.* Not for David only, but for all who, by a simple, sincere faith, can find shelter and safety under the shadow of His wings.

9. *Surely men of low degree are vanity.* They promise what they cannot perform.

9. *And men of high degree are a lie.* They often promise what they *will* not perform. The many-headed multitude are vanity—put the whole of them into the scales and how much do they weigh? Just nothing! And as for the aristocrats, those great men that would ride roughshod over the whole world if they could, they are worse than nothing, for while the

“men of low degree are vanity,” the “men of high degree are a lie,” and that is worse than vanity!

9. *To be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.* Put in Caesar and the senators and nobles of Rome—and then put in the populace of Rome—“they are altogether lighter than vanity.” Therefore it is no use to trust to men. If any man builds his comfort upon popularity, he builds upon the sand. Or if any build their hopes upon some great noble or prince, they build upon a lie, for he will fail them when most they need help. Blessed is the man who trusts in his God, but cursed is he that trusts in man!

10. *Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.* They will be as deceptive to you as the multitude or as the prince.

11. *God has spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongs unto God.* Hear that, Christian, and from this day forward place no reliance upon yourself, or upon any but your God!

12. *Also unto you, O Lord, belongs mercy: for You render to every man according to his work.* God gives to each Christian Grace proportioned to his work, and then He gives a reward—not of merit, but of mercy, in proportion to the work done. God grant us the Grace to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest this most instructive Psalm until our souls, like David’s, truly wait only upon God!

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

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

THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT NO. 2337

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*“And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemeth. And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then He said to the man sick of the palsy), Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house. And he arose, and departed to his house.”
Matthew 9:2-7.*

I REMARKED in the reading that the Gospel of Matthew is especially the Gospel of the Kingdom and of the King. All through Matthew's writing, the title of King constantly occurs in connection with Christ, and His kingliness is prominent from the opening chapter to the close. Here we see the King exercising His royal prerogatives. In this passage we have several instances of Christ acting as He could not have acted if He had not possessed a royal and Divine Power.

I. I will go at once to my text and note, first, that JESUS DEALT WITH THE PALSIED MAN IN A TRULY ROYAL AND DIVINE WAY.

The bearers of the man sick of the palsy, had broken through the tiling, whatever that may have been, to get him near the Savior. They had dropped him down over the heads of the eager throng and there he lay upon his pallet before Christ, unable to stir hand or foot, but looking up with that gaze of eager expectancy which Christ so well understood.

You will notice that our Lord did not wait for a word to be spoken—He simply looked and *He saw their faith*. Matthew writes, “Jesus, seeing their faith.” Who can see faith? It is a thing whose *effects* can be seen—its signs and tokens are discernable and they were eminently so in this case—for breaking up the roof and putting the man down before Christ in so strange a way, were evidences of their belief that Jesus would cure him. Still, Christ's eyes not only saw the *proofs* of their faith, but *the faith, itself*. There stood the four men, speaking with their eyes, and saying, “Master, see what we have done! We are persuaded that we have done the right thing and that You will heal him.” There was the man, lying on his

bed, looking up, and wondering what the Lord would do, but evidently cheered by the belief that he was now in a position of hope where, in all probability, he would become a man favored beyond everyone else. Christ not merely saw the looks of this man and his bearers, but *He saw their faith.*

Ah, Friends, *we* cannot see one another's faith! We may see the *fruit of it*. Sometimes we think that we can discern the *lack* of it, but to see the faith, itself—this needs Divine sight, this needs the glance of the eye of the Son of Man! Jesus saw their faith and now, tonight, those same eyes are looking upon all in this audience and He sees your faith. Have you any that He can see? "Oh, yes!" some of you can reply, "we have a humble, trembling faith—not such as it ought to be, but such as we are very thankful to possess." Some of you, it may be, are conscious of your sin, tonight, and all the faith you have is just a faint hope, a feeble belief that if He will but speak to you, you shall be forgiven. You believe that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, but you have, in the background, a fear that you cannot come, or that you may not come in a right way. Still, if it is ever so little faith in Him that you have, my Master sees it and, as in our early days we used to look for a single spark in the tinder that we might get a light on the cold mornings, so does the Lord look for the tiniest gleam of faith in any human heart, that out of it may come a flame of spiritual life! "Jesus, seeing their faith."

Now then, my dear Hearer, Christ's eyes are looking at you, tonight. Whatever faith you have, exert it now! Believe in Jesus! He is the Son of God—believe in Him as able to save you, for He *is* able, and He is willing as well as able—and now trust your soul to Him, sink or swim. Determine that if you must die, you will die at the foot of Christ's Cross, and you will go nowhere else for salvation! "Jesus, seeing their faith." His royal and Divine sight could perceive that which was hid from all mere mortal men.

But then, when Jesus saw their faith, observe, next, that *He dealt, first, with the chief evil which afflicted this man*. He did not begin by curing him of the palsy. That was bad enough, but sin is worse than the palsy! Sin in the heart is worse than paralysis of every single muscle! Sin is death and something worse than death—therefore Christ, at the very beginning of this miracle, to show His Lordship, His royal, his Divine Power, said to the man—"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." This was laying the axe at the root of the man's evil nature! This was hunting the lion, the biggest beast of all the foul creatures that lurked in the dense forest of the man's being. Christ's words drove the unclean animal from his lair and, by His Almighty Power, tore him as though he had been a kid!

Now, at this time, you may have many troubles and, perhaps, you are eager to spread them before the Lord. That sick child. Your dear husband who is at home ill. That business which is flagging and likely to fail. That disease of yours which is weakening you and which makes you scarcely fit to be in the Lord's House, tonight. Now, waive all those things, for heavy as they are, they are inconsiderable compared with sin! There is no venom as poisonous as that of sin! Sin is the wormwood and the gall—this is the deadly fang of the serpent whose sting infects and inflames our whole be-

ing! If this evil is removed, then every ill has gone and, therefore, Christ begins with this, "Your sins are forgiven you." Breathe a prayer to Him, now, for the forgiveness of your sin—"Jesus, Master, forgive me! With a word You can pardon all my sin. You have but to pronounce the absolution and all my iniquities will be put away at once and forever. O my Lord, will You not put them away, tonight?"

Notice, also, that *Jesus did absolutely forgive that man*—"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." He did not say, "They *shall* be forgiven," but, "They *are* forgiven; I absolve you from them all. Whatever they may have been, your youthful sins, your manhood sins, your sins before the palsy laid hold upon you, your sins of murmuring since you have been upon that bed—put them all together into one great mass and though they be multitudinous as the stars of Heaven, or as the sands on the seashore—Son, your sins are forgiven you." And the man felt that it was so. He believed that it was so—a load was taken from his heart and his whole spirit was lifted up by that gracious word—"Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." I pray my Master to deal thus with some who are sitting in these pews who are very heavy at heart. May He speak right into the depths of your spirit, "Son, Daughter, your sins are forgiven you! They are blotted out, they are all gone." Oh, what a dreadful time that is to a man when first he sees his sin! It is the darkest moment of his life, but it is a blessed moment when he sees that Christ has put away his sin and has said to him, "You shall not die in your iniquities; for they are all forgiven." Everything grows light and bright round about him! He, himself, is like one who comes up out of a well, or out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, yes, out of the very belly of Hell! He seems to leap, all at once, up to the Throne of Heaven as he sings, "My sins are all forgiven! I am a miracle of Grace!" Wonder not if the man can scarcely contain himself—marvel not if he runs and leaps, and dances for very joy!

This is how Christ behaves towards poor, palsied, sin-bound men and women. He sees their faith and then puts their sin away where it shall be seen no more, forever, for He is King, He is God and He is able to forgive and blot out all iniquity. I have heard of one who, having been under a great sense of sin and being relieved of it, could, for a long time, only cry out, "He is a great Forgiver!" When there were other things to be attended to, he could not see to them, nor speak of any other kind of business but this, "He is a great Forgiver!" I do not feel as if, tonight, I need to say anything else to you but this, "He is a great Forgiver! I have found Him so. Many here have found Him so and all who will trust His great atoning Sacrifice shall also know that He is a great Forgiver."

II. The second division of my subject diverges a little from the first, but it follows the text, and so it is no real divergence. By His royal and Divine Power, CHRIST READ AND JUDGED MEN'S THOUGHTS. See those scribes, those students of the letter of the Word, who know how many letters there are in every Book of the Old Testament and have counted them so accurately that they can tell which is the middle letter! Wonderfully wise men, those! Do you see them? They are very vexed and angry and they think hard thoughts of Christ. They did not dare to speak out what

they thought—the people would not have listened to them, just then, if they had spoken, so they held their tongues, but they did not hold their *hearts*. But there was a thought-reader there—not one who professed the art, but One who possessed it—and He heard where the quickest ear would have failed to detect the faintest sound! Jesus heard the scribes mentally say, “This.” If you look at your Bibles, you will find that the word, “Man,” is printed in italics and that the scribes said within themselves, “This,” they meant, “fellow”—they meant any evil name that you like to put in—“This blasphemer.” They would not say what they thought of Him—they did not like to call Him anything but just, “This. . . This off-scouring.”

Thus, *Christ read their contempt of Himself*. They had not uttered it, but He had heard it. It is an awful thing to have a silent contempt of Christ. You may pride yourself on saying, “I have never spoken anything against religion. I have never used a profane expression.” No, but if you do not call Jesus your Lord. If you do not acknowledge Him as your Savior, He knows what the contemptuous omission means! What you do not say, though you only say “This ...” and leave a blank space, He reads it all. If there are any here who have such thoughts of my Lord and Master, I do not wish to know them—and I hope that they will never let any other creature know them—but let them remember that *Jesus knows all about them*, for He is a King who reads the secrets of all hearts and, in due time, He will lay them bare.

But, next, *Jesus marked their charge of blasphemy*. They said in their heart that He blasphemed, for He had taken to Himself the prerogative of God. According to Mark and Luke’s accounts, they asked, “Why does this Man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God, only?” Now, mark you, we who worship Christ as God can never have any fellowship with those who deny His Godhead, nor can they have any fellowship with us, for if He is, indeed, the Son of God, then they blaspheme Him who deny it! And if He is only a man, then we are clearly idolaters and man-worshippers and He did blaspheme. We are obliged to confess that, and we do confess it—if He was not the Son of God, if He had not power to forgive sins—then they rightly judged that He was a blasphemer. Ah, my Hearer, when you are afraid that Jesus cannot forgive your sins, you are trembling on the very verge of blasphemy! There is such a crime as constructive treason and there is such a sin as constructive blasphemy. To deny Christ’s power to save is to make Him but a man—and if you put Him down as only man, you blaspheme! Even though you may not intend to utter blasphemy, there is the shadow of its dark presence even in that unbelief of yours.

Notice, also, how *Jesus judged their thoughts*. He said to them, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?” It was their *hearts* rather than their thoughts that were evil! Intellectual error generally springs from an un-renewed heart. And what evil had these men thought? They had thought Him a blasphemer! They had also thought contemptuously of Him. But the greatest evil of all was that they had limited His power—they did not

believe that He could forgive. They thought it blasphemy on His part to profess to have the power to forgive the sins of men!

Now, my dear Hearer, I know that you would shrink from openly blaspheming Christ, that is, if you are the person I think you are. Then, however great your sin at present is, do not make it more by insinuating that He cannot forgive you, for of all sins, this must be the most cruel—to think that He is unable to forgive. This stabs at Christ's Saviorship, which is His very heart! If you say, "I am very guilty," say it again, for you say the truth. But if you say, "I am so guilty that He cannot forgive me," I pray you to withdraw that wicked word lest you should limit the Holy One of Israel and He should have to say to you, "Why do you think evil in your heart?" It is thinking evil of Christ to imagine that He cannot forgive! I mean this word for the very worst man in the world. If you are now the blackest soul out of Hell, if you are at this moment the most guilty and the most condemned of all the myriad offenders of our ruined race, yet I charge you not to add to your past sin this further evil of doubting Christ's power to save even you! But come as you are and cast yourself at His feet, and say, "Let all Your power to save be shown in me. I am the chief of sinners and here You have an opportunity of showing the greatness of Your power to pardon."

And observe, once more, that, in dealing with these scribes, our Lord spoke right royally and Divinely to them, for *He revealed the unreasonableness of their thoughts*. He said to them, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" I ask you who are here, tonight, if you know any reason why Christ cannot forgive sin? Will anyone here who doubts His power to pardon, find a reason for that doubt? If you believe (and I will assume that you do believe), that He is the Son of God, can He not forgive sin? If you believe that He did heal the lepers, the paralyzed and even raised the dead, can He not forgive sin? Further, if you believe that He died for sin—that on the Cross He offered no less a victim than Himself—why do you think that He cannot forgive? If you believe that He rose again from the dead—and I know that you believe this—if, indeed, He rose again from the dead for the justification of the ungodly, how is it that He cannot forgive? And if He has gone into Glory, and you know that He is at His Father's right hand, and is there making intercession for the transgressors, how can you say that He cannot forgive *you*? "Why do you think evil in your hearts" in limiting my Master's power? He can forgive everyone here present! He can forgive every soul in whom He sees faith in Himself, whoever He may be and however dire his guilt!

III. Now we come back to the palsied man and our Master and notice, in the third place, that right royally JESUS OPENLY DECLARED HIS COMMISSION. He seems to me to read the letters patent which His Father gave Him when He sent Him on His errand of love and mercy—"The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."

First, *Jesus is the Son of Man*. He does not conceal that fact. One would have thought that He would have said, "I am the Son of God," but here He still chooses to hold His Godhead in abeyance, so He says, "The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. I, the Son of Mary. I, the carpenter-

ter's Son. I who dwelt at Nazareth 30 years. I who have gone up and down among you, worn with sufferings, pained by your hostility, wearied by labor for you, I, the Son of Man, have power to forgive sins." Think of that! He puts Himself on His very lowest standing and declares that as the Son of Man there is bestowed upon Him, by reason of His Godhead, the power to forgive sins!

And having thus declared His title, He goes on to say that *He forgives sins as the Son of Man on earth*. He was on earth and He had power on earth—that is, in His earthly life, in His humiliation when He had made Himself, for a while, to be less than the Father, so that He could say, "My Father is greater than I"—higher in office, just then, when He had humbled Himself and taken upon Himself the form of a servant, He could say, "The Son of Man has power on earth, at His lowest, divested of Glory, here as a Man among men—the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." Oh, how I love this word, for if He had power on earth, what power He has in Heaven! And if He had power as the Son of Man, what power He has as God and Man in one Person! Oh, how fully you may trust Him! Even the Christ whom they could see, the Son of Man—for you know that there was a Christ whom they could not see—that Son of God whom carnal eyes could not behold, who must reveal Himself spiritually or be unperceived by mortal sense. Even He whom they could see, the Christ whom you poor weeping ones can see, though you cannot see the half of Christ, no, you cannot see the *hundredth* part of Christ—the Christ whom you poor doubters can see, the Christ whom you who are all but blind can only see out of the corners of those eyes of yours when you see men as trees walking—even that Christ, the Son of Man, in His weakness on earth, was able to forgive sins! I do not seem as if I ought to try to preach about this glorious Truth of God, but I feel that I ought to state it and leave it as a solemn fact for you to reject at your peril if you dare—or to receive with glad joy—for, believe me, your only hope lies here! O guilty sons of Adam, here is the way of escape for you! Your father, Adam, has ruined you, but the Son of Man has come to seek and to save you—and He declares that He has power on earth to forgive sins!

Now, notice, in this blessed unrolling of His commission as the Son of Man, how *Jesus cheers the sad*. He said to the poor palsied man, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." How this should comfort you who are sad on account of sin! It is the Son of Man who can forgive you! You tremble at the greatness of God. You are afraid of His Majesty. But this Son of Man, your Brother, whose hands were pierced with the nails and whose feet still wear the nail-prints—whose side has the gash that the spear of the soldier made—He it is who can forgive sins! How tenderly He comes to you! How gently does He deal with you! Here is a hand fit for a surgeon of whom it is said that he must have an eagle's eye and a lion's heart, but a lady's hand. Here is a hand of flesh—a dainty, tender hand of love that brings pardon to you! You have not to encounter God, absolutely, but the one Mediator between God and men. He who is bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, says to you, "The Son of Man has power

on earth to forgive sins.” And this makes our hearts cheer up when they are sorrowing on account of sin!

Beside that, *Jesus assures the forgiven that He has forgiven them.* How I love to think of that blessed fact, that Christ does not forgive us and keep His forgiveness in the dark, but He says, “Son, your sins are forgiven you,” giving the assurance of forgiveness to the sinner whom He forgives! The realization of pardon is a delightful feeling. It is not worthwhile to sin, whatever comes of it. I cannot say, with Augustine, “Beata culpa! Blessed fault!” but oh, if there is a joy outside of Heaven that is higher than all others, it is the joy of a sinful soul when Divine forgiveness is granted, making the forgiven one whiter than the driven snow and fresher than the morning dew! I am a forgiven man, wonder of wonders! I, who have broken all God’s Laws and brought upon me Jehovah’s wrath, am pardoned for all my transgressions! God’s Son has said it and His Word is sure and steadfast, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

I think that men would readily give up all the pleasures of this world and count them as nothing if they could but know the bliss of forgiven sin. Oh, if any man who says that he loves a merry laugh, did but once know what it is to be reconciled to God, he would count that he never, before, enjoyed real merriment, or understood true mirth! Our Lord Jesus Christ, as I have said, makes us drink of the sweetness of forgiveness. It is not merely that He burns the books that recorded our indebtedness, but He tells us that He has done so! He says, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

Thus it was that Christ publicly unrolled His Divine commission, declaring that He had power on earth to forgive sins. He came here on purpose to forgive human guilt—not to condemn, no, not even to condemn her who was caught in the act of adultery—“Neither do I condemn you,” He said—“Go, and sin no more.” Jesus came not to condemn the thief who was dying on the Cross and confessing that He deserved to die. No, He said to him, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise.” It is Christ’s business to pardon! It is His bliss to pardon! It is His glory to pardon! He came here on purpose that He might pardon the guilty. Oh, that all sinful ones would go to Him for forgiveness!

IV. After having thus declared His commission, let us note, in the fourth place, that JESUS EXHIBITED HIS CREDENTIALS.

Since the scribes disputed His power to pardon, He gave them a practical proof that He could forgive—and I need your special attention to this point. He said to them, in effect, “To forgive sin is a Divine act. Now, which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise, and walk?” I put it to you, dear Friends, which is the easier of the two? Mark that Jesus does not ask, “Which is the easier, to forgive sin, or to heal the palsy? No. He said, “Which is easier to *say*, Your sins are forgiven you or to say, Arise, and walk?”

Well, now, *the first is much the easier* because there are a great many who can say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” and you cannot see whether the sins are forgiven or not. Look at the number of those who call themselves priests, who say, after they have heard the penitent’s confession, “I absolve you.” It is easy enough to say *that*—but who is to know whether

that person who has professed penitence is absolved or not? There is no apparent change to the observer—the poor sinner who is told that he is absolved may credulously derive some delusive comfort from his fellow sinner's words—but those who look on cannot see any difference in the man or woman coming back from the confessional from what they were when they went there.

It is very easy to say, "Your sins are forgiven you"—any fool can say it, any knave can say it—but then, if you say, "Arise, and walk," suppose they do not rise and walk—what then? Anybody can stand there and say to the man sick of the palsy, "Arise, and walk," and the man may make an effort to rise, but falls back as helpless as ever, so that, although both miracles are, in themselves, equally impossible to man and equally require Divine Power, yet the saying of the one is easy enough, but the saying of the other is more difficult! Many an impostor would shrink from saying, "Arise, and walk," for he would be mightily afraid that it would be found one thing to say it, and quite another thing for the patient to really rise and walk! Thus Christ said to the scribes, "I will prove to you that I am Divine and, therefore, that I have the power to forgive sins, for I will now perform a miracle which you shall see and which you shall be quite unable to dispute. It shall be worked before you all and then you shall know that as I could do what was evidently the harder thing, that is, say, 'Arise, and walk,' I had the right to say what has become the easier thing, 'Your sins are forgiven you.'"

"Then He said to the man sick of the palsy," while he lay there, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Thus *Jesus marked out the miracle in detail*. It was necessary to pile up the argument to make it complete and overwhelming. First, "Arise, sit up, stand up." The man could not do that if the palsy was still upon him—but at once, "He arose." "Now roll up your mattress." He stoops down and you can see him rolling it up. He now has it under his arm, or on his shoulder. "Now," is Christ's next command, "Go to your house," and he walks, straight away, off to his home. Of course, in modern times, we make exhibitions of converts, and we would have taken this man up and down the streets, to show him off as a trophy! But the Savior does much better than that. For him to go home to his house was a clearer proof of being cured than for him to remain with Christ, for it might be supposed that while he was with the Savior, some strange influence emanating from the great Physician kept him in a state of excitement and up to the mark. So Christ says, "Go home to your house, to everyday life, just as anybody else might do. Go along with you, bed and all." And off he goes! Every point of detail was necessary to make it clear that this was a real, radical, complete cure—and that the Christ who could work such a miracle was able, also, to forgive sin!

I remark, next, *that change of nature is the best proof of the pardon of the sinner*. You may come to me, tonight, and say, "Sir, I am forgiven." I am glad to hear it, but how will you behave at home, tonight? "I am forgiven," cries one, all of a sudden, under a sermon, as if electrified. Yes, yes, and you want to stay with us, do you, and never go home again? That will not do because such a cure as that could not be a perfect, business-

like, commonsense cure! Go home to your family. Your moral actions, your temperance, your honesty, your chastity, your obedience to parents, your good conduct as a servant, your generosity as a master—these will *not* save you—but unless we see them, how are we to know that Christ has worked a miracle upon you? And if He has not worked a miracle upon you in raising you up from the palsy of sin, how do we know that He has forgiven you? In fact, we *do not* know it and we do not believe that He has, for these two things go together—the one as the evidence of the power that worked the other!

If you have been forgiven, you have been renewed. Sitting in this place, tonight, you may be forgiven all your sin. But if you are, you will not be, tomorrow, what you have been today. The drunk's cup will not be lifted to his lips anymore. The company of the lascivious will not be pleasant to you. No oath, no profane speech, no foolish talk will come out of your mouth again. Christ forgives you outright, not because you are cured of your evil habits, but He forgives you while you are still palsied—and the evidence that you are forgiven—the harder thing as the world will always judge it to be, is your taking up your bed and walking home, quitting all your former sloth, for it will be sloth from this time on! The bed which you could not help lying upon, once, will become the couch of sloth to you if you are on it any longer. You will take that up and you will walk back—and be a man of activity at your daily labor, in your own house—from now on as long as you live.

Do notice this, dear Hearers. We do not preach to you salvation by works, but when you are forgiven, *then* the good works come! The same Christ who makes you a new creature, pardons your sin—you cannot have half a Christ—you must have Christ the Healer as well as Christ the Forgiver. If Christ could be cut up into lots, we could sell Him off immediately. But if He is to be taken all at once as a Sin-killer as well as a Sin-forgiver, there are always some who will fight shy of Him. I pray that not one of you may be of that kind.

I think, also, that *the detailed obedience that the Savior required was the best evidence that He had forgiven the man's sin*. "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Henceforth, to do *everything* that Christ bids you do, in the *order* in which He bids you do it, *because* He bids you do it—to do it *at once*, to do it joyfully, to do it constantly, to do it prayerfully, to do it thankfully—this shall be the token that He has, indeed, dealt with you as a pardoning God! O my dear Hearers, I am afraid that there are some who profess to have been forgiven who are not as obedient to Christ as they ought to be! I have known them neglect certain duties. I even knew a man, once, who would not read some parts of the Word of God because they made him feel uneasy! But be sure of this, that when you and the Word of God fall out, the Word of God has right on its side! There is something rotten in the state of Denmark when you cannot read a chapter without feeling that you wish that it was not there! If there is any *verse* that you would like left out of the Bible, that is the verse that ought to stick to you, like a blister, until you really attend to its teaching. There is something wrong with you whenever you quarrel with the Word of God.

I say, again, that detailed obedience is the surest evidence that the Lord has forgiven your sin. For instance, “He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Do not omit *any part of that precept*. And if Christ bids you come to His Table and thus remember Him, do not live in neglect of that command. At the same time, remember to live soberly, righteously, honestly, godly in this present evil age, for if you do not, if there is not a detailed obedience, there may be a fear that, after all, the Lord has never said to you, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

And, last of all, *the best evidence is always seen at home*. “Take up your bed and go to you house.” If there is a place where piety is best seen and best judged, it is at the family altar. What a man is at home, that he really is. What a woman is in her own house—that she truly is. It is very easy, you know, to masquerade in society—to seem to be something very wonderful upon the boards of the world’s theater—and then not to be, in reality, the king that you seemed to be, but, after all, to be only a very sorry specimen of humanity! “Arise, take up your bed and go to you house.” One said to me, this very day, of a certain man, “Do you think, Sir, that he was a good man?” I said, “Well, Brother, I think that he was a good man of a very bad sort.” I did not know how to put the truth more charitably.

I remember an old woman who went to hear a minister of a certain creed that she did not like, though he preached uncommonly well. And when she came out, they asked her how she got on with the preacher. She replied, “Well, he is one of the best of a very bad make.” Now, I do not like to have to say that of anybody who professes to be a Christian and it should not be so. No, and I do not want you to be the worst of a good make, either, though that, perhaps, is better than being the best or the worst of a bad make! We need to be such that we can bear the closest inspection.

“Ah!” says one, “I came here seeking the pardon of sin and now, Sir, you have got off to moral conduct.” Quite so and that is where I want you to get off, too! Seek the pardon of sin, tonight—it is to be had, as I have told you, by faith. “Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.” But if you want to make sure that Christ is really able to forgive your sin, the very best evidence *to you*, and the *only evidence to the outside scribes*, will be that you take up your bed and walk. “Oh,” you say, sometimes, “I still have many sins, but I am not what I used to be. I am a changed man at heart. I could not bear what I once enjoyed. I could not do what I once commonly did and the things that I loathed and despised are now delightful to me.” I am glad that it is so with you and I pray that it may be so with all my hearers. May God work that great and gracious change in many who are in this Tabernacle tonight, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 8:23-34, 9:1-13.**

Matthew's Gospel is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and of the King. Here you see the King amid the storms of Nature.

Matthew 8:23, 24. *And when He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, inasmuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but He was asleep.* In the quiet confidence of faith, resting upon His God.

25, 26. *And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He said unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.* As great a calm as there had been a tempest! After great trouble, expect deep, delightful rest and peace if you are a child of God.

27. *But the men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!* Now see the King in conflict with the powers of darkness.

28-31. *And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Are You come here to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought Him.* How the demons crouched at His feet! The dogs of Hell knew the power of His tongue—that was a whip whose lash they had felt before.

31, 32. *Saying, If You cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And He said unto them, Go.* He never wastes words on demons.

32-34. *And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.* A sad prayer, yet Jesus granted their request. Men may once too often ask the Holy Spirit to depart from them. They may grieve Him once more and then He will have done with them forever. Now we shall see the King in conflict with the diseases of mankind and with human sin.

Matthew 9:1, 2. *And He entered into a boat, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus, seeing their faith—*The faith of the bearers and the faith of the palsied man, himself—

2. *Said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.* It was remarked, by a mediaeval writer, that we do not find Christ calling any of the Apostles, not even the very chief of them, by the name that He gave to this palsied man, "Son." This is the title that He gives to a sin-sick sinner, lying on a bed before Him, waiting to be healed. Oh, the tenderness of Christ to sin and misery! He puts a kind of sonship upon this man which he had not possessed before.

3. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemeth. "He arrogates to Himself the prerogative of God. Who can forgive sins but God only?"*

4-8. *And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then He said to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house. And he arose and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. They rightly saw in this miracle, worked by Christ, power given to man, for, as you observe, Christ said, "The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." And these people magnified God that one Man should have such power granted to Him! There is an elevation to the whole of manhood in the alliance of Christ with it. Through Him the Lord has given great power unto men.*

9. *And as Jesus passed forth from there. The King is now going to show His power over the human will.*

9. *He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him. Everything bows before Him. Is He not King of Kings and Lord of Lords? Have we ever comprehended the true measure of His Divine and Human Nature? Even when He was on earth and known as the Son of Man, what gleams of His Divine Glory shone forth in these truly royal acts of His! Yet how condescending was our King! Where is His court? Who are His attendants? Listen—*

10. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. Lord of the sea, Conqueror of demons, Healer of the sick, Forgiver of sin and now He has, for His company, publicans and sinners! When the Pharisees saw it, they did not see condescension in it—but they saw wickedness in it.*

11. *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners? Ah, why, indeed? You and I know—that is a secret that has made us love Him better than almost anything else!*

12. *But when Jesus heard that, He said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. He has come here on purpose that He might heal our sicknesses! Oh, you who feel, tonight, sick with sin, and sick of sin, come and sit down with Him! He added, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out," and He will not cast you out, notwithstanding your sin, if you come to Him by faith!*

13. *But go you and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Let us never forget that Jesus is the sinner's Savior. He does not come to save saints—He comes to save sinners, and the saints who are saved are kept from becoming sinners by His almighty love. May God bless this reading of the Scriptures to us! Amen.*

“A MAN NAMED MATTHEW”

NO. 2493

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 29, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 12, 1885.**

***“As Jesus passed forth from there, he saw a man named Matthew,
sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him,
Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.”
Matthew 9:9.***

This is a little bit of autobiography. Matthew wrote this verse about himself. I can fancy him, with his pen in his hand, writing all the rest of this Gospel, and I can imagine that when he came to this very personal passage, he laid the pen down a minute and wiped his eyes. He was coming to a most memorable and pathetic incident in his own life and he recorded it with tremulous emotion. “As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew.” The Evangelist could not have said much less about himself than this. “He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.” I do not think there is any part of Matthew’s Gospel that touched him more than this portion in which he was writing down the story of Divine Love to himself and of how he, himself, was called to be a disciple of Christ.

I notice a very grave distinction between Matthew’s way of recording his call and the very general style of converts relating their experience nowadays. Today the man seems to come boldly forth, with a springing step and a boastful air, and shouts out that he was the biggest black-guard who ever lived! And he tells with great gusto how he used to curse and to swear, and he talks as if there was something to be proud of in all that evil! Sit down, Sir! Sit down and give us the story in this style, “As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew”—that is about as much as we care to know. Tell us as briefly as you can, how the Lord called you and enabled you to follow Him. There is a modesty about this narrative—not a *mock* modesty, by any means—there is no concealment of the facts of the case, there is no obscuration of the Grace of Christ, but there is a concealment of Matthew, himself! He mentions that he was a publican. In the list that he gives of the Apostles he calls himself, “Matthew the Publican.” The other Evangelists hardly ever call him a publican—they do not even call him, “Matthew,” as a rule. They give his more respectable name, “Levi,” and they have more to say of him than he says of himself. It is always best for us, if there is anything to be said in our praise, not to say it ourselves, but to let somebody else say it.

Brother, if your trumpeter is dead, put the trumpet away! When that trumpet needs to be blown, there will be a trumpeter found to use it—but you need never blow it yourself!

This verse reads to me so tenderly that I do not know how to communicate to you just how I feel about it. I have tried to imagine myself to be Matthew and to have to write this story. And I am sure that if I had not been Inspired as Matthew was, I should never have done it so beautifully as he has done it, for it is so full of everything that is touching, tender, timid, true, and gracious—“As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.”

Please notice—perhaps you did notice in our reading—where Matthew has put this story. It is placed immediately after a miracle. Some question has been raised, in a *Harmony of the Gospels*, as to the exact position of this fact, whether it did actually occur just when Matthew tells it or whether he rather studied effect than chronology. Sometimes the Evangelists seem to overlook the chronological position of a statement and put it out of its proper place, that it may be more in its place for some other purpose. Well, I do not know about the chronology of this event, but it seems to me very beautiful on Matthew’s part to record his call just here. “There,” he said, “I will tell them one miracle about the Savior having made the palsied man take up his bed and walk, and then I will tell them of *another miracle*—a greater miracle, still—how there was another man who was more than palsied, chained to his gains and to an injurious traffic, yet who, nevertheless, at the command of Christ, quit that occupation and all his gains that he might follow his Divine Master.”

Whenever you think about your own conversion, dear Friend, regard it as a miracle, and always say within yourself, “It was a wonder of Grace! If the conversion of anybody was ever a miracle of mercy, it was *my* conversion! It was an extraordinary condescension on Christ’s part to look on such a sinner as I was—and nothing but a miracle of Grace could have saved me.”

So Matthew tells his own story very tenderly, but he tells it very suggestively, putting it just after a most notable miracle! And I think that the Evangelist thought there was some similarity between the miracle and his own conversion, for there is nothing that palsies a man towards spiritual things like the lust of gold. Let a man be engaged in oppression and extortion, as the publicans were, and the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron—and the extortioner is not likely to feel or desire that which is right. Yet here was a man, up to his neck in an evil occupation, who in a moment, at the Divine Call, is made to part with all his hopes of gain that he may follow Christ! It was a miracle similar and equal to the raising of the palsied man who took up his bed and walked! You, too, dear Friend, can trace a parallel, perhaps, between your conversion and some miracle of the Master. Was it, in your case, the casting out of devils? Was it the opening of the eyes of the blind? Was it the unstopping of deaf ears and the loosing of a silent tongue? Was it the raising of the dead, or even more than that, was it the calling forth of corruption, itself,

out of the grave, as when Jesus cried, “Lazarus, come forth,” and Lazarus came forth?

In any case, I invite you who know the Lord, in the silence of your souls, to sit down and think—not about Matthew, but about *yourselves*. I shall think about “a man named Spurgeon” and you can think about “a man named John Smith,” or, “Thomas Jones,” or whatever your name may happen to be. If the Lord has looked upon you in love, you can put your own name into the text, and say, “As Jesus passed forth from there, he saw a man named James,” or “John,” or “Thomas.” And you women may put in your names, too, you Maries and Janes and so forth. Just sit and think how Jesus said to each one of you, “Follow Me,” and how in that happy moment you did arise and follow Him—and from that hour you could truly sing, as you have often sung since—

**“’Tis done! The great transaction’s done—
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine!
High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear
Until in life’s latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear.”**

With some degree of rapidity I will try to conduct your thoughts to various points of this interesting and instructive narrative.

I. The first is that THIS CALL OF THE MAN NAMED MATTHEW SEEMED ACCIDENTAL AND UNLIKELY.

“As Jesus passed forth from there,” just as He was going about some work or other, going away from Capernaum, perhaps, or merely going down one of its streets, it was as He “passed forth” that this event happened. As He passed, “He saw a man named Matthew.” That is the way we talk when we speak of things that, as we say, “happen,” we scarcely know why. Now, dear Friend, was that how *you* were converted? I do not know how long ago it was, but it did so happen, did it not? Yet it did not seem to you to be a very likely event ever to occur.

Looking back at the case of Matthew, it does seem, now, to have been a very unlikely thing that he should become a follower of Jesus. *Capernaum was Christ’s own city, so He had often been there, yet Matthew remained unsaved.* Christ had not seen that “man named Matthew” in the special way in which He saw him on this particular occasion and you, dear Friend, went to a place of worship a great many times before you were converted. Perhaps you had been there regularly since you were a child! Yet it was not till that one particular day of Grace that anything special happened to you, even as it was not till the time recorded in our text that something very special happened to the man named Matthew.

Further, at that time, *Jesus seemed as if He was about other business,* for, we read, “as Jesus passed forth from there.” And perhaps it seemed to you that the preacher was aiming at something else when his word was blessed to you. He was, maybe, comforting Believers, yet God sent the message home to *you*, a poor unconverted sinner. Strange, was it not, both in Matthew’s case and your own?

At that time, also, *there are many other people in Capernaum, yet Christ did not call them.* He saw them, but not in the particular way in which He saw the man named Matthew. And, in like manner, on that day of mercy when you received the blessing of salvation, perhaps there was a crowded congregation, but, as far as you know, the blessing did not reach anybody but yourself. Why, then, did it come to you? You do not know, unless you have learned to look behind the curtains in the holy place and to see by the light of the lamp within the veil. If you have looked there, you know that when Jesus Christ is passing by, what men call His “accidents” are all *intentional*—the glances of His eyes are all ordained from eternity! And when He looks upon anyone, He does it according to the everlasting purpose and the foreknowledge of God! The Lord had looked long before on that man named Matthew, so, in the fullness of time, Jesus Christ must necessarily pass that way and He must look in love and mercy upon that man named Matthew. He saw him, then, because, long before, He foresaw him!

I cannot tell how you happen to be here, my dear Friend—a stranger in London, perhaps, and a total stranger to this Tabernacle, yet I believe you are brought here that my Lord and Master may see you—*you*, “a man, named Matthew,” or “John,” or “James,” or “Thomas,” or whatever your name may be. And oh, I pray that this may be the time when you shall see Him and hear Him say, “Follow Me,” and you shall feel a blessed urge to follow Him without question, or hesitancy, but at once leave whatever your sinful life may have been and become a follower of Christ!

So, in the first place, this call of Matthew seemed accidental and unlikely, yet it was according to the purpose of God and, therefore, it was duly given and answered.

II. In the second place, THIS CALL OF THE MAN NAMED MATTHEW WAS ALTOGETHER UNTHOUGHT-OF AND UNSOUGHT.

Matthew was not engaged in prayer when Christ called him. *He was in a degrading business*—“sitting at the receipt of custom.” He was not listening to the Savior’s preaching—he was taking from the people, against their will, the taxes for their Roman conqueror. As far as I can see, he had not even *thought* about Christ. I do not believe that he had been called, before, to be a disciple of Christ—and that he was, on this occasion, called to be an *Apostle*—for I cannot imagine one who had been saved by Christ returning to the publican business. It was an extortioner’s occupation all through, and he who is called to be Christ’s follower does not practice extortion from his fellow men! If that is his employment before his conversion, he quits it when he comes to Christ.

Matthew was, further, *in an ensnaring business.* Nothing is more likely to hold a man fast than the love of gain. Sticky stuff is that gold and silver of which many are so fond—it has bird-limed many a soul for the best fowler, the devil—and many have been destroyed by it. The publicans usually made a personal profit by extorting more than was due and, at this time, Matthew was not paying away money, but, “sitting at the receipt of custom.”

I do not know that *even if Matthew had wished to follow Christ, he would have dared to do so*. He must have thought that he was too unworthy to follow Christ and if he had dared to attempt it, I should suppose that *he would have been repulsed by the other Apostles*. They would have snubbed him and asked, “Who are you, to come among us?” They dared not do so after Christ, Himself, had said to Matthew, “Follow Me,” but certainly there is no indication that this man named Matthew was seeking Christ, or even thinking about Him! Yet, while he sat taking his tolls and customs, Jesus came to him and said, “Follow Me.”

O my dear Hearer, if you have been converted, it may be that something like this was true in your case! At any rate, this I know is true—you were not the first to seek Christ, but Christ was the first to seek you. You were a wandering sheep and did not love the fold, but His sweet mercy went out after you. His Grace made you thoughtful and led you to pray. The Holy Spirit breathed in you, your first breath of spiritual life, and so you came to Christ. It was so, I am sure—you did not first seek Christ, but He first sought you! Let us who are saved now present the prayer to God, that many here who have never sought the Lord may nevertheless find Him, for it is written, “I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, to a nation that was not called by My name.” See, then, the freeness of the Grace of God, the sovereignty of His choice! Admire it in the man named Matthew. Admire it still more in yourself, whatever your name may be!

III. Thirdly, THIS CALL OF MATTHEW WAS GIVEN BY THE LORD JESUS WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM.

It is not said that Matthew first saw the Lord, but, “as Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew.” I like to dwell upon those words, “He saw a man named Matthew,” because they seem to me to have a great deal of instruction in them. Christ probably stopped opposite where Matthew was sitting and, looking at him, *He saw all the sin that had been in him and all the evil that still remained in him*. “He saw a man named Matthew.” Christ has a searching look, a discerning look, a detecting look. He looked Matthew up and down and He saw all that was in him. All that was secret to others was manifest before His piercing eyes. “He saw a man named Matthew,” and I believe that Jesus saw more in Matthew than was really in Matthew. I mean, that His love *looked goodness* into Matthew, and then saw it! His love looked Grace into Matthew and then saw it.

I do not know, but as far as I can see, Matthew had always been called, “Levi,” before. The Lord Jesus Christ did not see “a man named Levi.” That was his old name, but, *He saw Matthew as he was to be*. “He saw a man named Matthew.” O Beloved, when the Lord looked upon you, even while you were a sinner, He saw a saint in you! Though it was only His own eyes that could see so much as that, what He meant to make of you, He already saw in you and He loved you as one who should yet be one of His redeemed servants!

I believe, also, that when the Lord Jesus Christ saw Matthew with the pen in his hand, He said to Himself, “See what a nimble pen he has—*he*

is the man to write the first of the four Gospels.” Jesus saw Matthew figuring away, as he put down the people’s names and how much they paid, and He said to Himself, “That is the man to write one of the most regular and orderly of the Gospels. There is a clerkly habit about this man. He is a good account keeper—he is the man for My service.”

I do not know, dear Friend, what the Lord may happen to see in you. I do not know all that He saw when He looked upon me—I fear that He saw nothing in me but sin, evil and vanity—but I believe that He said to Himself concerning me, “I see one to whom I can teach My Truth and who, when he gets a hold of it, will grip it fast and never let it go. And one who will not be afraid to speak it wherever he is.” So the Lord saw what use He could make of me and I wonder what use He can make of you? Sit still, dear child of God, and wonder that the Lord should have made such use of you as He has made! And you who are just beginning to think of the Lord Jesus Christ, sit still, and each one of you say, “I wonder what use He can make of me!”

There is an adaptation in men, even while they are unconverted, which God has put into them for their future service. Luke, you know, was qualified to write his Gospel because he had been a physician. And Matthew was qualified to write the particular Gospel which he has left us because he had been a publican. There may be a something about your habits of life and about your constitution and your condition that will qualify you for some special niche in the Church of God in years to come. Oh, happy day when Jesus shall look upon you and call you to follow Him! Happy day when He *did* look upon some of us and saw in us what His love *meant* to put there—that He might make of us vessels of mercy meet for the Master’s use!

IV. Pressing on a little further, I want you to notice, in the fourth place, that MATTHEW’S CALL WAS GRACIOUSLY CONDESCENDING—“As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me.”

Christ had the choice of His followers, so *how came He to choose a publican?* The Roman yoke was so detestable to the free-born son of Abraham that he could not bear the fact that the Roman, the idolater, should be lord in the Holy Land. So, if the Romans wanted Jews to collect the taxes, they could only get persons who had lost all care about public reputation! They might be no worse than other people—perhaps they were not—but they were esteemed as being the very off-scouring and pariahs of their race. But the Lord Jesus Christ sees this publican and says to him, “Follow Me.” Not much of a credit will he be to his Master, so, at least those around him will say. “Look how this Man, Jesus Christ, goes about and picks up the scum of the people, the residue! He is taking a *publican* as His follower—the man who has given himself up to be the servant of the oppressors and who has been, himself, an oppressor! He is going to have *him*. Now, if the Nazarene had passed by and seen a learned Rabbi, or a Pharisee with his phylacteries—one who had made broad the borders of his garment—if Jesus had called *him*, it would have given a respectability to the community.”

Yes, but it so happens that the Lord Jesus Christ does not care about that sort of respectability at all! He is so respectable, Himself, in the highest sense of being respected, that He has honor enough and to spare for all His people! And He can condescend, without hazard, to call into His immediate company, to be one of His personal followers, “a man named Matthew,” even though he is a collector of the Roman taxes!

“Oh!” says one, “but I cannot think that He will ever call *me*.” Yes, but I can think that He will! You remember John Newton, who had been a slave dealer and more—who had been himself a slave, literally a slave—as well as a slave to the worst passions? Yet, let the church of St. Mary Woolnoth tell how from its pulpit there sounded through long years the glorious Gospel of the blessed God from one who had been an African blasphemer, but who became a minister of Christ of the highest and noblest kind! Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ loves to look out for the *publicani*, the very lowest of the low, and to say to them, “Follow Me. Come into My company. Walk behind Me. Become My servant. Be entrusted with My Gospel. I will make use of you.” He still takes such as these to become the proclaimers of His Word! Oh, that He may thus call some of you!

“Well,” you say, “it *was* great condescension when the Lord called Matthew, the publican.” Yes, but was it not equal condescension when He called you and me? O man or woman, whatever your name, sit and wonder, and adore the condescending love that chose even *you* to be Christ’s follower!

V. Again, dear Friends—I hope I do not weary you while I try to bring this case of Matthew fully before you, wishing always that you may see yourself in it—observe next that THIS CALL OF MATTHEW WAS SUBLIMELY SIMPLE. Here it is in a nutshell—“*He said.*”

It was not John who said it, or James, or any of the Apostles, but, “*He said.*” And it is not my preaching, or your preaching, or an archbishop’s preaching that can save souls—it is, “*He said*”—and it is when the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Divine Spirit, says to a man, “*Follow Me,*” that then the decisive work is done! Did He not say to the primeval darkness, “Light be!” and light was? And God, the Omnipotent and Eternal, has but to speak to man and a like result will follow. “He said to him, Follow Me,” and then *immediately*, just as simply as possible, the record says, “*he arose and followed Him.*” There is no flattery, no priest-craft, no sacramentarianism. “He said, Follow Me and he arose and followed Him.” That is the way of salvation! Christ bids you, while you are in your sin, leave it, and you leave it. He bids you trust Him and you *do* trust Him and, trusting Him, you are saved, for, “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.”

Is that how you were saved, dear Friend? I know it is! Yet you used to fuss and fret and fume and say to yourself, “I need to *feel*. I need to *see*. I need to *experience*.” Now I hope that you have gotten clear of all those mistakes! There is nothing more sublime than your conversion, but there is nothing more simple! And as for you, dear Friends, who are looking for signs and wonders, or else you will not believe, I wish you would give up that foolish notion, for there is no sign and no wonder which is equal to

this, that Christ should say to the *dead heart*, “Live,” and it lives! That He should say to the *unbelieving* heart, “Believe,” and it believes! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I say to you, Sinner, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!” And if He is really speaking by me, you *will* believe in Him and you will arise and follow Him!

So, Matthew’s call to follow Christ was sublimely simple.

VI. Notice, also, that IT WAS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTUAL. The Lord Jesus Christ said to him, “Follow Me,” and “he arose and followed Him.”

Matthew followed at once. Some might have waited and put the coins away, but it does not appear that Matthew did so—“he arose and followed Him.” He did not say to Christ, “I must enter the amounts to the end of this page. Here are a lot of people with fish baskets, I must see how much I can get out of them and so finish up my reckoning.” No, “he arose and followed Him.” I believe that when a man is converted, he is converted outright, and he will come right out from whatever wrong thing he has been doing. I have heard of a publican (I mean the other sort of publican, not a tax-gatherer) who was very fond of drink and he had, by means of the drink, sent many to Hell. But, the day he was converted, he smashed his signboard and had done with the evil traffic forever! When there is anything else that is wrong, whatever it is, I like to see men smash it up and have done with it! Clear every trace of it out of your house—do not try to keep even a little piece of it, or to do a wrong thing and say, “I will give the profits to the Lord Jesus Christ.” He will not take the money that is stained with the blood of souls! Quit the evil trade and have done with it. Every kind of sin and every sort of evil, whatever it may be, will be left as soon as Effectual Grace comes to a man! I do not believe that anyone ever repents a little bit at a time—it is once and for all that he does it—he turns straight around immediately and obeys the Lord’s call, “Follow Me.” Jesus said to Matthew, “Follow Me.” “And he arose and followed Him.”

“Oh!” says one, “was it so?” Yes, it was. I am not talking about things that are matters of question, I am speaking about *facts*. “As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.” I know another man, not named, “Matthew,” but “Charles,” and the Lord said to him, “Follow Me.” And he also arose and followed Him. If I were to ask all the Christian men now here—John, James, Samuel or whatever their names—who heard Jesus Christ say, “Follow Me,” and who followed Him. If I were to ask them to stand up, I hope there would not be many of you left sitting! And you godly women, too, know that it was just the call of the Lord Jesus Christ to you that brought you to Him, then and there!

The call to Matthew was the call of Effectual Grace. “Where the word of a king is, there is power,” and Jesus Christ spoke to Matthew the word of *the King*. He said, “Follow Me,” and Matthew did follow Him! I have heard that when the Queen sends for anybody to come and see her, she does not “request the pleasure of his company,” but she sends her command to him to come. That is the way kings and queens talk—and that is just

the way with the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. He says, “Follow Me.” And preaching to you *in His name*, we do not say, “Dear Friend, do be converted, if you will,” but we say, “Thus says the Lord! Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved”—and with that command goes the power of the Word of *the King*, and so sinners are saved. Jesus said to Matthew, “Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.”

VII. Now, lastly, MATTHEW’S CALL WAS A DOOR OF HOPE FOR OTHER SINNERS.

I have been speaking mostly about personal conversion and perhaps somebody says, “You know, Sir, we are to think about other people as well as ourselves.” Precisely so! And there is never a man who is saved who wants to go to Heaven *alone*. So, when the Lord Jesus Christ saw “a man, named Matthew” and bade the publican follow Him, *his salvation encouraged other publicans to come to Jesus*. Christ saw a great many other publicans and sinners whom he intended to draw to Himself by means of that “man, named Matthew.” He was to become a decoy for a great multitude of others like himself!

Next, *his open house gave opportunity to his friends to hear Jesus*. No sooner was Matthew called and led to follow the Lord Jesus, than he said to himself, “Now, what can I do for my new Master? I have a good big room where I have been accustomed to lock up the people’s goods till they have paid their dues—the *douane*, the custom house where I put away their goods in bond. Here, John, Thomas, Mary—come and clean out this room! Put a long table right down the middle. I am going to have in all my old friends—they have known what kind of man I have been. I am going to invite them all to supper and it will not be a lean supper, either, it shall be the best supper they have ever had.” Levi made a great feast in his own house and he said to the Lord Jesus, “You have bid me follow You and I am trying to do so. And one way in which I am following You is that I am going to have a great feast in my house, tonight, to fetch in all my old companions. Will You, my Lord, be so good as to come and sit at the head of the table and talk with them? They will be in a better humor for listening after I have fed them well. Will You come and when they are all happy around my table, will You do for them what You have done for me? Perhaps, Lord, if You will say that Matthew has become Your follower, they will say, ‘What? Matthew? Does *he* follow Christ? Well, then, who must this Christ be that He will have such a follower as Matthew? Surely, He will have us, too, for we are like Matthew—and we will come to Him as Matthew has come to Him, if He will but speak the Word of Power to us as He did to Matthew.” So the call of Matthew was Christ’s way of bringing numbers of lost ones to a knowledge of the Truth of God and to eternal salvation!

Now, has it been so with you, dear Friend? Man, named John, Thomas, Samuel—woman, named Mary, Jane, or whatever it may be—have *you* brought any others to Jesus? Have you brought your children to Jesus? Have your prayers brought your husband to Jesus? Have your entreaties brought your brethren to Jesus? If not, you have failed as yet in

accomplishing that which should be your life-work. Ask the Lord to help you, now, to begin with somebody or other of your own circle and your own standing, to whom you will be most likely to speak with the largest measure of influence and power of any man. The day you are converted, try to talk with those who were your schoolmates. Were you converted in a factory? Do not hesitate to speak to your fellow workmen. Are you a person of position? Do you occupy a high station in the fashionable world? Do not be ashamed of your Master, but introduce Christ into the drawing room and let Him have a footing among the highest of the land! Let each man, according to his calling, feel, “He who bade me follow Him, has bid me do so that others may, through my instrumentality, be led to follow Him, too.” God bless you in this holy service!

I feel as if I must close my discourse by saying that as the Lord saw “a man named Matthew,” and as He saw you, try now to return that look of love and see Him! Consider how great this Man was and, as Christ came to Matthew’s table, I now invite you who are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to come to His Table. And though you are not now numbered with publicans and sinners, but with His redeemed people, still it shall be your great joy to wonder, as you sit here, that your Master does still condescend to eat with publicans and sinners!

God bless you and save the whole of this great company, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 9:1-13.

Verses 1, 2. *And He* (that is, Jesus) *entered into a boat and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed.* “Behold,” for it is something worth looking at! Wherever this word, “Behold,” is put in Scripture, it calls for deep and earnest attention. There is nothing amazing in the sight of a man sick of the palsy, for there have been many such. But there is something amazing in his friends having faith enough in Christ to bring the palsied man to the Savior! “Behold” this, that you may imitate it and bring your friends, palsied with sin, and lay them down at the feet of Jesus! “Behold” it till you feel that you must copy it. “Behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed.”

2. *And Jesus, seeing their faith*—Our Lord Jesus has a very quick eye. If there is faith *anywhere*, He can see it. He can even see faith in you when you cannot see any in yourself! When unbelief covers up the faith you have, He can see it—“Jesus, seeing their faith”—

2. *Said to the sick of the palsy: Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.* Probably this was not the blessing that the man was first seeking, but it is our Lord’s custom to lay the axe at the root of the tree of evil—and He did so here. Sin was in the man’s heart. It is sin that lies at the bottom of all sorrow and if the sin is but taken away, we need not mind if we do not lose the palsy. If sin is forgiven, we may be content to keep our bed. The Savior often gives gold to those who only ask for sil-

ver—he grants the forgiveness of *sin* to those who only seek relief from sickness. He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,” so He said to this palsied man, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.”

3. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemes.* They did not dare to say it out loud—it was whispered in the chamber of their souls. But the Lord heard it and He can hear your *thoughts*, my Friend, though you would not dare to put them into words! He knows all that you are thinking, just as He read the thoughts of these murmuring scribes.

4, 5. *And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk? Why, of course, it is much easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven you”!* There are thousands of so-called “priests” who say that, but who is to know whether sins are forgiven or not? But if a man shall say, “Arise, and walk”—that is a thing that we can easily put to the test. You can see whether the man does arise and walk, so that, of the two, the command to arise and walk would seem to be the more difficult. And if these scribes had asked Christ—as they had tacitly done—to make this man arise and walk, if he had not done that, but had done a lesser thing, why should they say that He *blasphemed*?

6, 7. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then He said to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up your bed and go to your house. And he arose and departed to his house.* Now, since there was power in this Word of Christ for the healing of the sick, the onlookers might well conclude that there was also power in the Word of Christ for the forgiveness of sin. If it was no blasphemy on His part to bid the man arise, and walk, for God seconded the command and the miracle was worked, it could be no blasphemy for that same Divine Person to say to the palsied man, “Your sins are forgiven you.”

8. *But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled—*The scribes quibbled, but the multitudes marveled! And they did more—

8. *And glorified God, which had given such power to men.* They did not yet perceive that Christ was more than Man, but they went as far as they could see and they blessed God that a Man had been raised up who had such power over sickness and sin.

9. *And as Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.* Matthew was at the toll-booth, perhaps, taking money for fish caught in the Sea of Galilee—whatever the “custom” was, he was receiving from the people the usual tax on behalf of the Roman government.

9. *And He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.* This was a very amazing thing and it is recorded as an instance of Divine Power equal to that which was seen when Jesus bade the palsied man take up his bed and walk!

10. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.* Whose house? Matthew’s house! Then why did not Matthew say so?

Because he did not like to say anything in his own praise. Luke says that Matthew made Christ “a great feast in his own house,” but Matthew himself simply puts it, “As Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came.” I want you to notice this further, “Behold.” “Behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy.” Now again, “Behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.” It is worth your noticing, it is worth your thinking upon, for, it may be that you feel yourself to be guilty and unworthy to come to Christ—unfit to be in communion with Him. If so, listen—“Behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.” Jesus loves to feast the famished! And if they come where He is, seeking food, He will give them Himself, the Bread of Life, to eat, and the Water of Life to drink!

11. *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners? Oh, these wretched Pharisees! These men with the green eyes who cannot see anything but they must be jealous of it and find fault with it, are not all dead! Possibly there are some of them in our midst just now, for they are usually in every congregation where the Gospel is preached. You may know them by their sanctimonious appearance and their sneering countenance, as they look down on the common people and the sinful people—the publicans and sinners by whom they are surrounded.*

12. *But when Jesus heard that, he said to them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I do not find that the disciples answered these Pharisees, but Jesus replied for them. Very often the best thing to do with quibblers is to leave them to the Master—you might make a muddle of answering them—so turn them over to your Lord. “He said to them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.” “You supremely good people—in your own esteem—do not need Me. Why should I come and eat bread with Pharisees? But these publicans whom you despise—these sinners whom you loathe, are spiritually sick, and ought not I, the Good Physician, to be found among them?”*

13. *But go you and learn what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not chosen to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. It must have galled these Pharisees to be sent to learn anything, for they thought they knew everything that could be known!*

May the Lord Jesus come into this assembly and find those people who most need a blessing, for to them He will freely give it!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—231, 660.

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

CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS

NO. 2889

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 1904.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE WINTER OF 1861-2.**

*“And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.”
Matthew 9:10.*

How strangely different was our Lord Jesus Christ from the philosophers of Greece! They were reserved in their demeanor—eclectic, or studiously choice in their tastes and jealous of contact with their fellow creatures. Retiring from the busy haunts of men to encircle themselves with an atmosphere created by their own breath, they wanted none in their society but those who were fit companions for men so exalted in wisdom. Their disciples looked up to them with profound and insincere reverence—and they, themselves, in their various halls and classrooms, talked as men might who were teaching little children. And their pupils were completely subject to their dictation, but they always kept “the common people” at a distance, for they concerned not themselves to instruct the many, but only to teach the few who were ambitious to become wise like themselves!

Our blessed Lord and Master was no philosopher of this sort, shut up with His few disciples by themselves. He had His chosen twelve, but He and they mingled freely with the populace. He was a man among men and not a philosopher among those shut out from men. True, He taught greater wisdom than all the sages knew—and better philosophy than all the wise men of Greece understood—but He was still familiar with the people, tender-hearted, mild and of a gentle spirit. We have an instance of this here, where we read of Jesus doing what Solon or Socrates would never have done, for He sat down to take a meal with the common people around Him, eating with publicans and sinners!

How different, moreover, we may add, was Christ from the great Prophets of the olden time! With the utmost stretch of imagination, you cannot conceive of Moses sitting down to eat with sinners. He was a king in Jeshurun—an awful majesty surrounded the Prophet of Horeb who was mighty in word and deed. Wherever he went, he appeared as the man whom his high office had exalted above his fellows. His whole character, like his face on that memorable occasion when he had been in the mountain with God, shone so brilliantly that ordinary men could scarcely gaze upon him unless he covered his face with a veil. More than once he

was hidden in complete seclusion with God. True, he was accessible enough in the due exercise of his office to all who had complaints or charges to be decided at the bar where he presided as judge—but who would presume to think of being a companion to the mighty Moses? Even his brother, Aaron, and his sister, Miriam, seem to have had a great gulf fixed between them and their truly regal brother—they could not approach him without becoming deference, nor could he come down to be on a social level with them.

Think also of Elijah, the very pattern and model of a Prophet of the Most High God. How high he towered above the men of his age! The fire which Elijah called from Heaven upon the Carmel sacrifice and upon the captains of fifties and their fifties, seemed to be a fitting type of his own character. One can admire him as a Prophet and follow him as a leader, but who could think of having him as a companion and friend? Stern, unflinching, faithful, he has little or no pity for the sinner. The only thing that an erring man could say to Elijah would be what Ahab said to him, “Have you found me, O my enemy?” His sternness in rebuking sin, his bold, thundering denunciation of idolatry made men tremble before him—and we can hardly imagine that publicans and sinners would have been anxious to sit down to eat with him.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, the Christ whose Gospel we preach is no unapproachable philosopher! The Glory of His Person reflects even a brighter luster than the dignity of His office. He appeared among men not as one who had been lifted up from the ranks to obtain a position for Himself, but as one who bowed Himself down from the Heaven of heavens that He might bring blessings to the sons of men—yet the ignorant and the illiterate may find in Him their best Friend. He is no stern Law-Giver, like Moses, who, wrapping around himself the robe of his own integrity, looks upon the transgressor simply with the eye of justice! Neither is He merely the pitiless denouncer of iniquity and crime, or the bold enunciator of penalty and punishment. Christ is the gentle Lover of our souls! He is the Good Shepherd coming forth, not so much to slay the wolf as to save the sheep! As a nurse tenderly watches over the child committed to her charge, so does Jesus watch over the souls of men and, like as a father pities his children, so does He pity sinful men. He does not stand upon a lofty height and bid sinners ascend to Him, but, coming down from the mountain and mingling in social communion with them, He draws them to Himself by the magnetic force of His Almighty Love. “Jesus, the sinners’ Friend”—that is His true title, for that is what He really is! O Jesus, may we personally know You as our Friend just now! We are sinners, be You our Friend.

Before I come directly to the subject, I want to paint three pictures in order to show you, by the force of contrast, the way in which Christ, the Physician of Souls, really cures and heals. There have been various schemes for cleansing society from the pollution that comes through sin. Even men who were sinners have been conscious that iniquity so saps and undermines the foundations of society that it must, if possible, be uprooted and destroyed. Behold the many schemes which men have de-

vised for this purpose! Listen to the voices which have charmed men's ears and awed their hearts, but have not been able to change for the better their condition!

First came *Severity*, and he said, "There is a plague broken out among the people! Clear out the tainted ones. There are the fatal spots upon their brows, the venom of the dread disease has worked its way to their skin—there is no doubt about their being infected—therefore, slay them—let them be destroyed! Take them away, executioner, it is better that they should be put to death than that the whole nation should perish. Cut off the few sickly sheep lest the whole flock should be affected." But the Savior came and He said, "No, no, not so. Why will you destroy them? If you do so, the disease will be spread all the more, for their blood shall be spattered on the men who slay them and shall infect their executioners. And they, in their turn, will come back and infect the man who condemned the plague-stricken to be slain! And here, in the very Hall of Judgment, the signs of the dread disease shall be seen even upon the judge's brow! Why deal you thus hardly with your brethren? You are all diseased—there is a plague upon every one of you! If you thus begin to uproot some of the tares, you may not only uproot the wheat, but you may uproot the whole field which, after all, might bring forth something which would be better than absolute sterility. No, spare them, spare them! Let them not die! Give them into My hands."

His request was, of course, granted, and He went to those whom He had rescued and He said, "Your forfeited lives are spared. It is well known that according to the laws of your fellow men, you deserve to die, but I have undertaken that and, without the violation of law—and so you shall escape" Then He touched them, healed their running sore, and said to all who stood near, "Now these men shall spread life through your ranks, for I have restored them from their sickness. And now, instead of being to you wellsprings of everything that is abominable and filthy, they shall become fountains of everything that is lovely, pure and of good repute." Glory be unto You, O Jesus! Glory be unto You, for You have done far more than *Severity* could ever have accomplished!

Next came one called *Stern Morality* and he said, "Let us not kill them. Let not the laws be like those of Draco, written in blood, but let us build a leper house with high walls and let us thrust them in there and shut them out from all contact with their kind. In this way they shall live, but shall do no injury to their fellows. And the self-righteous Pharisee said, "Let my house be far away from the infected spot lest the wind should blow from them to me. Let them be shut away from their fellows, as persons under a curse—let not others speak to them, or go near them." The Pharisees were practicing that method in Christ's day. They had tabooed the publicans and sinners, saying to them, "We will not touch you with so much as one of our fingers." They drew their garments around them and gave the moral lepers plenty of room in the streets and if, by any chance, they did come into contact with them, or were obliged to have any dealings with them in the marketplace, they were careful to wash before they ate lest they should be defiled. So society decided that a leper

house should be built and that the infected sinners should be put in there to rot and die by themselves.

But Jesus said, "Not so, not so. If you mean to shut up all the infected, every one of you must also be shut up, for you are all suffering from the same disease in a greater or less degree! Why shut up these few when all are affected? You do not well—if you build the walls of the leper house as high as Heaven, the festering disease within will still find an outlet and taint your sons and your daughters, notwithstanding all that you do—and that place will be the hotbed of everything that is foul and noxious—and will tend to your own destruction despite all your efforts to be removed from it." You know how, even to this day, a certain class of sinner is considered by some good, reputable people as being unworthy even to be spoken of, or noticed—and some are foolish enough to try to forget that they are actually in existence! But our Divine Master went to the gate of the leper house and knocked. And when it was opened, He said to those within, "You may come forth." Society outside objected, so He said, "Well then, if they may not come out, I will go in with them." And to those inside, He said, "Shut the door and keep out the over-righteous. I am come to eat bread and to dwell with you, the infected and sinful ones." He put out both His hands and touched them and healed their diseases—and the blood again leaped in their veins and their flesh came again to them like the flesh of a little child!

Then He opened the gate, again, and, strange to say, society outside was infected this time! And He said to them who had once been lepers in the leper house, "Go you forth and heal them." And they went forth to carry healing to those who formerly thought themselves to be well! And thus He made the very curse itself to be a channel through which to spread the blessing! Blessed are You, O Jesus! You have done for sinners what the sternest laws and the strictest customs of society could never have done!

But there have been others of a gentler spirit—*Philanthropists*—who have been sensible of the claims of humanity upon them. They have said, "Let us look at the case of these rebellious sinners in the most favorable light possible. Let us consider them as hopeful. Let us use remedies that will be the means of healing them, but let us keep them in quarantine for many a day before we let them out. Let us fumigate them and put their clothes out until every trace of infection has gone from them. And if, after a long probation, they are proved to be really healed and cleansed, then let them go forth to freedom." But Jesus said, No, not so. Why would you keep them thus shut up by themselves? If one of them should become better, contact with his fellows would make him sick again. Will you deny them your help and your sympathy and shut them away by themselves? Your quarantine arrangements will breed further disease and all your fumigations will be in vain, for, while you are seeking to cure, you will be generating the very disease you seek to destroy! The only effective remedy is for Me to go in with them where they are."

So He presented Himself before them. They were covered with running sores and they themselves were most obnoxious—yet He touched them—

no, more, He *embraced* them! They were filthy, but He took them in His own hands and washed them. They were ragged, but He, Himself, took off their rags, clothed them in the spotless robe of His own righteousness and gave them the kiss of His love upon their sin-stained cheeks. "Oh," they said, "this is healing, indeed! We were never healed before. People told us to get well and said that, then, they would do something for us. They told us to cleanse ourselves and said that, *then*, they would receive us. But You, O blessed Savior, did take us just as we were—all black, defiled and loathsome—and You have made us clean!" Glory be unto You, O Jesus, for You have done ten thousand times more for poor lost souls than Philanthropy ever even suggested! Your wisdom has availed where our prudence has defeated its own ends! Our sympathy has been marred by our vanity! Our counsels have been rendered valueless by our conceit! We have repelled the confidence of sinners while You have won their hearts, for You have sat down to eat with them and Your disciples have shared the feast.

I have thus tried to paint three pictures. I do not know whether I have held the brush steadily enough, or have had sufficiently good colors to paint them true to life. I only want to show you that while we are condemning the outcasts, Jesus Christ comes forth and saves them! While we are trying to keep sinners away from us, He goes to them and heals them! And while we are hoping the best concerning them and thinking of the means by which they can be gradually renovated, He goes to them and restores them! Christ takes into His arms some whom we would not touch with a pair of tongs! He receives into His very heart some whose names we would hardly venture to mention! He lifts up the beggar from the dunghill! He raises the despairing from the Slough of Despond! He takes the vilest of the vile, transforms them, by His Grace, and makes them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light!

I. After so long an introduction, I must compress the rest of my discourse as much as I can. And, first, I am going to ILLUSTRATE THE WAY IN WHICH CHRIST RECEIVES SINNERS.

There was a man, a tax-gatherer—who had an evil reputation everywhere—no one was more obnoxious than he was to the proud, moral, orthodox Pharisees. One day he heard that Jesus of Nazareth, the great Prophet and Miracle-Worker, was about to pass through his native place—the accursed city of Jericho. And having a great curiosity and nothing but a curiosity to see this mighty Savior—thinking, doubtless, no better of Him than that He was a strange enthusiast—he climbed up a tree in the hope that, concealed amid its leaves, he might look down, unobserved, upon the famous Stranger. If a Pharisee had been walking that way, he would have avoided even the shadow of that tree, lest sin should be hidden by its shade and he should thereby be defiled. But Christ, whose instincts of mercy always make Him sharp-sighted where there is an objective for His compassion, came right underneath that tree and, looking up, cried aloud, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at your house." No wonder that the Pharisees and the people in general murmured because Christ went to be a guest with a

man who was “a sinner” in a very special sense! They were surprised that a man in such ill repute should have the honor of entertaining the Lord Jesus Christ.

But our Lord entered the house of Zacchaeus and His Truth entered the heart of Zacchaeus. And there, on the spot, that “sinner” became a saint—practically proving the reality of his conversion by saying to Jesus, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “This day is salvation come to this house.” O my Savior, You have done right well! Suppose the Lord had passed by Zacchaeus without taking any notice of him? He would have remained as great a sinner as ever! Suppose He had upbraided him? Possibly, then, the tax-gatherer would have replied in language not at all complimentary! But that kind word, that sweet look of pity, that gracious token of forgiveness broke the hard heart of the rich oppressor and he gladly entertained his Savior and became His disciple.

This is the way in which Jesus Christ deals with sinners. Have we a sinner in this house—the house where Christ has, for many a day, worked miracles of mercy? Sinner, He will not despise you and we are rejoiced to see you in the place where Christ is preached! His eyes are on you now—where you are, I cannot tell, but He can—and it may be that this very hour He will say to you, “Sinner, make haste and come down, for tonight I must abide at your house.” Who can tell? It may be with you as it has been with many a score in this house—you may go home to forsake the drunkard’s cup, to leave the Sabbath-breaker’s haunts, to forsake the abodes of blasphemy and to say, once and for all, “Christ has called me! I am His and He I desire to serve.” This is how Jesus deals with sinners, even with sinners who are only moved by curiosity to see Him as Zacchaeus was.

On another occasion Christ was by the seaside and he passed a certain toll-house where a tax-gatherer was “sitting at the receipt of custom.” His name was Levi—at least that was his name when he was at home—but now that he had become one of the hated publicans, he had taken the name of Matthew, just as many a young man, when he runs away from home and enlists in the army or navy, takes a name which does not belong to him. Little did he think that when Jesus was passing by, He would take any notice of him! But He did, for He said to him, “Follow Me.” That was all He said, but there was a volume of meaning in those two words! And the glance of His eyes and the majesty with which He pronounced His Divine command produced instant and most willing obedience, for “he arose and followed Him.” And Matthew the publican became Matthew the Apostle and Matthew the Evangelist!

Now, if Christ needed an Apostle, why did He not select one of the Pharisees? If He needed an Evangelist, why did He not choose one of the scribes? The reason is that a publican and a sinner was more adapted to His purpose. Perhaps the Lord is, at this moment, looking for a valiant preacher of the Truth of God—and it may be that you, my Friend, away there among the crowd, are the man whom He has chosen for this high

and noble enterprise. Christ found John Bunyan playing “tip-cat” on Elstow Green and He found Richard Weaver down in the mines, blaspheming the name of God! Who knows whether He may not find you for this high purpose, to bless you and to make you a blessing? There may be some here who will make Hell’s old pillars shake, though they are, today, the sworn friends of sin and Satan! But He who has permitted them to go so far into sin may issue His Divine mandate concerning each one of them—

“Almighty Grace, arrest that man”—

and he shall be renewed in heart, changed in life and made to be “a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

Certain it is that many of the most useful and honored servants of the Lord Jesus Christ have been taken from that very class with whom Jesus and His disciples ate bread. There was a certain person needed, on one occasion, to be—if I may use the term—lady-in-waiting to the King of kings. Queens might have been well content to part with their crowns in exchange for such an honor as that, yet “a woman in the city, who was a sinner,” was chosen to render this lowly service to the Lord Jesus Christ! And she “stood at His feet behind Him, weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment.” Simon, the Pharisee, found fault with Christ for allowing her to do this, but Jesus said it was her great love which had moved her to do what the Pharisee had neglected to do for his Guest. And to the woman, Jesus said, “Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Am I addressing any woman who might truly take the term, “sinner,” to herself? My Sister, this is how Christ received this woman who was a sinner. He accepted the homage of her love—love such as only she could render, love that could only come from a woman who had borne such a character as she had borne and who, therefore, was filled with such intense gratitude to her Lord and Savior. This is how Christ receives sinners—oh, that He might thus receive you just now!

Here is another case in which Christ received a sinner. I have reminded you how He visited the house of a sinner, how He chose a sinner to be one of His Apostles and how He was anointed by a woman who was a sinner. Now He was about to die and someone was needed to go with Him from earth to Heaven. When He returned Home, it was not meet that He should go back alone. The great Conqueror must not re-enter Heaven without some token of His victories here below. O mighty Hero, You may not pass the gates of Your paternal metropolis without taking some captive with You! Who shall accompany the Savior into His Glory? Shall it be some martyr, who, in fiery chariot, shall mount to Heaven with his Redeemer? Shall it be some devout disciple and deacon, like Stephen, who, amid a shower of stones, shall see Heaven opened unto him and enter it side by side with his Lord? No. But there is a thief dying on a cross hard by the suffering Son of God, for Jesus was numbered with the transgressors and died in the company of sinners even as He had lived among them. The thief prayed, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your

Kingdom.” And Jesus answered, “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise” and, probably the first soul to enter Heaven after the return of the King was the soul of this poor penitent thief!

I will only mention one more case of Christ receiving a sinner. After He had gone back to Heaven, He needed a man who should be His Apostle to the Gentiles. Peter, the Jew, was far too bigoted even when his nature was overruled by Divine Grace—there was still so much of the Jewish exclusiveness in him that he was not fit to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. The Master, therefore, resolved that, for once, He would call out of Heaven with an audible voice and that, as a pattern for all who should afterwards believe on Him, He would have some one special soul. Who should that one be? You might send an officer through Greece and Rome and he might find scores whom he would recommend for the post, but the least likely individual in the whole world was selected by Christ, Himself! There he is, “breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,” for he hates Christ and His followers as well. When Stephen was stoned, he gloated over the dying martyr. He is constantly casting the Christians, both men and women, into prison. And he is now on his way to Damascus, being exceedingly angry against the saints, that he may persecute all whom he can find there who are followers of Christ!

The sequel of the story is given in Paul’s own words to Agrippa, “At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from Heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying, in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” The further sequel is given in Paul’s words to the church at Ephesus, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

This is my Master’s way of dealing with sinners, even with him who called himself the chief sinner! Proud professors, is this the way you deal with them? Professing Christians whose hearts have grown callous, is this the way you act towards poor sinful souls? And O poor lost soul, is this the way that you thought Christ would deal with you? He will do with you as He did with them! He is as ready to save, today, as He was in the days gone by! He has as great a love for sinners now as He had when He went through the towns and villages of Galilee, teaching and healing the people, or when He poured out His soul unto death that He might redeem the lost by purchasing them with His blood!

II. I now turn to my second point and ask—HOW IS IT THAT CHRIST IS SO WILLING TO COME DOWN TO POOR SINNERS AND SAVE THEM?

Do not imagine that it is because He is insensible to their guilt. Sinner, Jesus Christ knows far better than you do what an evil and bitter thing sin is. It is as hateful and loathsome to Him as anything can possibly be. It is not, therefore, because He is insensible to their guilt that He seeks the society of lost souls. Why, then, does He desire to be in their company?

It is *because He has such deep affection for sinners*. There is a little child crying upstairs. Some people in the house wish that noise could be stopped, for they say they cannot endure it, but the mother says, "It is my child who is weeping up there," and she hurries up to comfort and soothe her baby. So, when we hear the sinner blaspheme, we are angry with him, but Christ weeps over him and comes forth to save him. "He is My child," He says—

***"Joint heir with Me, He yet shall be
In Glory everlasting."***

There is all the difference between what a wife will do for her sick husband and what a stranger might do for him. Imagine the husband suffering from some loathsome disease. The nurse says, "No, for no money in the world will I stay any longer. Besides, the disease is infectious and I might take it to my dear ones at home." But if it were as infectious as the plague, itself, and as noxious as the great pit into which the unconfined dead were cast, that wife would still remain with her loved one—if necessary, to sicken, suffer and die—for she says, "He is my husband." And here is a sinner so full of filth that even the most sympathetic stand aside and will not come near him—but the Lord Jesus sees, in that abject sinner, a fit objective for His pity and Saving Grace. "He is one with Me," He says, "by eternal covenant and union, and I will stay with him till I have healed him. I will watch by him till I have saved him from all his filthiness and all his sin."

Besides, poor Sinner, there is another reason why the Lord Jesus Christ is so deeply interested in you. *He sees in you the purchase of His precious blood*. "I bought him," He says, "with My heart's blood. Do you think that I will lose him after that?" "But, Lord, he blasphemes You!" "Yes, but I have bought Him with My blood." "But, Lord, he has made a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell." "Yes," says Christ, "I know he has, but I will disannul that covenant and cancel that agreement, for I have bought him and I will have him as My own." Jesus never forgets the price He paid for the redemption of even one soul! I think I hear Him say, my Brothers and Sisters, "By My agony and bloody sweat, by My Cross and passion, by My death and burial, I will have him as My own, for I cannot have suffered all these things in vain."

Moreover, Christ *views the sinner, not as he is in himself, but as he is in the purpose of Redemption*. "His whole head is sick," says Christ, "but I can cure him. His whole heart is faint, but I can restore him and I will do it. His feet have gone astray, his mouth is an open sepulcher, his eyes are windows of lust, his hands are stained with blood, but I will amend all that and make him a new creature fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Jesus looks, you see, not so much to what the sinner is in himself, as to what He can make him. He sees in every sinner the possibility of making a glorified saint who shall dwell with Him forever and ever. If He chose you, poor Sinner, before all worlds were made, and bought you with His blood, He sees you not as you now are, but as you shall be when He has perfected you! Oh, what a wonder it will be when that poor drunk over there shall sing in Heaven as one of the

spirits of just men made perfect! And when yonder harlot shall have a golden harp in her hand and sound forth the praises of Him who has saved her and washed her from her sins in His own blood! He who has said it, will do it! He who is “mighty to save,” will redeem by power those whom He has secured by purchase! And, *penitent Sinner*, Jesus already hears you hymning His praise and He sees you as you will be—without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—washed in His blood, renewed by His Spirit, brought safely Home and glorified with Him forever! No wonder, then, that Christ is willing to come to poor sinners and to dwell with them! He can see what you and I cannot see—what they shall be when He has fulfilled His purposes of mercy and Grace concerning them!

Sinner, you are so ashamed of your sin that you dare not approach a minister, but you can approach Christ. There is no pride in Him and no cautious reserve such as we might rightly exercise in dealing with you. Though you cannot tell even your own father all about yourself, you can tell Jesus. You cannot tell all the story of your sin and your repentance to the wife of your bosom, but you can tell Jesus. There is no music that He loves so much as the voice of a sinner confessing his sin! There are no pearls that He prizes so highly as those pearly tears which repentance forms in the eyes of the soul that trembles at His Word! Do not imagine that He is hard to please, for He loves sinners! Do not fancy that it is difficult to obtain access to Him. Like the father in the parable, He can see a sinner when he is a great way off and He will run to meet you and give you a hearty reception and a loving welcome. You will be happy in being saved, but He will be more happy in saving you! You will rejoice in being pardoned, but He will rejoice more in pardoning you! I cannot put this blessed Truth of God about Christ’s compassion for sinners in such words as I would do if I could.

If you do not admit that you are a sinner, I have no Gospel to preach to you. But if you stand self-condemned, I have a message of mercy to deliver to you. To the self-convicted, to the law-condemned, the prisoners that plead guilty, those who are ready to confess that they are undeserving, ill-deserving, Hell-deserving sinners, I have to say that Christ is an approachable Savior! No, more than that, He is waiting to be gracious! He stands with arms outstretched, longing to clasp poor sinners to His heart. Why do you wait?

III. Now I close my discourse by endeavoring to teach you THE PRACTICAL LESSON WHICH OUGHT TO FOLLOW from the fact that Christ receives sinners and eats with them.

Let me just utter a word of warning here. When we speak of Christ receiving sinners, everybody says, “Well, I am a sinner.” It is a curious proof that people do not know what a sinner is, or they would not be so ready to admit that they are in that class. If I were to say to almost any man I met, “You are a criminal,” in almost every case he would reply, “No, Sir, I am not.” But what is the difference between being a criminal and being a sinner except that the sinner is the worse of the two? A criminal is a person who offends against the laws of men. “A sinner” is a theological term, signifying one who offends against the Laws of God! People

say, "To be criminals—oh, that is horrible! But to be sinners—well, we are all sinners." And they do not appear to think anything of that terrible brush. Ah, but, unless the Grace of God shall change you, the day will come when you will think it would have been better to have been a frog, a toad, a viper, or any other creature rather than to have been a sinner, for, next to the word, "devil," there is no word which has so much that is dreadful in it as that word, "sinner." "A sinner" means one who cares nothing for God—one who breaks God's Laws, despises God's mercy and who will, if he continues as he is, have to endure God's wrath as a punishment for his sin!

Yet these are the persons whom Jesus Christ is willing to receive! You cannot, therefore, any of you, say, if you perish, that you perish because He would not receive you. "Oh, but," you say, "He would never receive such a sinner as I am." How do you know that? Have you ever tried Him? There is not, even in Hell itself, a sinner who will ever dare to say that he came to Jesus, yet Jesus refused to receive him. There is not a lost soul in the Pit who can look up to God and truthfully say to Him, "Great God, I asked for mercy through the precious blood of Jesus, but You said, 'I will not grant it to you.'" No, that can never be! Neither on earth, nor in Hell, shall there ever be one soul that trusted in Christ and then perished!

You say that Christ will not save you, so I ask again—Did you ever try Him? Did you ever give Him a fair trial? Did you ever, on your knees, conscious of your lost condition, say to Him, "Jesus, save me, or I die"? You are spiritually blind—did you ever say to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on me"? Did you cry to Him, again and again, and did He turn His back on you and leave you in darkness? Leper, you are loathsome in His sight by reason of your sin, but did you ever say to Him, "Lord, if You will, You can make me clean"? No, you know you never did, though you have often resolved that you would!. Under an earnest sermon you have said, "I will seek the Lord"—but when you got outside the House of Prayer, some idle companion met you and you soon forgot all about your good resolution.

But let me say to you now—Despite all the years in which you have heard the Gospel in vain, if the Holy Spirit shall move you even now to confess your sin to Jesus and to say to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on me. I put my soul's affairs into Your hands from this moment"—Sinner, He will save you! Or, if He will not, then I will perish with you and the whole Church of God will also perish with you, for this is all our hope—that Jesus died to save the lost! And if one soul, believingly gazing upon His wounds, can perish, then all must perish and the Pit must engulf the whole blood-bought family of God. But that can never be!

There is an old tradition which I will repeat as a rebuke to the self-righteous, and a comfort to the sinner. Dean Trench, quoting from a Persian moralist, tells one of his old fables about Jesus. Of course it is only a fable, but it contains the very spirit of the Truth of God about which I have been preaching. When Christ, according to this fable, was travelling through a certain region, He stayed at the cave of a hermit. It so hap-

pened that there was living in the neighboring town a young man whose vices were so great that, according to common report, the devil, himself, did not dare to associate with him lest he should become worse than he was before. This young man, hearing that the Savior, who could pardon sin, was in the hermit's cave, went to Him. Falling down on his knees, he made confession of his guilt and acknowledged that he was utterly unworthy of mercy. But he entreated Christ, in the love of His gracious heart, to forgive him for the past and make him a new man for the future.

The monk who lived in the cave said to the young man, "Get out! You are not worthy to be in such a holy spot as this!" And, turning to the Savior, he said, "Lord, in the other world appoint me a place as far away as possible from this wretch." The Savior answered, "Your prayer is heard—you are self-righteous so I appoint you your place in Hell—this man is penitent and seeks mercy at My hands—I appoint him his place in Heaven. Thus both of you shall have your heart's desire." There is the very essence of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in that old fable. You who trust in your own good works go and perish! Come, you who confess your evil deeds—hate them, flee from them, trust in Jesus and you are saved! But they who go about to establish their own righteousness shall perish everlastingly!

Oh, that my Master would draw some of you to Him at this moment! What do you say? Will you go with this Man who receives sinners? He bids you come to Him—will you come? You cannot plead that you are too vile, for He takes the very off-scouring of men—the devil's outcasts—He will not cast them out if they will but come to Him! However despairing of yourself you may be, you must not say of Him, "He will reject me." Trust Him to receive you and trust Him now!

O Spirit of the living God, prove the Divinity of Christ's Gospel this very hour by turning lions into lambs and ravens into doves—and let the chief of sinners prove Your power to save! Amen.

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

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

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN AND HIS PATIENTS NO. 618

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 5, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”
Matthew 9:12.*

THIS was Christ’s apology for mingling with publicans and sinners when the Pharisees murmured against Him. He triumphantly cleared Himself by showing that according to the fitness of things He was perfectly in order. He was acting according to His official Character. A physician should be found where there is work for him to do and that it is where healing is required. There was evidently none among the Pharisees—if their own opinion of themselves were to hold good—for they were perfectly whole. There was much to do, according to their own admission, among the publicans and sinners, for they were sorely sick. Therefore our Lord was in His place and fittingly executing His office when He sought out those who needed Him.

I. We shall have no time for a preface this morning and therefore let us enter at once into the text by observing that MERCY GRACIOUSLY REGARDS SIN AS A DISEASE. Sin is more than a disease. If it were only a sickness, men were to be pitied for suffering it. But the element of the perverse will, of voluntary rebellion and designed offense enters into sin, otherwise it were far less truly sin. And this makes it more than a sickness and worse than a malady. Let us not think that the picture of disease really does set forth all the heinous nature of sin—it is only a generous way in which Mercy chooses to look at it and to deal with it.

As Justice views it, all the plagues, venom, virus and disease in the world would be sweet and harmless compared with one single evil thought or imagination! But Mercy leniently and graciously chooses, in order that it may have a sort of apology for its operations under the great plan of salvation, to view sin as a disease. It is justified in such a view, for almost everything that may be said of deadly maladies may be said of sin. Let us come to particulars. Sin is an hereditary disease—we are born with a tendency towards it—no, we are born *in* it. The taint is in our blood—the very center of our being feels the infection.

Born in sin and shaped in iniquity, in sin did our mothers conceive us and our offspring, in like measure, received from us that original sin which is part of our fallen nature. Every man born into the world bears within him, in the bias and current of his mind, the seeds of sin. Nor is this to be wondered at, for, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” “How can he be clean that is born of a woman?” Sin, like

sickness, is very disabling. A sick man cannot carry burdens, climb mountains, run in service, walk with perseverance or leap for joy. The occupations and the pleasures of other men are things from which he is shut out. Even so does sin prevent our serving God.

We cannot pray to Him—we cannot praise Him aright. In every duty we are weak and for every good we are feeble. There is not a single moral power of manhood which sin has not stripped of its strength and glory. If we wished to run in the ways of God's commands, then sin has crippled us. If we would grasp God's promises, evil has paralyzed us. If we desired to see into the mysteries of Divine Grace, guilt has blinded us. If we would hear the voice of God, transgression has struck us with deafness. And if our voices would swell the song of cherubim and seraphim, alas, the plague of our heart within has made us dumb!

Of all of us in our measure it may be said we are, through sin, "unstable as water and shall not excel." Sin weakens man's nature for all good. Sin also, like certain diseases, is a very loathsome thing. Some diseases are so extremely disgusting that scarcely can their names be mentioned. But, oh, they are sweetness itself when compared with sin! The most putrid poisonous air that ever blew from a fever hospital never had such foulness in it as dwells in sin. Pest-houses and lazar-houses are clean and safe compared with the haunts of vice. In God's esteem and in the esteem of all holy minds the most detestable, obnoxious, dreadful thing in the whole world is moral evil.

If that could be gotten rid of, all other evil would cease to be. This is the mother and nurse of all evil, the egg of all mischief, the fountain of bitterness, the root of misery. Here you have the distilled essence of Hell. The "quintessence," as the old Divines would say, of everything that is unlovely, disreputable, dishonest, impure, abominable—in a word—damnable! Like some diseases, sin is fearfully polluting. As the leper cannot be tolerated abroad, as the plague-stricken are separated from their fellows—even so, sin separates us from communion with God and holy beings. It is not their unwillingness to associate with us, as much as our horrible unfitness to have fellowship with them. It is dreadful to bear about with us a cancer which has reached the stage of sickening rottenness. And yet this is not half so terribly disgusting as sin is to the heart of God.

God is very gracious but He cannot endure sin in His Presence and to set forth His hatred of it in type and figure He forbade diseased persons to enter His courts or even to mingle with the camp of His people. For the unclean there was a plain and clear separation until he had been purified. Sin necessarily shuts us out from God's Presence. Into His holy fellowship we must not come—we dare not attempt to come. The fire of His anger would consume us, as it did Nadab and Abihu, if we, as sinners should venture near Him apart from Christ Jesus. We cannot stand at the altar to officiate as priests before God, though this were the proper lot of manhood, by reason of the leprosy that is on our brow.

Our praising God, simple as that might seem, cannot be acceptable in His sight because of the defilement of our uncircumcised lips. Almighty Grace must take away our uncleanness or we cannot worship. Iniquity is a polluting thing. Everything we do and everything we think of grows polluted through our corruption. The unclean person could not touch a vessel, sit on a bed, or come near a garment without defiling it. And our sin has much the same effect. Our prayers have stains in them. Our faith is mixed with unbelief. Our repentance is not so tender as it should be. Our communion is distant and interrupted. We cannot pray without sinning and there is filth even in our tears. Well was it for Israel that there was an Aaron to bear the sins of their holy things and blessed is it for us that Jesus takes the sins even of our best works and casts them into the depths of the sea.

Sin, too, may be likened to many sicknesses from its being contagious. A man cannot be a sinner alone. "One sinner destroys much good." The seeds of sin are winged like thistle seeds—you may shut up the leper in a leper-house, but there is no such way of shutting up sin—it will get out and spread itself. A man, if he is evil, will make others evil. His children will imitate him. His dependants, feeling his influence, will walk in his footsteps. Even his neighbors cannot look upon his sin without being in some measure infected by it, for, "the thought of evil is sin." There is a fierce contagiousness in every form of moral evil—like fire among stubble it spreads most rapidly.

Sin moreover, like many diseases, is very painful. And yet, on the other hand, at certain stages it brings on a deadness, a numbness of soul-preventing pain. The most of men are unconscious of the misery of the Fall. They think themselves rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing, when they are naked and poor and miserable. Sin causes a madness which makes sick souls dream that they are in sound health. They talk as though Heaven were their heritage, when they are sitting on the brink of Hell. But when sin is *really* discerned, then it becomes painful. I would sooner suffer—I know not what may be the pangs of some disease, but I feel sure I may say this—I would sooner suffer a complication of all the ills that flesh is heir to than suffer the plague of a guilty, awakened, enlightened, quickened conscience!

When conscience accuses a man there is no rest for him either day or night. Its little finger is heavier than the loins of all other grief. When sin becomes exceedingly sinful before the eyes, then there is a gloom and a heaviness of spirit which crushes the soul into despair, making life bitter, as Pharaoh did the lives of the children of Israel. Speak of Egyptian darkness—it was bright as noonday compared with the darkness of a mind borne down with its own guilt. Oh what wretchedness was mine before I laid hold on Christ. There are some who feel not so acutely the agony of conflict with sin, but it was my lot to feel a horror of great darkness, verging upon despair, so that had I not soon found a Savior my soul had chosen strangling rather than life.

Believe me, there is no pain so bitter as the pain of sin and no curse so heavy as the curse which comes from the black lips of our civil iniquities. And yet I would to God that some of you felt it now that you might *not* feel it *hereafter*. I would that this whip would fall upon your backs that you might be flogged out of your self-righteousness and made to fly to Jesus Christ and find a shelter there. The disease of sin is deep-seated and has its throne in the heart. It does not lie in the hand or foot, it is not to be removed by amputation, much less by outward applications. No knife can reach it, it is impossible to cauterize it.

The skill of a physician can often extract the roots of disease, but no skill can ever reach this. It has entered the marrow, the very core and center of our being and only the Divine One is able to purge us from it—

**“No outward forms can make me clean
The leprosy lies deep within.”**

It is in its own nature wholly incurable. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?” If so, then can he that is accustomed to do evil learn to do well? Can a brine fountain send forth sweet waters? Shall the thorn suddenly yield olives? Can the waterfall which has been forever dashing down the cliffs reverse its course and return towards the river-head?

Shall fire suddenly become gentle and lose its consuming power while the fuel is round about it? Shall the lion of himself eat straw like the ox? Shall the leopard bleat like a lamb? Such changes, being changes of *nature*, are only to be worked by Divine strength. And so it is not possible for the disease of sin ever to be cured by any human remedies. Man cannot cure himself. He may reform. He may drive the disease inward and prevent its coming out upon the skin. He may so model and guide and restrain himself that the coarser forms of sin which are condemned among men may not appear in him. But the virus, the essential poison of sin, no man can ever extract from his own heart—nor can another man do it for him.

Jehovah Rophi, the healing Lord, must manifest His Omnipotent power. The utmost religionist, the most devout prayers, the greatest possible circumspection will not avail to remove the taint of sin if they spring from an unrenewed heart. The carnal mind is enmity against God and is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can it be. And so, let us close the story of this sickness of sin by observing that it is a *mortal* disease. It kills not just now, but it will kill before long. Not merely shall the body die as the result of sin, but the soul must be killed forever with eternal wrath. O Sinner, you little know what your sin will bring you to! But if you will read in God’s Word, you shall discover that it will bring you to the worm that never dies and to the fire that never can be quenched.

Perhaps tomorrow you may know what a full-blown sin is. Perhaps tomorrow, I said—that word may be prophetic to some of you—but if not tomorrow, it is but a matter of time, a few months, more or less and you will be in torment. Sin, when it is ripened, brings forth death and damnation. Oh, you do not know what those words, “to be damned,” mean! You

can play with them sometimes and lightly hurl them at your fellow creatures—but could you only once hear the shriek of a damned soul! Could you only once see a spirit cast out from the Presence of God into eternal misery—surely it would compel you to cry—“What must I do to be saved?”

Enough of this—it is clear that there is a very excellent parallel to be drawn between sin and disease. Humbling as it is, the fact is, nevertheless, most certain—we are all suffering under the disease of sin.

II. But now, secondly, IT PLEASES DIVINE MERCY TO GIVE TO CHRIST THE CHARACTER OF A PHYSICIAN. Having deigned to consider sin as a disease, which is a great proof of mercy, it now graciously confers upon Christ the character of a physician. Be it forever understood that Jesus Christ never came into the world merely to explain what sin is. Moses had for his mission the exposition of sin—Christ has for His mission the eradication of it.

We know what sin is through the Law—that is as much as the Law can do for us. Christ comes, not merely to tell us what it is, but to inform us how it can be removed. Jesus did not come to apologize for sin—Christ never died in order that sin might appear less sinful—that God might be less severe towards sin, or hate it less. God forbid! We never see sin to be so black as when we view its evil as revealed in the sufferings of Jesus. Nor is God’s wrath ever more intolerable than when we behold it consuming His Only-Begotten Son.

“Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger.” Christ did not come to lay a flattering unction to men’s souls, to prevent distress of conscience, to say to them, “Peace, Peace!” where there is no peace. No, He came to *cure* sin, not to film it over—not to make men forget the disease by drugging them with presumptuous draughts of consolation—but by absolutely *removing* that which is the cause of their dread and of their fear to make them whole. Christ Jesus did not come in order that you might continue in sin and escape the penalty of it! He did not come to prevent the disease being mortal, but to take the disease itself away.

Many people think that when we preach salvation, we mean salvation from going to Hell. We do *not* mean that! We mean a great deal more! We preach salvation from sin. We say that Christ is able to save a man. And we mean by that that He is able to save him from sin and to make him holy—to make him a new man. No person has any right to say, “I am saved,” while he continues in sin as he did before. How can you be saved from sin while you are living in it? A man that is drowning cannot say he is saved from the water while he is sinking in it! A man that is frostbitten cannot say, with any truth, that he is saved from the cold while he is stiffened in the wintry blast.

No, Christ did not come to save you in your sins, but to save you *from* your sins. He did not come to make the disease so that it should not kill you, but to let it remain in itself mortal and, nevertheless, to *remove* it from you and you from it. Christ Jesus came, then, to heal us from the

plague of sin—to touch us with His hand and say, “I will, be you clean.” When a physician presents himself, one of the first enquiries is, “Is he a regular practitioner? Has he a right to practice? Has he a diploma?”

Very properly the law requires that a man shall not be allowed to hack our bodies and poison us with drugs at his own pleasure without having at least a show of knowing what he is doing. It has been tartly said that, “a doctor is a man who pours drugs, of which he knows little, into a body of which he knows still less.” I fear that is often the case. Still a diploma is the best safeguard mortals have devised.

Christ has the best authority for practicing as a physician. He has a *Divine* diploma! Would you like to see His diploma? I will read you a few words of it—it comes from the highest authority, not from the College of Physicians, but from the *God* of Physicians. Here are the words of it in the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek. He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted.”

He has a diploma for binding up broken hearts. I should not like to trust myself to a physician who was a mere self-dubbed doctor who could not show any authorization! I must have him know as much as a man can know, little as I believe that will probably be. He must have a diploma. It must be signed and sealed, too, and be in a regular manner—for few sensible men will risk their lives with ignorant quacks. Now Jesus Christ has His diploma and there it is—God has sent Him to bind up the brokenhearted.

The next thing you want in a physician is experience. You want to know that he is thoroughly qualified. He must have walked the hospitals. And certainly our Lord Jesus Christ has done so. What form of disease did He not meet with? When He was here among men it pleased God to let the devil loose in order that there might be more than usual venom in the veins of poor diseased manhood. And Christ met the devil at His darkest hour and fought with the great enemy when he had full liberty to do his worst with Him.

Jesus did, indeed, enter into the woes of men—He walked the hospitals! Why the whole world was an infirmary and Christ the one only Physician, going from couch to couch healing the sons of men. Something more, be it observed, may be said of Him—He is *experimentally* as well as by education—qualified in the healing arts. I have heard of a celebrated physician that was known to try the effect of his medicines upon himself. This has been done in our Master’s case.

There is not a single disease which He does not know experimentally—for He Himself took our sicknesses and infirmities. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He knows His patient’s case by having passed through the case Himself. There is no brokenness of heart, there is no grief of soul which Jesus Christ has not Himself participated in. And though you may say He knows not sin in its *infection*, yet He knows sin in its *imputation* and is, by having suffered all its penalties, perfectly well acquainted with it.

One likes a physician, too, who has a wide practice. One does not care for a man's merely understanding his tools. We like to know whether he has used them and whether he has been successful in his art. Blessed be the name of the beloved Physician! He has the widest imaginable practice. These 1800 years He has been healing sin-sick souls—what am I saying?—these 6000 years He has been “mighty to save.” Before He bodily gave Himself to the Cross, the virtue of the medicine of His own blood had begun to operate upon the sons of men.

O Souls! You may see in Heaven the multitudes whom He has healed! There, before the Eternal Throne, you may view the myriads who have been delivered from all sorts of diseases through the power and virtue of His touch. You need not fear to trust yourselves in His hands, for even the hem of His garment heals our diseases!

To sum up the virtues of this Physician in a very few words—His cures are very speedy—there is life in a look at Him. His cures are radical—He strikes at the very center of the disease and His cures are very sure and certain. He never fails and the disease never returns. There is no relapse where Christ heals—no fear that one of His patients should be but patched up for a season. He makes a new man of him—a new heart also does He give him and a right spirit does He put within him!

He is a physician, one of a thousand, because He is well-skilled in all diseases. Physicians generally have some specialty. They may know a little about almost all our pains and ills, but there is usually one disease which they have studied the most carefully—one part of the human frame whose anatomy is as well-known to them as the rooms and cupboards of their own house.

Jesus Christ has made the whole of human nature His specialty. He is as much at home with one sinner as with another sinner and never yet did He meet with an out-of-the-way case that was out of the way for Him. He has had extraordinary complications of strange diseases to deal with but He has known exactly, in one moment, with one glance of His eyes, how to treat the patient. He is the only universal doctor “at home” in every case.

The medicine He gives is a catholicon—it heals in every instance, never failing. His medicine is Himself! If there is a smart caused by it, it is borne upon His own back. “By His stripes we are healed.” “His flesh is meat, indeed. His blood is drink, indeed”—He Himself casts out the disease from poor dying men. We do but trust Him and sin dies—we love Him and Divine Grace lives! We wait for Him and Grace is strengthened. We see Him, as we soon shall, and Grace is perfected forever! O blessed Physician for this desperate disease!

III. I cannot, however, tarry longer on that point, but come to the third, which is the main one that I am driving at, namely, THAT NEED IS THAT ALONE WHICH MOVES OUR GRACIOUS PHYSICIAN TO COME TO OUR AID. He says, “They that are whole need not a physician,” and you will see the natural conclusion from His line of reasoning is, “I do not go to the

whole, because they do not *need* Me. I go to the sick because they do need Me. The reason why I go anywhere is because I am *needed*.”

I believe, dear Friends, though doubtless there are some exceptions, that if you were to take the medical profession through, you would perceive larger-heartedness and more humanity there than almost anywhere. And you would find that there is scarcely a physician, certainly none known to me, who would, if he had two urgent cases to consider, make any distinction between the two except that he would give his first attention to the sufferer who needed him most.

Of course if the matters are both trivial, common sense allows a man to select that which will best remunerate him for his skill. But in imminently dangerous cases, necessity decides. The true physician is born with a physician's heart and feels for the woes of his fellow men. And, though a man has obtained a diploma, he is no physician and ought not to practice if his soul is not in his work and his heart full of benevolence to the afflicted. The true physician, having a sympathy and an intense desire to be of service, if there are two persons requiring him, would say, “This one is in the more imminent danger. I shall go to him first.”

Now what is most certainly only fair to acknowledge concerning human physicians, we must admit with a far greater cogency concerning the Great Physician of souls. If there were two sinners both perishing and Christ were not able to save at the same moment more than one, He would go to that one first which needed Him most. This is His rule. He acts according to sovereignty, but that sovereignty is under the control of His own infinite mercy. If He hears a cry from two hearts today, if He should give any preference, the preference would be given to that which was the cry of the most lost, the most abject, the most needy sinner.

Now think this over and you will see that it is true, and most consolatory. What was it that made Christ a physician at all? Was it not because men were sick with sin? Suppose they had been perfect—would Christ have ever been a Savior if men had not been lost? Brethren, it would have been a work of supererogation—it would have been a folly, a monstrous folly, on His part—to undertake an office which was not required of Him! It is *sin* which makes room for His work as a Savior. I say it—you will understand me—He is only a Savior because there are sinners and His Saviorship is based upon our sinnership!

He takes that position because He is *needed*. Again, what was the main thought which was upon Him when He was compounding His great medicine? What was it that made Him shed great drops of blood? Was it human guilt? Or do you think, perhaps, human merit? Why guilt, and guilt alone! What made Him give His back to the scourgers and His cheeks to the smiters? What made Him stretch His arms to the Cross and give His feet to the nails?

What made Him bear the insufferable wrath of Almighty God? Was it man's *goodness*? Why you cannot think of such a thing! It was human vileness, villainy, degradation, iniquity which made such sufferings as these all necessary! As I see, then, Christ in His great surgery, compound-

ing the Almighty medicine which is to expel the disease from the veins of humanity, I see Him every moment thinking of sin! Sin! SIN! Man's sin makes Him die. And now that He is in Heaven, Beloved, what is it that Christ is thinking of there?

"He makes intercession"—what for? For the righteous? If they were self-righteous, perfectly righteous, they would not need intercession from Him. "He makes intercession for the *transgressors*." He is exalted on high—what for? To reward the good? No, verily, but to give repentance and remission of sins—evidently to those who have no repentance and whose sins have need to be forgiven. Up in Heaven Christ still has His eyes upon sinners—*sinner*s are the jewels whom He seeks!

Where, again, was Jesus Christ when He was on earth? Did He not spend the most of His time among sinners? Was He not always dealing out healing to the sick, life to the dead, and so on? You might ask again, on the other hand, to whom is the Gospel sent? What is it? "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." That is the Gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned."

So those who are bid to believe are evidently those who deserve to be damned. Need, need, need alone quickens the Physician's footsteps, bringing Jesus from the Throne of Glory to the Cross, and in His spiritual power bringing Him every day from the Throne of His Father down to brokenhearted heavy-laden souls. Now this is very plain talking and you all receive it—but still most of the people do not understand it. A minister, when he had done preaching in a country village, said to a farm-laborer who had been listening to him, "Do you think Jesus Christ died to save good people, or bad people?"

"Well, Sir," said the man, "I should say He died to save good people." "But did He die to save bad people?" "No, Sir. No, certainly not, Sir." "Well, then, what will become of you and me?" "Well, Sir, I do not know. I dare say you are pretty good, Sir. And I try to be as good as I can." That is just the common doctrine. And though we think it has died out among us, that is the religion of ninety-nine English people out of every hundred who know nothing of Divine Grace—we are to be as good as we can. We are to go to church or to chapel and do all that we can and then Jesus Christ died for us and we shall be saved.

Whereas the Gospel is that He did *not* do anything at all for people who can rely on themselves—but gave Himself for lost and ruined ones. He did not come into the world to save self-righteous people! On their own testimony, they do not want to be saved. He comes because we need Him, and therefore He comes only to those who need Him! And if we do not need Him and are such good, respectable people, we must find our own way to Heaven. Need, need alone, is that which quickens the Physician's footsteps.

IV. We therefore come to another point, upon which we shall not stay many minutes. It follows, therefore, and the text positively asserts it, that

THE WHOLE—THAT THOSE WHO HAVE NO GREAT NEED—NO NEED AT ALL, WILL BE UNAIDED BY CHRIST.

Of course they *ought* to be left alone. No physician in his right mind thinks of sending a prescription, nor does any surgeon think of sending his bottles and his boxes of pills to people who profess to be perfectly well! The prescription would be put into the fire and the medicine thrown in the streets—the man himself would reckon it to be a gross insult. Christ did not come into the world merely to insult humanity. If humanity is the fine thing it thinks it is, then let it exalt itself as it may and let it go on with the health it thinks it possesses! Let it work out its own salvation if it will even allow that this is required.

To send a physician to those who are whole is an insult to the physician, too. He knocks at the door, “Who is ill here?” is the first question. “Nobody, we are all well, thank you, Sir. We are all well, we thank God—we are not as other men are down the street there, we have no fever. The smallpox never comes here, we never catch scarlet fever. We have nothing of the kind, Sir! We are glad to see you—glad to see you—but we have nothing the matter with us.”

The physician would find at once that he had been hoaxed in being asked there. And that truly is the treatment Jesus Christ gets from a great many people. You hear them say, “Lord have mercy upon us miserable sinners.” They are dressed in satin and all sorts of fine clothes, and as good a people as you would find in all the parish. And if you come to question them, they are not “miserable sinners” at all. I would like to chalk “miserable sinners” on their backs and see whether they could bear it. It is the same with you—you come here and if I pray about sinners, there are some of you who say, “Yes, yes, we are sinners.”

But if I came round and said, “Now let us take the Ten Commandments—have you broken them?” I daresay there are some here who would say, “Really, I do not know that I have in particular done anything wrong. I do not feel that I have erred very remarkably.” No, the fact is you insult Christ by sending to Him when you are not ill and it is nothing better than impertinence, though you think it to be a compliment! The whole have no need of a physician—there is no need for a physician’s skill. “Why,” says the doctor, as he looks round upon all his store of knowledge, what is the good of this? A fool is as good as I am to a man who is not ill. If you were sick, I would try to do my best, but as there is nothing the matter with you, there is no room for me.”

You may fetch any crossing-sweeper and he will be of as much use to you as the best physician when you are not ill. So if you do not confess yourselves really to be sinners, Jesus will have no preciousness in your eyes. He will be but an ordinary person. If you are not sick, there is no likelihood of gratitude. Men will not thank a physician for doing nothing. You will never be thankful to Christ for saving you if you do not feel that you need saving.

Then again, there will be no honor to Him. Suppose you went to Heaven and entered there in the same self-righteous frame of mind as you are in

now—what would you say? “Well done!” There would be no honor to Christ, no glory to Jesus. A man must have a deep and conscious need of Christ or else he cannot illuminate the Throne of Christ with glory by his praise when he shall enter Heaven. Now I think there is some sweet music in what I have been saying to those of you who do need—though it must sound like a mockery to those of you who think you do not need it.

V. To conclude, it follows then, that **THOSE WHO ARE SICK SHALL BE HELPED BY JESUS.** Let the question go round these galleries and this area this morning, “Am I sick? Am I sinful? Then I have a need of Jesus and need is the only thing that will bring Jesus to me!” “Oh,” says one, “but I am so very sinful.” Then you have a very great need and there is room for very great power on the Savior’s part! And that display of Divine Grace shall give Him very great glory!

Sinner, believe on Him, that He can save you! Trust Him to save you and let not your great sin keep you back. “Oh, but I have so many sins!” Then, again, you have the greater need! And as it is need that brings the doctor, so your many needs will be so many knocks at His door, so many rings at His bell! He will come the faster—only plead earnestly every one of your sins and ask Him to have pity upon you. “Yes,” you say, “but I have been so long sick.” Then your case is a very bad one and there is the more need of His care. He healed the woman that had been thirty-six years disabled, and if you have been thirty-six years—yes, if it is eighty years—He is still able to heal all your need—let us keep to that—your need is your only plea. You have evidently a very strong plea, for you have a very great need.

“Ah,” says another, “but I have relapsed since I thought I was healed—I have backslidden.” Now there is a *special* promise given to that form or sickness, “I will heal their backsliding.” He does not specially say, “I will heal their drunkenness and so on,” but here is a special promise for a special case! Now you need Him. This is a great sin, this backsliding. Go to Him—rather ask Him to come to you. “Yes,” says another, “but I cannot feel my sin as I would.” This only proves how much you need the Lord Jesus, since you have not even that form of fitness which lies in a deep *sense* of need! You cannot even *feel*, for you have a heart of stone.

Oh, make this a plea with Him. Say, “Jesus I need You more than anybody else, for there are some who have a little health. They can feel they are diseased, but I have not even that. I need You, oh I need You more than any other!” Perhaps you will say, “But I cannot believe on Him as I would.” Then add that, also, to your other sins—confess your unbelief! Tell Him you have great need of Him to give you faith. And go to Him and oh, may He help you to believe that He is able to forgive this sin, also. “Well,” says one, “but I grow worse the more I think about these things.” I am glad of it, dear Friend! This growing worse is a part of the cure!

Suppose you should keep on growing worse—if you should get to feel yourself as black as the devil and as damned as a lost soul—yet while you are in *this world* the Great Physician can heal you! And you still have this great plea—that you *need* Him—you *NEED* Him. “Oh,” says one, “I cannot

see how I can plead my *need* as the only thing.” My dear Friend, what would you plead? Suppose you were publicly begging. If I had to turn to the trade of a beggar, believe me, I would not wear this black coat, or, if I did, I would take care to have it pretty well riddled with holes! Because the great thing you have to do when you plead in the street is to convince the passers-by that you are in *need*.

Some lean, wretched-looking fellows have faces which are worth a fortune to them! Their cheeks white with consumption—their bodies thin and lean as with starvation—with scarcely a handful of rags on them. They squat down in some corner and write on a paper, “I am starving,” and as you pass them you cannot help it—your hand goes into your pocket! “Here is a case of destitution,” you say—and you give them relief. Imitate these vagabonds in all but their deception! Use their logic, the rational argument that need is a beggar’s best plea!

You are destitute! You are starving! Spread your case before God. The best case you can make out in order to prevail with God is a bad one. Let it be as bad as it can be and I venture to say the worst is the best. Do not be apologizing, attempting to make your sins less than they are. Tell Him you are a wretch undone without His Sovereign Grace. And there, guilty and vile, and self-aborred, fall flat before Him and say, “Lord Jesus, if You want someone to heal, I am just the man. If You want a case that can be blazoned abroad and that will make the public ears ring and ring again with the praise of Your all-healing medicine, I am Your man, Lord. “If You want one full of sores and wounds and putrefying disease like Job upon a dunghill. If You want one that is very far gone—that is rotten through and through—Lord, I am Your man.”

O believe, Sinner, He is *your* Savior, for while He loves to meet with such cases as yours, you should rejoice to meet with such a Savior as He is! And all you are asked to do is to believe that He can save you and to trust Him to do it! If you knew Him, you would believe Him. He loves to save. He can save the vilest! Trust Him then and may the Spirit of God so lead you to understand Him that you can rely upon Him! And, if you do, He will say, “Sinner, your sins are forgiven you, be of good cheer, go on your way rejoicing.” May God bless these words, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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GOOD CHEER FROM GRACE RECEIVED

NO. 3020

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE. NEWINGTON.

“And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”
Matthew 9:20-22.

“But as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanchd. And Jesus said, Who touched Me? When all denied, Peter and they that were Him said, Master, the multitude throng You and press You, and You say, Who touched Me? And Jesus said, Somebody has touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me. And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole: go in peace.”
Luke 8:42-48

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon this Miracle, published in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, are as follows—No. 1809, Volume 30—MAY I?; No. 2018, Volume 34—CURED AT LAST and No. 2019, Volume 34—SHE WAS NOT HID—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

THE words of good cheer which our Savior spoke to this woman were not given to her while she was coming to Him, for that would have been premature. She had not avowed her desire to be healed. She had uttered no prayer. She had actually as yet sought nothing at the Savior's hands and, therefore, she had not reached the stage at which comfort is fitting. She does not appear to have required comfort in taking her first step—she was resolved upon that and she took it without fail. It is one of the most unwise things under Heaven to comfort people who do not require it. When we are dealing with enquirers, our love may bring them loss if we offer them words of cheer when they need admonition or rebuke. Any comfort which keeps a soul short of Christ is dangerous. A sinner's main

business is to get to Jesus, to exercise *personal* faith in the personal Savior—and we have no right to a gleam of comfort until we have heartily and honestly trusted in Christ. If encouragements to believe are used as a sort of halfway house to rest in before actually believing, they are mischievously used and may ruin our souls!

This afflicted woman did not require to be cheered so soon, for she had such confidence in Christ and such a resolve to put her confidence to the test, that difficulties could not hinder her, nor crowds keep her back. The Savior was in the press—she joined the throng and with a holy boldness mixed with a sacred modesty she came behind Him, only wishing to touch His garment, or even the fringe of it—feeling persuaded that if she did but come into contact with the Lord, no matter how, she would be healed. According to her faith so was it done to her! And *it was after she had been healed that our Lord spoke comfortingly to her*. He brought not forth the cup of cordial till the need for it had fully come. After she had touched Him and her faith had made her whole, a trial awaited her and her spirit was ready to faint—and then the tender One cheered her by saying, “Your faith has made you whole: go in peace.”

It happens to many and many a heart that after it has obtained the blessing of salvation and has been healed of the disease of sin, a time of fear occurs. After it has made its confession of faith, a season of trembling follows occurring, perhaps, as a reaction from the joy of salvation, a rebound of the spirit from excessive delight. We eat the heavenly provision eagerly and it is sweet to our taste and yet, afterwards, our long hunger having weakened us, we do not digest the food with ease—and pains ensue for which medicine is required. We fear and tremble because of the greatness of the mercy received and then this word is needed—“Be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole.”

We will meditate, first, upon *this woman’s need of comfort*. Secondly, upon the *comfort which Jesus gave her*. And then, in the third place we will enter a little further into that comfort and think of *the faith which Jesus Christ declared had made her whole*—the faith to which He pointed her for comfort.

I. Come, then, dear Friend, and attentively consider THIS WOMAN’S NEED OF GOOD CHEER. She felt in her body that she was made whole and yet she stood in urgent need of comfort. This necessity arose from several causes.

First, *she had hoped to obtain the blessing secretly, but she was found out*. She thought that by coming behind the Lord Jesus in the press, she would not be observed. And she anxiously desired secrecy because the peculiarity of her bodily disorder caused her to dread publicity. She aimed at gaining her end and retreating unnoticed into the multitude. Truth to tell, she stole the cure! Her touch was given in stealth, no eye resting upon her. No disciple seems to have spied her out, nor had anyone in the throng perceived the deed, or else when the Master said, “Who touched Me?” one or other of them would have pointed her out. So far she had shunned observation and even the Savior, Himself, had not seen her with His bodily eyes. But faith such as hers could not be

hidden. It was not meet that such a flower should bloom unseen. She is called for and she stands discovered, the center of all eyes.

You, perhaps, dear Friend, have hoped to find salvation and to keep it a secret. You entered the House of Prayer a stranger to the things of God, but very anxious—there you sat and wept—but you tried to conceal your feelings from those who sat near you. You have gone in and out of the place of worship, seeking the Savior, but fearing to be suspected of doing so. Nobody spoke to you or, if anyone did, you evaded all the questions that were put to you, for you were as jealous of your secret as if you carried diamonds and were afraid of thieves!

Now you have believed in the Savior, or at least you hope so, but you court secrecy just as much. You have found honey and you have tried to eat it all alone—not because you grudge others eating it with you, but because you are afraid of them. You did not wish mother or father, kinsfolk or acquaintance to suspect you of being a Christian. You shrank from the blessed charge and desired to be a secret friend of Jesus—a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea. To your great amazement you have been found out. Like Saul, you hid among the stuff, but the people have called you forth. Your love to Jesus has oozed out and is spoken of by many! Do you wonder? How can fire be hidden? Your speech has betrayed you. Your manner and spirit have revealed you as odors betray sweet flowers. And now that it is out, you feel a sinking of spirit at the notice you have attracted. Your modesty cries, “They take me for a Christian. Can I live like a Christian? Shall I be able to adorn my profession? They have discovered me in the family—my brothers and sisters see that there is a change in me. Is it a real change? Or shall I turn out to be one of those deceivers who have a name to live, and yet are dead?” Your heart fails you for fear of future backsliding and apostasy. And well it may be, for flesh is weak and the world is bewitching—and Satan is subtle and deceitful. Whatever comfort there is in our present meditation will be meant for you since it is intended for persons embarrassed by being forced out of the shade of solitude into the glare of observation—troubled because they fear that they shall not honor the holy name which is named upon them. To you who are in that condition, Jesus says, at this moment, “Be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole.”

This poor woman, in addition to being found out, *had been constrained to make a public personal testimony*. As we have already noticed, her case was a very special one in which privacy would naturally be courted. But that privacy had been invaded—the Savior had looked for her and had demanded, “Who touched Me?” And she, all trembling and afraid, had been constrained to fall down before Him and to tell Him all the truth! Do you wonder that the excitement was too much for her? The people had been astonished as they heard of the wondrous power which had emanated from the Person of Christ, even through the fringe of His garment—and that astonishment, in a great measure, referred to *her*. She was the observed of all observers! Of her cure she had to make a

public acknowledgment. She was equal to the task. Being brought to bay, she did her work bravely and bore full and telling testimony. Take careful note that our Lord did not bid her be of good cheer till she had done so! She trembled before she confessed the Lord's deed of Grace which had been worked upon her, but, as soon as she had made a public avowal, her Lord said to her, "Daughter, be of good comfort."

I have known certain timid ones who have wished to unite with the Church on the sly and to make no open confession either by word of mouth or by Baptism. I have refused to be a party to the breeding of cowards, and they have lived to thank me for what seemed a harsh demand! Yet, when the confession has been made, once and for all, many brave hearts have been full of anxiety. They have confessed Christ before men—they have proclaimed what the Lord has done for their souls—and after it has been all over, they have been overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility and have said within themselves, "What great things will now be expected of me? What have I had the courage to say? Shall I be able to live up to it all?" After the bold, open confession, comes the inward shrinking! Though they are not sorry that they made the admission for, on the contrary, they would make it a thousand times over if they could glorify Christ thereby, yet they know their weakness and tremble lest they should ever behave themselves so as to prove unworthy of the cause of their Beloved Redeemer! If you, dear Friend, have just come out from the world and have newly said, "I am on the Lord's side," do not be surprised if what you have just done should, upon calm consideration, look almost like presumption. A sense of fear is natural when you see to what a service your dedication vows have bound you. At such a time Jesus will give you the comfort of the text, "Be of good cheer: your faith has made you whole." May you have Grace to receive it by faith and to drink in all its consolation!

This, however, is not quite all the reason for the woman's needing encouragement at the moment the Lord bestowed it. This woman, no doubt, *had a very deep reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ*. She had such an esteem for Him that even His garments were thought by her to be saturated with healing energy! And now, when she found herself immediately in His Presence, she trembled and was afraid. She had come behind Him, no doubt, to a great extent out of modesty and humility as well as out of timidity. But now she finds herself face to face with the glorious Lord and He is asking her questions—and in full view of all the people she has to acknowledge her faith in Him. I hardly think that she was afraid of the people, but I do think that her faith was so reverential that she felt an awe at being found immediately in the Presence of the Lord.

Beloved Friend, you have been singing lately—

***"Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,"***

and you have joined in meetings where all have been filled with a sacred delight because they have met with Jesus. And I should not wonder if when you have been alone at home afterwards, and you have thought the

matter over, it has seemed too gracious a thing to be really true that the Lord of Glory had lovingly communed with you! As your thoughts of Him have risen in reverential love, you have said, "Is it possible? Is it true? Am I dreaming? Has the Son of God really looked on *me* in love? Can it be true that He who wears the majesty of Heaven, has set His heart upon *me* and has come to tabernacle in my breast? This is a miracle of miracles! Is it, indeed, a fact?" You have felt pressed down by the weight of the Divine Goodness. I remember well, not only the joy I had when I found the Savior, but the horror of great darkness which fell upon me within a very short time after I had rejoiced with unspeakable joy. It was on this account I knew that I had found the Lord—I was fully assured of my salvation and full of joy as to my possession of His love. But then I asked, "Is it not too good to be true? Is salvation altogether of Free Grace? Is there an everlasting love of God and is it fixed on me? Am I, indeed, an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ?" The brightness of the Glory blinded my weak eyes—by floods of amazing love I was carried off my feet! Are you in such a condition? Then it is time for the Savior's gentle words to sound in your heart, "Be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole." When a reverent sense of the Lord's amazing condescension causes us to swoon at heart, He will stay us with flagons and comfort us with apples. This is a sweet melancholy which Infinite Love can soon relieve.

Perhaps the greatest reason for the trembling of the woman in the narrative lay *in a sense of her faulty coming*. When she looked back at the way in which she had approached the Lord, she saw a mass of faults in it—as we may well do in ours. When she had been made whole, her faith would say to her, "The blessed Lord did not deserve that you should come behind Him and touch His garment in that *unbelieving* fashion. See what a Savior He is! What love, what tenderness shines in His face! Why did you not *openly* come to Him? You crouched in the rear—why did you not look Him full in the face and crave His mercy? He would have received you freely—why did you suspect His Grace? You may have wounded Him by doubting His willingness to bless you. You should not have indulged such unbelief." After a seeker has found the Lord and has experienced salvation, he is sometimes tempted to question whether he is really a Believer in Jesus. He reasons within himself thus—"My faith is so mixed with unbelief that I am ashamed of it. Why did I come to Jesus in such a way as I did? It was well to come, but oh that I had come in a more childlike spirit and that I had done Him the justice to have a greater confidence in Him!" Do you, dear Friend, know this experience? If so, to you and to all others who are thus exercised, the comfort of our text is addressed!

Very likely conscience would charge the trembling woman with dishonest stealth in her way of getting her cure. "You felt, at the time, that you had no right to the blessing, but you snatched at it and did not ask the Savior's leave to take it! You thought that you would be healed and then run away—and none would be any the wiser—thus you robbed

the Lord of His Glory. Can a blessing rest on such a way of acting?" Conscience made her tremble and, therefore, the Savior as good as said, "Daughter, do not suspect your faith, for it has made you whole and, therefore, it is good faith. However it acted, it has brought you healing—therefore do not distress yourself about its imperfections, but go in peace." He pointed her for comfort to the fact that however faulty might be the way of her coming, it had healed her and, therefore, she might well be content. Is there not also a word of cheer in this for us? If we have been renewed in heart and life, the faith by which this change was worked cannot but be good!

Perhaps, too, she might have felt that it was sadly too bold of her, a woman unclean according to the Law, to push among the throng and dare to touch the Lord, Himself. Many and many a time my heart has whispered to itself, "How could you be so bold as to trust Christ?" The devil has called it presumption and my trembling heart has feared that it might be so. One thing I know—I am certain that I am healed, even as the woman knew that the cure was worked in her! This I know, that I am not what I once was, but I am made a new creature in Christ Jesus! Yet the question will propose itself, "How can it be that you dared to dash in and seize on mercy, being such a sinner and so utterly unworthy?"

For my own part, I confess that I acted toward the Lord Jesus somewhat like a poor starving dog who saw meat in the butcher's shop and could not restrain himself from laying hold of it and running away with it! Many a butcher would chase the wretched creature and take the meat from him, but our Savior is of a nobler temper. If our Lord Jesus sees us grasp His mercy, He will never take it away from us! He says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." O you who are quite unfit to come to Christ and altogether unworthy of His favor, you are the very people who may come and welcome! O you who say that you have no warrant to come to Jesus, He would have you come without any warrant but His own Word which says, "Whoever will, let him come." Let your lack of inward warrant be your warrant! You are needy and sinful—let that be your passport! Come along with you and boldly grasp the covenanted mercy! It will not be theft, for Jesus has already given over Himself and all that He has to all who are willing to have Him! Have courage to take freely what the Lord freely gives—

***"To sinners poor, like me and you,
He says He'll 'freely give.'
Come, thirsty souls, and prove it's true—
Drink, and forever live!"***

Yet it may be that after you have done so—and have obtained the blessing—you will fall into a fainting fit and swoon with fear because you question your right to it. Listen to a word of comfort. "Possession is nine tenths of the law," and it is all the ten tenths of the Gospel! So long as you have Christ, there is no need to ask how you got Him. Yet the trembling conscience whispers, "You had no right to believe. You are not the man who should have ventured trust in Jesus." Then you will need a cheering word and then you will have it, even as our dear Master said, "Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole." Let what

Divine Grace has done for you plead your justification for having believed in Jesus! If you are, indeed, changed and renewed, question not your faith, but believe yet more—and you shall see greater things than these!

Thus I set forth the woman's need of comfort. And if anyone else is in a similar case to hers, let him look up and be of good cheer, for her feet have trodden the way of fear before him. Let him say, as Augustus Toplady did—

***“If my Lord Himself reveals
No other good I need!
Only Christ my wounds can heal,
Or silence my complaint.
He that suffered in my place
Shall my Physician be—
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”***

II. May the Holy Spirit rest upon us while we notice THE COMFORT WHICH JESUS GAVE HER. He said to her, “Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole.”

There was comfort in the loving title. To call her “Daughter” was most kind and tender. I suppose that she must have been of much the same age as our Lord and, therefore, He did not call her, “Daughter,” because of her youth. When our Lord said, “Daughter,” He expressed His tender consideration for her which made Him feel towards her as tenderly as a father to a child. “Sister” would have been the word if He had only meant human relationship, but, “Daughter,” meant careful affection. While Jesus is our Brother, there is a sense in which He is also our Father—and He exercises towards His poor, downcast children, a father's pity and care.

Such a title must have dispelled her fears. To be so near of kin to Him who had worked a matchless cure upon her was consolation enough. Let our tried and cast-down friends rest with us concerning this matter—you have believed in Jesus and you have confessed His name and you are made whole—go your way in peace! From now on you belong to Christ and you are related to Christ as His daughter or son. Do not, therefore, question your right, since the Grace of adoption has confirmed it. If the Lord calls you His daughter, you did no wrong when you touched your Father's garment. If He avows you as His child, be not so unwise as to question the Divine declaration! Your rights and privileges are almost boundless. You may do much more than touch His garment's hem—you may lean on His breast! He gives you greater privileges than those which you have yet enjoyed, yes, favors beyond what you ask or even think! To those who believe on Him, He gives the right and privilege to become the sons of God, even to as many as believe on His name, so that all question about your right to do this or that may be ended, for He calls you His own beloved child and says, “Be of good comfort.”

The main point of consolation was that she was cured. Jesus said to her, “Your faith has made you whole,” which would bring her comfort in several ways, for, first, *it was a great consolation that her impurity was gone.* So, my Brothers and Sisters, if you have believed in Jesus, you are

no longer regarded as unclean before the Lord. The blood of the Lord Jesus has removed your defilement. You are, “accepted in the Beloved.” His blood, like the hyssop of which David sang, has purged you and you are clean. Do not look upon yourself as being what you are not, but know yourself to be whiter than snow in Christ Jesus. In the removal of your guilt and the renewal of your nature, the source of your defilement is destroyed! Do not, therefore, hide your face and stand afar off from God, but come boldly to the Throne of Grace, since Grace has made you meet to come. When my anxious Brother or Sister, you come before the Lord with the recollection of all your past transgressions, you may well be ashamed and confounded and feel as if you should never open your mouth any more—but know of a surety that your sins have ceased to be—they shall not be mentioned against you any more forever! God, even the God of Judgment, has blotted out the record! Humble yourself for having been a transgressor, but let a sense of perfect forgiveness embolden you in coming to your Savior!

Whatever you once were, God views you not as you were in yourself, but as what you are in Christ Jesus. When you come to His Table and feast among His family, do not hesitate to feel at home, although it cannot be denied that you once stood at the swine-trough and hungered after husks. Say within your believing heart, “Whatever I was, my Father has kissed me and put a ring on my hand and shoes on my feet. Therefore I will eat and drink as He bids me and I will not mar the music and the merriment by unbelieving lamentations. My Father rejoiced over me because He had received me safe and sound, and shall I not be glad at being thus received?” God be thanked that though you were the servants of sin, you have obeyed from the heart that form of Doctrine which was delivered unto you—and you are now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God! Though you were once unclean, polluted and polluting, it may be said of you, “But you are washed, but you are sanctified.” Perhaps your old name will stick to you as it did to Rahab the harlot and to Simon the leper—but do not feel degraded since the Lord has turned away your reproach. Hear Jesus Christ Himself say to you, “Daughter, be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole.”

Remember that and rejoice in His Presence. You have a right to be among His people, for your faith has made you whole—and this is the mark which all His people wear. You are a sinner, it is true, but you are a sinner saved from wrath through Infinite Love! You are no longer a miserable sinner, so why should you call yourself so? You are a happy, blessed, forgiven child whom the Lord has taken from the dunghill and set among His princely children. Rejoice, therefore, because your faith has made you whole! Is not this a theme for boundless gratitude? Come boldly into the Church! Come boldly to the Throne of Grace for you are so cleansed by the blood of Atonement that you may come unquestioned even into the Holy of Holies! Has not Jesus said, “He that is washed is clean every whit?”

The woman was comforted by being made to see in her cure that Jesus was not angry with her. Our Lord in effect said to the saved woman,

“Have you been afraid that you did wrong in touching Me? Are you fearful lest I should be grieved because you did not believe enough in Me to come and face Me, but must steal behind Me? Do you suspect that I shall blame you because of the littleness of your faith? Now”—He puts it so sweetly—“do not think so, but be of good comfort: for your faith has made you whole.” Though her faith dared only to touch the hem of His garment, it was evidently acceptable faith, for because of it the Lord had made her whole! It is clear that the Lord has not rejected our faith when He acknowledges and honors it. He cannot be vexed at a confidence which He has evidently rewarded!

Beloved Friend, has your faith been such that it has made you abhor sin? Has it been such that the things you once loved you now hate—and the things you once hated you now love? Has your faith made a complete change in you? Are you a new man or woman in Christ Jesus? Have you been made morally and spiritually whole? Then be sure that no wrong faith could have worked this good work in you! A faith that produces wholeness or holiness of life cannot have been a mistake! Whether in your coming to Jesus you came behind Him or before Him. Whether you touched His gracious hand or touched His garment’s hem. Whether you did it secretly or did it publicly—all these enquiries are interesting, but not essential—for if a change of heart has been worked in you and you are saved, then the Lord Jesus must be pleased with you! He could not have worked a great work in you and yet be angry with you and, therefore, you need not be troubled as to the way in which you came to Him. “Be of good comfort: your faith has made you whole,” is a most sweet and effectual way of lulling fears to rest!

Possibly the poor woman may have been haunted by the fear that she would suffer a relapse, but our Lord consoles her by *the assurance that her faith had effectually made her whole*. She had not obtained a little time of deliverance from the evil, so that it would recur again, but she was made *whole*. The Lord gives her a medical certificate! He sends her forth with a clean bill of health! Oh, how sweet it is when Jesus Christ gives to any of us a full assurance of complete salvation so that we are delivered from all fear of the malady’s return and can walk abroad free from fear! I know that some Christians think that after Christ has fed us and given us new hearts, the old hearts may come back—and though His Grace in us is a well of water which He promises shall spring up to everlasting life, yet they think that it may dry up to the last drop. Beloved, I do not thus read the Word of God—the very opposite is clear to me in Sacred Writ! The work of God in the soul is a lasting and an everlasting work! If you are once healed by Christ, He has worked in you an effectual cure which will hold good throughout time and throughout eternity! Solomon truly said, “I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever.” He who has made you whole will *keep* you whole, for His gifts and calling are without repentance!

The comfort to the woman in the narrative was meant, as we have seen, to meet the trial occasioned by her open confession. She had been

driven to reveal her secret and this, to a large extent, caused her trembling. She would rather have hidden in the crowd, but she was called to the front and made to confess Jesus before all. The Savior, in effect, says, "You need not be ashamed to tell your story for it *ends well*, since you are made whole. You need not be ashamed to let everybody know that your faith has healed you. What does it matter what your sickness was, if you are now recovered from it?" It will be no disgrace to us to confess our guilt if, at the same moment, we are assured of full forgiveness! It is annoying to hear persons talk flippantly of their sins before conversion as though they were proud of them. They seem to glory in them as a Greenwich pensioner might boast of his battles and his broken bones. Such things are to be mentioned with blushes and tears. Say as little as you can about those things of which you are now ashamed, and let what you say be spoken in lowliest penitence. Still, there are times when you are bound to tell out your case to the praise of the Glory of the Grace which so abounded where your sin abounded! And then you need not be afraid to tell your story, for Grace has made it end so well. Let the world know that though foully defiled, you came into contact with the Savior by simply, humbly believing in Him—and that by this simple means you are saved.

Once more, if anyone is conscious that faith has saved him, he may take to himself the good cheer of the text and use it wherever he goes, *for nothing can happen to him so bad as that which has been removed*. "Your faith has saved you," is an antidote for many ills. "I am very poor," says one. So was this woman, for she had spent all that she had upon physicians. But Jesus said to her, "Your faith has made you whole." "I am very sick," cries a friend, "I feel low and ill." But "your faith has saved you"—is not this joy enough? Oh, what a blessing it is to be saved! That you are saved is enough to set all your being ablaze with joy! I am sure that the healed woman felt rich, though she had not two pence to chink together in her pocket! She was made whole by faith and that was wealth enough for her! To be one of the Lord's saved ones is joy enough to bear up the heart under every affliction!

Do you not see that if your faith has changed your character and delivered you from the desperate plague of sin, there remains no longer any impossibility or even difficulty in the way of duty? You have been half afraid to try to teach the children in the Sunday school but, surely, since your faith has made you whole, you can teach a few little children! You have been afraid to address a score of people in a village chapel. But you need not be afraid to try if God has called you—for the faith which has made you whole can give you "a word in season." What is there that faith cannot do? Why, if my faith has had the power to drop the burden of my sin into the sepulcher of my Lord, what is there that it cannot accomplish? If, by that faith, my soul has risen from among the dead and taken her seat at the right hand of the Father in the heavenly places in Christ, what shall stand in its way? If we have to force a passage through a throng of devils, we need not hesitate! And though all the world combined and stood against us, we need not fear! Our faith has made us

whole—who can undo the miracle? A faith which, by Divine Grace, saves us from Hell and secures us for Heaven—what is there that it cannot accomplish? It laughs at impossibilities and marches from strength to strength in majestic serenity! Holy confidence shall win victory upon victory till, at last it shall cry, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day!” I cannot imagine a sweeter consolation than this—“Your faith has made you whole: go in peace.” Endeavor to suck the honey out of it!

III. We will close this meditation by considering THE FAITH WHICH OUR LORD COMMENDED.

It made her whole. That is its best certificate of excellence! There is much to note in reference to that faith, but a few brief hints may suffice. Her faith is to be commended because *it outlived a long season of discouragement*. She had been afflicted 12 years—think of that! Patience had indeed had its perfect work in her. But she believed in Christ for a cure and the cure came to her! So will it be with everyone who will believe in Jesus. If there could be a soul found which had been living in sin 1,200 years—if it had faith in Jesus He would make it whole! After half a century of impenitence, he that believes in Christ Jesus is saved at once. Eighty years of sin vanish in a moment when a man trusts in the great Atonement! Come, dear unconverted Friend, and cast yourself at Christ’s feet at this quiet hour, for He will not cast you out!

The faith which healed this poor woman had *survived many failures*. She had been deceived by all sorts of quacks and medicine-men—and yet she had not lost the capacity for faith. It is said that she had “suffered many things of many physicians,” and I can well believe it, for if you read the prescriptions of the old doctors, you will quite agree that poor humanity has suffered many things from “the faculty.” The way in which the ancient doctors went to work to cure their patients much resembled that which a man would follow who was eager to kill them! Dr. Sangrado, by his bleeding and drenching, has sent many into a premature grave and, in Christ’s time, if you needed to be well, the first rule was to avoid all physicians!

I will tell you the names of a few spiritual doctors to whom I beseech you not to go, for if you do, you will suffer a great deal from them, but get no good. There is one whose name is Dr. Self-Confidence, who is in partnership with a relative called Dr. Self-Righteousness. Dr. Legality and his son, Mr. Civility, are another popular pair of cheats. You will find them at home whenever you call—and they will give you bitter doses or silver-coated pills as they see fit—but you will never be whit the better. There is a doctor about just now who was educated by the Jesuits and practices the Romeopathic system—wafers and wine and water are his specialties—to this school belong Mr. Ceremonies and Doctor Sacraments. None of these can heal a sick soul! Have nothing to do with them, but apply to the Beloved Physician, even the Lord Jesus Christ!

Some of us went to most of these pretenders and gave them a long trial—and though we were disappointed in them all—yet we still were enabled to believe in Jesus Christ! Dear Friend, do the same! Though you have been disappointed everywhere else, yet go and knock at Christ's door and that faith of yours which leaps over discouragement will make you whole!

Her faith *believed in simple touching*. She used no ceremonies—she only believed. It was a faith which believed that she would be healed *without payment*. She took the cure, gratis—she offered no fee. That is Gospel faith which takes Christ's forgiveness without money and without price, just as He presents it in the Gospel! Hers was a great faith, for she believed that Christ could heal her *when He was occupied with healing another*. He was hastening to the house of Jarius to work a miracle there, and yet she believed that He could heal her on the way! Can you, dear Reader, believe in this fashion? Do you know, of a surety, that however Jesus may be now occupied, He can without difficulty at this moment pardon and save you? If you have reached so great a confidence, then give the saving touch and trust Him once and for all!

The poor sick soul had a faith which assured her that *Christ could bless her when His back was turned*. Can you also reach this point? Some of God's own children can hardly trust Him when they see the Light of His Countenance, but this woman could trust Him when His back was turned to her. I would to God that we had, each of us, such confidence in Jesus that we would not doubt, under any circumstances, His power and willingness to save all who trust Him! He must save these who rely upon Him! It is a necessity of His Nature that those who touch Him should receive healing from Him!

Trusting in Jesus is a man's best evidence that he is saved, for it is written, "He that believes in Him is not condemned." Faith has made its possessor whole, whoever he may be! And if you are resting alone in Jesus and His finished work, the life of the holy has begun in you and you may, therefore, "be of good comfort."

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

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

MAY I? NO. 1809

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 6, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“If I may.”
Matthew 9:21.*

THE woman in the narrative was fully persuaded that if she did but touch our Lord's garment, she would be made whole. What she had heard and seen concerning Jesus made her sure of His superabundant power to heal the sick. A touch would do it. Yes, even a touch of His clothes. Her one and only question was, might she touch Him? Could she touch Him? She would surely be healed if she could touch, but was this allowable? Was this possible? I know that multitudes of sin-sick men and women are vexed with this same question. Oh that I could help them over the difficulty! May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, aid me!

This poor diseased woman did not utter this, “if,” of hers with her lips. Perhaps if she had, it might not have troubled her so much, for a silent doubt usually eats right into the heart. You have heard of the Spartan boy who had hidden a fox in his bosom and allowed it to eat into his vitals before he would admit it—beware of having a doubt hidden away in your heart gnawing and tearing! If you are even, now, suffering from, “If I may, if I may,” reveal the trouble to some tender Christian friend and you may soon escape from it.

But the sufferer now before us had the courage to put the question to a practical issue—she tried whether she might or not. She had the good sense, the Grace-given wisdom, not to wait until she had solved that question in her mind, but she went and solved it, as a matter of fact, whether she might or not—she went and actually *touched* the hem of the garment of the Savior—and she was made perfectly whole! Oh that those I am now addressing would have the bravery and the earnestness to do the same! Oh that they would, at once, put the disturbing question to a practical test! There can be but one result, for as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole.

Now, I know that souls are going to be saved tonight. Who they are, I cannot tell, but some are certain to come to the Savior and, this night, to be made perfectly whole! I know it because we prayed an hour ago for it downstairs, many of us, and we felt the assurance that we were heard. My dear son, in praying just now, I am sure felt a very remarkable liberty at the Mercy Seat and the witness of the Spirit within that he was heard. The Lord has heard the petitions which we have presented in the name of Jesus. You are going to be saved! I would to God that every unconverted person here would lean forward and say, “May it be I! God grant that sal-

vation may come to *me!*” I am going, therefore, in the simplest way possible, without any attempt at a sermon, to try to talk so as to meet this rankling question which lies within, festering and irritating many an earnest heart—this doubtful enquiry—“If I may.”

You know, many of you, who Jesus is, and you believe Him to be the Son of God, the Savior of men. You are sure that “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” You have no doubt about those eternal verities which surround His Godhead, His birth, His life, His death, His Resurrection and His Second Advent. The doubt is concerning *yourself* personally—“If I may be a partaker of this salvation.” You feel quite certain that faith in Jesus Christ will save *anyone*—will save *you* if you exercise it. You have no doubt about the doctrine of Justification by Faith. You have learned it and you have received it as a matter beyond all dispute, that he who believes in Him has everlasting life! And you know that he who comes to Him, He will in nowise cast out. You know the remedy and believe in its efficacy—but then comes the doubt—may *I* be healed by it?

At the back of your belief in faith hides the gloomy thought, “May I believe? May I trust? I see the door is open and many are entering. May I? I see that there is washing from the worst of sins in the sacred Fountain. Many are being cleansed. May I wash and be clean?” Without formulating a doubt so as to express it, it comes up in all sorts of ways and robs you of all comfort and, indeed, of all hope. When a sermon is preached, it is like as when one sets a table with all manner of dainties and you look at it, but do not feel that you have any right to sit down and partake. This is a wretched delusion! Its result will be deadly unless you are delivered from it! Like a harpy, it preys upon you, croaking forever! When you see the brooks flowing with their sparkling streams and you are thirsty, does there arise the thought in your heart that you are not permitted to drink? If so, you are out of your mind—you talk and think like one bereft of reason! Yet many are in this state *spiritually*. This doubting your liberty to come to Jesus is a very wretched business! It mars and spoils your reading and your hearing and your attempts to pray. And you will never get any comfort until this question has been answered in your heart once and for all—“May I?”

Our Authorized Version may not be exactly correct in this passage, but I do not care whether it is or not, so far as my address is concerned, for it does not depend upon the accuracy of a text. I am quite satisfied to preach from it, tonight, but there is another translation in the Revised Version which, I dare say, is more accurate. I will preach from that when I have done with the first. This shall be our subject—“If I may.” Or first, “*if I may be allowed.*” Secondly, “*if I may be enabled.*” Thirdly, “*if I actually do.*” This last is the Revised Version—“If I do but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole.”

I. First, take it as we have got it here—“IF I MAY BE ALLOWED, or permitted, to touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole.” That is your difficulty, is it?—Whether you have liberty and warrant to come and trust Christ—whether you, such a sinner as you are, are permitted to

repose your soul upon His great Atonement and His finished work. Let me reason with you a little.

In the first place, you are quite sure of this—that *there is nothing to forbid your coming and resting your guilty soul upon Christ*. I shall defy you, if you will read all the Old and New Testament through, to put your finger upon a *single* verse in which God has said that you may *not* come and put your trust in Christ. Perhaps you will reply that you do not expect to read it in the Bible, but God may have said it somewhere where it is not recorded. Well, I answer you there, for He says, “I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me In vain.” Now, He has bid you over and over again to seek His face, but He has *never* said that you shall seek His face in vain! Dismiss that thought!

Again I return to what I have said—there is nothing in the Scripture that refuses you permission to come and repose your soul, once and for all, upon Christ. It is written, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Does that exclude *you*? It is written, “*Whoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Does that shut *you* out? No, it *includes* you! It invites you! It encourages you! And I come, again, to what I have said—that nowhere in the Word of God is it written that you will be cast out if you come, or that Jesus Christ will not remove your burden of sin if you come and lay it at His feet.

Ah, no—a thousand passages of Scripture welcome you, but not *one* stands with a drawn sword to keep you back from the Tree of Life! Our heavenly Father sets His angels at the gates of His house to welcome all comers and there are no dogs to bark at poor beggars, nor so much as a notice that trespassers must beware! Come and welcome! There is none to say you may not!

Further, do you not think that *the very Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ should forbid your raising a doubt about your being permitted to come and touch His garment’s hem?* Surely, if anyone were to paint the Lord Jesus Christ as an ascetic, repelling, with lofty pride, the humbler folk who had never reached His dignity of consecration—if *any* were to paint Him as a Pharisee driving off publicans and sinners, or as an iceberg of righteousness chilling the sinful—it would be a foul slander upon His Divine Character! If anyone were to say that Jesus Christ is exacting—that He will not receive to Himself the guilty just as they are, but requires a great deal of them and will only welcome to Himself those who are, like Himself, good, true and excellent—that would not be a Truth of God but the direct opposite of it—for, “this Man receives sinners and eats with them,” was thrown in His face when He lived here below! And what the Prophet said of Him was most certainly true, if anything was ever true—“A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench.”

Little children are wonderful judges of character. They know intuitively who is kind. And so are loving women. They do not go through the processes of reasoning, but they come to a conclusion very soon as to a man’s personal character. Now, the children came and clambered our Redeemer’s knees and the mothers brought their infants for His blessing! How can you *dream* that He will repel *you*? The women wept and bewailed

Him! Whoever might refuse Him they pitied and, therefore, I am sure that He is not hard to move. Therefore I want you to feel sure of this—that there is *nothing* in the Savior's Character which can, for a moment, lead Him to discard you and drive you from His Presence! Those who know Him best will say that it is impossible for Him to ever refuse the poor and needy. Not a blind man could cry to Him without receiving sight, nor a hungry man look to Him without being fed! He was touched with a feeling of our infirmities—the most gentle, loving and tender of all that ever dwelt upon this earth! I pray you, then, take it for granted that you may come boldly to Him without fear of a rebuff. If He has power to heal you when you touch Him, rest assured that you may touch Him! You may believe—there is no question—for Jesus is too loving to refuse you. It will give the Lord Jesus joy to receive you! It is not possible that He should say no to you—it is not in His Nature to spurn you from His Presence.

Will you think, yet again, of *the fullness of Christ's power to save*, and make a little argument of it. Christ was so full of power to bless that the secret virtue even saturated His clothes! It overflowed His blessed Person. It ran down to the hem of His garments, yes, and it went to that blue hem which every Jew wore round about his dress—that fringe of blue. It went into that border, so that if the woman did but touch the raveling of His garment, virtue would stream into her! If the touch was a touch of faith, it mattered not where the contact was made. Well now, you often judge of a man's willingness to help by the power that he has. When a person has little to give, he is bound to be economical in his giving. He must look at every penny before he gives it if he has but a few pence to spare. But when a nobleman has no limit to his estate, you feel sure that *he* will freely give if his heart is generous and tender.

The blessed Lord is so full of healing power that He does not need to stint Himself as to the miracles of healing! He shall work and He must be, according to the goodness of His Nature, delighted to overflow, glad to communicate to those who come! You know if a city is straitened for water, the corporation will send out an order that only so much may be used. And then there is a stinting of public baths and factories, because there is a scarcity of the precious fluid. But if you go along the Thames when we have had a rainy season, you laugh at the notion of a short supply and economical rules! If a dog needs to drink from a river, nobody ever questions his right to do so. He comes down to the water and he laps and, what is more, he runs right into it, regardless of those who may have to drink after him! Look at the cattle, how they stand knee-deep in the stream and drink and drink again—and nobody ever says, as he goes up the Thames, that those poor London people will run short of water, for the dogs and the cattle are drinking it up before it gets down to London! No, it never enters our head to petition the Conservators to restrain the dogs and the cows, for there is so much water that there must be full liberty to everyone to drink to the full.

Your question is, "May I? May I?" I answer that question by this—there is nothing to forbid you! There is everything in the Nature of Christ to encourage you and there is such a fullness of mercy in Him that you cannot think that He can have the slightest motive for withholding His infinite

Grace. Moreover, suppose you come to Christ, as this woman came, and touch the hem of His garment—you *will not injure Him*. You ought to hesitate in getting good for yourself if you would injure the person through whom you obtain that good. But you will not injure the Lord Jesus Christ! He perceived that virtue had gone out of Him, but He did not perceive it by any pain He felt! I believe that He perceived it by the pleasure which it caused Him. Something gave Him unusual joy. A faith-touch had reached Him through His clothes and He rejoiced to respond by imparting healing virtue from Himself.

You will not defile my Lord, O Sinner, if you bring Him all your sins! He will not have to die, again, to put away your fresh burden of transgression! He will not have to shed one drop of blood to make Atonement for your multiplied sins—the one Sacrifice on Calvary anticipated all possible guiltiness. If you will come just as you are, He will not have to leave Heaven, again, and be born, again, on earth, and live another sorrowful life in order to save you! He will not need to wear another crown of thorns, or bear another wound in His hands, or feet, or side! He has done all His atoning work—do you not remember His victorious cry—“It is finished!”? You cannot injure Him, though all your injurious thoughts, words and deeds are laid upon Him! You will not be robbing Him of *anything* though your faith-touch should convey a life into yourself!

He has such a fullness about Him that if all you poor sinners will come at once, when you have taken away all of merit that you need, there will be as much merit left as there was before! When you deal with the infinite, you may divide and subtract, but you cannot diminish! If the whole race were washed in the infinite fountain of Jesus’ merit, the infinite would still remain! Let me tell you that if you come to Jesus and just trust Him, tonight—only *trust Him*—*you shall rather benefit Him than injure Him*, for it is His heart’s joy to forgive sinners! He longs and thirsts to heal wounded consciences. My Lord is hungering, even now that He is in Heaven, to bring poor sinners to His Father’s feet and reconcile them unto Him, so that you will bless Him—you will increase His joy, if you will return to the great Father whose house you have left! You will delight His heart as He, again, finds the lost piece of money, bears back the lost sheep and welcomes home the returning prodigal. I think you need not keep on asking, “If I may,” for these cheering reasons ought to convince you that you are fully warranted to trust in Him whom God has set forth to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins.

And might not this, also, help you?—*Others just like you have ventured to Him and there has not been a case in which they have been refused*. I thought, like you, when I was a child, that the Gospel was a very wonderful thing—and free to everybody but myself! I should not have wondered at all if my brother and sisters, as well as my father and mother had been saved. But, somehow, I could not get a hold of it, myself. It was a precious thing, quite as much out of my reach as the Queen’s diamonds. So I thought. To many the Gospel is like a tram-car in motion and they cannot jump upon it. I thought, surely, everybody would be saved, but I would not! And yet, soon after I began to cry for mercy, I found it! My expectations of difficulty were all sweetly disappointed. I believed and found im-

mediate rest unto my soul. When I once understood that there was life in a *look* at the Crucified One, I gave that look, by His Grace, and I found eternal life! And up to now I have never met with *anybody* who gave that look and was repulsed! No, they all say—

***“I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad.
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.”***

Nobody ever bears a contrary witness. I challenge the *universe* to produce a man who was chased from Christ’s door, or forbidden to find in Him a Savior! I pray you, therefore, observe that since others have come this way to life and peace, God has appointed it to be the *common thoroughfare of Grace*. Poor guilty Sinners, there is a sign set up—“This way for sinners! This way for the guilty! This way for the hungry! This way for the thirsty! This way for the lost! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Why, surely, you need not say, “If I may.”

And why do you think—and that is one more question I would put to you—*why do you think that the Lord Jesus Christ, in His mercy, has led you here, tonight?* “Oh, I always come,” says one. Then what has induced you always to come where Christ is talked about so much and where He saves so many? Surely the Lord means to accept you if you will believe on Jesus! “But I do not usually come here,” says one, “I only stepped in here, tonight, I am afraid, out of curiosity.” Yes, curiosity moved *you*—but may it not be that *compassion* moved *God* to guide you here? I like to hear a wife say, “My husband is not a member of the Church, Sir, but he comes to hear the Gospel and, therefore, I have hope for him.” Yes, yes, if we get them into the battle, a shot will come their way, one of these days! I love to see yon hungry sparrows round about the windows—they will get courage enough to pick up a crumb of mercy one of these days. I hope so. And why should it not be *now*? If the trouble is, “If I may,” I will ask you whether it does not help to remove that trouble to reflect that you are still on praying ground and pleading terms with God. You might, long before this, have been cast into despair! Should not the Lord’s long-suffering lead you to repentance and induce you to come to Christ?

Now listen, Friend—there is no room to say, “If I may,” for, first of all, *you are invited* to come and accept Christ as your Savior—invited over and over again in the Word of God! “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.” “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Jesus Christ invites all those that labor and are heavy laden to come unto Him and He will give them rest! God is honest in His invitations. You can be sure of that! If God invites you, He desires you to come and accept the invitation. After reading the many invitations in the Word of God to such as you are, you may not say, “If I may.” It would be a wicked questioning of the sincerity of God!

In addition to being invited, *you are entreated*. Many passages of Scripture go far beyond a mere *invitation*. God persuades and entreats you to

come to Him! He seems to cry as one that weeps, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" Our Lord and Master, when He made the feast, and they that were bid, did not come, sent out His servants to *compel* them to come in! He used more than a bare invitation—He put forth a Divine compulsion. I would entreat, persuade, exhort all of you who have not believed in Jesus to do so now! In the name of Jesus, I beseech you seek the Lord. I do not merely put it to you, "Will you or will you not?" but I would lay my whole heart by the side of the request and say to you, "Come to Jesus! Come and rest your guilty souls on Him!" Do you not understand the Gospel message? Do you know what it asks and what it gives? You shall receive perfect pardon in a *moment* if you believe in Jesus. You shall receive a life that will never die—receive it now, quick as a lightning flash, if you do but trust in the Son of God! Whoever you may be and whatever you may have done—if you will, with your heart, believe in Him whom God has raised from the dead, and obey Him henceforth as your Lord and Savior—all manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven you! God will blot out your iniquities like a cloud. He will make you begin *de novo*—afresh, anew! He will make you a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things shall pass away and all things become new.

But here is the point—believing in Jesus—and you look me in the face and cry, "But may I?" May you? Why, you are exhorted, invited, entreated to do so! Nor is this all. *You are even commanded to do it.* This is the *commandment*—that you believe on Jesus, whom He has sent. This is the Gospel, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." There is a command—with a threat for disobedience. Shall anybody ask, "May I," after that? If I read, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart," do I ask, "May I love God?" If I read, "Honor your father and your mother," do I ask, "May I honor my father and my mother?" No! A command is a permit and something more! It gives full allowance and much more. As you will be *damned* if you believe not! You have, herein, given you a right to believe—not only permission, but a warrant of the most practical kind. Oh, can you not see it? Will you not cry unto God, "Lord, if You will damn me if I do not believe, You have, in this, given me a full Gospel liberty to believe. Therefore I come and put my trust in Jesus."

"If I may"—why, I think that this questioning ought to come to an end right now! Will you not give it up? May the Holy Spirit show you, poor Sinner, that you may now lay your burden down at Jesus' feet and be at once saved! You may believe! You, right now, have full permission to confess your sin and to receive immediate pardon—see if it is not so. Cast your guilty soul on Him and rise forgiven and renewed, henceforth to live in fervent gratitude, a miracle of love!

That is the first meaning of the text—"If I may be permitted to touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole."

II. But then there arises in other hearts this equally bitter question, "BUT CAN I? I know that I may if I can, but I cannot." This woman, seeing the crowd, might have said, "If I can touch the hem of His garment, I shall

be made whole, but can I get to Him? Can a feeble person like myself force my way through the throng and touch Him?"

Now, that is the question I am going to answer. The *will* to believe in Christ is as much a work of *Grace* as faith, itself, and when the will is *given* and a strong desire, a measure of Grace is already received—and with it the power to believe. Do you not know that the *will to commit* adultery is, according to Scripture, reckoned as adultery? "He has committed adultery with her, already, in his heart." Now, if the very *thought* of uncleanness and the will towards it is the thing, itself, then a desire or will to *believe* contains within itself the major part of faith! I say not that it is *all*, but I do say this—that if the power of God has made a man will to believe, the greatest work has been done and his actually believing will follow in due course!

That entire willingness to believe is nine-tenths of believing. Inasmuch as to will is present with you, the power which you find not as yet will certainly come to you. The man is dead and the hardest thing is to make him live—but in the case before us, the quickening is accomplished, for the man lives so far as to *will*—he wills to believe, he yearns to believe, he longs to believe how much has been done for him! Rising from the dead is a greater thing than the performance of an act of life. Already I see some breaths of life in you who are longing and yearning to lay hold on Christ. You shall, by His Grace, yet lay hold on Him and live in His Presence!

I would have said to that woman, had I been there and known, then, what I know now, "Oh, Woman, that faith of yours—that if you can but touch the hem of His garment you will be made whole—is a greater thing than the actual touch can be! It is not, at present, so *operative*, but it is a more amazing product of Divine Grace! You already have, within you, the greater work of Grace and the lesser will follow! A thousand persons could press through the crowd and touch the hem of the Savior's robe, but *you* are the *only* person in whom God has worked the faith that a touch will make you whole! I might say of such a faith as that, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you' and if you are in that condition, there is already a very great work done in you and you need not doubt the possibility of your touching the sacred garment."

But mark this, faith in Christ is the simplest action that anybody ever performs. It is the action of a child! Indeed, it the action of a new-born babe in Grace. A new-born babe never performs an action that is very complicated. We say, "Oh, it is such a babyish thing," meaning, thereby, that it is so small. Now, faith comes at the moment that the child is born into God's family; it is synchronized with the new birth. One of the first signs and tokens of being born again is faith; therefore it must be a very, very simple thing. I venture to put it very plainly when I say that faith in Christ differs in no respect from faith in anybody else, except as to the person upon whom that faith is set. You believe in your mother—you may, in the same manner, believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God! You believe in your friend—it is the same act that you have to do toward your higher and better Friend! You believe the news that is commonly reported and printed in the daily journals—it is the same act which believes the Scriptures and the promises of God!

The reason why faith in the Lord Jesus is a superior act to faith in anyone else lies in this fact—that it is a superior Person whom you believe in and superior news that you believe—and your natural heart is more adverse to believing in Jesus than to believing in anything else. The Holy Spirit must teach your faith to grasp the high things of Christ Jesus, but that grasp is by the hand of a simple child-like faith. But it is the same faith, mark that! It is the gift of God in so far as this—that God gives you the understanding and the judgment to exercise it upon His Son and to receive Him. The faith of a child in his father is almost always a wonderful faith and it is just the faith that we would ask for our Lord Jesus. Many children believe that there is no other man in the world so great and good, right and kind and rich—and everything else—as their father is. And if anybody were to say that their father was not as wonderful a man as Mr. Gladstone, or some other great statesman, they would become quite grieved, for if their father is not king, it is a mistake that he is not!

Children think so of their parents and that is the kind of faith we would have you exercise towards the Lord Jesus Christ who deserves such confidence and much more. We should give to Jesus a faith by which we do Him honor and magnify Him exceedingly. As the child never thinks where the bread and butter is to come from, tomorrow morning, and it never enters its little head to fret about where it will get new socks when the present ones are worn out, so must you trust in Jesus Christ for everything you need between here and Heaven—trust Him without asking questions. He can and will provide. Just give yourself up to Him entirely, as a child gives itself up to a parent's care and feels itself to be at ease. Oh, what a simple act it is—this act of faith! I am sure that it must be a very simple act and cannot require wisdom, and so forth, because I notice that it is the wise people that *cannot* do it! It is the strong people that cannot do it. It is the people who are righteous in themselves that cannot reach it!

Faith is a kind of act which is performed by those who are childlike in heart, whom the world calls fools and ridicule and persecutes for their folly. “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the weak things of the world and base things, and things which are despised has God chosen.” There are persons with no education, whatever, who know their Bible is true and have an abundant faith. They are poor in this world, but rich in faith. Happy people! Alas for those wise people whose wisdom prevents faith in Jesus! They have been to more than one university and have earned all the degrees that carnal wisdom can bestow upon them—and yet they cannot believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

Oh, Friend, do not think that faith is some difficult and puzzling thing, for then these senior wranglers and doctors of divinity would have it! It is the simplest act that the mind can perform. Just as I lean now with all my weight on this rail and if it breaks I fall—so lean your full weight on Jesus Christ—and that is faith! Just as a babe lies in its mother's bosom, unconscious of the thunderstorm, or of the rocking of the ship, quite safe and happy because it rests in the bosom of love—all fear and care laid aside because of that true heart which beats beneath—even so, cast your-

self altogether upon Christ and that is all that you have to do! In fact, leave off *doing* anything—

***“Cast your deadly doings down,
Down at Jesus’ feet.
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete.”***

“But shall I not have to do many good works?” asks one. You shall do as much as ever you like when you are once saved. But in this matter of your salvation, you must fling all self-righteousness away as so much devilry that will ruin and injure you! You must simply come to Christ and Christ, alone, and trust in Him.

“Oh,” says one, “I think I see a little light. If I am enabled—if I do but get power enough to trust in Jesus, I shall be made whole.” I will ask you another question. Do you not know that *you are bound to believe in Christ*—that it is due to Christ that He is believed in? I would not make extensive claims upon your faith for myself. Often have I said to friends who have told me that they could not believe in Christ, “Could you believe in *me*? If I were to tell you that I would do such-and-such a thing, would you believe it?” “Oh yes, Sir.” “If anyone were to say that he did not believe what I said, how would you feel?” “I should feel very indignant, for I feel that I can trust you. Indeed, I cannot help trusting you.” When I receive such confidence from one of my fellow creatures, I feel that it is cruelly wrong for the same person to say, “I cannot trust Christ!”

Oh, Beloved, not believe Jesus? When did He lie? “Oh, but I cannot trust Him.” Not trust Him? What madness is this? And did He die in very truth? Did He seal His life’s witness with His heart’s blood—and can you not believe Him? My own conviction is that a great many of you can and that already, to a large extent, you do, only you are looking for signs and wonders which will never come. Why not exert that power a little farther? The Spirit of God has given to you a measure of faith—oh, believe more fully, more unreservedly! Why I know that you shivered just now at the very thought of doubting Christ! You felt how unjust and wrong it was—there is latent in you, already, a faith in Him. “He that believes not God has made Him a liar.” Would you make Christ a liar? Dear Hearts, I know that you would not! Although you say that you dare not trust Him, yet you know that He is no liar and you know that He is able to save you. What a strange state your mind has reached! How bewildered and befogged you are, for already, I think, as a looker-on, I can see that there is within your soul a real faith in Jesus Christ—and yet what doubts distract you.

Why not bring faith to the front and say, “I do believe, I will believe, that the Christ who is the Son of the Highest, and who died for the guilt of men, is able to save those that trust Him and, therefore, I trust Him to save me. Sink or swim I trust Him. Lost or saved I will trust Him. Just as I am, with no other plea but that I am sure that He is able and willing to save, I cast my guilty soul on Him”? You have the power to trust Jesus when you have already yielded to the conviction that He is worthy to be trusted. You have but to push to its practical conclusion what God the Holy Spirit has already worked in many of you and you will at once find peace!

Still, if you think that there is something that prevents your having faith in Christ, though you know that if you had it, you would be saved, I do earnestly entreat you not to remain content for a single hour without a full, complete and saving faith in Christ—for if you die unbelievers, you are lost—lost forever! Your only safety lies in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart and obeying His commandments. Therefore use what common sense would suggest to you as the means for obtaining faith. If I were told in the vestry, after service, something by a true friend whose word I could not doubt, and yet if what he said seemed incredible, I would express to him a wish to believe it. I would not wish to imply, for a moment, that he was not truthful and, somehow, I found it difficult to believe the remarkable statement that he made.

What should I do in this case? If it were pressing that I should believe his statement, I would ask him, “How did you come by the information? Where did you hear or read it? What are the precise facts?” Perhaps the moment that he mentioned where he got it, I would conclude, at once, that the wonderful statement was unquestionably correct. Or if he said, “Well, I give it to you on my own authority, but if you need any further information, you can get it by reading such-and-such a document—here is the document.” Why, I would read it at once! I would read it with a good deal of happy prejudice in favor of my faithful friend! Anyway, I would read it to see whether I could fully believe what he said because I would be sure that he would not intentionally deceive me.

Now, if there is anything in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, or anything about Him that you question, let me invite you to read over the four Gospels, again—especially the story of His crucifixion. That Cross of His is a very wonderful thing, for not only does it save those who have faith in it, but it breeds faith in those who look at it—

***“When I see Him wounded, bleeding,
Dying on the accursed tree,
Then I feel my heart believing
That He suffered thus for me.”***

There is life in a look at Christ, because in the very *considering* of Christ there is the breeding of a living faith! We listen to the Word of God and faith comes by hearing. We read the Word of God and picture the whole thing before our eyes, and we say, “Yes, I do believe it. I never saw it quite in this fashion, before, but I now believe it and I will risk my soul on it.”

Now, dear Hearts, if any of you who have never trusted Christ will trust Him, tonight, if you perish I will perish with you! For, though I have known my Lord these 35 years, I have no other hope of salvation than I had when I first came to Him. I had no merits of my own, then, and I have none, now. I have preached many sermons, offered many prayers, given much alms, brought many souls to Christ—but I place all that I have ever done under my feet and desire, as far as it is good, to give to God the glory of it. But as far as it comes of myself, I would sink it in the sea! I am saved in Christ, by faith in Him—confidence in myself is detestable to me. I dare believe in Jesus Christ as my All in All, but I am less than nothing before Him.

Come, we start even, you see. If we start tonight, you and I will start on a level, with the same confidence in the same Savior, the same blood to

cleanse us and the same power to save us—and we will meet in Heaven! As surely as we meet at the Cross, we will meet where the Savior wears the crown! Oh, that you would trust Him, now, and believe Him. “I have no good works,” says one. Then for certain you cannot trust in *them*. You will be forced to trust in Jesus, only. “Oh, but I have no good feelings.” I am glad to hear you say so. Then you are not tempted to trust in *feelings*, but will be drawn to trust wholly on your Lord. “Oh, but I feel so unfit.” Very well, then you cannot trust in your *fitness*, but must trust in Him, alone. It is a blessing when spiritual poverty forces a man into the way of life!

III. Here I close with these words. This woman said in her heart, “IF I DO TOUCH the hem of His garment, I shall”—what? “I shall be made whole.” It is not, “*If* I may but touch, I *may be* made whole.” No, she had got over the “may bes” in the first struggle. It is, “If I may, I shall.” If you trust Christ, you shall be made whole. If you, tonight, actually repose yourself in Christ—as the Lord lives, you must live and be saved! Unless this Bible is all a lie. Unless Jesus was a rank impostor. Unless the eternal God can change, you that come and trust yourself with Jesus must and shall be saved in the last great day of account—

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,”

for I shall tell the Lord of His own promise and how He bade me trust Him—and if I am not saved, then His word is broken—but that can never be! He *is* true. Oh, it is this that some of you need to have done with—thinking, talking, considering and hoping. You need to come, now, and TRUST—resting yourself fully and wholly on what Christ has done!

He loved, lived and died that sinners might not die! He worked a complete work, of which He said as He expired, “It is finished.” There is nothing for you to add to it! Nothing for you to bring with you to make that work complete, but you, yourself, stripped naked of every hope—black, foul, guilty, abominable—the worst of the worst have only to come and look up to those five wounds and to that bleeding, thorn-crowned head, and say, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit,” and you shall be saved!

It is done! “Your sins which are many are forgiven you. Go and sin no more.” You are His child! Go and live to the glory of your Father and may the peace of God that passes all understanding be with you forever and ever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 9:14-38.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—548, 614, 612.**

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OUR LORD'S QUESTION TO THE BLIND MEN NO. 1355

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

**[On this occasion the Members of the regular Congregation left their
seats to strangers.]**

*“And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, Son of David, have mercy on us. And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus said unto them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yes, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened.”
Matthew 9:27-30.*

IN OUR own streets we meet, here and there, with a blind beggar, but they swarm in Eastern cities. Ophthalmia is the scourge of Egypt and Syria and Volney declares that in Cairo, out of a hundred persons whom he met, 20 were quite blind, 10 had one eye, and 20 others were more or less afflicted in that organ. At the present day everyone is struck with the immense number of the blind in Oriental lands, but things were probably worse in our Savior's times. We ought to be very grateful that leprosy, ophthalmia and certain other forms of disease have been wonderfully held in check among us in modern times, so that the plague which devastated our city 200 years ago is now unknown and our Lock hospitals are no longer crowded with lepers.

Blindness is now often prevented, and frequently cured. And it is not, by any means, an evil of such frequent occurrence as to constitute a leading source of the poverty of the country. Because there were so many blind folk in our Savior's day and so many gathered around Him, we very commonly read of His healing the blind. Mercy met misery on its own ground. Where human sorrow was most conspicuous, Divine power was most compassionate. Now, in these days it is a very usual thing for men to be blind spiritually and, therefore, I have great hope that our Lord Jesus will act after His former manner and display His power amid the abounding evil.

I trust there are some here at this hour who are longing to obtain spiritual sight, longing especially, like the two blind men in our text, to see Jesus, whom to see is everlasting life! We have come, tonight to speak to those who feel their spiritual blindness and are pining for the light of God—the light of *pardon*, the light of love and peace, the light of holiness and purity. Our eager desire is that the pall of darkness may be lifted, that the Divine Ray may find a passage into the soul's inner gloom and

cause the night of Nature to pass away forever. O that the moment of day-dawn may be just at hand to many of you who are "only blind!"

Immediate illumination is the blessing I implore upon you. I know that Truth of God may abide in the memory for years and, at last, produce fruit. But at this time our prayer is for *immediate* results, for such only will be in accordance with the nature of the light of which we speak. At the first, Jehovah did but say, "Let there be light," and there was light! And when Jehovah Jesus sojourned here below, He did but touch the eyes of the blind and straightway they received sight! O for the same speedy work at this hour! Men who were led by the hand to Jesus, or groped their way along walls to the place where His voice proclaimed His Presence, were touched by His finger and went home without a guide, rejoicing that Jesus Christ had opened their eyes!

Such marvels Jesus is still able to perform and, depending upon the Holy Spirit, we will preach His Word and watch for the signs following, expecting to see them at once! Why should not hundreds of you who came into this Tabernacle in Nature's blackness go forth from it blessed with the light of Heaven? This, at any rate, is our heart's inmost and uppermost desire—and at this we aim with concentrated faculties. Come with us, then, to the text, and be at once friendly enough to yourselves to be willing to be affected by the Truths of God which it will bring before you.

I. First, in explaining the passage before us, we must call your attention to THE SEEKERS themselves—the two blind men. There is something about them worthy of imitation by all who would be saved. We notice at once that the two blind men were in downright earnest. The word which describes their appeal to Christ is, "crying," and by this is not meant mere *speaking*, for they are represented as, "crying and saying." Now, crying implies earnest, energetic, pathetic imploring, pleading and beseeching. Their tones and gestures indicated that theirs was no holiday fancy, but a deep, passionate craving.

Imagine yourselves in such a case. How eager you would be for the blessed light if for years you had been compelled to abide in what Milton called, "the ever-during dark." They were hungering and thirsting after sight. Now, we cannot hope for salvation till we seek it with equal vigor and yet, how few are in earnest about being saved! How earnest some men are about their money, their health, or their children! How warm they are upon politics and parish business! But the moment you touch them upon matters of true godliness they are as cool as the Arctic snows. O Sirs, why is this? Do you expect to be saved while you are half asleep? Do you expect to find pardon and Grace while you continue in listless indifference? If so, you are woefully mistaken, for "the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force."

Death and eternity, judgment and Hell are not things to play with! The soul's eternal destiny is no small matter and salvation by the precious blood of Christ is no trifle. Men are not saved from going down into the pit by a careless nod or a wink. A mumbled, "Our Father," or a hasty "Lord, have mercy upon me," will not suffice! These blind men would have remained blind had they not been in earnest to have their eyes opened. And so, many continue in their sins because they are not in earnest to escape

from them. These men were fully awake. Dear Hearer, are you? Can you join with me in these verses?—

***“Jesus, who now are passing by,
Our Prophet, Priest, and King You are!
Hear a poor unbeliever’s cry,
And heal the blindness of my heart.
Urging my passionate request,
Your pardoning mercy I implore,
Whoever rebuke I will not rest,
Till You my spirit’s sight restore.”***

The blind men were thoroughly persevering in consequence of being in earnest, for they “followed” Christ and so continued to urge their suit. How did they manage to follow the movements of the Lord? We do not know. It must have been very difficult, for they were blind, but they, no doubt, asked others the way which the Master had taken and they kept their ears open to every sound. Doubtless they said, “Where is He? Where is Jesus? Lead us! Guide us! We must find Him.” We do not know how far our Lord had gone, but we know this, that as far as He had gone they followed. They were so bravely persevering that having reached the house where He was, they did not stay outside waiting till He came out again, but they pressed into the room where He sat. They were insatiable for sight!

Their earnest cries took Him off from His preaching. He paused and listened while they said, “Son of David, have mercy on us.” Thus does perseverance prevail—no man shall be lost who knows the art of importunate prayer! If you will resolve never to leave the gate of Mercy till the porter opens to you, he will assuredly unbar the door. If you grasp the Covenant angel with this resolve, “I will not let You go except You bless me,” you shall come forth from the place of wrestling more than a conqueror! A mouth open in never-ceasing prayer shall bring about eyes open in full vision of faith. Pray, therefore, in the darkness, even if there is no hope of light, for when God, who is Light, itself, moves a poor sinner to plead and cry out before Him with the solemn intent to continue to do so till the blessing comes, He has no thought of mocking that poor crying heart! Perseverance in prayer is a sure sign that the day of the opening of the eyes is near.

The blind men had a definite object in their prayers. They knew what they wanted, they were not like children crying for nothing, or greedy misers crying for everything! They wanted their sight and they knew it. Too many blind souls are unaware of their blindness and, therefore, when they pray, they ask for anything except the one thing necessary. Many so-called prayers consist in saying very nice words, very pretty, pious sentences, but they are not prayers. Prayer, “to saved ones,” is communion with God. And to persons seeking salvation, it is asking for what you need and expecting to receive it through the name of Jesus, whose name you plead with God.

But what sort of prayer is that in which there is no sense of need, no direct asking, no intelligent pleading? Dear Hearer, have you in distinct terms asked the Lord to save you? Have you expressed your need of a new heart, your need of being washed in the blood of Christ, your need of being made God’s child and adopted into His family? There is no praying till

a man knows what he is praying for and sets himself to pray for it as if he cared for nothing else. If being already earnest and importunate, he is, also, instructed and full of definite desires, he is sure to succeed in his pleading. With a strong arm he draws the bow of desire and fits upon the string the sharp arrow of passionate longing. And then with the instructed eye of perception, he takes deliberate aim and, therefore, we may expect that he will hit the very center of the target.

Pray for light, life, forgiveness, salvation—and pray for these with all your soul—and as surely as Christ is in Heaven, He will give these good gifts to you. Whom did He ever refuse? These blind men in their prayers honored Christ, for they said, “Son of David have mercy on us.” The great ones of the land were loath to recognize our Lord as being of the royal seed, but these blind men proclaimed the Son of David right lustily! They were blind, but they could see a great deal more than some with sharp eyes, for they could see that the Nazarene was the Messiah, sent of God to restore the kingdom unto Israel!

They gathered from this belief that, as the Messiah was to open blind eyes, Jesus, being the Messiah, could open their blind eyes. And so they appealed to Him to perform the tokens of His office, thus honoring Him by a real, practical faith! This is the manner of prayer which will always speed to Heaven, the prayer which crowns the Son of David! Pray, glorifying Christ Jesus in your prayers, making much of Him, pleading much the merit of His life and death, giving Him glorious titles because your soul has a high reverence and a vast esteem of Him. Jesus-adoring prayers have in them the force and swiftness of eagles' wings! They must ascend to God, for the elements of heavenly power are abundant in them.

Prayer which makes little of Christ is prayer which God will make little of, but the prayer in which the soul glorifies the Redeemer rises like a perfumed pillar of incense from the Most Holy place and the Lord, Himself, smells a sweet savor. Observe, also, that these two blind men in their prayer confessed their unworthiness. “Son of David, have mercy on us.” Their sole appeal was to *mercy*. There was no talk about merit, no pleading of their past sufferings, or their persevering endeavors, or their resolves for the future! No, nothing but, “Have mercy on us.”

He will never win a blessing from God who demands it as if he had a right to it. We must plead with God as a condemned criminal appeals to his sovereign, asking for the exercise of the royal prerogative of free pardon. As a beggar asks for alms in the street by pleading his need of it and requesting a gift for charity's sake, so must we apply to the Most High, appealing and directing our supplication to the loving kindness and tender mercy of the Lord. We must plead after this fashion—“O God, if You destroy me, I deserve it. If never a comfortable look should come from Your face to me, I cannot complain. But save a sinner, Lord, for mercy's sake! I have no claim upon You whatever, but oh, because You are full of Grace, look on a poor blind soul that gladly would look on You.”

My Brothers and Sisters, I cannot put fine words together. I have never occupied myself in the school of oratory. In fact, my heart abhors the very idea of seeking to speak finely when souls are in peril. No, I labor to speak straight home to your hearts and consciences. And if there is, in this lis-

tening throng, any who are listening in the right manner, God will bless the Word to them. "And what kind of listening is that?" you ask. Why, that in which the man says, "As far as I perceive that the preacher delivers God's Word, I will follow him, and I will do what he describes the seeking sinner as doing. I will pray and plead tonight and I will persevere in my entreaties, laboring to glorify the name of Jesus and, at the same time, confessing my own unworthiness. Thus, even thus, will I crave mercy at the hands of the Son of David."

Happy is the preacher if he knows that such will be the case!

II. Now, we will pause a minute and note, secondly, THE QUESTION WHICH WAS PUT TO THEM. They sought to have their eyes opened. They both stood before the Lord, whom they could not see, but who could see them and could reveal Himself to them by their hearing. He began to question them, not that He might know them, but that they might know themselves. He asked only one question—"Do you believe that I am able to do this?" That question touched the only thing which stood between them and sight. On their answer depended whether they should go out of that room seeing men or blind.

"Do you believe that I am able to do this?" Now, I believe that between every seeking sinner and Christ there is only this one question—"Do you believe that I am able to do this?" And if any man can truly answer as the men in the narrative did, "Yes Lord," he will assuredly receive the reply, "According to your *faith* be it unto you." Let us look, then, at this very weighty question with very serious attention. It concerned their faith. "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" He did not ask them what kind of characters they had been in the past, because when men come to Christ the past is forgiven them. He did not ask them whether they had tried various means of getting their eyes opened, because whether they had, or had not, they were still blind.

He did not ask them, even, whether they thought there might be a mysterious Physician who would effect a cure in a future state. No. Curious questions and idle speculations are never suggested by the Lord Jesus! His enquiries were all resolved into a trial upon one point—and that one point is faith. Did they believe that He, the Son of David, could heal them? Why does our Lord, everywhere, not only in His ministry, but in the teaching of the Apostles, always lay such stress upon faith? Why is faith so essential? It is because of its *receptive* power. A purse will not make a man rich and yet, without some place for his money, how could a man acquire wealth? Faith, of itself, could not contribute a penny to salvation, but it is the purse which holds a precious Christ within itself! Yes, it holds all the treasures of Divine Love.

If a man is thirsty, a rope and a bucket are not, in themselves, of much use to him, but yet, Sirs, if there is a well near at hand, the very thing that is needed is a bucket and a rope, by means of which the water can be lifted. Faith is the bucket by means of which a man may draw water out of the wells of salvation and drink to his heart's content! You may, sometimes, have stopped a moment at a street fountain and have desired to drink, but you found you could not, for the drinking cup was gone. The

water flowed, but you could not get at it. It was tantalizing to be at the fountainhead and yet to be thirsty, still, for lack of a little cup!

Now faith is that little cup which we hold up to the flowing stream of Christ's Grace. We fill it and then we drink and are refreshed. Hence the importance of faith. It would have seemed to our forefathers an idle thing to lay down a cable under the sea from England to America. And it would be idle, now, if it were not that science has taught us how to speak by lightning—yet the cable, itself, is now of the utmost importance—for the best inventions of telegraphy would be of no use for purposes of transatlantic communication if there were not the connecting wire between the two continents! Faith is just that—it is the connecting link between our souls and God—and the living message flashes along it to our souls.

Faith is sometimes weak and comparable only to a very slender thread, but it is a very precious thing for all that, for it is the beginning of great things. Years ago they were wanting to throw a suspension bridge across a mighty chasm, through which flowed, far down, a navigable river. From crag to crag it was proposed to hang an iron bridge aloft in the air, but how was it to be commenced? They shot an arrow from one side to the other and it carried across the gulf a tiny thread. That invisible thread was enough to begin with. The connection was established and, by-and-by, the thread drew a piece of twine. The twine carried after it, a small rope. The rope soon carried a cable across and all in good time came the iron chains and everything else that was needed for the permanent way.

Now, faith is often very weak, but even in that case it is still of the utmost value, for it forms a communication between the soul and the Lord Jesus Christ. If you believe in Him, there is a link between Him and you. Your sinfulness rests on His Grace. Your weakness hangs on His strength. Your nothingness hides itself in His all-sufficiency! But if you believe not, you are apart from Jesus and no blessing can flow to you. So the question that I have to address, in my Master's name tonight, to every seeking sinner, has to do with his faith and nothing else. It does not matter to me whether you are a 100,000 pounds man, or whether you earn a few shillings a week. I care not whether you are a peer or a pauper, whether you are royal or rustic, learned or ignorant. We have the same Gospel to deliver to every man, woman and child—and we have to lay the stress upon the same point—"Do you believe?" If you believe, you shall be saved, but if you believe not, you can not partake of the blessings of Grace.

Notice, next, that the question concerned their faith *in Jesus*. "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" If we were to ask the awakened sinner, "Do you believe that you can save yourself?" His answer would be, "No, that I do not. I know better. My self-sufficiency is dead." If we were, then, to put the question to him, "Do you believe that ordinances and means of Grace and sacraments can save you?" If he is an intelligent, awakened penitent, he will reply, "I know better. I have tried them, but in and of themselves they are utter vanity." Truly it is so! There remains in us and around us nothing upon which hope can build, even for an hour. But the enquiry passes beyond self and casts us upon Jesus only, by bidding us hear the Lord Himself say, "Do you believe that *I* am able to do this?"

Now, Beloved, we are not talking concerning a merely historical Person when we speak about the Lord Jesus Christ. We speak of One who is above all others. He is the Son of the Highest and yet He came to this earth and was born a Baby at Bethlehem. He slept upon a woman's bosom and grew up as other children do. He became a Man in fullness of stature and wisdom, living here for 30 years or more, doing good. At the last, this glorious God in human flesh, "died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God," standing in the place of guilty man, that He might bear man's punishment—that God might be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes.

He died and was buried, but only for a short time could the grave contain Him. Early in the morning of the third day He rose and left the dead, no more to die. He tarried here sufficiently long for many to see Him alive and really in the body. No event in history is so well authenticated as the Resurrection of Christ. He was seen by individuals and by twos and twenties, and by above 500 Brothers and Sisters at once. After having lived here a little while, He ascended up into Heaven in the presence of His disciples, a cloud receiving Him out of their sight. At this moment He is sitting at the right hand of God in human flesh—that same Man who died upon the Cross is now enthroned in the highest heavens, Lord of All—and every angel delights to do Him homage!

The one question which He asks of you tonight, through these poor lips, is this, "Do you believe that I am able to save you—that I, the Christ of God now dwelling in Heaven, am able to save you?" Everything depends upon your answer to that question! I know what your answer *ought* to be. Surely, if He is God, nothing is impossible or even difficult for Him. If He has laid down His life to make atonement, and God has accepted that Atonement by permitting Him to rise from the dead, then there must be efficacy in His blood to cleanse me, even me! The answer ought to be, "Yes, Lord Jesus, I believe that You are able to do this."

But now I want to lay stress on another word of my text and I want you to lay stress on it, too. "Do you believe that I am able to do *this*?" Now, it would have been of no use for these blind men to say, "We believe that You can raise the dead." "No," says Christ, "the matter at hand is the opening of your eyes. Do you believe that I am able to do *this*?" They might have replied, "Good Master, we believe that You did stop the woman's issue when she touched Your garment." "No," He says, "that is not the question. Your eyes have now to be attended to. You need sight and the question about your faith is, Do you believe that I am able to do *this*?"

Ah, some of you can believe for other people, but we must bring the question more fully home to you and say, "Do *you* believe that Christ is able to save you—even you? Is He able to do *this*?" Possibly I address someone who has gone very far in sin. It may be, my Friend, you have crowded a great deal of iniquity into a short space. You went in for a short life and a merry one and according to your present prospects you are likely enough to have a short life. But the merriment is pretty nearly over with you, already, and as you look back upon your life, you reflect that never did a young man or a young woman throw life away more foolishly than you have done. Now then, do you desire to be saved? Can you say

from your heart that you do? Answer me, then, this further question, Do you believe that Jesus Christ is able to do this, namely, to blot out all your sins, to renew your heart and to save you *tonight*?

“Oh, Sir, I do believe He is able to forgive sin.” But do you believe that He is able to forgive *your* sin? You, yourself are the case in hand! How is your faith on that point? Let the cases of others, alone, just now, and consider yourself! Do you believe that He is able to do this? This—this sin of yours, this misspent life—is Jesus able to cope with this? On your answer to that question everything depends. It is an idle faith which dreams of believing in the Lord's power over *others*, but then declares that it has no confidence in Him for itself. You must believe that He is able to do this—this which concerns *you*—or you are, for all practical purposes, an unbeliever.

I know I am speaking to a great many persons who never did go into the vices of the world. I thank God on your behalf that you have been kept in the ways of morality and sobriety and honesty. Yet I know that some of you almost wish, or at least it has occurred to you that you might almost wish—that you had been great, open sinners—that you might be preached to as open sinners are and that you might see a change in yourself equal to what you have seen in some of them about whose conversion you can never doubt. Do not indulge in so unwise a wish, but listen while I put this question to you, also. Your case is that of a moralist who has obeyed every outward duty, but has neglected his God—the case of a moralist who feels as if repentance were to him, impossible, because he has been so long eaten up with self-righteousness that he knows not how to cut out the gangrene!

The Lord Jesus Christ can as easily save you from your self-righteousness as He can save another from his guilty habits! Do you believe that He is able to do this? Come now, do you believe that He is able to meet this, your own peculiar case? Give me a, “yes,” or a, “no,” to this question. “Alas,” cries one of you, “my heart is so hard.” Do you believe that He can soften it? Suppose it is as hard as granite—do you now believe that the Christ of God can turn it into wax in a moment? Suppose your heart is as fickle as the wind and waves of the sea—can you believe that He can make you stable-minded and settle you upon the Rock of Ages forever? If you believe in Him, He will do this for you, for, according to your faith shall it be unto you.

But I know the pinch lies here. Everybody tries to run away to the thought that he does believe in Christ's power for others, but he trembles for himself. But I must hold each man to the point which concerns himself! I must buttonhole you and bring you to the real test! Jesus asks each one of you—“Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Why,” says one, “it would be the most surprising thing that the Lord Jesus ever did if He were to save me tonight!” Do you believe that He can do it? Will you trust Him to do it now? “But it will be such a strange thing, such a miracle!” The Lord Jesus works strange things! It is the way of Him. He was always a miracle-worker! Can you believe Him able to do this for you, even this, which is now needed to save you?

It is wonderful, the power which faith has—power over the Lord Jesus, Himself! I have often experienced, in my little way, how confidence will master you. Have you not frequently been conquered by the trustfulness of a tiny child? The simple request was too full of trust to be refused. Have you ever been grasped by a blind man at a street crossing who has said to you, “Sir, would you take me across the road?” And then, perhaps, he has said somewhat cunningly, “I know by the tone of your voice that you are kind. I feel I can trust myself with you.” At such a time you have felt that you were in for it—you could not let him go. And when a soul says to Jesus, “I know You can save me, my Lord. I know You can, therefore in You do I trust,” why He cannot shake you off! He cannot wish to do so, for He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

I sometimes tell a story to illustrate this. It is a simple enough tale, but it shows how faith wins everywhere. Many years ago my garden happened to be surrounded by a hedge, which looked green, but was a poor protection. A neighbor's dog was very fond of visiting my garden and as he never improved my flowers I never gave him a cordial welcome. Walking along quietly one evening I saw him doing mischief. I threw a stick at him and advised him to go home. But how did the good creature reply to me? He turned round and wagged his tail! And in the merriest manner, he picked up my stick, brought it to me and laid it at my feet! Did I strike him? No, I am not a monster! I should have been ashamed of myself if I had not patted him on the back and told him to come there whenever he liked! Soon he and I were friends, because, you see, he trusted me and conquered me.

Now, simple as the story is, that is just the philosophy of a sinner's faith in Christ. As the dog mastered the man by confiding in him, so a poor guilty sinner does, in effect, master the Lord, Himself, by trusting Him when he says, “Lord, I am a poor dog of a sinner and You might drive me away, but I believe You to be too good for that. I believe You can save me, and lo, I trust myself with You. Whether I am lost or saved, I trust myself with You.” Ah, dear Heart, you will never be lost if you thus trust! He who trusts himself with Jesus has given the answer to the question, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” and there is nothing now left but for him to go his way and rejoice, for the Lord has opened his eyes and saved him!

III. Now, thirdly, THAT QUESTION WAS A VERY REASONABLE ONE. “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” Just a minute, let me show that it was a very reasonable question for Christ to put—and equally reasonable for me to urge home upon many here present. Our Lord Jesus might have said, “If you do not believe that I am able to do this, why did you follow Me? Why did you follow Me more than anybody else? You have been after Me down the streets and you have come into this house after Me. Why have you done this if you do not believe that I am able to open your eyes?”

So a large proportion of you who are here tonight attend a place of worship. You like to be there, but why, if you do not believe Jesus? Why do you go there? Do you go to seek a savior who cannot save you? Do you foolishly seek after one in whom you cannot trust? I have never heard of such madness as for a sick man to run after a doctor in whom he has no

confidence. And do you come here, tonight, and attend your places of worship at other times without having any faith in Jesus? Then why do you come? What inconsistent people you must be! Again, these blind men had been praying to Jesus to open their eyes, but why did they pray? If they did not believe that Jesus could heal them, their prayers were a mockery. Would you ask a man to do a thing which you knew he could not do? Must not prayer always be measured by the quantity of faith that we put into it?

I know that some of you have been in the habit of prayer ever since you were little children. You scarcely ever go to bed at night without repeating the form of prayer your mother taught you. Why do you do that if you do not believe that Jesus Christ can save you? Why ask Him to do what you do not believe He can do? What strange inconsistency—to pray without faith! Moreover, these two blind men had called Jesus Christ the “Son of David.” Why had they thus confessed His Messiahship? The most of you do the same. I suppose that out of this congregation there are very few who doubt the Deity of Christ. You believe in the Word of God—you do not doubt that it is Inspired—you believe that Jesus Christ has lived and died and gone into His Glory.

Well, then, if you do not believe that He is able to save you, what do you mean by saying that He is God? God and yet not able? A dying, bleeding, atoning, Sacrifice—and yet not able to save? Oh, man, your nominal creed is not your true one! If you were to write your true creed out it would run something like this—“I do not believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, or that He has made a full atonement for sin, for I do not believe that He is able to save me.” Would not that be correct and all of a piece? Well, then, I charge you by your frequent hearings of the Word, by your habitual prayers and by your profession of being Believers in that grand old Bible, answer me—How is it that you do not believe in Jesus?

Sirs, He must be able to save you! Do you know it is some 27 years or more since I put my trust in Him and I must speak of Him as I find. In every hour of darkness, in every season of despondency, in every time of trial I have found Him faithful and true! And, as to trusting Him with my soul, if I had a thousand souls I would trust them with Him! And if I had as many souls as there are sands upon the seashore, I would not ask for a second Savior, but would just put them all into those dear hands which were pierced with the nails, that He might grasp me and hold me fast forever.

He is worthy of your trust and your trust is all He asks of you! Knowing that He is able—and you cannot doubt that He is willing, seeing that He has died—He asks you to act upon your belief that He is able to save you and trust yourself to Him.

IV. Now, I must not detain you much longer and, therefore, I want you to notice THE ANSWER which these blind men gave to His question. They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” Well, now, I have been pressing that question upon *you* and I again repeat it. Do you believe that Christ is able to save you? Do you believe that He is able to do this, to touch your case in all its specialty? Now for your answer. How many will say, “Yes, Lord”? I am half inclined to ask you to say it aloud. But I will rather beg you to say it in

your secret souls—"Yes, Lord." And now may God the Holy Spirit help you to say it very distinctly, without any holding back and mental reservation, "Yes, Lord. Blind eyes, dumb tongue, cold heart—I believe that You are able to change them all and I rest myself on You, to be renewed by Your Divine Grace."

Say it and mean it! Say it decidedly and distinctly, with your whole heart, "Yes, Lord." Notice that the two men replied immediately. The question was no sooner out of Christ's mouth than they gave the answer, "Yes, Lord." There is nothing like being prompt in your answers, for when you ask a man a question and you say, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" and he stops, rubs his forehead, strokes his head and, at last says—"Y-y-yes," does not such a, "yes," sound uncommonly like "no"? The best "yes" in the world is the "yes" which leaps forth at once!

"Yes, Lord. Bad as I am, I believe You can save me, for I know Your precious blood can take away every stain. Though I am an old sinner, though I am an aggravated sinner, though I am one who has gone back from a profession of religion and have played the backslider's part. Though I seem to be an outcast from society, though I do not, at this time, feel as I could wish to feel, and am the very reverse of what I ought to be, yet I do believe that if Christ has died for sinners, that if the eternal Son of God has gone into Heaven to plead for sinners, then He must be 'able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.' And so I come to God tonight by Him, by His Grace, and I do believe that He is able to save even me."

That is the kind of answer which I long to get from you all! May the Spirit of God produce it!

V. Then see OUR LORD'S RESPONSE to their answer. He said, "According to your faith be it unto you." As much as if He had said—If you believe in Me there is light for your blind eyes. So true the faith, so true the sight. If you believe decidedly and fully, you shall not have one eye opened, or both eyes half opened, but all your sight shall be given to you. Decided faith shall clear away every speck and make your vision strong and clear. If your answer is quick, so shall My answer be. You shall see in a moment, for you at once believed.

The Lord's power just kept touch with their faith. If their faith was true, His cure was true. If their faith was complete, His cure was complete. And if their faith said, "yes," at once, He give them sight at once. If you are a long while in saying, "yes," you will be a long while in getting peace. But if you say, tonight, "I will venture it, for I see it is so. Jesus must be able to save me. I will give myself up to Him." If you do that at once you shall have instantaneous peace—yes, in that very seat, young man, you who are burdened tonight shall find rest! You shall wonder where the burden has gone, and look round and find that it has vanished, because you have looked to the Crucified One and trusted all your sins with Him.

Your bad habits, which you have been trying in vain to conquer, which have forged fresh chains to hold you fast—you shall find them fall from off you, like spiders' webs. If you can but trust Jesus to break them and give yourself up to Him to be renewed by Him, it shall be done and done tonight! And Heaven's eternal arches shall ring with shouts of Sovereign

Grace. Thus I have put the whole matter before you. My only hope is that God, the blessed Spirit, will lead you to seek as the blind men sought—and especially to trust as they trusted. This last word. There are some persons who are specially diligent in finding out reasons why they should *not* be saved. I have battled with some such by the half-hour together and they always finish up with, “Yes, that is true, Sir, but”—and then we try and chop that, “but,” to pieces.

But after a while they find another and say, “Yes, I now see that point, but”—so they buttress their unbelief with “buts.” If anybody here should be willing to give you a thousand pounds, can you tell me any reason why he should not? Well, I fancy if he were to come to you and present you with a bank note for that amount you would not worry yourself to discover objections! You would not keep on saying, “I should like the money, but”—no, if there were any reason why you should not have it, you would let other people find it out. You would not labor and cudgel your brains to try and find out arguments against yourself—you are not so much your own enemy!

And yet with regard to *eternal life*, which is infinitely more precious than all the treasures of this world, men act most absurdly and say, “I earnestly desire it and Christ is able to do it, but”—What folly is this to argue against yourself! If a man were in Newgate, condemned to die, and had to stand upon the drop tomorrow morning, and the sheriff came and said, “There is a free pardon for you,” do you think that man would begin to object? Would he cry, “I should like another half-hour to consider my case and find out reasons why I should not be pardoned”? No, he would jump at it! Oh that you may, also, jump at the pardon tonight! The Lord grant that you may feel such a sense of danger and guilt that you may promptly cry, “I do believe; I will believe in Jesus!”

Sinners are not half as sensible as sparrows. David said in one of the Psalms, “I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.” Well, have you noticed the sparrow? He keeps his eyes open and the moment he sees a grain of wheat or anything to eat down in the road, he flies to get it. I never knew him wait for someone to invite him, much less to beg and beseech him to come and feed! He sees the food and he says to himself, “Here is a hungry sparrow and there is a piece of bread. Those two things go well together—they shall not be long apart.” Down he flies and eats up all he can find as fast as he finds it!

Oh, if you had half the sense of the sparrow, you would say, “Here is a guilty sinner and there is a precious Savior. These two things go well together—they shall not be long apart. I believe in Jesus and Jesus is mine.” The Lord grant that you may find Jesus, tonight, before you leave this house! I pray you may. In these very pews and aisles may you look to Jesus Christ and believe! Faith is only a look, a look of simple trust! It is reliance, a believing that He is able to do this and a trusting in Him to do it and to do it now! God bless every one of you and may we meet in Heaven, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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THE PLAIN MAN'S PATHWAY TO PEACE

NO. 1560

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

“And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, You son of David, have mercy on us! And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus said unto them, Do you believe that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yes, Lord. Then He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no one knows it.”
Matthew 9:27-30.

I AM not about to expound this incident, nor to draw illustrations from it, but only to direct your attention to one single point in it and that is, its extreme simplicity. There are other cases of blind men and we have various incidents connected with them, such as, in one instance, the making of clay and the sending of the patient to wash at the pool of Siloam and so forth. But here the cure is extremely simple—the men are blind, they cry to Jesus, they come near, they confess their faith and they receive their sight straightway! In many other cases of miracles that were worked by Christ there were circumstances of difficulty. In one case a man is let down through the roof, being borne of four; in a second case a woman comes behind Him in the press and touches the hem of His garment with great effort.

We read of another who had been dead four days and there seemed to be a clear impossibility in the way of his ever coming forth from the tomb. But everything is plain sailing here. Here are blind men, conscious of their blindness, confident that Christ can give them sight. They cry to Him, they come to Him, they believe that He is able to open their eyes and they receive their sight at once! You see there was, in their case, these simple elements—a sense of blindness, a desire for sight—then prayer, then coming to Christ, then an open avowal of faith and then the cure. The whole matter lies in a nutshell. There are no details, no points of care and nicety which might suggest anxiety—the whole business is simplicity, itself, and upon that one point I want to dwell at this time.

There are cases of *conversion* which are just as simple as this case of the opening of the eyes of the blind and we are not to doubt the reality of the work of Grace in them because of the remarkable absence of amazing incidents and striking details. We are not to suppose that a conversion is a less genuine work of the Holy Spirit because it is extremely simple. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditation.

I. To make our discourse useful to many I will begin by remarking, in the first place, that it is an undoubted fact that **MANY PERSONS ARE**

MUCH TROUBLED IN COMING TO CHRIST. It is a fact which must be admitted—that all do not come quite so readily as these blind men came. There are instances on record in biographies—there are many known to us and, perhaps, our own cases are among them—in which coming to Christ was a matter of struggle, of effort, of disappointment, of long waiting and, at last, of a kind of desperation by which we were forced to come.

You must have read Mr. John Bunyan's description of how the pilgrims came to the wicket gate. They were pointed, you remember, by Evangelist to a light and to a gate and they went that way according to his bidding. I have told you, sometimes, the story of a young man in Edinburgh who was very anxious to speak to others about their souls, so he addressed himself one morning to an old Musselburgh fishwife and he began by saying to her, "Here you are with your burden." "Yes," she said. He asked her, "Did you ever feel a *spiritual* burden?" "Yes," she said, resting a bit, "I felt the spiritual burden years ago, before you were born, and I got rid of it, too. But I did not go the same way to work that Bunyan's pilgrim did."

Our young friend was greatly surprised to hear her say that and thought she must be under grievous error and therefore begged her to explain. "No," she said, "when I was under concern of soul, I heard a true Gospel minister who bade me look to the Cross of Christ and there I lost my load of sin. I did not hear one of those milk-and-water preachers like Bunyan's Evangelist." "How," said our young friend, "do you make that out?" "Why, that Evangelist, when he met the man with the burden on his back, said to him, 'Do you see that wicket gate?' 'No,' he said, 'I don't.' 'Do you see that light?' 'I think I do.' Why, man," she said, "he should not have spoken about wicket gates or lights, but he should have said, 'Do you see Jesus Christ hanging on the Cross? Look to Him and your burden will fall off your shoulders.'

"He sent that man round the wrong way when he sent him to the wicket gate and much good he got by it, for he was likely to have been choked in the Slough of Despond before long! I tell you, I looked at once to the Cross and away went my burden." "What?" said this young man, "Did you never go through the Slough of Despond?" "Ah," said she, "many a time, more than I care to tell. But at the first I heard the preacher say, 'Look to Christ,' and I looked to Him. I have been through the Slough of Despond since that—but let me tell you, Sir, it is much easier to go through that slough with your burden off than it is with your burden on!"

And so it is! Blessed are they whose eyes are only and altogether on the Crucified! The older I grow the more sure I am of this, that we must have done with self in all forms and see Jesus, only, if we would be at peace. Was John Bunyan wrong? Certainly not! He was describing things as they generally are. Was the old woman wrong? No! She was perfectly right—she was describing things as they ought to be and as I wish they always were. Still, experience is not always as it ought to be and much of the experience of Christians is not Christian experience! It is a fact which I lament, but, nevertheless, must admit, that a large number of persons, before they come to the Cross and lose their burden, go round about no end of a way, trying this plan and that plan with but very slender success, after

all, instead of coming straightway to Christ just as they are, looking to Him and finding light and life at once.

How is it, then, that some are so long in getting to Christ? I answer, first, in some cases it is ignorance. Perhaps there is no subject upon which men are so ignorant as the Gospel. Is it not preached in hundreds of places? Yes, thank God, it is, and illustrated in no end of books. But still men come not at it so—neither hearing nor reading can, of themselves, discover the Gospel. It needs the teaching of the Holy Spirit, or else men still remain in ignorance as to this simplicity—this simplicity of salvation by faith! Men are in the dark and do not know the way and so they run here and there and oftentimes go round about to find a Savior who is ready, then and there, to bless them!

They cry, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” when, if they did but understand the Truth of God, His salvation is near them, “in their mouth and in their heart.” If with their heart they will believe on the Lord Jesus and with their mouth make confession of Him, they shall be saved then and there! In many cases, too, men are hindered by prejudice. People are brought up with the belief that salvation must be through ceremonies and if they get driven out of that, they still conclude that it must certainly be in some measure by their works. Numbers of people have learned a sort of half-and-half Gospel, part Law and part Grace, and they are in a thick fog about salvation.

They know that redemption has something to do with Christ, but it is much of a mixture with them—they do not quite see that it is *all* Christ or no Christ! They have a notion that we are saved by Grace, but they do not yet see that salvation must be of Grace from top to bottom. They fail to see that in order that salvation may be of Grace it must be received by faith and not through the works of the Law, nor by priestcraft, nor by any rites and ceremonies whatever. Being brought up to believe that surely there is something for them to *do*, it is long before they can get into the clear, blessed sunlight of the Word of God where the child of God sees Christ and finds liberty.

“Believe and live” is a foreign language to a soul which is persuaded that its own works are, in a measure, to win eternal life. With many, indeed, the hindrance lies in downright bad teaching. The teaching that is so common, nowadays, is very dangerous. The service makes no distinction between saint and sinner. Certain prayers are used every day which are meant for saints and sinners, too—ready-made clothes—made to fit everybody and fitting nobody at all. These prayers suit neither saint nor sinner, thoroughly beautiful as they are and grand as they are—they bring people up under the notion and delusion that they are somewhere in a condition between being saved and being lost—not actually lost, certainly, but yet not quite saints—they are *betweenites*, mongrels!

They are a sort of Samaritan that fears the Lord and serves other gods and who hopes to be saved by a mixture of Grace and works. It is hard to bring men to Grace, alone, and faith, alone—they will stand with one foot on the sea and the other foot on the land. Much of teaching goes to buoy them up in the notion that there is something in man and something to be

done by him and, therefore, they do not learn in their own souls that they must be saved by Christ and not by themselves. Besides that, there is the natural pride of the human heart. We do not like to be saved by charity. We must have a finger in it! We get pushed into a corner—we are driven farther and farther away from self-confidence, but we hang on by our teeth if we cannot find a hold by any other means!

With awful desperation we trust in ourselves. We will cling by our eyelashes to the semblance of self-confidence! We will not give up carnal confidence if it is possible to hold it. Then comes in, with our pride, opposition to God, for the human heart does not love God and it frequently shows its opposition by opposing Him about the plan of salvation. The enmity of the unrenewed heart is not displayed by actual open sin in all cases, for many, by their very growing up, have been made to be moral—but they hate God's plan of Grace and Grace, alone—and here their gall and bitterness begin to work. How they will writhe in their seats if the minister preaches Divine Sovereignty! They hate the text, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion."

They talk of the rights of fallen men and of all being treated equally—and when it comes to Sovereignty and God's manifesting His Grace according to His own absolute will—they cannot endure it! If they tolerate God at all, it shall not be on the Throne. If they acknowledge His existence, yet not as King of kings and Lord of lords who does as He wills and has a right to pardon whom He reserves and to leave the guilty, if it so pleases Him, to perish in their guiltiness, rejecting the Savior. Ah, the heart loves not God as God, as revealed in Scripture, but makes a god unto itself and cries, "These are your gods, O Israel."

In some instances the struggle of the heart in getting to Christ, I have no doubt, arises from a singularity of mental conformation and such cases ought to be looked upon as exceptions and by no means regarded as rules. Now take, for instance, the case of John Bunyan, to which we have referred. If you read, "Grace Abounding," you will find that, for five years or more, he was the subject of the most fearful despair—tempted by Satan, tempted by his own self—always raising difficulties against himself. And it was long, long, long before he could come to the Cross and find peace. But then, dear Friends, it is to the last degree improbable that either you or I will ever turn out to be John Bunyans. We may become tinkers, but we shall never write a Pilgrim's Progress! We might imitate him in his poverty, but we are not likely to emulate him in his genius.

A man with such an imagination, full of wondrous dreams, is not born every day and when he does come along, his inheritance of brain is not all a gain in the direction of a restful life. When Bunyan's imagination had been purified and sanctified, its masterly productions were seen in his marvelous allegories! But while, as yet, he had not been renewed and reconciled to God—with such a mind so strangely formed, so devoid of all education and brought up, as he had been, in the roughest society—he was dowered with a fearful heritage. That marvelous fancy would have worked him wondrous woe if it had not been controlled by the Divine

Spirit! Do you wonder that, in coming to the day, those eyes which had been veiled in such dense darkness could scarcely bear the light and that the man should think the darkness all the darker when the light began to shine upon him? Bunyan was one by himself—not the rule, but the exception.

Now, you, dear Friend, may be an odd person. Very likely you are and I can sympathize with you, for I am odd enough, myself. But do not lay down a law that everybody else must be odd, too. If you and I did happen to go round by the back ways, do not let us think that *everybody* ought to follow our bad example. Let us be very thankful that some people's minds are less twisted and gnarled than ours and do not let us set up our experience as a *standard* for other people. No doubt difficulties may arise from an extraordinary quality of mind with which God may have gifted some, or a depression of spirit natural to others—and these may make them peculiar as long as they live.

Besides, there are some who are kept from coming to Christ through remarkable assaults of Satan. You remember the story of the child whom his father would bring to Jesus, but, "as he was a coming, the devil threw him down and tore him"? The evil spirit knew that his time was short and he must soon be expelled from his victim and, therefore, he cast him on the ground and made him wallow in epilepsy and left him half dead. So does Satan with many men. He sets upon them with all the brutality of his fiendish nature and expends his malice upon them because he fears that they are about to escape from his service and he will no longer be able to tyrannize over them. As Watts says—

**"He worries whom
He can't devour,
With a malicious joy."**

Now, if some come to Christ and the devil is not permitted to assail them; if some come to Christ and there is nothing strange about their experience; if some come to Christ and pride and opposition have been conquered in their nature; if some come to Christ and they are not ignorant but well instructed and readily see the light, let us rejoice that it is so! It is of such that I am now about to speak somewhat more at length.

II. It is admitted as an undoubted fact that many are much troubled in coming to Christ but now, secondly, THIS IS NOT AT ALL ESSENTIAL TO A REAL SAVING COMING TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. I mention this because I have known Christian men distressed in heart because they fear that they came to Christ too *easily*. They have half imagined, as they looked back, that they could not have been converted at all because their conversion was not attended with such agony and torment of mind as others speak of.

I would first remark that it is very difficult to see how despairing feelings can be essential to salvation! Look for a minute. Can it be possible that unbelief can help a soul to faith? Is it not certain that the anguish which many experience before they come to Christ arises from the fact of their unbelief? They do not trust—they say they *cannot* trust—and so they are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. Their mind is tossed to and

fro and vexed sorely through unbelief. Is this a foundation for holy *trust*? It would seem to me the oddest thing in all the world that unbelief should be a preparation for faith! How can it be that to sow the ground with this-tle seed should make it more ready for the good corn? Are fire and sword helpers to national prosperity? Is deadly poison an assistance to health?

I do not understand it. It seems to me to be far better for the soul to believe the Word of God at once and far more likely to be a genuine work when the soul, convicted of sin, accepts the Savior. Here is God's way of salvation and He demands that I trust His dear Son who died for sinners. I perceive that Christ is worthy to be trusted, for He is the Son of God—so that His sacrifice *must* be able to put away my sin. I perceive, also, that He laid down His life in the place of His people and, therefore, I heartily trust Him. God bids me trust Him and I trust Him without any further question. If Jesus Christ satisfies God, He certainly satisfies me! And, asking no further question, I come and trust myself with Him.

Does not this kind of action appear to have about it all that can be necessary? Can it possibly be that a raging, raving despair can ever be helpful towards *saving faith*? I do not see it. I cannot think it! Some have been beaten about with most awful thoughts. They have supposed that God could not possibly forgive *them*—they have imagined that, even if He could pardon them He would not since they were not His elect, nor His redeemed! Though they have seen the Gospel invitation written in letters of love—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," they dare to question whether they should find rest if they came and they invent suspicions and surmises, some of them amounting, even, to *blasphemy* against the Character of God and the Person of His Christ!

That such people have been forgiven according to the riches of Divine Grace I do verily believe, but that their sinful thoughts ever *helped* them to obtain pardon I cannot imagine! That my own dark thoughts of God, which left many a scar upon my spirit, were washed away with all my other sins, I know. And that there was never any good in those things, or that I can look back upon them without shame and regret is also a thing I know! I cannot see of what particular service they could have been to anybody! Shall one bath of ink take out the stain of another? Can our sin be removed by our sinning more? It is impossible that sin could aid Grace and that the greatest of all sins, the sin of *unbelief*, should help towards faith!

Yet, once again, dear Friends, much of all this struggling and tumult within which some have experienced is the work of the devil, as I have already said. Can it be essential to salvation for a man to be under the influence of Satan? Is it necessary that the devil should come in to help Christ? Is it absolutely essential for the black fingers of the devil to be seen at work with the lily hands of the Redeemer? Impossible! That is not my judgment of the work of Satan nor will it, I think, be yours if you will look at it. If you never were driven either to blasphemy or despair by Satan, thank God you never were! You would have gained *nothing* by it—you would have been a serious loser. Let no man imagine that if he had been

the prey of tormenting suggestions his conversion would have more marks of the Truth of God about it—no mistake can be more groundless!

It cannot be that the devil can be of any service to anyone among you. He will do you damage and nothing but damage. Every blow he strikes, hurts but does not heal. Mr. Bunyan, himself says, when he speaks of Christian fighting with Apollyon, that, though he won the victory, he was no gainer by it. A man had better go many miles round about, over hedge and ditch, sooner than once come into conflict with Apollyon! All that is essential to conversion is found in the simpler way of coming at once to Jesus and, as to anything else, we must face it, if it comes, but certainly not *look* for it! It is easy to see how Satanic temptation hampers and how it keeps men in bondage when otherwise they might be at liberty, but what good it can do, in itself, it would be difficult to tell.

Once again, many instances prove that all this law work and doubting and fearing and despairing and being tormented by Satan are not essential because there are scores and hundreds of Christians who came at once to Christ, as these two blind men did and, to this very day, know very little about those things. I could, if it were proper, call upon Brothers and Sisters who are around me at this moment who would tell you that when I have been preaching the experience of those who come to Christ with difficulty, they have been glad that it should be preached, but they have felt, "We know nothing of all this in our own experience."

Taught from their very youth the way of God; trained by godly parents; they came under the influences of the Holy Spirit very early in life. They heard that Jesus Christ could save them. They knew that they needed saving and they just went to Him. I was about to say, almost as naturally as they went to their mother or their father when they were in need—they trusted the Savior and they found peace at once! Several of the honored leaders of this Church came to the Lord in this simple manner. Only yesterday I was greatly pleased with several that I saw who confessed faith in Jesus in a way which charmed me and yet, about their Christian experience there was little trace of terrible burns and scars. They heard the Gospel—they saw the suitability of it to their case—and they accepted it then and there and entered immediately into peace and joy.

Now, we do not tell you that there are a few such plain cases, but we assert boldly that we know hosts of like instances and that there are thousands of God's most honored servants who are walking before Him in holiness and are eminently useful whose experience is as simple as A B C. Their whole story might be summed up in the verse—

***"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad."***

I will go yet further and assure you that many of those who give the best evidence that they are renewed by Grace cannot tell you the day in which they were saved and cannot attribute their conversion to any one sermon or to any one text of Scripture, or to any one event in life! We dare not doubt their conversion for their lives prove its truth. You may have many trees in your garden of which you must admit that you don't know when

they were planted—but if you get plenty of fruit from them—you are not very particular about the date of their striking root.

I am acquainted with several persons who do not know their own age. I was talking to one the other day who thought herself 10 years older than I found her out to be. I did not tell her that she was not alive because she did not know her birthday. If I had told her so, she would have laughed at me and yet there are some who fancy that they cannot be converted because they do not know the *date* of their conversion! Oh, if you are trusting the Savior—if He is all your salvation and all your desire and if your life is affected by your faith so that you bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, you need not worry about times and seasons!

Thousands in the fold of Jesus can declare that they are in it, but the day that they passed through the gate is totally unknown to them. Thousands there are who came to Christ, not in the darkness of the night, but in the brightness of the day and these cannot talk of weary waiting and watching, though they can sing of Free Grace and dying love! They came joyously home to their Father's house! The sadness of repentance was sweetened with the delight of faith which came simultaneously with repentance to their hearts. I know it is so! We tell you but the simple Truth of God. Many young people are brought to the Savior to the sound of sweet music. Many, also, of another class, namely, the simple-minded, come in like manner. We might all wish to belong to that class.

Some professors would be ashamed to be thought simple-minded, but I would glory in it. Too many of the doubting, critical order are great puzzle-makers and great fools for their pains. The childlike ones drink the milk while these folks are analyzing it! They seem, every night, to take themselves to pieces before they go to bed and it is very hard for them, in the morning, to put themselves together again. To some minds the hardest thing in the world is to believe a self-evident truth. They must always, if they can, make a dust and a mist and puzzle, themselves, or else they are not happy. In fact, they are never sure till they are *uncertain* and never at ease till they are *disturbed*. Blessed are those who believe that God cannot lie and are quite sure it must be so if God has said it—these cast themselves upon Christ whether they sink or swim because if Christ's salvation is God's way of saving man—it must be the right way and they accept it! Many, I say, have thus come to Christ.

Now, proceeding a step farther, there are all the essentials of salvation in the simple, pleasant, happy way of coming to Jesus just as you are, for what are the essentials? The first is *repentance* and these dear souls, though they feel no remorse, yet hate the sin they once loved. Though they know no dread of Hell, yet they feel a dread of *sin*, which is a great deal better. Though they have never stood shivering under the gallows, yet the *crime* is more dreadful to them than the doom. They have been taught by God's Spirit to love righteousness and seek after holiness and this is the very essence of repentance! Those who thus come to Christ have certainly obtained true faith. They have no experience which they could trust in, but they are all the more fully driven to rest in what Christ has felt and done.

They rest not in their own tears, but in Christ's blood—not in their own emotions, but in Christ's pangs—not in their consciousness of ruin, but in the certainty that Christ has come to save all those that trust Him. They have faith of the purest kind! And see, too, how certainly they have love. "Faith works by love" and they show it. They often seem to have more love at the first than those who come so dreadfully burdened and tempest-tossed, for, in the calm quiet of their minds they get a fairer view of the beauties of the Savior and they burn with love to Him and they commence to serve Him while others, as yet, are having their wounds healed and are trying to make their broken bones rejoice.

I am not wishing to depreciate a painful experience, but I am only trying to show as to this second class, that their simple coming to Christ, as the blind men came—their simply believing that He could give them sight—is not one whit inferior to the other and has in it all the essentials of salvation. For, next, notice that the Gospel command implies in itself nothing of the kind which some have experienced. What are we bid to preach to men—"Be dragged about by the devil and you shall be saved"? No, but, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." What is my commission at this time? To say to you, "Despair and you shall be saved"? No, verily, but, "Believe and you shall be saved."

Are we to come here and say, "Torture yourself! Mangle your heart, scourge your spirit, grind your very soul to powder in desperation"? No, but, "Believe in the infinite goodness and mercy of God in the Person of His dear Son and come and trust Him." That is the Gospel command! It is put in various forms. This is one—"Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Now, if I were to come and say, "Tear your eyes out," that would not be the Gospel, would it? No, but "Look!" The Gospel does not say, "Cry your eyes out," but, "Look!" And it does not say, "Blind your eyes with a hot iron." No, but, "Look, look, look!" It is just the very opposite of anything like remorse, despair and blasphemous thought. It is just, "Look."

Then it is put in another shape. We are told to take of the Water of Life freely. We are bid to drink of the eternal spring of love and life. What are we told to do? To make this Water of Life scalding hot? No. We are to drink it as it freely flows out of the Fountain. Are we to make it drip after the manner of the Inquisition, a drop at a time and to lie under it and feel the perpetual drip of a scanty trickling? Nothing of the sort! We are just to step down to the Fountain and drink and be content, for it will quench our thirst! What is the Gospel, again? Is it not to eat the Bread of Heaven? "Eat you that which is good." There is the Gospel banquet and we are to compel men to come in—and what are they to do when they come in? Silently to look on while others eat? Stand and wait till they feel more hungry? Try 40 days' fasting, like Dr. Tanner? Nothing of the sort!

You might *think* this to be the Gospel by the way some people preach and act, but it is not so. You are to feast on Christ at once! You need not fast till you turn yourself into a living skeleton and then come to Christ. I am sent with no such message as that, but this is my word of good cheer—"Listen diligently to me and eat that which is good and let your

soul delight itself in fatness. He—*everyone*—that thirsts, come to the waters and he that has no money, let him come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” Freely take what God freely gives and simply trust the Savior! Is not that the Gospel? Well, then, why should any of you say, “I cannot trust Christ because I don't feel this and don't feel that”?

Do I not solemnly assure you that I have known of many who have come to Christ just as they were—who have never undergone those horrible feelings which are so much spoken of and yet have been most truly saved? Come as you are! Do not try to make a righteousness out of your unrighteousness, or a confidence out of your unbelief, or a Christ out of your blasphemies as some seem to do! Nor dote so foolishly as to imagine that despair may be a ground of hope. It cannot be! You are to get out of self and into Christ and there you will be safe. As the blind men said, when Christ asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” so are you to say to Him, “Yes, Lord.” Trust yourself with your Savior and He is *your* Savior!

III. I conclude with one more observation—THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE PRIVILEGED TO COME TO JESUS CHRIST SOFTLY, PLEASANTLY AND HAPPILY ARE NOT LOSERS. They do lose something, certainly, but there is not much in it. They lose somewhat of the picturesque and they have less to tell. When a man has had a long series of trials to drive him out of himself and, at last, comes to Christ like a wrecked vessel tugged into port, he has a story to talk of and write about and, perhaps, he thinks it interesting to be able to tell. And, if he can tell it to God's Glory, it is quite proper that he should. Many of these stories are found in biographies because they are the incidents which excite interest and make a life worth writing about—but you must not conclude that *all* godly lives are of the same sort.

Happy are those whose lives could not be written because they were so happy as to be uneventful. Some of the most favored lives do not get written because there is nothing very picturesque about them. But I ask you this—when those blind men came to Christ just as they were and said that they believed that He could open their eyes and He *did* open their eyes—is there not as much of Christ in their story as there well could be? The men, themselves, are nowhere—the healing Master is in the foreground! More detail might almost take away the peculiar prominence that He has in it all. There He stands, the blessed, glorious Opener of the eyes of the two blind men! There He stands and His name is glorious!

There was a woman who had spent all her substance upon physicians and was nothing better, but rather grew worse. She had a long tale to tell of the various doctors she had been to, but I do not know that the narrative of her many disappointments would glorify the Lord Jesus one bit more than when these two blind men could say, “We heard of Him and we went to Him and He opened our eyes! We never spent a halfpenny upon doctors. We went straightaway to Jesus, just as we were, and all He said to us was, ‘Do you think that I can do it?’ and we said, ‘Yes, we believe You can,’ and He opened our eyes at once and it was all done.” Oh, if my experience should ever stand in my Master's light, perish my best experi-

ence! Let Christ be first, last, midst—don't you agree, my Brothers and Sisters?

If you, poor Sinner, come to Christ at once with nothing about you whatever that you ever can talk of—if you are just a nobody coming to the ever-blessed Everybody—if you are a mere *nothing* coming to Him who is the All-in-All! If you are a lump of sin and misery, a great vacuum, nothing but an emptiness that never is thought of any more—if you will come and lose yourselves in His infinitely glorious Grace—this will be all that is needed! It seems to me that you will lose nothing by the fact that there is not so much of the picturesque and the sensational in your experience. There will be, at least, this grand sensation—lost in self but saved in Jesus—glory be to His name! Perhaps you may suppose that persons who come thus gently lose something by way of evidence afterwards. “Ah,” said one to me, “I could almost wish, sometimes, that I had been an open offender so that I might see the change in my character. But, having been always moral from my youth up, I am not always able to see any distinct sign of a change.”

Ah, let me tell you, Friends, that this form of evidence is of small use in times of darkness, for if the devil cannot say to a man, “You have not changed your life”—for there are some that he would not have the impudence to say that to, since the change is too manifest for him to deny it—he says, “You changed your actions, but your *heart* is still the same. You turned from a bold, honest sinner to be a hypocritical, canting professor! That is all you have done! You have given up open sin because your strong passions declined, or you thought you would like another way of sinning—and now you are only making a false profession and living far from what you should do.” Very little consolation is to be had even out of the change that conversion works when once the arch-enemy becomes our accuser.

In fact, it comes to this—however you come to Christ you can never place any confidence in how you came. Your confidence must always rest in Him to whom you came—that is, in Christ—whether you come to Him flying, or running, or walking. If you get to Jesus you are all right! It is not *how* you come—it is *whether* you come to Him! Have you come to Jesus? Do you come to Jesus? If you have come and you doubt whether you have come, come again! Never quarrel with Satan about whether you are a Christian. If he says you are a sinner, reply to him, “So I am, but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and I will begin again.” He is an old lawyer, you know, and very cunning. He knows how to baffle us, for we do not understand things as well as he does.

He has been, these thousands of years, at the trade of trying to make Christians doubt their interest in Christ and he understands it well. Never answer him! Refer him to your Solicitor—tell him you have an Advocate on high who will answer him. Tell him you will fly away to Christ, again. If you never went to Jesus before, you will go now and, if you have been before, you will go again! That is the way to end the quarrel. As to evidences, they are fine things in fine weather, but when the tempest is out, wise

men let evidences go. The best evidence a man can have that he is saved is that he is still *clinging to Christ!*

Lastly, some may suppose that those who come gently to Christ may lose a good deal of adaptation for later usefulness because they will not be able to sympathize with those who are in deep perplexity and in awful straits when they are coming to Christ. Ah, well, there are enough of us who can sympathize with such and I do not know that everybody is bound to sympathize with everybody in every respect. I remember mentioning, one day, to a man who had considerable property, that his poor minister had a large family and could scarcely keep a coat on his back. I said I wondered how some Christian men who profited under the ministry of such a man did not supply his needs.

He answered that he thought it was a good thing for ministers to be poor because they could sympathize with the poor. I said, "Yes, yes, but then, don't you see, there ought to be one or two that are *not* poor to sympathize with those who are rich." I would go one better, certainly, and let the poor pastor, now and then, have the power to sympathize with both classes! He did not seem to understand my argument, but I think there is a good deal in it. It is a great mercy to have some Brethren around us who, by their painful experience, can sympathize with those who have been through that pain. But don't you think it is a great mercy to have others who, through not having undergone that experience, can sympathize with others who have not undergone it?

Is it not useful to have some who can say, "Well, dear Heart, don't be troubled because the great dog of Hell did not howl at you. If you have entered the gate calmly and quietly and Christ has received you, do not be troubled because you are not barked at by the devil, for I, too, came to Jesus just as gently and safely and sweetly as you have done"? Such a testimony will comfort the poor soul and so, if you lose the power to sympathize one way, you will gain the power to sympathize in another—and there will be no great loss, after all. To sum it all up—I would that every man and woman and child here would come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ! It seems to me to be such a matchless plan of salvation—for Christ to take human sin and to suffer in the sinner's stead and for us to have nothing to do but just to accept what Christ has done and to trust ourselves wholly with Him!

He that would not be saved by such a plan as this deserves to perish—and so he will! Was there ever so sweet, so sure and so plain a Gospel? It is a joy to preach it! Will you have it? Dear Souls, will you not yield to be nothing and have Jesus to be All in All? God grant that none of us may reject this way of Grace, this open way, this safe way. Come, linger no longer. The Spirit and the bride say "Come." Lord, draw them by the love of Jesus! Amen.

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FAITH IN CHRIST'S ABILITY

NO. 3302

A SERMON
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***“Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this?”
Matthew 9:28.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon verses 27 to 30, are #1355, Volumen 23—
OUR LORD'S QUESTION TO THE BLIND MEN and #1560, Volume 26—
THE PLAIN MAN'S PATHWAY TO PEACE—read/download the entire sermons
free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

I WANT to lay special emphasis on the word, “this,” in the text—“Believe you that I am able to do *this*?” The question of Jesus referred to one particular thing—it was not intended to apply to the general power of Christ to heal the sick or to raise the dead—it concerned the specific malady from which these two men were suffering. The question meant did they believe that Christ was able to cure their blindness? Among professing Christians, there is much so-called faith that is not really faith. Many of us profess much more in our creeds than we believe in our hearts and we hold a great deal more in theory than we do in reality. For instance, I suppose there is no professor of religion here who would dispute the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to do anything and everything—we believe that He has all power in Heaven and in earth. And yet, if it came to be a matter of personal detail and He said to us, “Believe you that I am able to do *this*?” we might not all be able to answer as promptly and as confidently as the blind men did, “Yes, Lord.”

I. I am going to speak about this matter, and I start with the very simple statement that FAITH, IN SO FAR AS IT IS TRUE, DEALS IMMEDIATELY WITH THE CASE IN HAND.

True faith believes that Jesus Christ is “able to do this.” It believes, of course, that He is able to do twenty thousand other things, but *it believes especially that He is “able to do this”*—to forgive this sin of which I am so deeply conscious, to remove this trial with which I am now so sorely afflicted, to sustain me under this temptation which so fiercely assails me, to strengthen me to accomplish this duty which so clearly is before me. As each special case arises, faith will exercise itself upon that particular thing and believe that Christ is “able to do *this*.”

There are solemn thoughts connected with unbelief concerning “this” which Christ is able to do. Over there is a Brother who is in such a plight that he thinks there is no way of deliverance for him out of it. He has a task before him which he hardly dares ask his Lord to enable him to perform because he lacks the necessary faith in his Lord’s power and willingness to help him! Now, my dear Friend, as you are in doubt in this case, I want to ask you what is to prevent you from doubting in the next difficulty that occurs to you—and then in the next after that, and so on? You say that it is only upon this one point that you are in doubt and that you think you have very good reasons for not believing in this particular case? But the next circumstances that occurs to you will very probably furnish you with just as weighty reasons for doubting—and so will it be with each succeeding case as it arises. It seems to me that you are shut up to this alternative, either to trust God in this case or else to confess that you do not intend to believe Him in *any* case. I know you will urge that the present case is a very peculiar one, but I shall remind you that the next one will also be a very peculiar one. I have not lived as long as some of you have but, during the years that I have been able to observe what has been passing around me, I have noticed that every year of my life has been a crisis in the affairs of the nation—at least so the papers have always told us and so have some good people always told us! I think it is very likely that the present time is a most solemn crisis and I also think with equally good reason, that this is a most solemn crisis in your history and that if you do not believe now, you are not likely to believe in the next crisis that comes to you. The fact is, you must either believe God always or you must never believe Him! If you think Christ is not “able to do *this*”—forgive this sin, remove this trial, overcome this temptation, or strengthen you for this duty—you will probably think the same when the next testing times comes.

Moreover, it seems to me that *if you doubt God concerning any one trial, you give up the whole case*. You would have me believe that your present trial is very peculiar and strange. Well, suppose I admit that it is? Still, if you do not believe concerning *this*, you have given up the whole case, for what Christ claims is *Omnipotence*—and if there is any one thing that He cannot do, then He is not Omnipotent! If there is any one heart too hard for Him to break, if there is any one sin too strong for Him to enable me to abandon, then He is not Omnipotent. If you look this thought fairly in the face, I think you will scarcely dare to rob your Lord of one of the most glorious of His attributes! You would surely hesitate to put forth that right hand of yours to snatch from His crown one of its most precious gems! No, you would sooner lose your life than commit so traitorous a crime as that—yet you do practically commit it if you do not believe that He is “able to do *this*,” whatever, “*this*,” may be and, therefore, you do virtually say that He is not Almighty!

Besides, *your doubt concerning God's power sets up a new god*. Do you start in alarm at that statement? It is true, for that which is mightiest in the world is God—but if there is *anything* which surpasses the power of God—something that is more potent than *Omnipotence*, that something must be god! I only put the matter thus to show you that you are obliged to believe that God can deliver you out of your present desperate plight, or else you must become an idolater! You must feel that your difficulties and trials are greater than God and, therefore, you deify them! Of course you do not mean to do that! You feel a cold shiver go through you at the bare thought of such blasphemy, yet you practically do it whenever you doubt that God is “able to do *this*,” whatever, “*this*,” may be!

Further, to doubt God's power to do “*this*,” whatever it may be, *is challenging every attribute of the Divine Character*. I could prove this if I had the time, but I will indicate only one attribute of God, that is, His truthfulness. Take such a promise as this, “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble.” Now, if you doubt God's power to fulfill that promise, you practically challenge His veracity! Can you calmly contemplate such a sin as that would be? Yet it seems to me that you cannot avoid committing that sin unless now, by simple faith, you believe that He is “able to do *this*.” But grant that God is Omnipotent, once really accept that Truth of God in your heart and then you will feel that there remains no strait into which you can be brought out of which He cannot deliver you, that there is no temptation which may assail you from which He cannot preserve you, that there can be no position of peril in which He cannot protect you and out of which He cannot bring you unharmed! May the Holy Spirit graciously reveal to us the unsafe, treacherous, boggy pit that would swallow us up if we doubt that God is “able to do *this*”—and may He enable us to realize that it is safe walking and happy walking when we walk by faith!

II. My second statement, which is as simple as the first, is that TRUE FAITH, ESPECIALLY IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION, MUST BE PERSONAL.

If I have any true faith in Christ at all, I must believe that He is “able to do *this*”—that is, that He is able to do for me what He has done for many who are now in Glory—and what He is doing for many who are rejoicing in His salvation here on earth! I know that I am addressing many who believe in the Bible. At least you say that you do and that you believe that Jesus Christ is able to do everything. That is the theory of your faith, yet you do not believe *this*—that Jesus Christ is able to save you *now*. You have got an idea in your mind that for some reason or other, on account of some lack of preparation in you, or for some equally foolish reason, the simple act of faith in Christ would not be the means of bringing salvation to your soul! You imagine that your case is not one that is

covered by the promise of God, or encompassed by the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

If that is what you think, that Christ cannot save you—why do you not doubt whether He can save others? In fact, *why do you not doubt whether He can save any sinner who ever lived?* You tell me that your case is a very peculiar one. I will grant you that, but then the case of the next sinner you meet will also be a peculiar one. He is as honest a man as you are and he will tell you that there is something very peculiar about his case. I have very seldom talked with any person under conviction of sin who did not think that his case was different from that of anybody else—and very surprised has he been when I have told him that his words just described my own experience when I was under conviction of sin! If you believe that Christ cannot save you because of some peculiarity in your case, is it not equally reasonable or unreasonable that you should believe that He cannot save another sinner because of some peculiarity in his case? In this way you would soon get to believe that Jesus Christ cannot save at all! “No,” you say, “I shall never believe that.” But that is practically what you do believe! You do not believe that Jesus Christ is a potent Savior! You may think that you do, but if the matter were put to the test and you regarded every other sinner’s case as you regard your own, there would be just as good reason to suppose every other case to be hopeless as to conclude that there is no hope of salvation for yourself! If you are strictly reasonable in your belief, you must either believe that Christ can save you or that He can save nobody at all!

Then, as I said before under the previous head, *if you do not believe that Christ can save you, you give up the whole case.* You have probably, all of you, held as one of the undisputed articles of the Christian faith that Christ is Omnipotent. But supposing that your case is one in which His blood has no cleansing efficacy—supposing that you are so vile that He cannot and will not receive you, supposing that your heart is so hard that He cannot soften it—then He is not Omnipotent! That is as clear as anything can be, for here is a case that has defied and defeated Him! Oh, tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon that there is a man here who professes to believe the Bible, yet He holds that Christ is not Omnipotent! “Oh,” you say, “I do not hold that!” But you do practically hold it, for if you thought Him to be Omnipotent, you must conclude that He is “able to do this,” that is, to save you!

More than that, *disbelieving Christ’s power to save in your own case is virtually making yourself god.* “Oh, no!” you say in horror at the bare mention of such a thing! “I never did that!” Stay a moment and let me prove it to you. You believe that there is something in you which cannot be overcome by Divine Power. You think that there is something in you which makes it impossible that you can be saved. Now listen, the most mighty of all forces must belong to Deity—but if there is in you some

force of wickedness, some hardness of heart, some obstinate willfulness which you imagine God really cannot overcome, then you are practically making out that the evil in you is more powerful than *Omnipotence* and greater than God! Is not this very strange, as well as very wicked? You thought you were making yourself out to be very humble, but it turns out that you are very proud, lifting up yourself to the very Throne of God and seeking to usurp His place! This is what you are practically doing when you assume that Christ is not “able to do *this*,” that is, to save you. My dear Friend, look at the enormous guilt in which such unbelief would involve you and start back from it with the utmost abhorrence! And believe that Christ is mighty to save, yes, that He is Almighty to save even you!

I say again, as I said upon the first part of my subject, *this unbelief of yours challenges all the Divine Attributes*. In believing that Christ cannot save you, you are dishonoring the Character of God in the Person of His well-beloved Son, for you have set a limit to His power although He said that all power in Heaven and in earth had been given to Him! When He asks, “Is My arm shortened that it cannot save you?” you answer, “Yes, Lord.” When He says, “Is My ear heavy that it cannot hear your cry?” you reply, “Yes, Lord.” You may not dare to say it with your lips, but you really mean it in your heart—and that is even worse! You are denying the Truth of Christ’s promise. He said, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Yet *you* say, “Lord, I would come to You, but I would never get any rest. I would trust you, but I would never be saved.” You suppose either that Christ has promised more than He can perform, not knowing that He was doing so, which is challenging His Omniscience, or that He has deliberately promised more than He knew that He could do, which is challenging His truthfulness and honor! He has commanded that this message should be preached to every creature in all the world—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” He also said, “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” This is His declaration concerning every believing soul, so that if you believe on Him, it is *not possible* that your case could be beyond the limit of His power to save! I am not talking now about His willingness to save. If I were, I would speak just as confidently, but just now I am referring to His power. Christ’s own question to you, my dear Friend, is the same that He put to the blind men, “Believe you that I am able to do this?”—that, is, to save you! Think of the solemn consequences of unbelief—see how shamefully it maligns and slanders the Character of Jesus and then may His gracious Spirit sweetly compel you to believe that He is “able to do *this*,” and to save even you!

After Christ had cured these blind men, He healed a dumb man who was possessed with a devil. And the multitudes marveled, saying, “It was never so seen in Israel.” I wonder if there is one here who thinks himself the biggest sinner in the world, the most hardened, the most hopeless? If

so, and he believes in Jesus, Jesus will save him and then he, also, will be able to say, "It was never so seen in Israel." I know that when I found peace through believing in Jesus, I thought that it had never been so seen in Israel! And I have met with many others who have felt just the same about their own conversion. Well, supposing that it *was* never so seen in Israel, then there are new honors and fresh glories for Immanuel and there is no reason why it should not be seen here tonight! At any rate, I pray God to show you the inconsistency of professing to believe the Bible and yet thinking that for some reason or other, or for all the reasons in the world put together, Christ is unable to save you!

III. My third statement, which is as simple as the first and second were, is that **IN ALL MATTERS AFFECTING THE SOUL, THE VITAL QUESTION IS THAT OF FAITH.**

"Believe you that I am able to do this?" must be the vital question concerning a soul's salvation! Personal faith with regard to Christ's power to save must be the main matter. Jesus did not say to these blind men, "Have you a proper sense of your blindness? Are you sufficiently sensible of the deprivation from which you suffer through the loss of your eyesight? Do you feel the degradation of the poverty which compels you to beg? Have you wept, moaned, groaned and grieved because you cannot see?" No such questions as these were put to them by our Lord! He simply asked them, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" There are various questions that many of you ask yourselves although Christ never puts them to you—His one enquiry is, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" If you can answer that question satisfactorily, you need not trouble about your own queries!

You will notice, too, that *Christ did not ask the blind men whether they loved Him*. He did not say to them, "I am not going to do anything for you unless your hearts are burning with love to Me." Oh, no! It would have been clean contrary to our Savior's nature to say to these men, "Are you really fond of Me? Then I will do what you desire." So, Sinner, Christ does not ask you whether you love Him because He knows that you do not—yet you ask yourself this question again and again—"Do I love the Lord or no? Am I a lover of Jesus? I have heard His people say that they love Him, but do I love Him?" Now, this is a very proper question for you to ask yourself after you have believed in Jesus—but you must have the root-grace of faith, first, before you begin to look for its fruits. I hope that you will afterwards attain to that burning, fervent love that many advanced Believers have to Jesus, but this is not the matter that concerns you just now. The question that Jesus puts to you now is, "Believe you that I am able to do this? Believe you that I can take your sins away and make you clean tonight? Believe you that I can take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh? Believe you that I can turn you, a lion, into a lamb? Believe you that I can give you the Grace of repentance

though you cannot repent without My aid? Do you believe that I am able to do all that needs to be done in order to save you?" This is the question Christ asks you now. I trust the time will come when He will say to you, "Do you love Me?" and that you will be able truthfully to answer, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You."

There was another question which Christ did not put to the blind men. He did not say to them, "*Have you feared whether you would ever have your sight?* Have you been frightened at the thought that you may have to grope about in darkness and poverty all your days? Have you been in such despair that you have almost feared that you would commit suicide unless your blindness could be cured?" No, Christ did not ask any such questions as these! His one enquiry was, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" Friends tell us sometimes about the terrors they have experienced before they came to Christ by simple faith, but it would be quite wrong on our part to conclude that such terrors are necessary! I believe that they are *never* necessary and that they are seldom useful—it certainly cannot be right to put them in the place of faith in Christ! Dear Friend, I wish that you would answer the Master's question and leave all other matters alone until He asks you about them. He does not question you concerning your fears and your terrors, the plowing and harrowing Law work of which some brethren are so fond of talking about. His first question is, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" Give Him an answer and may the Holy Spirit enable you to give the right reply, "Yes, Lord," even as the blind men did when Christ put a similar question to them! The vital matter is faith in Jesus. "Do you believe on the Son of God?" O Sinner, how glad and thankful I would be if I knew that you were saying in your heart, "I do believe that Christ is both able and willing to save me. And I cast myself into His arms now." If you have really done that, you are saved, and now you know, feel, and rejoice in His power to save all those who come unto God by Him! Trust in Jesus, for this is the vital sign by which we discern those who are chosen of the Father, regenerated by the Holy Spirit and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus! If you truly believe in Jesus, you are born of God—you need not fear that you shall ever perish, but you may even now rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of Glory!

IV. I close with this fourth observation, that THIS QUESTION IS ONE WHICH WE MIGHT NATURALLY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT JESUS WOULD ASK.

It was a vitally important question, and it was by no means an unreasonable one. *If the blind men had not believed that Jesus was "able to do this," they would not have asked Him to have mercy upon them.* It would have been an impertinence on their part, or something worse than that, if they had pleaded for mercy and yet had not believed that He was able to grant it to them! I should not feel pleased if a blind man came to me

and said, "Will you be so good as to open my eyes?" I should feel morally certain that he was mocking me, for he would know as well as I do that I have not the power to give sight to the blind! Now, dear Friends, some of you have been praying to the Lord to have mercy upon you—so you see that you have committed yourselves just as these blind men had! You have not told anybody about it. Possibly it was behind the hedge, or up in the hayloft, or in that little bedroom of yours when no one but God could see you. Well then, how did you dare to pray thus if you did not believe that the Lord could do for you what you asked of Him? You did not mean to insult Him, did you? I think the very fact of your praying drives you to the conclusion that you do believe that He is "able to do this." If you do not, you must not pray anymore! "Oh," you say, "I cannot help praying." I am glad you cannot and I hope you never will cease praying, but if you go on praying, yet do not believe in Christ's power to save you, it is very much like a mockery of the Savior, for how can you pray with any sort of justification unless you can truly say, "O Lord, I do believe that You are able to save, and able to save even me"? I do not know whether the blind men at first fully believed in the Deity of Jesus, but I assume that all of us hold that He is "very God of very God." I hope none of you have been led astray by the false Doctrine that Christ is a mere man. You believe that He is the Son of God, so what is more reasonable than that He should say to you, "Believe you that I am able to do this?" You must give up your belief that He is Divine or else you must believe that He is able to do this, that is, to save you! I have already shown you that *Omnipotence* is essential to Deity, so if you doubt that Christ is Omnipotent, I do not see how you can believe that He is the Son of God. But inasmuch as you say that you do believe that He is the Son of God, and I have no reason to question your veracity, how can it be a question with you whether He is able to save you?

Besides, you know that *Christ has saved a great many other people* and this should encourage you to believe that He can save you. The blind men had probably heard of His miracles of mercy and so were stimulated to cry to Him on their own account. You have seen the change that Christ has worked in some of your relatives or friends—and this being the case, Christ certainly has the right to expect that you should believe that what He was able to do for them, He is also able to do for you! Your case is not by any means as peculiar as you imagine. It can easily be matched by others where Christ's power to save has been abundantly proved. If you are a drunk, we can produce drunks who have been saved by Christ. If you are a swearer, we can show you swearers who have been saved by Christ. If you are a harlot, we can bring harlots who have been washed in the precious blood of Jesus and who are now living chaste and holy lives. If, on the other hand, you have led an outwardly moral life and cannot

feel the deep conviction of sin that others have experienced—if you say, with Cowper—

***“I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel.
If anything is felt, 'tis only pain
To find I cannot feel”—***

we can find plenty of cases to match yours! Suppose you have a bad leg and you go to a doctor and say to him, “Doctor, you see what is the matter with my leg, but I don’t believe you can cure it.” He would certainly not feel flattered by your doubt concerning his skill, yet he might say to you, “Well, it so happens that I have had many cases exactly like yours, and in every instance the remedies I have prescribed have been the means of producing a complete cure.” If, after that, you still persist in saying that you do not believe the doctor can cure you, he would be fully justified in saying to you, “Then I think your unbelief is very unreasonable. Here in my book I have the record of many cases almost identical with yours, and as I was able to cure them, I have no doubt that I can cure you if you will only commit yourself to my hands and do as I tell you.” In a similar manner, I venture to say that there is not a case in this house—there is not a case in the whole world to which there has not been a very close parallel in which the power of Christ has already been displayed—and, therefore, He has the right to ask every unsaved soul, “Believe you that I am able to do this for you?”

My dear Hearer, I can most confidently assure you that He is “able to do this.” I know the ways of unbelief, for I have walked there. But oh, happy, happy, happy day when I understood my Savior’s Grace and power at least in some degree! When I saw that, although I was a sinner, He came to save sinners, and although I was black with sin, His precious blood was able to wash me whiter than snow—and although I was naked, His righteousness supplied me with a robe in which I might even dare to appear before God, and although I was spiritually dead, His Holy Spirit was given to quicken me and make me live forever—thus in Christ all my soul’s needs were fully met—and desperate as my case had appeared to myself, I had proved as so many before me and since have also proved that, “with God all things are possible.” May you come to the same conclusion, dear Friend, and cast yourself now upon the naked promise of God made in Covenant with Christ and ratified by His most precious blood! If He does not save you when you trust Him, this Bible is not true. If any soul can truly trust Him and then be a castaway, I have no Gospel to preach to guilty sinners! But that can never be the case, for He has Himself declared—oh that I could pronounce the words as He uttered them!—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Come then, everyone of you, and prove the truth of His blessed promise and so you shall be saved—and He shall have the Glory forever and ever! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:18-38.**

Verse 18. *While He spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Your hand upon her, and she shall live.* This was grand faith on the ruler's part, believing that the touch of Christ's hand would raise his dead daughter to life! We do not wonder that the Savior honored such faith as that at once!

19, 20. *And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment.* This was while He was on the way to the ruler's house. Jesus Christ can work many miracles while He is on the way to work other miracles.

21. *For she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole.* [See Sermon #1809, Volume 30—MAY I?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This also is wonderful faith—in this Chapter we get among the great Believers! The man believes that the touch of Jesus can raise the dead. The woman believes that the touch of His garment will make her whole!

22. *But Jesus turned about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.* [See Sermon #3020, Volume 53—GOOD CHEER FROM GRACE RECEIVED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Christ never comes short of our faith, but He often goes beyond it!

23. *And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise.* These were hired men and women who were brought in to act as mourners

24, 25. *He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when the people were put out, He went in—*There is a good deal that has to be "put out" before the Lord Jesus Christ will fully reveal His power to bless. He would have you put out your doubts, your fears, your wandering thoughts, your self-trust—in fact, everything that is contrary to His righteous rule. "When the people were put out, He went in"—

25-27. *And took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land. And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us!* See how busy our Lord was, and how ready for every application that was made to Him! And note how He adapted His power to every case that came before Him. First He heals an issue of blood. Then He raises the dead and now He is ready to open blind eyes! I wish the Lord might have such blessed business among us here—and He may have—for if you will cry to Him for your child, dead in trespasses and

sins, He will make her live! If you will bring your blind eyes to Him, He will open them! And if you will come to Him with a disease that is sapping your very life, He will heal you! Give the Lord plenty of this holy work to do! Drawn wells, they say, are sweetest—and a Savior who is constantly used is most enjoyed!

28. *And when He was come into the house, the blind men came to Him: and Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this?* That is the question the Lord puts to any who are in soul-trouble. “Believe you that I am able to do *this*?”—to forgive your sins once and for all—to give you a new Nature at this very moment—to make you, a sinner, into a saint—to save you, not merely for the next few weeks, but to save you *eternally* so that you shall see My face in Glory with exceeding joy—“Believe you that I am able to do *this*?”

28, 29. *They said unto Him, Yes, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you.* That is what Jesus says to every person here, “According to your faith be it unto you.” If you believe Christ a little, He will bless you a little, but if you believe Him up to the hilt, He will bless you to the fullest! Your faith shall never outrun the manifestations of Divine Love. Believe you this? Then you shall see it! “According to your faith be it unto you.”

30-32. *And their eyes were opened and Jesus immediately charged them, saying, See that no man knows it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil.* These miracles were worked so rapidly, and they concerned such different cases that as we read of them, we rejoice to see how Christ was ready for anything and ready for everything! It did not matter what case was brought to Him, He was never taken aback. Here He is just as fully prepared to heal the dumb as just now He was to cure the blind!

33. *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke*—There is nothing like going at once to the root of the matter. Christ did not heal the dumb man, and leave the devil in him, but He first cast the devil out and then, “the dumb spoke.” And this is His way of saving men. He renews them by His Spirit, He casts the devil out and then their despair goes, their prayerlessness disappears, their love of vice is killed! All evil is expelled when once the root of the evil is pulled up. “When the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke”—

33. *And the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never before seen in Israel.* [See Sermon #2482, Volume 42—AN UNPARALLELED CURE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Christ had worked such miracles as the multitudes had never before seen! And they might well marvel.

34, 35. *But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages*—What the

Pharisees said was of such very small consequence that, for the time being, Christ vouchsafed them no answer but this, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages." In like manner, it will be your best plan not to reply to slander. There are some lies that smell so strongly of the Pit from which they come that everybody will recognize their origin and, therefore, you need not take the trouble to point out that they are lies. And the best reply to all scandal and slander is to go on with your work just as if you had never heard it. The Pharisees said that Christ cast out devils through the prince of the devils, and the very next sentence is, "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages"—

35-36. *Teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them*—Yet Christ, while upon the earth in the flesh, never saw such multitudes as are gathered in London today! He never saw such multitudes as make up this nation! There never passed before the eyes of the Redeemer such multitudes as are crowded together in China and India today! No, the population of the world has wondrously increased since those days, so what must be the compassion of His heart when He sees the multitudes that are living in the world today? "When He saw the multitudes He was moved"—in the original, this is a very striking word—it signifies that He trembled with emotion, His inmost powers were moved, His heart was stirred "with compassion on them"—

36-37. *Because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then said He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Not the preachers, but the laborers are few! Not the talkers, but the laborers—the patient, plodding, resolute, disinterested, industrious toilers who really go in for winning souls for Christ—the men and women who do real work for God and do not play at Christian service as some do, making it a kind of amusement to go and do some little good now and then! It is these laborers who are few. You know the difference between a dock laborer, or a farm laborer, and the gentleman who takes a tool in his hand just for a pastime now and then.*

38. *Pray you therefore the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.* [See Sermon #1127, Volume 19—HARVEST MEN NEEDED—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is earnest workers that we are to pray God to thrust forth into His harvest, for still the harvest is plenteous and the laborers are few.

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

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

AN UNPARALLELED CURE NO. 2482

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
SEPTEMBER 13, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 8, 1886.**

***“As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the mute spoke: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never seen like this in Israel.”
Matthew 9:32, 33.***

As we read the chapter we noticed the rapidity with which the cures worked by the Savior followed each other, how much of mercy was compressed into a short space of time. He has no sooner healed the paralytic than, straightway, we find Him curing the woman who had an issue of blood, then raising to life the ruler's dead daughter and next giving sight to two blind men, then quickly after that, healing this poor man who was deaf and dumb—and possessed with a devil. Matthew seems to call attention to this succession of cures—“As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil.” The blind men disposed of, here is a dumb demoniac ready for the great Physician's hands. No sooner is one act of mercy done than there is another person needing an equal display of Grace and power—and the Savior at once goes to the task and heals again, again, again and yet again! What an inexhaustible fullness there is in Christ! He can bless and bless, and bless, and bless and still remain as full of blessing as ever.

I think that this ought to encourage us who have heard of revivals of religion. There is no time in which anyone is so likely to be converted as when many others are being brought to the Lord. When the Savior seems to rouse Himself up to an extraordinary display of power, it is well to be present and to put in our plea that we may share in those waves of mercy which follow so quickly, one upon the other! Have you heard of any who have been saved of late? Have your own friends been converted? Has the Lord been gracious to any of your old companions? Come, then, and put your case before the Lord Jesus Christ, feeling that you will not weary Him, that He will not need to pause till He has gathered fresh strength, but that He can continue to bless without cessation! Say to Him, as we have many times sung—

***“Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
You are scattering, full and free.
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing—
Let some drops fall on me.”***

And you need not be so modest as to say, "Let some *drops* fall on me," for when the Lord blesses, He delights to give *showers* of blessing—showers in one place and then showers in another. He can still act in this glorious fashion, blessing one after another without a pause.

Then observe, dear Friends—for it lies at the very door of our subject—the wonderful readiness of the Lord thus to bless men. You do not often find them kneeling down and importuning Him to bless them. It does occur, sometimes, when there is great faith and He means to try and prove it, but, as a rule, and especially in this chapter, you can see how ready the Lord was to bless. A paralyzed man is dropped through the ceiling by four friends and the Savior at once sees their faith before a word is spoken—and He bestows both forgiveness of sin and healing of sickness. In another case, the child lies dead and the father asks Christ to come and He comes. He was as willing to come as the father was that He should come. Then, next, a woman comes behind Him and touches the hem of His garment and the virtue flows out even from the blue fringe of the seamless robe which He wore! Then the blind men asked for sight and Jesus gave it to them!

But here was one who could not ask, for he was dumb. I do not suppose that he even went the length of a *desire*, for he was possessed of a devil—and that devil mastered the poor creature who was both deaf and dumb, for the Greek word means that he was a mute. He could not speak and he could not hear others speak, so the Savior, though He perceived no faith in him, and no prayer could come from him, yet noticed and honored the faith of *those who brought him*—and swiftly and spontaneously did His mercy flow out to this poor deaf and dumb demoniac!

Let us admire this readiness of Christ to bless and put our admiration to a practical use. Come, dear Heart, you have not to plead with Him to make Him merciful, for He loves you better than you love yourself! You have not to persuade Him to be gracious—Christ is no churl, holding His blessings with a tight hand as though He would rather hoard than bestow them on the needy. No, as freely as the sun scatters his light. As freely as the clouds dispense rain, so does Christ bless where He sees that there is need of blessing! Then let us put our friends in Christ's way by breathing a secret silent prayer for them. And let us also put *ourselves* in Christ's way—and may the great Master speedily heal us to the praise of the Glory of His Grace!

So I think we see very clearly in our Lord's working these two things, rapidity and readiness.

Then, once more, observe the great ease with which the Savior moved in every case. I do not know whether it strikes you, but it seems to me that Matthew, in the text before us, intimates the remarkable ease of the Savior. I will read it to you again. "As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the mute spoke." The Evangelist does not say that Jesus Christ cast out the devil—it was done so much as a matter of course by the Savior that Matthew takes it for granted that it was done! When you have to get into the swing of such a narrative as this and you have some five or six

different cures to relate, you seem to arrive at the feeling, "Well, they have only to come to Christ and the cure is worked at once."

Sometimes the Master healed with a word. At other times with a touch. Occasionally, it was not His touch, but the touch of the person healed. And here we are not told whether it was by a word, or a look, or how it was that the healing act was done. Let Christ, Himself, once meet the devil and that is an end to Satan's dominion! I may stand here and preach my very soul away—and effect *nothing* by the most earnest labor. But when the Master comes into the field, what is there that can stand before Him? The devil must flee even out of a deaf and dumb man who cannot plead for himself! He must depart when once the Master puts forth His Divine Power.

O Sirs, this is my hope for the salvation of the unsaved! If it depended upon *my* preaching, or upon *your* pleading, I would have scant hopes! But as it depends upon Him who has risen from the dead and who always lives at the right hand of God. As it depends upon Him who has pledged us His Presence wherever two or three are met together in His name and who has promised to be with His people wherever the Gospel is preached, then we *expect* to see wonders of Grace worked by Christ the mighty Miracle-Worker! May we see some of them worked in our midst this very hour!

This will suffice by way of introducing the subject and now let me call your careful attention to this special case as an encouragement to any who are seeking mercy from the Lord.

I. The multitudes said, "It was never seen like this in Israel" and the multitudes spoke the truth, for, first, IT WAS A VERY EXTRAORDINARY CASE. Here was a man deaf and dumb and possessed by a devil—and probably deaf and dumb *because* possessed by a devil.

The parallel of this poor man's case, if we take the miracle and spiritualize it, can be found in some *sinner*s who are dumb so that they cannot express their needs. They cannot pray. I do not say that they *desire* to do so, but they are honest when they say that they cannot even describe themselves, or cannot so plead for themselves as to cry to God for mercy. They have the conviction that they would be hypocrites if they did. They feel as if it would be an insult to God if they were to *attempt* to pray. All this is a mistake, but yet such is their feeling. This poor man's dumbness came of the possession of the devil and so does this inability to pray—it is often the work of Satan upon the heart of sinners when they cannot speak. If anyone were to ask them about their soul's affairs, they could not say anything. They have often, perhaps, been addressed by earnest Evangelists who have tried to find out what was wrong with them, but they could never give an answer. There are such spiritually dumb persons who have long come to this Tabernacle. I often wonder that they continue to come, yet they do, and Brothers and Sisters have tried in all manner of ways to get at them, but they cannot. These people seem to be shut in by impenetrable barriers of ice, so that they cannot be reached by any ordinary means. They cannot reply to a question, for they are

dumb. It must be a dreadful thing to feel as if you could not tell even the Lord about your case!

But then, perhaps, it is worse to be deaf, and *this dumb man was also deaf so that he could not hear Jesus speak*. It is a great deprivation to be unable to tell the Master our trouble, but it is a greater deprivation not to be able to hear that dear Voice which can wake the dead, which can heal the sick, which can change the nature, which can speak Grace into the soul! There are some in our midst who seem as if they could not hear. They come to the place of worship, but they say—

**“I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
Insensible as steel.
If anything is felt, ‘tis only pain
To find I cannot feel.”**

I am glad when they get as far as that last line, but they are deaf until the voice of God goes with the voice of the ministry. If they read the Bible, it does not have that effect upon their conscience and their heart which it does when it is accompanied by the mighty working of the Holy Spirit.

Then there are persons who appear to be *like this demoniac, not even desiring good*. They feel as if they were under the influence of Satan. I know a well-educated man in a good position in society who might be a comfort to his wife and family. You would like to speak to him if you could see him just now, but I would not like you to see him at *any* time when he is drunk—then he is a curse to his poor family and to the whole district! Oh, what a life a man leads when once the demon of drunkenness has gained the mastery over him! I do not wonder that such a man is both deaf and dumb to the Gospel!

Some are in the grip of that foul and loathsome demon of licentiousness—they seem as if they went after their lust greedily, they cannot be kept back from it and, of course, they cannot pray—they cannot hear the Word with any right realization of its power. Satan has such a mastery over them that theirs is a terrible case, like that of this deaf and dumb demoniac. I do not wonder that the multitudes said, when Christ had cured him, “It was never seen like this in Israel.”

II. So, next, it was not only an extraordinary case that was brought to Christ, but **IT WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY CURE** that He worked, for we read that the devil was cast out and the mute spoke!

Note, first, that *the devil was cast out*. Whenever he goes out of himself, he always comes back again. But when he is cast out, He that threw him out keeps him out. There are some men that reform, though they hardly know why, and then, by-and-by, they go back to their old sin and they are worse than ever. But whenever Christ comes to deal with this strong-armed man, He ejects him with a Divine Violence and never permits him to return, for the stronger Man who drove him out keeps that house in peace. This casting out of the devil is a very wonderful work. May the Lord come and perform it in our midst! May the demon of drunkenness, or lust, or whatever it is, be flung out of the window, never to return to the soul again!

Then, next, *the dumb man spoke*. That, also, was a wonderful thing. Deaf and dumb, how did he know the meaning and value of different sounds? Ordinarily we would have to explain to such a person what was the force of such a vowel, or of such a combination of vowels and consonants, but this man at once spoke! Matthew does not record what the man said, though he does tell us what the multitudes said. Curiosity might lead us to want to know what this man said than what the multitudes said, but the Lord knew that it would be more to our edification to know what the *multitudes* testified concerning the miracle! What is recorded is of much more value than what is omitted, we may be sure of that.

I wonder, however, what the man did say. I do not know, but I can imagine what I would have said if I had been in his place. I would have said, "Blessed be the Lord God who has delivered me from the power of the devil!" I would also have said, "O Lord Jesus, I love You! Let me follow You wherever You go!" I would not have known what I did *not* want to say under such circumstances, but if there had been some great unusual word to express intense gratitude, I would have wanted to use that—

***"Oh, for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak!"***

It is always amazing to me, but I have often seen it—some foul blasphemer, or some other great sinner has been converted and almost immediately he has spoken the language of Canaan as sweetly as if he had been an old saint! I have known a woman rescued from the streets, foul with vice, yet as soon as ever she has been truly penitent at the Savior's feet, the tears with which she has washed those precious feet have been as pure as ever fell from a godly matron's eyes! The Grace of God makes marvelous changes where it comes into the soul, for the devil is cast out and a holy tongue is put in! Saintly speech is taught—not in 12 lessons, as I hear that some teach the German tongue—but in a single lesson is taught that blessed language of prayer, praise and testimony to the power and love of Christ which, I think, must have been what this man said. "It was never seen like this in Israel," said the multitudes, for they could hardly believe their own ears when this poor deaf-mute commenced talking at such a rate! It was wonderful and I am sure that if some people I know are saved, the world will scarcely believe it!

I saw a Brother this week. I had seen his wife some time ago and I had known how brutally he had treated her. And when I saw him confessing Christ and weeping over his sin, I was ready to weep on his neck to think that he should be among us loving the Savior when once his mouth was full of oaths and cursing and the drunkard's cup seemed to be always at his lips. The Lord does great wonders! If there are any more of these outrageous sinners here, may He come and deal with you till everybody shall say of Tom, or Harry, or Jack, or Polly, "The Lord has made such a change in that great profligate, it was never so seen in Israel." God be thanked for the very hope that such a miracle of mercy may yet be

worked! Thus, first, this was an extraordinary case, and next, it was an extraordinary cure.

III. But, then, it is all accounted for by this fact, IT WAS WROUGHT BY AN EXTRAORDINARY PERSON!

There had been many Prophets in Israel and God had worked miracles by them, but now there stood in Israel *the Incarnate God Himself*. He who had now come to deal with the sick and with those possessed of devils was “The Mighty God.” Omnipotence was in His hands, Omniscience was in His eyes, Infinite Love was in His heart and He had come to deal with the woes and needs of men. Surely, Brothers and Sisters, in such a case we might expect that there would be things done that had never before been seen in Israel! Israel was the land of wonders and yet here was a wonder such as Israel never marveled at before and, if it had never been seen in Israel, you may depend upon it that it had never been seen anywhere else in the whole world! So, if Christ comes and saves great sinners and makes even His people wonder and say, “It was never seen like this among us,” then, depend upon it, it was never so seen anywhere else!

If conversion had to be worked by ministers, Evangelists and teachers, we would like to pick out some very tender hearts and gentle spirits—those who had been trained from their youth up in the ways of godliness—but as conversion is always the work of the Lord, Himself, and the new birth is worked by the Holy Spirit, then it does not matter what are the materials with which the Lord has to deal! God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham! He can call Saul of Tarsus from among the Pharisees and Matthew from among the publicans—and the woman who loved much from among the harlots! Christ could save the dying thief, yes, and the very chief of sinners had an open gate of mercy because God, Himself, had assumed human flesh and had come down to save the guilty. “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth.”

I seem to myself to stutter and stammer over these glorious Truths of God! Oh, that my soul could speak without being hindered by my lips and that I could fully tell how great a Savior this is, to whom nothing is difficult, much less impossible! You greatest sinner, you blackest sinner, you most hardened sinner, the Lord Jesus is able to save you *now*! Believe it and believe Him and, according to your faith, so shall it be to you! Yes, it shall be so to you this very night before you leave this House of Prayer!

I have now only to speak for just a few minutes to someone who may be saying, “If I were to be saved, Sir, it would be the most extraordinary thing that ever happened! If I were to become washed in the blood of Christ and made a child of God, it would be the greatest novelty that ever was known! I do not think it could be because it was never so seen in Israel.”

Now listen to me. You say it was never so seen in Israel—how do you know that? It is highly probable that *you are making a great mistake* and

that there have been some saved who were quite as bad as you are, perhaps some who, in certain respects, were *worse than you*. What a splendid book might be made out of the records of the conversion of great sinners! The wildest romance is dull compared with the true history and mystery of the salvation of sinners! Whatever you may be, there is someone like you gone to Heaven. Though you are blacker than any other in the circle of your companions, yet there have been some who were blacker than you are who, nevertheless, have been washed whiter than snow and have been eternally saved. Do not persuade yourself into the conviction that it was never so seen in Israel, for great things have been seen in Israel, of which you know nothing.

But suppose that you speak the truth and are correct? Then, if it was never so seen in Israel, that is *no reason why it should not be so seen just now*. Because a thing has not happened, shall it never happen? The Israelites stood before the Red Sea and they might have said that a nation had never marched through the *sea*. Well, then, it was time that they should do so! And when God divided the waters, they went through the sea on foot and there did they rejoice in the might of Jehovah. Is not the Scripture full of the surprises of Grace—and has God changed? No, dear Friend, if this wonder has not happened yet, it is time that it should happen—and if it never has been so seen in Israel, I hope the hour has come when it shall be so seen in our midst! This which the multitudes said Israel had never seen, Israel did see, for the dumb man was delivered from the power of the devil and was enabled to speak the Savior's praise! And you, great sinner as you are, may become an instance of the surprise power of Divine Grace. It is time that it should be so!

Now let me ask you a question which may, perhaps, put an end to your belief that in your case this marvel cannot happen. *Are you beyond the limit of Divine Power?* Can God's Grace come, like the waves of the sea, right up to your feet and then shall some cruel voice say, "Up to this point shall you come, but no further"? Do you really believe that you are above the high-water mark of Divine Mercy? Will you just ponder this question over and think what a strange kind of man you must be? Neither the wandering Jew, nor any other fictitious character in the world of romance is so strange a creature as you—a man outside the limit of almighty love, one who has sinned beyond the boundary of Infinite Mercy—a sinner whom Christ's blood cannot wash! When you get to Hell, what a parade they will make of you! "Here is a man whom Christ could not save! He was willing to be washed, but Christ's blood could not cleanse him!" I fancy I hear you say, "Do not talk so, Sir—it is almost blasphemy." Why do you think so, then, if I may not say it? Why do you have the impudence to think that, after all, you are going to be master over Christ and that for once He will have to draw back and say, "This man has beaten Me. I cannot touch him. I cannot in any way soften, renew, or convert him"? You do not believe it—I am sure you do not! Get, then, out of this horrible falsehood of despair which is now upon you. If it was never so seen in Israel, believe that it may be so seen—and this very hour trust yourself with Christ and live!

Again, suppose it never was so seen in Israel. Suppose that you are the hardest sinner to save. Suppose that you are the most unlikely person to be forgiven. Suppose that your sins have well-near reached the limit of forgiving love. Well, now, here is a fine opportunity for Christ to show what He can do—*there is all the more room for the Glory of God's Grace to be seen*. Let me quote a text—“Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound.” Now here is an opportunity for the splendor of Divine Love to be seen in chasing away the midnight darkness of your sin and despair! Where are you, dear Sir, where are you? I am right glad to think that I am speaking to such a person, for, by-and-by, when you sit among the angels and sing to the praise of Free Grace and dying love, surely there will be no voice sweeter than yours!

I used to think that I should sing among the Saints above as loudly as any, for I owe so much to the Grace of God! And I once said so in a sermon, long ago, quoting those lines—

**“Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While Heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of Sovereign Grace!”**

I thought that I was the greatest debtor to Divine Grace and would sing the loudest to its praise. But when I came down out of the pulpit there was a venerable woman who said to me, “You made a blunder in your sermon this evening.” I said, “I daresay I made a dozen, good Soul, but what was that particular one?” “Why, you said that you would sing the loudest because you owed most to Divine Grace. You are but a lad, you do not owe *half* as much to Grace as I do at 80 years of age! I owe more to Grace than you and I will not let you sing the loudest.” I found that there was a general conspiracy among the friends, that night, to put me in the background. And that is where I meant to be and wished to be—that is where those who sing the loudest long to be—to take the lowest place and praise most the Grace of God in so doing!

Brother, if you are the biggest sinner out of Hell, there will be the more music in Heaven when they get you there and, at this moment, if you believe in Jesus, angels shall re-string their harps and new hallelujahs shall sound through the streets of Heaven when they see such a sinner as you washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb! “It was never so seen in Israel,” well then, let it be so seen *now* to the praise of God's glorious Grace! “Ah,” says one, “I do not think I shall ever be saved, for *the very devil is in me*.” Yes, but the devil's Master has come to turn him out. Only believe in Jesus and He will cast him out of you. “But he will not go out.” Never you mind what the devil says about that matter! His Master can make him go out. The Omnipotent Jehovah knows of no power which is capable of standing against Him—

**“When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?
When He His people's cause defends
Who, who shall stop His hand?”**

Almighty Grace can cast Satan out and keep him out, too. “Oh, but Sir, I do not feel as if I could pray. Oh, that I could pray!” But you *have* prayed—that was a prayer that you uttered. “I cannot pray, Sir, I wish I

could." You have prayed, already, that very *wish* is a prayer. "Sir, I cannot pray. I scarcely dare look up to Heaven." That confession that you dare not look up has in it the very essence of prayer! "But I cannot pray." Well then, *groan*. "But I can scarcely groan." Then, *desire*. "But I can hardly get to a desire." Then be wretched because you cannot desire! I do not exhort you to act like that—I only want to lead you away from your feelings or lack of feelings. If you wish to be saved, look to Jesus Christ right now, whatever you feel or do not feel! Whether you can groan, or pray, or do anything else, or cannot do anything else, look to Jesus! The only hope of a poor sinner is in Christ Jesus and Him crucified. As I have said already, He is the devil's Master and He, alone, can be your Savior. Cast yourself at His feet and He will not let you go! Lie before Him just as you are, in all the horror of your condition, and say, "Lord, look on me, for I look alone to You." Look, look, look to Jesus! Look and live!—

***"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you."***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9.**

Verse 1. *And He entered into a ship and passed over, and came into His own city.* Our Lord had given these Gergesenes an opportunity of becoming His disciples. The Kingdom of God had come very near to them, but as they accounted themselves unworthy of it and urged Him to depart out of their coasts, He did not force Himself upon them. Take heed, dear Friends, if you do but hear the Gospel, once, that you do not reject it, for you may never have the opportunity of hearing it again!

2. *And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.* He saw the faith of the one man who was brought to Him and also the faith of the four bearers who had let him down through the roof.

3, 4. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This Man blasphemes! And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts?* His knowledge of the *thoughts* of their hearts ought to have convinced them that He was Divine and that, therefore, He had the right to forgive sins. They were not, however, in a condition to learn *anything*, for they thought that they already knew *everything*.

5. *For what is easier to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Arise, and walk?* Each of these actions needed Divine Power, but Divinity being present, there was no difference as to the manifestation of this power between the forgiveness of sins and the healing of sickness.

6, 7. *But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then He said to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house. And he arose and departed to his house. Carrying the mattress on which he had lain. Would he keep that bed sacred, do you think, for a memorial? Or if he used it in the future to sleep upon, would he not, by night, upon his bed wake up and praise the Lord for what He had done for him? I think that we should treasure up in our*

memory the deeds of Christ on our behalf, if, indeed, we know His great salvation. I should not wonder if there is a mattress that you have somewhere at home—a bed, or a book—or something with which there is connected the remembrance of some deed of Infinite Love and Almighty Grace.

8. *But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power to men.* They did not think deeply enough and go really to the bottom of the matter, but they concluded that it was a wonderful thing that *any* man—that *any men*, as they put it—should have such power given to them.

9. *And as Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.* Notice how Matthew describes himself—“As Jesus passed forth from there, He saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.”

9. *And He said to him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.* See how everything is obedient to Christ? Paralysis leaves the palsied man and hardness of heart departs from the tax-gatherer.

10. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.* Note the modesty of these early recorders—Matthew does not say that it was his own house where this gathering took place, nor that he was the giver of the feast. Mark and Luke supply this information.

11-13. *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, He said to them, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.”* God prefers the doing of good to all outward ritual and ordinances, even the best of them—“I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:”

13-22. *For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, but your disciples fast not? So Jesus said to them, Can the children of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them and then shall they fast. No man puts a piece of new cloth to an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up takes from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break and the wine runs out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. While He spoke these things to them, behold there came a certain ruler and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Your hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; your faith has made you whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.* See how He scatters mercy all around? He is charged to the full with the Divine electricity of

health and whoever comes in His way gets a blessing! Oh, for the Presence of that full and overflowing Christ in the midst of every worshipping assembly, for there are still many sick folk who need a Savior as much as these people did in the days of Jesus!

23. *And when Jesus came into the ruler's house and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise.* They were gathered together for the funeral of this young girl.

24. *He said to them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleeps. And they laughed Him to scorn.* They did not yet understand His expression—apparently sleep only differs from death in this respect—that the sleeper wakes, again, and returns to consciousness. The Lord Jesus Christ did not mean that the maiden was not dead—He meant that, as she was soon coming to life, again, it was, as it were, only like the *image* of death. To her, death was not a *cul-de-sac*, a dark cave without an opening at the further end—it was rather a tunnel through which she was passing back again into life.

25, 26. *But when the people were put forth, He went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And His fame hereof went abroad into all that land.* And well it might! This was the marvel of marvels that He could even raise the dead!

27. *And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, You Son of David, have mercy on us.* See, my Brothers and Sisters, how miracle follows upon miracle, how the way of Christ is, as it were, paved with mercy upon mercy?

28. *And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him and Jesus said to them, Do you believe that I am able to do this?* It is a great thing to have faith about the particular point that most concerns us—“Do you believe that I am able to do this?” Some can believe everything except the one thing for which faith is most needed,

28. *They said to Him, Yes, Lord.* Can you, dear Friend, say, “Yes, Lord,” about yourself?

29-31. *Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it to you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus charged them, saying, See that no man knows it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country.* This was very wrong of them, for they ought to have obeyed Christ's orders. They were doing much mischief, although, no doubt, they thought they were doing good. The Savior, first of all, was modest and did not wish His cures reported. In the next place, He wanted to have an opportunity of doing more good, but the reporting of this cure brought Him immense crowds who encumbered Him and also excited the animosity of the Pharisees who would the more persecute Him. Moreover, our Lord did not wish the Pharisees to think that He cured people that they might simply advertise Him. I think that we often err in imagining that making known every little thing that happens, and even every great thing, is the best course to pursue. There is a way of walking in wisdom toward them that are without—and Christ knew that way. And these blind man whose eyes He had opened should not have disobeyed Him.

32. *As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. “As they went out.”* Do notice what a succession of mercies Christ dispersed! It was a sort of tempest of blessing, peal upon peal, following almost without intermission!

33, 34. *And when the devil was cast out, the mute spoke: and the multitudes marveled, saying, It was never seen like this in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the prince of the devils.* How does Christ answer this wicked taunt?

35. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* That is the best answer to give to quibblers— do more good than ever! There is no stopping the barking of dogs, so go on your way, as the moon shines, let the hounds bay as they may. Oh, the glory of the Master! Like a cloud that dispenses showers of blessing wherever it moves, so did He continue to do His life-work.

36-38. *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then said He to His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray you, therefore, to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.* Or, “that He will thrust forth laborers into His harvest.” He who does the most is always the one who needs to see more done. This blessed Christ, with His hands so full of holy work, is the One who bows His knee and cries to the great Lord of the harvest to thrust forth laborers into His harvest. Let us imitate Him both in the working and in the praying!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136 (SONG II), 537, 499.

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

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

NO. 3438

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1914.

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

“He was moved with compassion.”
Matthew 9:36.

THIS is said of Christ Jesus several times in the New Testament. The original word is a very remarkable one. It is not found in classic Greek. It is not found in the Septuagint. The fact is, it was a word coined by the Evangelists, themselves. They did not find one in the whole Greek language that suited their purpose and, therefore, they had to make one. It is expressive of the deepest emotion—a striving of the heart—a yearning of the innermost nature with pity. As the dictionaries tell us—*Ex intimis visceribus misericordia commoveor*. I suppose that when our Savior looked upon certain sights, those who watched Him closely perceived that His internal agitation was very great, His emotions were very deep and then His face betrayed it—His eyes gushed like fountains with tears and you saw that His big heart was ready to burst with pity for the sorrow upon which His eyes were gazing. He was moved with compassion. His whole Nature was agitated with commiseration for the sufferers before Him.

Now, although this word is not used many times even by the Evangelists, yet it may be taken as a clue to the Savior's whole life—and I intend thus to apply it to Him. If you would sum up the whole Character of Christ in reference to ourselves, it might be gathered into this one sentence, “He was moved with compassion.” Upon this one point we shall try to insist, now, and may God grant that good practical results may come of it. First, I shall lead your meditations *to the great transactions of our Savior's life*. Secondly, *to the special instances in which this expression is used by the Evangelists*. Thirdly, *to the forethought which He took on our behalf* and, fourthly, *to the personal testimony which one's own recollections can furnish*. Let us take a rapid survey of—

I. THE GREAT LIFE OF CHRIST, just touching, as with a swallow's wing, the evidence it bears from the beginning. Before ever the earth was framed. Before the foundations of the everlasting hills were laid. When as yet the stars had not begun their shining, it was known to God that His creature, man, would sin—that the whole race would fall from its pure original state in the first Adam, the Covenant Head as well as the common parent of the entire human family, and that in consequence of that one man's disobedience every soul born of his lineage would become a

sinner. Then, as the Creator knew that His creatures would rebel against Him, He saw that it would become necessary, eventually, to avenge His injured Law. Therefore, it was purposed, in the eternal plan, before the stream of time had commenced its course, or ages had begun to accumulate their voluminous records, that there should be an Interposer—One ordained to come and re-head the race, to be the Second Adam, a federal Chief to restore the breach, and repair the mischief of the first Adam—to be a Surety to answer for the sons of men on whom God’s love did light, that their sins should be laid upon Him—and that He should save them with an everlasting salvation. No angel could venture to intrude into those Divine counsels and decrees, or to offer himself as the surety and sponsor for that New Covenant. Yet there was One—and He none other than Jehovah’s Self—of whom He said, Let all the angels of God worship Him, the Son, the Well-Beloved of the Father, of whom it is written in the Word, “When He prepared the heavens I was there. When He set a compass upon the face of the depth, when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep” then, “I was by Him as One brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth; and My delights were with the sons of men.” He it is of whom the Apostle John speaks as the Lord who was God, and was in the beginning with God. Was He not moved with compassion when He entered into a Covenant with His Father on our behalf, even on the behalf of all His chosen—a Covenant in which He was to be the Sufferer and they the gainers—in which He was to bear the shame that He might bring them into His own Glory?

Yes, verily, He was even then moved with compassion for His delights, even then, were with the sons of men! Nor did His compassion peer forth in the prospect of an emergency presently to diminish and disappear as the rebellion took a more active form, and the ruin assumed more palpable proportions. It was no transient feeling. He still continued to pity men. He saw the fall of man. He marked the subtle serpent’s mortal sting. He watched the trail as the slime of the serpent passed over the fair glades of Eden. He observed man in his evil progress, adding sin to sin through generation after generation, fouling every page of history until God’s patience had been tried to the uttermost! And then, according as it was written in the volume of the Book that He must appear—Jesus Christ came, Himself, into this stricken world! Came how? O, be astonished, you angels, that you were witnesses of it, and you men that you beheld it! The Infinite came down to earth in the form of an Infant! He who spans the heavens and holds the ocean in the hollow of His hand, condescended to hang upon a woman’s breast—the Eternal King became a little Child! Let Bethlehem tell that He had compassion! There was no way of saving us but by stooping to us! To bring earth up to Heaven, He must bring Heaven down to earth! Therefore, in the Incarnation, He had compassion, for He took upon Himself our infirmities and was made like unto ourselves. Matchless pity, indeed, was this!

Then, while He tarried *in the world, a Man among men*, and we beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth, He was constantly moved with compassion, for He felt all the griefs of mankind in Himself. He took our sicknesses and carried our sorrows. He proved Himself a true Brother, with quick, human sensibilities. A tear brought a tear into His eyes, a cry made Him pause to ask what help He could render. So generous was His soul that He gave all He had for the help of those who had not. The fox had its hole, and the bird its nest, but He had no dwelling place. Stripped even of His garments, He hung upon the Cross to die. Never one so indigent in death as He, without a friend, without even a tomb, except such as a loan could find Him. He gave up all the comforts of life—He gave His life, itself—He gave His very Self to prove that He was moved with compassion! Most of all do we see how He was moved with compassion *in His terrible death*. Oft and oft again have I told this story, yet these lips shall be dumb before they cease to reiterate the old, old tidings. God must punish sin, or else He would relinquish the government of the universe. He could not let iniquity go unchastened without compromising the purity of His administration. Therefore, the Law must be honored, Justice must be vindicated, righteousness must be upheld, crime must be expiated by suffering! Who, then, shall endure the penance or make the reparation? Shall the dread sentence fall upon all mankind? How far shall vengeance proceed before equity is satisfied? After what manner shall the sword do homage to the scepter? Must the elect of God be condemned for their sins? No! Jesus is moved with compassion. He steps in, He takes upon Himself the uplifted lash and His shoulders run with gore! He bares His bosom to the furbished sword and it smites the Shepherd that the sheep may escape! “He looked, and there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore, His arm brought salvation.” He trod the winepress alone, and “bore, that we might never bear, His Father’s righteous ire.”

Are you asked what does the Crucifixion of a perfect Man upon a felon’s Cross, mean? You may reply, “He was moved with compassion.” “He saved others. Himself He could not save.” He was so moved with compassion, that compassion, as it were, did eat Him up! He could save nothing from the general conflagration—He was utterly consumed with love and died in the flame of ardent love towards the sons of men! And after He had died and slept a little while in the grave, He rose again! He has gone into His glory! He is living *at the right hand of the Father*! But this is just as true of Him—“He is moved with compassion.” Is proof needed? Let faith pass within the veil and let your spirits, for a moment, stand upon that sea of glass mingled with fire where the harpers stand tuning their never ceasing melodies! What? Do you see there, conspicuous in the very midst of Heaven, One who looks like a lamb that has been slain, and still wears His priesthood? What is His occupation there in Heaven? He has no bloody Sacrifice to offer, for He has perfected forever those that were

set apart! That work is done, but what is He doing now? He is pleading for His people! He is their perpetual Advocate, their continual Intercessor! He never rests until they come to their rest! He never holds His peace for them, but pleads the merit of His blood, and will do so till all whom the Father gave Him shall be with Him where He is! Well, indeed, does our hymn express it—

***“Now, though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great!
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor will His saints forget.”***

His tender heart pities all the griefs of His dear people. There is not a pang they have but the Head feels it, feels it for all the members! Still does He look upon their imperfections and their infirmities, yet not with anger, not with loss of patience, but with gentleness and sympathy, “He is moved with compassion.” Having thus briefly sketched the life of Christ, I want you to turn to—

II. THOSE PASSAGES OF THE EVANGELISTS IN WHICH THEY TESTIFY THAT HE WAS MOVED WITH COMPASSION.

You will find one case in Matthew 20:31—“Two blind men sat by the wayside begging, and when they heard that Jesus passed by, they said, “O Lord, You Son of David, have mercy on us.” Jesus stood still, called them, questioned them and they seem to have had full conviction that He could and would restore their sight, so Jesus had compassion on them, touched their eyes and immediately they received sight!

Yes, and what a lesson this is for any here present who have a like conviction! Do you believe that Christ can heal you? Do you believe that He is willing to heal you? Then let me assure you that a channel of communication is opened between Him and you, for He is moved with compassion towards you, and already I hear Him command you to come to Him. He is ready to heal you now! The sad condition of a blind man should always move pity in the breast of the humane, but a glance at these two poor men—I do not know that there was anything strange or uncommon about their appearance—touched the Savior’s sensibility. And when He heard them say that they believed He could heal them, He seemed to perceive that they had inward sight—and to account it a pity that they should not have outward sight too! So at once He put His fingers on their eyes, and they received the power of seeing. O Soul, if you believe “Christ can save you, and if you will now trust in Him to save you, be of good cheer, you are saved! That faith of yours has saved you. The very fact that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, and rely upon Him, may stand as evidence to you that you are forgiven, that you are saved! There is no let or bar to your full redemption! Go your way and rejoice in your Lord! He has compassion on you.

The next case I shall cite is that of the leper, Mark 1:41. This poor man was covered with a sad and foul disease when he said to Jesus, “Lord, if You will, You can make me clean.” He had full faith in Christ’s

ability, but he had some doubts as to Christ's willingness. Our Savior looked at him, and though He might very well have rebuked him that he should doubt His willingness, He merely said, "I will, be you clean," and straightway he was made whole of that loathsome plague! If there is in this assembly one grievously defiled or openly disgraced by sin, see the leprosy upon yourself and do you say, "I believe He could save me if He would"? Have you some lingering doubt about the Savior's willingness? Yet I beseech you breathe this prayer, "Lord, I believe, I believe Your power. Help You my unbelief which lingers round Your willingness." Then little as your faith is, it shall save you! Jesus, full of compassion, will pity even your unbelief and accept what is faith and forgive what is unbelief. That is a second instance.

The third I will give you is from Mark 5:19. It was the demoniac. There met Christ a man so possessed with a devil as to be mad! And instead of belief in Christ or asking for healing, this spirit within the man compelled him to say, "Will You torment us before the time?"—and rather to stand against Christ healing him than to ask for it. But Christ was moved with compassion and He bade the evil spirit come out of the evil man. Oh, I am so glad of this instance of His being moved with compassion! I do not so much wonder that He has pity on those that believe in Him, neither do I so much marvel that He has pity, even, on weak faith—but here was a case in which there was no faith, no desire, nor anything that could commend him to our Lord's sympathy! Is there no such case among the crowds gathered together here? You do not know why you have come into this assembly. You scarcely feel at home in this place. Though you have led a very sad life, you do not want to be converted—not you! You almost shun the thought! Yet it is written, "He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion." Well, we have known it in this house, and I hope we shall know it again and again that the Lord has laid violent hands of love upon unprepared souls! They have been struck down with repentance, renewed in heart and saved from their sins! Saul of Tarsus had no thought that he would ever be an Apostle of Christ, but the Lord stopped the persecutor and changed him into a preacher—so that ever afterwards he propagated the faith which once he destroyed! May the Lord have compassion on you tonight! Well may we offer that prayer, for what will be your fate if you die as you are? What will be your eternal doom if you pass out of this world as soon you must, without being sprinkled with the blood of Christ and forgiven your iniquities? Jesus knows the terrors of the world to come! He describes the torments of Hell. He sees your danger. He warns you. He pities you—He sends His messengers to counsel you. He bids me say to the very chief of sinners, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." "Only return unto Me and confess your iniquity, and I will have mercy upon you," says the Lord. May God grant that the compassion of Christ may be seen in your case!

As I turned over the Greek Concordance to find out where this word is repeated again and again, I found one instance in Luke 7:13. It refers to the widow at the gates of Nain. Her son was being carried out—her only son. He was dead and she was desolate. The widow's only son was to her, her sole stay—the succor as well as the solace of her old age. He was dead and laid upon the bier, and when Jesus saw the disconsolate mother, He was moved with compassion and He restored her son. Oh, is there not refreshment here for you mothers that are weeping for your boys? You that have ungodly sons, unconverted daughters, the Lord Jesus sees your tears! You weep alone, sometimes, and when you are sitting and enjoying the Word, you think, "Oh, that my Absalom were renewed! Oh, that Ishmael might live before You." Jesus knows about it. He was always tender to His own mother, and He will be so to you. And you that are mourning over those that have been lately taken from you, Jesus pities you. Jesus wept, He sympathizes with your tears. He will dry them and give you consolation. "He was moved with compassion."

Still the occasions on which we find this expression most frequently used in the Evangelists are when crowds of people were assembled. At the sight of the great congregations that gathered to hear Him, our Lord was often moved with compassion. Sometimes it was because they were hungry and faint, and in the fullness of His sympathy, He multiplied the loaves and fishes to feed them. At the same time He showed His disciples that it is a good work to feed the poor. Jesus would not have them so spiritually-minded as to forget that the poor have flesh and blood that require sustenance—and they need to eat and to drink, to be housed and clothed—the Christian's charity must not lie in words only, but in deeds! Our Lord was moved with compassion, it is said, when He saw the number of sick people in the throng, for they made a hospital of His preaching place. Wherever He paused or even passed by, they laid the sick in the streets! He could not stand or walk without the spectacle of their pallets to harrow His feelings. And He healed their impotent folk, as if to show that the Christian does well to minister to the sick—that the patient watcher by the bedside may be serving the Lord and following His example, as well as the most diligent teacher or the most earnest preacher of the glorious Gospel! All means that can be used to mitigate human suffering are Christ-like, and they ought to be carried out in His name, and carried to the utmost perfection possible. Christ is the patron of the hospital—He is the President of all places where men's bodies are cared for. But we are also told that the multitude excited His compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So He taught them as a Guide that showed the path by leading the way—and He looked after their welfare as a Shepherd who regarded the health of their bodies as well as the good estate of their souls! Surely, Brothers and Sisters, if you love Him, and wish to be like He, you cannot look on this congregation without pity. You cannot go out into the streets of London and stand in the high roads among the surging masses for half an hour without say-

ing, "Where are these souls going? Which road are they travelling? Will they all meet in Heaven?" What? You live in London, you move about in this great metropolis and do you never have the heartache, never feel your soul ready to burst with pity? Then shame on you! Ask yourself whether you have the spirit of Christ at all! In this congregation, were we all moved with pity as we should be, I should not have to complain, as I sometimes must, that persons come in and out of here in need of someone to speak with them, to condole, to console, or to commune with them in their loneliness, and they find no helper! Time was when such a thing never occurred, but, in conversing with enquirers lately, I have met with several cases in which persons in a distressed state of mind have said that they would have given anything for half an hour's conversation with any Christian to whom they might have opened their hearts. They came from the country, attended the Tabernacle, and no one spoke to them! I am sorry it should be so. You used to watch for souls, most of you. Very careful were you to speak to those whom you saw again and again. I do pray you mend that matter. If you have a heart of mercy, you should be looking out for opportunities to do good! Oh, never let a poor wounded soul faint for want of the balm! You know the balm. It has healed yourselves. Use it wherever the arrows of God have smitten a soul.

Enough. I must leave this point. I have given you, I think, every case in which it is said that Jesus was moved with compassion. Very briefly let me notice—

III. SOME OF THE FORESIGHTS OF HIS COMPASSION.

The Lord has gone from us, but as He knew what would happen while He was away, He has, with blessed forethought, provided for our needs. Well, He knew that we should never be able to preserve the Truth of God pure by tradition. That is a stream that always muddies and defiles everything. So, in tender forethought, He has given us the consolidated testimony, *the unchangeable Truths of God in His own Book*, for He was moved with compassion. He knew the priests would not preach the Gospel. He knew that no order of men could be trusted to hold fast sound Doctrine from generation to generation, He knew there would be hirelings that dare not be faithful to their conscience lest they should lose their pay—while there would be others who love to tickle men's ears and flatter their vanity rather than to tell plainly and distinctly the whole counsel of God. Therefore, He has put it here, so that if you live where there is no preacher of the Gospel, you have the old Book to go to. He is moved with compassion for you. For where a man cannot go, the Book can go, and where in silence no voice is heard, the still clear voice of this blessed Book can reach the heart. Because He knew the people would require this sacred teaching and could not have it, otherwise, He was moved with compassion towards us all and gave us the blessed Book of Inspired God-breathed Scripture!

But then, since He knew that some would not read the Bible, and others might read and not understand it, He has sent His ministers forth to do *the work of Evangelists*. He raises up men, themselves saved from great sin, trophies of redeeming Grace, who feel a sympathy with their fellow men who are reveling in sin, reckless of their danger. These servants of His, the Lord enables to preach His Truth, some with more, some with less ability than others. Still, there are, thank God, throughout this happy realm and in other favored lands, men everywhere, who, because sinners will not come to Christ of themselves, go after them and persuade them, plead with them and entreat them to believe and turn to the Lord. This comes of Christ's tender gentleness. He was moved with compassion and, therefore, He sent His servants to call sinners to repentance.

But since the minister, though He may call as he may, will not bring souls to Christ of himself, the Lord Jesus, moved with compassion, has *sent His Spirit*. The Holy Spirit is here. We have not to say—

“Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove.”

He is here! He dwells in His Church and He moves over the congregation and He touches men's hearts, and He subtly inclines them to believe in Christ. Oh, this is great mercy when a Prince spreads a feast and gives an invitation! That is all you can expect him to do. But if he keeps a host of footmen and says, “Go and fetch them, one by one, till they do come,” that is more gracious, still! But if He goes Himself and with sacred violence compels them to come in—oh, this is more than we could have thought He would have done—but He is moved with compassion and He does that! Furthermore, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus knew that after we were saved from the damning power of sin, we would always be full of needs and, therefore, He was moved with compassion, and He sets up *the Throne of Grace*, the Mercy Seat, to which we may always come, and from which we may always obtain Divine Grace to help in time of need. Helped by His Spirit, we can bring what petitions we will, and they shall be heard! And then, since He knew we could not pray as we ought, He was moved with compassion when He sent the Holy Spirit to help our infirmities, to teach us how to pray! Now I do not know a single infirmity that I have or that you have, my Christian Brothers and Sisters, but what Christ Jesus has been moved with compassion about it and has provided for it! He has not left one single weak point of which we have to say, “There I shall fail, because He will not help there.” But He has looked us over and over from head to foot, and said, “You will have an infirmity there—I will provide for it. You will have a weakness there—I will provide for it.” And oh, how *His promises meet every case*! Did you ever get into a corner where there was not a promise in the corner, too? Had you ever to pass through a river but there was a promise about His being in the river with you? Were you ever on the sick bed without a promise like this, “I will make your bed in your sickness”? In the midst of pestilence have you not found a promise that, “He shall cover you with His

feathers, and under His wings shall you trust”? The Lord’s great compassion has met the needs of all His servants to the end! If our children should ever need as much patience to be exercised towards them as Christ needs to exercise towards us, I am sure there would be none of us able to bear the house. They have their infirmities and they full often vex and grieve us, it may be, but oh, we ought to have much compassion for the infirmities of our children—yes, and of our Brothers and Sisters, and neighbors—for what compassion has the Lord had with us? I do believe none but God could bear with such unruly children as we ourselves are. He sees our faults, you know, when we do not see them, and He knows what those faults are more thoroughly than we do. Yet, still, He never smites in anger. He cuts us not off, but He still continues to show us abounding mercies! Oh, what a Guardian Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ to us, and how we ought to bless His name at all times, and how His praise should be continually in our mouth. One thought strikes me that I must put in here—He knew that we should be very forgetful—and He was moved with compassion with our forgetfulness when He instituted the blessed Supper, and we can sit around the Table and break bread, and pour forth the wine in remembrance of Him. Surely this is another instance of how He is moved with compassion—not with indignation towards our weaknesses! And now let me close with—

IV. PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST.

I shall only recall my own experience in order to stir up your pure minds, by way of remembrance, my Brothers and Sisters. I do well remember when I was *under conviction of sin* and smarted bitterly under the rod of God—that when I was most heavy and depressed, there would sometimes come something like hope across my spirit. I knew what it was to say, “My soul chooses strangling rather than life,” yet when I was at the lowest ebb and most ready to despair, though I could not quite lay hold of Christ, I used to get a touch of the promise, now and then, till I half hoped that, after all, I might prove to be God’s prisoner and He might yet set me free! I do remember well, when my sins compassed me about like bees, and I thought it was all over with me, and I must be destroyed by them, it was at that moment when Jesus revealed Himself to me. Had He waited a little longer, I had died of despair, but that was no desire of His! On swift wings of love He came and manifested His dear wounded Self to my heart. I looked to Him and was lightened, and my peace flowed like a river! I rejoiced in Him! Yes, He was moved with compassion. He would not let the pangs of conviction be too severe—neither would He allow them to be protracted so long for the spirit of man to fail before Him. It is not His practice to break a leaf that is driven by the tempest. “He will not quench the smoking flax.” Yes, and I remember since I first saw Him and began to love Him, many *sharp and severe troubles*, dark and heavy trials, yet have I noted this, that they have never reached that pitch of severity which I was unable to bear. When all

gates seemed closed, there has still been with the trial, a way of escape, and I have noted again that in deeper depressions of spirits through which I have passed, and horrible despondencies that have crushed me down, I have had some gleams of love, and hope, and faith at that last moment, for He was moved with compassion! If He withdrew His face, it was only till my heart broke for Him, and then He showed me the light of His Countenance again. If He laid the rod upon me, yet when my soul cried under His chastening, He could not bear it, but He put back the rod and He said, "My child, I will comfort you." Oh, the comforts that He gives on a sick bed! Oh, the consolations of Christ when you are very low! If there is anything dainty to the taste in the Word of God, you get it then! If there are any hearts of mercy, you hear them sounding for you then. When you are in the saddest plight, Christ comes to your aid with the sweetest manifestations, for He is moved with compassion!

How frequently have I noticed, and I tell it to His praise, for though it shows my weakness, it proves His compassion, that sometimes, after preaching the Gospel, I have been so filled with self-reproach that I could hardly sleep through the night because I had not preached as I desired. I have sat down and cried over some sermons, as though I knew that I had missed the mark and lost the opportunity. Not once nor twice, but many a time has it happened, that within a few days someone has come to tell me that he or she found the Lord through that very sermon, the short-coming of which I had deplored! Glory be to Jesus—it was His gentleness that did it! He did not want His servant to be too much bowed down with a sense of infirmity, and so He had compassion on him and comforted him! Have not you noticed, some of you, that after doing your best to serve the Lord, when somebody has sneered at you, or you have met with such a rebuff as made you half-inclined to give up the work, an unexpected success has been given you, so that you have not played the Jonah and ran away to Tarshish, but kept to your work? Ah, how many times in your life, if you could read it all, you would have to stop and write between the lines, "He was moved with compassion." Many and many a time, when no other compassion could help, when all the sympathy of friends would be unavailing, He has been moved with compassion towards us, has said to us, "Be of good cheer," banished our fears with the magic of His voice and filled our souls to overflowing with gratitude! When we have been misrepresented, maligned and slandered, we have found in the sympathy of Christ our richest support, till we could sing with rapture the verse I cannot help quoting, now, though I have often quoted it before—

***"If on my face for Your dear name,
Shame and reproach shall be,
I'll hail reproach and welcome shame,
Since You remember me."***

The compassion of the Master making up for all the abuses of His enemies! And, believe me, there is nothing sweeter to a forlorn and bro-

ken spirit than the fact that Jesus has compassion. Are any of you sad and lonely? Have any of you been cruelly wronged? Have you lost the goodwill of some you esteemed? Do you seem as if you had the cold shoulder even from good people? Do not say, in the anguish of your spirit, "I am lost," and give up. He has compassion on you! No, poor fallen woman, seek not the dark river and the cold stream—He has compassion! He who looks down with the bright eyes of yonder stars and watches you is your Friend! He yet can help you! Though you have gone so far from the path of virtue, throw not yourself away in blank despair, for He has compassion! And you, broken down in health and broken down in fortune, scarcely with shoes for your feet, you are welcome in the House of God, welcome as the most honored guest in the assembly of the saints! Let not the weighty grief that hangs over your soul tempt you to think that hopelessness and darkness have settled your fate and foreclosed your doom! Though your sin may have beggared you, Christ can enrich you with better riches. He has compassion! "Ah," you say, "they will pass me on the stairs. They will give me a broad pathway and if they see me in the street they will not speak to me—even His disciples will not." Be it so, but better than His disciples, more tender by far, is Jesus! Is there a man here whom to associate with were a scandal from which the pure and pious would shrink? The holy, harmless, undefiled One will not disdain even him—for this man receives sinners—He is a friend of publicans and sinners! He is never happier than when He is relieving and retrieving the forlorn, the abject and the outcast! He despises not any that confess their sins and seek His mercy. No pride nestles in His dear heart, no sarcastic word rolls off His gracious tongue, no bitter expression falls from His blessed lips. He still receives the guilty. Pray to Him now! Now let the silent prayer go up, "My Savior, have pity upon me! Be moved with compassion towards me, for if misery is any qualification for mercy, I am a fit object for Your compassion. Oh, save me for Your mercy's sake!" Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 9:27-38.**

Verses 27, 28. *And when Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying and saying, Son of David, have mercy on us. And when He was come into the house. I suppose the house at Capernaum, where he was known to stay.*

28. *The blind men came to Him.* Forced their way in. They must be attended to. Hunger breaks through stone walls, they say, and an earnest heart will follow after what it seeks.

28, 29. *And Jesus said unto them, Believe you that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yes, Lord. Then He touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith, be it unto you.* That is, "If you do not believe, you shall not see, but if there is faith in you, behold, you shall have sight."

30-32. *And their eyes were opened; and Jesus at once charged them, saying, See that no man knows it. But they, when they were departed, spread abroad His fame in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil.* Here we have had the dead, those that were bleeding to death, the blind and the dumb, and the possessed of a devil.

33. *And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel.* No, but Jesus does wonders! Something off the common, and altogether out of the ordinary way, His work of Grace must be!

34. *But the Pharisees said, He casts out devils through the Prince of the devils.* There is always somebody or other who has got an ugly word to put in. It matters not how much God may bless the Gospel, there is no stopping the sneers and objections—but the mercy is that it does not matter much. Our Lord was not hurt and the work went on, notwithstanding all the quibbling of the Pharisees.

35. *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* That was the answer to the Pharisees. Christian activity and fervent devotion to the cause of God is the best answer that can be given to quibblers of any sort or every sort! In your work hold on, my Brother, and those who quibble at you, now, may come to honor you one of these days.

36-37. *But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.* We are all loiterers, but where are the laborers? Where are they with the sharp sickle that can cut down the wheat and, with a ready hand, can bind it and, with a strong shoulder, carry it? Alas, in this great city the harvest is truly plenteous, but the laborers are few!

38. *Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the Harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

HARVEST MEN NEEDED

NO. 1127

**A SERMON DELIVERED OF LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 17 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Then said He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous,
but the laborers are few, pray you therefore the Lord of the
harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.*

*And when He had called unto
Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against
unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all
manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”*

Matthew 9:37, 38; 10:1.

THE circumstances under which our Lord uttered these words are instructive. He saw the people thronging Him whenever He stood up to preach and He perceived that the regular instructors of the people, those who thought that they were commissioned to teach the nation, were, many of them, leading them into error. And the rest were either shamefully neglecting their duty, or were performing it without heart, zeal, or even sincerity. The poor people fainted and were scattered abroad like sheep without a shepherd, harassed by different fears and cast down by many anxieties. I do not think that the circumstances under which our Lord spoke these words have passed away, but rather that we are living under precisely the same conditions. I would not willingly be guilty of uncharitableness and I bless God that there are many left in our land who are preaching the Gospel in all its purity, and with great earnestness.

But still, it is lamentably true that those who profess to be the only authorized teachers are, a very great number of them, leading the people into spiritual bondage by reviving the old popish and pagan rites. And those who *do* preach a measure of the Truth of God too often do not preach it *boldly* nor *simply* as they should. Neither is there enough of life and earnest concern for the souls of men among them. How many, even, of our own Churches, where we think the Truth is held, have their pulpits so ill-occupied that they might almost as well be empty as filled as they are, for there is a manifest need of zeal, love and spiritual power, while the clear testimony concerning Jesus is sadly lacking.

At this time the people of many towns and villages are shepherdless sheep, for whose souls no man cares. They are fainting and ready to die and no man lays it to heart. If the circumstances are the same—and he would be a bold man who would dare dispute it—then the text urgently demands our prayerful attention. Our Savior looked upon the people among whom He moved in a manner worthy of our imitation. He was a Man of great feeling. He was “moved with compassion,” as the Greek word

has it. "His heart yearned." His sympathies were awakened. He could not look upon a mass of men with an indifferent countenance—His inmost soul was stirred.

But at the same time He was no mere enthusiast. He was as calmly practical as if He had been a cool calculator. If He sighed, He did something more than sigh—He proceeded to aid those He pitied. He had practical compassion on the crowd and, therefore, He turned to His disciples and said, "Pray you the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." He did not go about among the masses with all undiscerning admiration of them. I do not hear Him praising them as, "the finest peasantry," or, "the sinew of the nation," as such will do. But neither do we see in Him any trace of aversion to them, as though He felt out of place in their society. He was often saddened by their follies and grieved by their sins, but He never loathed them or spoke contemptuously of them. The common people heard Him gladly because they saw that He had sympathy with them. Though in character grandly aristocratic, He was in manner and life profoundly democratic. He was the King, and yet, "One chosen out of the people." He loved them with all His heart.

It is clear, also, that He never grew discouraged in laboring for their good. You never hear Him say that it is useless to preach to the multitude, that they are too degraded, too priest-ridden, or too ignorant. No discouragement ever dampened His ardor. He persevered till His work was done. A brave, glorious heart was that of Jesus, always melted to tenderness, but, at the same time, always practical. He was never influenced either by admiration, or aversion, or discouragement, so as to cease from practical methods of bettering the condition of the people among whom He dwelt. Take note, therefore, that we are about to speak upon a practical matter and I trust it may become so this morning that many may be influenced to pray according to the bidding of their Lord and, that the sincerity of their prayers may be proven by their subsequent endeavors to obtain their petitions.

At the outset, this morning, we shall see how our Lord states the case—"The harvest is plenteous." Secondly, that He indicates the service needed—more "laborers" were required to gather in the harvest. Thirdly, that He directs us how to obtain the supply of laborers—by prayer. And, fourthly, He answers their prayers in a remarkable manner.

I. First, our Lord STATES THE CASE of men of His time and ours. The people who gathered around Him He likens to harvest fields—wherein lay the similarity? First, He thought of the great multitudes. The thought of multitudes rises naturally from the sight of a harvest field and when the crop is plenteous the idea of *multitude* forces itself upon you at once. You cannot count the ears of corn, neither will you be able to count the sons of men. I suppose our Savior alluded, first of all, to the crowds around Himself, but His mind, being much more capacious than ours, He remembered all the thousands of Israel. No, I think He could not have restricted

His heart to the little country of Israel. He glanced across the seas and beyond the mountains to the myriads of mankind swarming upon this globe!

Brothers and Sisters, it crushes one to think of the millions of our species. Nobody, yet, has been able to obtain an idea of the vast extent of this one city of London. You shall traverse it from end to end as long as you will, and you shall study its statistics, but you have no conception what the population of London is and you never will have—the mass is too great. But what is London compared with our nation and with the millions that speak our mother tongue all over the world? Yet even these are but a small portion of the innumerable host. We never shall be able to obtain even a fringe of a conception of China with its teeming millions, or of that other populous nation which owns our scepter, Hindustan.

Multitudes are in the valley of existence, as the drops from the rain cloud and as the leaves upon the forest trees—such are the sons of men. You might as well count the stars in the heavens or the waves of the sea as hope to reckon the myriads which have sprung from the loins of Adam. All these must be reaped and gathered into the Gospel garner or they must perish. All these must have laborers sent of God to gather them in or they will miss a blissful immortality. Well did our Savior compare the myriads of the sons of men with the multitude of the ears of corn in the harvest field.

Our Lord intended to set forth a second idea, which dwelt, perhaps, still more prominently in His mind and it was that of *value*. He did not speak of blades of grass, mark you, in His comparison, but of ears of corn. He did not talk of tares as He did in other parables. He did not speak of loose pebbles by the sea coast, or worthless grains of sand—He compared the multitude to *wheat*—and what is there more precious than corn? Is it not to us most valuable, because it is the sustenance of our life? Do we not, for this cause, gather it in with shouts? Harvest-home is always gladsome because we prize its sheaves! Much toil and care have been spent to secure the production of the harvest and when the yellow fields wave before our eyes we cannot *despise* them—we know that they are more precious than anything else that comes up out of the earth.

So is it to God and to Jesus, God's Son. He did not look upon men of any sort as things to be despised. He would not have the least among them treated as chattels nor regarded with contempt. He knew the wisdom which was displayed in the creation of the fabric of their bodies and in the faculties of their souls. He knew how God takes delight in men and how good men, sanctified men, give to God's heart a joy like the joy of harvest—and how men who have gone astray, when they are restored, make the great Father's heart leap within Him with a joy which angels cannot give! Of all creatures under Heaven, the most precious thing to God is man. He cares nothing for gems of the mine or pearls of the sea, but *men* He values so much that He gave His only-begotten Son to bleed and die that they might not perish, but have everlasting life.

The souls of the multitude are precious in the sight of the Lord, even as corn is precious to the farmer. But when the Lord spoke of them as a *harvest*, He had before His mind the idea of danger to them. The harvest in our own country is just now ripe and ready for the sickle. But suppose the owner of some large estate should walk through his broad acres and should say, "I have a great harvest—look at those far-reaching fields. But the country has become depopulated, the people have emigrated and I have no laborers. There are one or two yonder. They are reaping with all their might. They make long days and they toil till they faint—but over yonder there are vast ranges of my farm unreaped and I have not a sickle to thrust in. The corn is being wasted and it sorely grieves me. See how the birds are gathering in troops to prey upon the precious ears! Meanwhile the season is far advanced, the autumn damps are already upon us and the chill, frosty nights which are winter's vanguard are on their way. Mildew is spoiling the grain and what remains sound will shell out upon the ground, or swell with the moisture and become of no service."

Behold in this picture the Redeemer! He looks upon the world today and He says within Himself, "All these multitudes of precious souls will be lost, for there are so few reapers to gather them in. Here and there are men who, with prodigious energy, are reaping all they can and all but fainting as they reap. And I am with them and blessed sheaves are taken home, but what are these among so many?" Look, Brothers, can your eyes see it? Can even an eagle's wing fly over the vast fields and unreaped plains without growing weary in the flight? There are the precious ears—they decay, they rot, they perish, they are ruined—to the loss of God and to their own eternal injury! And it grieves the Great Farmer that it should be so.

That is still the case today and it ought to grieve us that it should be so, for His sake, and for the sake of our fellow men! A multitude of precious souls were perishing and this, the Savior lamented. The Savior had yet another thought, namely, that the masses were accessible, for He used the same expression when the people came streaming out of Samaria to the well to hear Him, drawn out by curiosity created by the woman's story. He said to His disciples, "Lift up now your eyes, behold the fields are white already to the harvest." Now, when people are ready to hear the Word, then it is that the fields are ripe—and our Lord meant that as the wheat ears do not oppose the sickle, but stand there, and a man has but to enter into the field and use the sickle and the result will surely follow, so there are times when nothing is needed but to preach the Gospel and the souls which otherwise would perish, will surely be gathered in.

I do not believe, my Brothers, that at any time the world has had a dull ear to the Gospel. Who have gathered the crowds? Such men as Augustine and Chrysostom! And what was their preaching but the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Who have gathered them? Such men as John Buss, Jerome, Luther, Calvin, and the like, about whom there was ever a sweet savor of Christ. Who have gathered them in this land? Who but our Wycliffe and

our Knox? Who gathered them in later days but our Whitfield and our Wesley—men who spoke the common language of the people and who had no theme but Jesus Crucified! They will not go to hear your philosophers—they leave you and your philosophers to the spiders and the dry rot! But preach Jesus and His precious blood, and tell men that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved, and they will hear you gladly!

I heard but last week from a missionary who spends nights in working for his Lord in gin palaces and the lowest resorts of the people, that he has scarcely ever met with an insult. The people received his tracts and thanked him for his kind words. I find it continually asserted by our city missionaries and those who visit cab ranks, or omnibus yards, or work among other public servants, that in general there is a willing attention to the Gospel. The fields stand asking us to reap them—but there are not reapers enough—the grain perishes for lack of laborers! The people are accessible. What country is there where the Gospel cannot be preached? Fast closed was China, but you may go throughout the length and breadth of the land and talk of Christ, if you will.

Japan is open to you and Africa has laid bare her central secret. Spain, fast shut as with a seal, is this day set free and Italy rejoices in the same liberty. All the world lies before the reapers of the Most High, but where are they? “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.” The idea of immediate need is contained in the figure, for the reaping of the harvest is, to a considerable extent, with the farmer a matter of now or never. “Ah,” he says, “if I could postpone the harvest. If I could let it be gathered in by slow degrees. If we could work on till the harvest moon has gone and then through November and December till winter closes the year—then the scantiness of laborers would be a small evil! But there is a limited time in which the wheat can be safely housed and it must be harvested before winter begins, or it is lost to us.”

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, there is no time for us to waste in the salvation of the sons of men! They will not live forever! Yon gray head will not tarry till you have told him the Gospel if you postpone the good news for the next 10 years. We speak of what we hope may be accomplished for our race in half a century, but this generation will be buried before that time. You must reap yon harvest at once, or it will be destroyed! It must be gathered in speedily, or it will perish. Today, today, today the imperative necessities of manhood appeal to the benevolence of Christians. Today the sure destruction of the unbeliever speaks with pleading voice to the humanity of every quickened heart. “We are perishing! Will you let us perish? You can only help us by bringing us the Gospel *now!* Will you delay?” Thus we have indicated the design of the Master in selecting the figure of a harvest.

II. And now, secondly, I desire to point out to you THE SERVICE NEEDED. The world being represented as a harvest, the need was for “laborers.” I have never seen in any commentary or sermon I have yet met with, any working out of the metaphor of laborers in the harvest field, and

yet the meaning lies upon the very surface—I will call your attention to it in a moment, when I have noticed, first, that our Savior tells us that laborers are needed. There are certain persons in the world who do not believe in instrumentalities and habitually depreciate them. Our Savior was not of their mind. He did not say, “The harvest truly is plenteous, and the laborers are few, but that matters not, God can bless a few and make them accomplish as much as many.”

He believed in His Father’s Omnipotence, but He also believed that the Lord would work by means, and that many laborers were required to gather in a plenteous harvest—and therefore He told us to pray for them. He believed in results being proportionate to means used and He, therefore, bid us go to the root of the matter practically. Neither did our Lord say, “The laborers are few, therefore pray God to do the work. He can do it alone and has no need of men. You think too much of men. Your one-man ministry ought to be put away.” No, Jesus did not talk so. We do not see any trace of such sentiments in our Savior’s teaching—our Master never made too much of men but He made a very great deal of men anointed of the Spirit and sent to preach—in fact He taught us to pray for them.

And the very last thing He did for us when He went to Heaven was to give us men, for it is written, “He received gifts for men; and gave some Apostles, some Evangelists, some pastors and teachers.” If we despise what Christ evidently prizes as His Ascension gift, we may fancy we are honoring God, but we shall grieve His Spirit. He would have us attach great importance to the *instrumentality*. He bids us know that though God could reap His harvest without men, He will not do it. Could He not bring forth a spiritual reaping machine? Modern invention has done this for the farmer and the same idea could be carried out in spiritual things—and so thousands would be converted in an hour without human agency!

But the Lord asks for no such inventions. He does not direct us to ask for spiritual reaping machines, but to pray the Master to send laborers into the harvest. And what kind of men does the Master mean to use? This is indicated in the text. First, they must be laborers. The man who does not make hard work of his ministry will find it very hard work to answer for his idleness at the Last Great Day. A gentleman who wants an easy life should never think of occupying the Christian pulpit. He is out of place there and when he gets there the only advice I can give him is to get out of it as soon as possible, and if he will not leave the position voluntarily, I call to mind the language of Jehu concerning Jezebel, “Fling her down,” and think the advice applicable to a lazy minister.

An idler has no right in the pulpit! He is an instrument of Satan in damning the souls of men. The ministry demands brain labor. The preacher must throw his thought into his teaching and read and study to keep his mind in good trim. He must not weary the people by telling them the Truth of God in a stale, unprofitable manner, with nothing fresh from his own soul to give force to it. Above all, he must put *heart* work into his preaching. He must feel what he preaches—it must never be with him an

easy thing to deliver a sermon—he must feel as if he could preach his very life away before the sermon is done. There must be *soul* work in it—the entire man must be stirred up to effort—the whole nature that God has endowed him with must be concentrated with all its vigor upon the work in hand. Such men we need.

To stand and drone out a sermon in a kind of articulate snoring to a people who are somewhere between awake and asleep must be wretched work. I wonder what kind of excuse will be given by some men at last for having habitually done this? To promulgate a dry creed, go over certain doctrines and expound and enforce them logically, but never to deal with men's consciences, never to upbraid them for their sins, never to tell them of their danger, never to invite them to a Savior with tears and entreaties? What a powerless work is this! What will become of such preachers? God have mercy upon them! We need laborers, not loiterers! We need men on fire and I beseech you, ask God to send them. The harvest can never be reaped by men who will not labor—they must off with their coats and go at it in their shirt-sleeves—I mean they must doff their dignities and get to Christ's work as if they meant it, like real harvest men. They must sweat at their work, for nothing in the harvest field can be done without the sweat of the face, nor in the pulpit without the sweat of the soul.

But what kind of laborers are required? First, they must be men who will go down into the wheat. You cannot reap wheat by standing a dozen yards off and beckoning to it. You must go up close to the standing stalks. Every reaper knows that. And you cannot move people's hearts and bring men to Christ by imagining yourself to be a superior being who condescends wonderfully when he shakes hands with a poor man. There is a very genteel order of preaching which is as ridiculous as reaping with a lady's ivory-handled pocket knife, with kid gloves on! And I do not believe in God's ever blessing it. Get among the wheat, like men in earnest! God's servants ought to feel that they are one with the people. Whoever they are, they should love them, claim kinship with them, be glad to see them and look them in the face and say, "Brother." Every man is a Brother of mine. He may be a very bad one, but for all that I love him and long to bring him to Jesus. Christ's reapers must get among the wheat.

Now, see what the laborer brings with him. It is a sickle. His communications with the corn are sharp and cutting. He cuts right through, cuts the corn down and casts it on the ground. The man whom God means to be a laborer in His harvest must not come with soft and delicate words and flattering doctrines concerning the dignity of human nature, and the excellence of self-help, and of earnest endeavors to rectify our lapsed condition and the like. Such mealy mouthedness may God curse, for it is the curse of this age. The honest preacher calls a sin a sin and a spade a spade, and says to men, "You are ruining yourselves! While you reject Christ you are living on the borders of Hell and before long you will be lost to all eternity. There shall be no mincing the matter, you must escape

from the wrath to come by faith in Jesus, or be driven forever from God's Presence and from all hope of joy."

The preacher must make his sermons cut. He is not to file off the edge of his scythe for fear it should hurt somebody. No, my Hearers, we mean to hurt you! Our sickle is made on purpose to cut. The Gospel is intended to wound the conscience and to go right through the heart with the design of separating the soul from sin and self, as the corn is divided from the soil. Our object is to cut the sinner right down, for all the comeliness of the flesh must be slain, all his glory, all his excellence must be withered and the man must be as one dead before he can be saved. Ministers who do not aim to cut deep are not worth their salt. *God* never sent the man who never troubles men's consciences. Such a man may be an ass treading down the corn, but a reaper he certainly is not! We need faithful ministers.

Pray God to send them! Ask Him to give us men who will preach the whole Truth of God. Who will not be afraid of certain humbling doctrines, but will bring out, for instance, the doctrine of Election and not be ashamed of it. Who will tell men that salvation is of the Lord and will not go about to please them by letting them have a finger in salvation, as though they were to share in the glory of it! Oh for laborers who can use sharp cutting sickles upon ungodly hearts! But then a laborer has only begun when he cuts the corn—much more is needed. As he cuts, he lets the corn fall onto his arm, and then he lays it along in rows. But afterwards he binds it together and makes it into bundles, that it may be gathered in.

So the laborer whom God sends into the field must be a *gathering* laborer. He must be one who brings God's people together, who comforts those that mourn and picks up from the earth those who were cut down by the sharp sickle of conviction. He must bind the saints together, edifying them in their most holy faith. Alas, how many have been scatterers, rending Churches to pieces? Pray the Lord of the harvest to give His Church binders who can, by the power of the Holy Spirit, unite men's hearts! Remember, also, that the laborer's work is never done in harvest time till he sees the corn housed—until it is made into a stack or put into a barn, his toil is not over. And the Christian minister, if God has truly anointed him to His work, never leaves caring for souls till they get to Heaven. He is like Mr. Greatheart, with Christiana and Mercy and the children—he goes with them from the City of Destruction, right up to the River Jordan—and if he could, he would go through the river with them.

It is his business to march in front with his shield—to meet the dragons and giants with his sword—and protect the little ones. It is his to be tender to them as a shepherd with the lambs and a nurse with her children, for he longs to present them at the last to his Master and say, "Here am I, and the children that You have given me." Brother minister, ours is a great work and it never ceases from the first moment when our sickle touches the conscience and wounds it, to the last moment when we are

enabled to present our people before the Lord, saved, by His Grace, forever! The Church needs men sent of the Holy Spirit who can do all this, by God's help, for though the Lord works all things, He does it by men and men are needed everywhere that the work may be accomplished. Thus have we described the service required.

III. The third thing is, our Lord DIRECTED HIS DISCIPLES HOW TO OBTAIN A SUPPLY. He bids them pray for such men. Every word here is instructive. "Pray you." Brothers and Sisters, do you ever pray God to send such workers into His vineyard? How long since you heard that prayer prayed, except from this pulpit? Pray you, every one of you! Are you in the habit of doing so every morning and night? Why is there such a dearth of really warm-hearted, loving, earnest Evangelists in England? It is because they are not asked for! God will not give them to us if we do not ask for them. If there is one thing noticeable in this Church it is our continual prayer that God may be pleased to raise up among us men who will work for Him, and He has done it! And He continue will to do it if we continue to pray for it.

But if you do not pray that God would send forth the laborers and the laborers do not come, who is to blame? "Pray you." "Pray you therefore," He says, as if the very fact that there are so many precious souls perishing should be our argument for praying, "Lord, it is not a few score that are left untaught and unsaved, but millions in our own land and hundreds of millions in other lands! Therefore, Lord, we do pray You send forth laborers." We are to pray to the Lord, for it is the *Lord's* business. Only the Lord can send us the right men. He has a right to send whom He pleases, for it is His own harvest and a man may employ whom he wills in his own field.

It would be all in vain to appeal to anybody else. It is of no use to appeal to bishops to find us laborers. God alone has the making of ministers and the raising up of true workers. And therefore the petition must be addressed to Him. "Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest." The Lord's Prayer, in its first three petitions, contains this prayer—"Our Father which are in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven." Does not that mean, "Lord, send forth men who may teach this world to hallow Your name, that they, through Your Spirit's power, may be the means of making Your kingdom come and causing Your will to be done in earth as it is in Heaven"? We ought to pray continually to the great Lord of the harvest for a supply of earnest laborers.

And do you notice the expression used here, "that He would send forth laborers." Now the Greek is much more forcible. It is that He would push them forward and thrust them out. It is the same word which is used for the expulsion of a devil from a man possessed. It takes great power to drive a devil out—it will need equal power from God to drive a minister out to His work. I always say to young fellows who consult me about the ministry, "Don't be a minister if you can help it," because, if the *man* can help

it, God never called him! But if he cannot help it, and he must preach or die, then he is the man! May the Lord push men out, thrust them out, drive them out and compel them to preach the Gospel! For unless they preach by a Divine compulsion, there will be no spiritual compulsion in their ministry upon the hearts of others. "Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would thrust out laborers into His harvest."

And notice, Beloved, that our Lord said, "into *His* harvest." I like that, because the harvest is not ours. If that harvest shall perish, it is our heavenly Father's harvest that perishes. This makes it weigh upon my soul. If they told me that the harvest of some harsh, overbearing tyrant was perishing, I might say, "Let it! If he had it, what good would it be to him or anybody else? He grinds the faces of the poor. Who wants to see *him* rich?" But when it is our gracious God, our blessed loving Father—one cannot bear the thought—and yet Jesus puts it before us that it is God's harvest which is perishing for need of reaping!

Suppose an angel should take you upon his wing and poise you in mid-space some hundreds of miles above the earth where you could look down on the globe with strengthened eyesight? Suppose you rested there and the world revolved before you 24 hours? You would see the sun and gradually all portions of it. And suppose that with the sunlight there should be rendered visible certain colors which would mark where there was Divine Grace, where there was idolatry, where there was atheism, where there was popery? You would grieve to see only here and there upon our globe, like little drops of dew, bright marks of the Grace of God—and many shades of darkness would show you that the whole world still lies in the Wicked One.

And if the vision changed and you saw the two hemispheres spread out like a map and transformed into a corn field with corn all white for the harvest. How sad would you be to see here and there men reaping their little patches, doing the best they can, but the great mass of the corn untouched by the sickle. You would see leagues of land where never an ear was reaped, that we know of, from the foundations of the world. You would be grieved to think that God's corn is spoiling—men whom He has made in His own image, and made for immortality, perishing for lack of the Gospel. "Pray you," that is the stress of the whole text—"Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would thrust forth laborers into His harvest," that these fields may not rot before our eyes.

Will you pray it, my Brothers and Sisters? This text is laid on my heart. It lies more on my heart than any other in the Bible. It is one that haunts me perpetually and has done for many years. What can one voice, one tongue, do? That is why we instituted the College, that men might be instructed in the way of God more perfectly, and you, my beloved people, have helped me these many years, for which I thank you, thank you lovingly and with all my heart! You have never ceased from that best of works and therefore you, as a Church, can honestly pray because you work as well as pray. Some Churches cannot do so—they despise the

teaching of a simple man of utterance—but they love him that can read the Scriptures in the original tongue and speak his own language correctly.

But you have taken tenderly and generously to the work and God has blessed you, and at this very moment some 300 of your sons, nursed at your knees, are preaching the same Gospel which we are preaching here, for which let God be praised! While we give let us pray and when we have prayed, let us give, that God may send forth laborers into His harvest.

IV. The last point is this—THE LORD JESUS HEARD THEIR PRAYERS—He did send forth laborers. I feel vexed with the fellow who chopped the Bible up into chapters. I forget his name just now and I am sure it is not worth remembering. I have heard that he did the most of his carving of the new Testament between London and Paris, and rough work he made of it. Surely he was chaptering the Gospel of Matthew while he was crossing the Channel, for he has divided it in such strange places. He has chopped this passage in two. “Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.”

Down comes the meat axe, right across a bone! Let us put the bones together, and read what is next. “And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out.” It appears, then, that the Lord told them to pray that God would raise up laborers and then called them to be the laborers themselves! “You have been praying for men,” he said, “and you are the very men yourselves.” He puts His hands upon them one by one. “You prayed God to send out laborers, come here Matthew, come here Peter, James, John. I heard you pray as I told you, and behold I send you forth to work for Me.” What if God, this morning, should move some of you to feel that men are perishing and you cannot let them perish? What if you should pray, “Lord, send out men to save souls,” and then He should put His hands on *you* and say, “You are the man yourself. Behold I send you”?!

I do not suppose the 12 dreamed for a moment that they would be sent forth to be reapers, but so the Lord of the harvest had decreed. Have I not some men here who, if they thought it over, would say, “Lord, I am of uncouth speech and I cannot serve You as I would, but such as I have, I give You”? And, dear Brother, when you begin to talk about the Savior, you do not know how well you will succeed. And if you do not please yourself, that does not matter if you please God. There is another, a man who has been dumb half his life, and yet, if he did but know it, has force and power in him. “But I shall never preach,” says one. If you do not preach you can serve God another way. Could you not start a Prayer Meeting in your house? Some of you live in different parts of London, could you not commence such interests?

Do something for Jesus! Some of you good women, could you not get young women together and talk to them about the Savior? Yes, but perhaps I have some Brother here who has been smothering in his heart a desire to go into the missionary field. Brother, do not quench the Spirit!

You may be missing your vocation while trying to suppress that desire. I would sooner you should burst into fanaticism, some of you, and become right down fools in enthusiasm rather than remain as the Church now is, in a dead coolness, caring little for the souls of men. What do Christian people nowadays think of? If they hear about Japan, they say, "Oh, we shall have a new trade there!" But do they say, "Who among us can go to Japan to tell them of the Gospel?"

Do you not think that merchants, and soldiers, and sailors and such like people who trade with distant parts of the world are the very persons to spread the Gospel? Should not a Christian man say, "I shall try and find a trade for myself which will bring me into contact with a class of persons that need the Gospel. And I will use my trade as the stalking horse for Christ. Since hypocrites use religion as a stalking horse for gain, I will make my trading subservient to my religion." "Oh," says one, "we can leave that to the Society." God bless the Society and, I was going to say, smother the Society rather than alloy it to smother *personal* effort! We need our godly merchants, working men, soldiers and sailors everywhere to feel, "I cannot go and get a proxy in the shape of a Society to do this for me. In the name of God I will do it myself and have a share in this great battle."

If you cannot labor, yourself, the Society is the grandest thing conceivable, for you may help others. But still the main cry from Christ is that you, yourself, should go into the highways and hedges and as many as you find, compel them to come in to the Gospel feast. The world is dying! The grave is filling! Hell is boasting and yet you have the Gospel! Can it be that you do not care to win souls, do not care whether men are damned or saved? The Lord wake us from this stony-hearted barbarity to our fellow men and make us yearn over them, care about them, pray about them and work for them till the Lord shall arise and send forth laborers into His harvest!

But I remember that some of you may very well be unconcerned about others, for you are unconcerned about yourselves. Oh, I do implore you, remain so no longer! Live not upon the brink of the grave without a Savior! Sport not between the jaws of Hell, but fly to Him, to Him who never did reject a sinner that came to Him and never will. God hear you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 9:9-38; 10:1.

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PETER'S THREE CALLS

NO. 702

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

*“The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.”
John 1:37.*

*“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers,
Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a
net into the sea, for they were fishermen. Then He
said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
Matthew 4:18, 19.*

*“And when He had called His twelve disciples...the first,
Simon, who is called Peter.”
Matthew 10:1, 2.*

PERHAPS YOU are aware that there has always been a certain set of persons who have tried to disprove the Gospel narrative by picking out what they suppose to be discrepancies, especially in the statements of Matthew and Luke. Four independent persons have each given us a separate story of the Life of Christ, each story being written with a distinct object. Of course, from the fact that each one was written with a distinct object, it was natural that one Evangelist should give more attention to certain points in the history of Christ than the others. And it was natural for his eye to be fixed upon those things which most concerned the point which he had in hand, and for his ears to be most quick to catch those words which had a relation to the object he was driving at throughout the whole of his Gospel.

Now these divergences and differences have been so many pegs upon which quibblers have hung their quibbles and these men have constantly been saying, “How do you reconcile Matthew with John in a certain place.” Or, “how do you reconcile Mark, in such another place, with Luke?” It is not always easy to harmonize the testimony of four perfectly honest witnesses upon the same subject! I will venture to say that if there should be a simple accident upon the railway, and four persons present were to give their accounts of it with rigid exactness, yet they would each one be likely to mention some point not mentioned by the other, and, moreover, differ upon the points which they notice in common!

Although we might be morally convinced that they all spoke the truth, yet it would be difficult to put the story together so as to make a harmonious whole of it. Sometimes it is not easy to put the stories of the Evangelists together, and many of the “Gospel Harmonies,” so called, which have been produced by very admirable writers, are not quite correct—they show at once the difficulty attaching to that which some Brethren have been trying to attempt, and which perhaps will never be fully carried out—namely, the making of it into one harmonious idyll.

It so happens, however, that the difficulty in the case before us is no difficulty at all! John tells us that Peter was called by Christ through the preaching of John the Baptist, who bore witness that Jesus was Christ,

the Messiah. Matthew, on the other hand, tells us that Peter and his brother were fishing, that Christ was walking by the lake of Galilee, and that as He passed by He saw these men fishing, called them by name, and said, "Follow me." Now, the key to the whole may be found in the fact that there was yet a third call, and that afterwards Jesus called not Peter and Andrew alone, but the whole twelve of His disciples and set them apart to be Apostles.

And so we gather from this last call that the other two might perhaps have been different and distinct from each other. Coming to look at the subject we find that the first call was the call at Peter's *conversion*, which called him to be a disciple while still at his daily avocation. The second was the call of Peter, not to be a mere disciple, but to be an Evangelist. And the third was the call of Peter, not to be an Evangelist or a common servant of the Master, but to be a leader, to take a yet higher grade, and to become one of the Twelve who should be associated with Christ as the founders of the new system of religion, and witnesses of the life of Christ Himself.

I. I want you, then, just for a moment, to bear in mind that we have under our consideration THREE CALLS:

(1) The first is that which Christ gave to Peter when He called him out of darkness into marvelous light, blessing to him at first the testimony of John, and then by manifesting Himself to him.

(2) The second is the call by which the servant, already converted, already willing, is bid to put himself into closer relationship with his Lord—to come out and be no longer a servant whose allegiance is true but not manifest—but to show that fealty by following his Master.

(3) And the third call is that which the Savior gives only to a few whom He has picked out and chosen to do some special work—who shall have fellowship with Him more closely still, and become captains in the ranks of—

"The sacramental host of God's elect."

We shall speak of these three calls in the order in which they occur. Very briefly I shall go through the subject, speaking at length about the second call which Peter received.

1. Notice the personal call to be a disciple. These three calls are given in a certain order. Observe where it begins. Peter was not called to be an Evangelist before he was called to be a *follower*. Christ begins by first teaching us our own need of Him, and our own sin, and then, revealing Himself to us as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It is a presumption—what if I say an accursed *treason*—against the Majesty of the great Head of the Church, if any man pretends to reverse this order!

You must first be called, yourselves, *into Christ* before you may dare to even so much as think about being called into the ministry or into the service of Christ. You cannot serve Him until first of all you have learned to sit at His feet. Before you can serve God you must have a new heart and a right spirit. The blind eye is not fit for the service of Christ. The eye must be *illuminated*. The understanding must be instructed. That stubborn will of yours cannot bear the yoke of Christ—it must be subdued. "You must be born again."

Should there be some among you here tonight who are teaching in Sunday schools, distributing tracts, or in any other way are trying to serve

God, and yet are not, yourselves, saved, I would very affectionately, but with great earnestness, entreat you to consider that you are reversing the natural and proper order of things. Your first business is at home, in your own soul and your own heart!

I will not apply to you the words of the Prophet, "Unto the wicked, God said, What have you to do to declare My statutes?" But I think there is a spirit in those terrible words which might well have an application to you. How can you be a guide until you are first able, yourself, to see, for "if the blind lead the blind, they shall both fall into the ditch." How can you, diseased and leprous, begin to heal others, for it shall be said to you, "Physician, heal yourself"? How can you, when the beam is in your own eye, go abroad to point out the beams and the specks which are in other men's eyes?

Oh, take care, take care lest this very service to Christ, as you think it to be, is an injury to you—for you may serve Christ after a sort till you begin to think that you do so much, and do it so well, that you *must* be a Christian! You may spin for yourself a robe which shall seem sufficient to cover you, and you may go and dress in this cobweb, this mere figment of a fictitious righteousness, and persuade yourself that you are wearing the robe of Christ's righteousness, whereas you shall be found at the last to be naked, and poor, and miserable!

Oh, I pray you to understand those words, "Behold the Lamb of God." Behold Him for yourselves! See Him for yourselves! Do not talk about being a fisher of men—do not speak of being a servant whose loins are girt, and whose lamp is trimmed—until first you have become as a little child. Unless you so become you cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

2. But, dear Friends, after the first call has been received, it is very delightful to observe the Christian receiving the second. He is called into active service. Simon Peter became a disciple, but all that he meant by that was, "I acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah," and he went away and continued with his good brother in the fishing business! It never, perhaps, entered into his head that he was to do anything more than to cultivate a quiet peaceful faith, and walk in a life consistent with that faith.

But all of a sudden he sees this famous man of Nazareth walking by the seaside, who addresses him by name, and says to him, "Follow Me." And in a moment, putting down his net, and leaving his family, he left all to follow Christ with his two companions James and John, equally famous in the battle-roll of Christian heroes. Now, I may have some here tonight who are saved. You are the disciples of Jesus, and I regret to say that He has not yet been seen by you as calling you into His service.

You have joined the Church and you have been baptized into the faith of Christ, and so far it is good. But as yet it has not struck you that you are to be actively engaged for Christ. Now, it is not in my power to call you to the service, nor to indicate to you what special form that service shall take. But, my dear Friends, I do pray that you may have another revelation of the Lord Jesus yet more full and bright, and that He may say to you, "Come, Man, you are not your own. You are bought with a price. Serve Me. Arise, gird up your loins, and wait upon the Lord." I trust that He may lay His hand upon you tonight, and say to you as He did to the

assembled twelve, "As My Father has sent Me into the world, even so send I you."

And may you have Divine Grace to obey the mandate—and though it may be something which has been distasteful to you, some Christian engagement in which you have never been occupied before—may you have Grace to say, "Here am I, Lord, send me, whatever the business may happen to be." Ah, what would a Church be if it consisted altogether of persons of this sort? What vigor should we have in the Christian army if every soldier felt called to fight! But some of you do not realize your *duty* in this respect. I would that you would take a farther step. I would that the spirit of service fell upon you so that you did not merely wear the robe of righteousness but the mantle of *service*, too!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, by the love which—

**"Saw you ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved you notwithstanding all,"**

by the love which gave up its honor and its glory, and took upon itself the form of a servant for your sakes—by the love which sweat great drops of blood in the garden, by the love which emptied out its heart that you might be redeemed from ruin—I pray you, hear Jesus saying to you, "Follow Me"! And do follow Him—follow Him in active, industrious, persevering consecration.

And from this day forth, if you have up to now been but a sleeping partner in the great Christian firm. If you have been content to ride upon the Gospel chariot instead of drawing it or adding an impulse to its wheels, may you say, "My Lord, fill me with the zeal which possessed You. Kindle in me the same spirit of service which burned so brightly in Yourself. And as You did call Peter, and Andrew, and James, and John, so call me, and say, "Follow Me."

You notice, then, that this second call follows the first call, and it is a blessed thing when it does thus succeed and is obeyed.

3. But in the third text which I gave you, you find Peter called to *another* service above that of an ordinary worker, that is to say, he is called to be an Apostle. I will venture here to trace an analogy between this and the calling of the Christian minister. You will observe that this call comes *last*. The call to the Apostleship does not come first. Peter is first the catechumen or disciple, secondly the Evangelist and thirdly the Apostle. So, no man is called to be specially set apart to the ministry of Christ, or to have a share in the Apostleship until he has first of all, himself, known Christ, and until, secondly, as an ordinary Christian he has fully exercised himself in all the duties which are proper to Christian service.

Now, some people turn this topsy-turvy. Young men who have never preached are set apart to the ministry. Those who have never visited the sick, never instructed the ignorant, and are totally devoid of any knowledge of Gospel experience except the little of their own, are supposed to be dedicated to the Christian ministry. I believe this to be a radical and a fatal error. Brothers and Sisters, we have no right to thrust a Brother into the ministry until he has first given evidence of his own conversion, and has also given proof not only of being a good average worker but something more.

If he cannot labor in the Church, before he pretends to be a minister, he is good for nothing. If he cannot, while he is a private member of the

Church, perform all the duties of that position with zeal and energy, and if he is not evidently a consecrated man while he is a private Christian, certainly you do not feel the guidance of God's Holy Spirit to bid him enter the ministry! No man has a right to aspire to come into that office until, like the knights of old, he has first won his spurs and has shown that he is really devoted to Christ by having served Him as others have done.

Let me say that it would be a very great mercy for this Christian Church if some persons would not take this last place at all, but would be content to stop in the second one. There are many men who, when set apart to the Christian ministry, are a drag and burden to the churches as well as to other people. If they had but given up themselves as ordinary members to Christian service they might have been a very great blessing and honor to the Church. One of the kindest pieces of advice I could give to some of our ministerial friends would be, "Go home, Brother. Take off your black coat and your white tie, and put yourself into some honest way of getting a living. Just think about whether you were not more serviceable to the Church when you were a carpenter or a tradesman—when you were earning a considerable sum of money at your own ordinary avocation—than you are now, when you are necessarily dependent upon the gifts and liberality of God's servants without having the ability and the talent which are necessary to make you a leader in the Lord's host."

I pray the day may come when we shall all see this, and never think of giving ourselves to the ministry before conversion, and even then aspire not after special work until first of all we have proved that we can serve the Lord in our ordinary life. Occasionally I have Brothers come to me asking to be received into our College, and one singular reason which some of them give me why they believe that they are called to the ministry is this: "You see, Sir, I could not get on at anything else, and therefore I thought Providence must have ordained me to be a minister."

I never say a word about that, but I am very clear that if a man is such a fool that he can do nothing else but preach, it is a great pity that he should be allowed to do that! And when a Brother tells me that, I sometimes venture to ask him if he thinks that God wants only the biggest fools to serve Him. I question him as to whether there should not be given up to God's service the very pick, and prime, and flower of the Christian Church—those men who, if they had addicted themselves to commerce, might have taken the lead—or who, if they had given themselves to the bar or to the profession of surgery or medicine, would have stood in the front rank?

I believe, Brothers and Sisters, we need strong men to take such a position, and that the Lord Jesus Christ has a keen eye, and when He does call a man He calls him to something that he is fit for. Take the cases of Peter and Paul. Peter was a fisherman, it is true, but a fisherman of such a peculiar breed that it would be well if God would find us more of the same sort who would become fishers of men! And as for Paul, he was one well-skilled and learned in all matters, and just fitted and adapted to the work which the Master gave him to do.

II. I have thus noticed these three calls. And I want now to direct your earnest and particular attention to the second call, because of the lessons to be learned from the CHARACTER OF THE MEN CHOSEN, AND THE NATURE OF THE WORK entrusted to them.

The second call is recorded in the fourth chapter of Matthew and the eighteenth verse, and it deserves our attention because we perceive that these Brothers were called to the service of Christ while they were engaged in their ordinary avocations. It seems to have been early in the morning, for Peter was just starting on his work, and was casting his net into the sea. And in the twenty-first verse we find that James and John were mending their nets, so that they were all industrious in their ordinary calling.

There is a notion abroad among some persons that they cannot serve God unless they neglect their ordinary work. This used to be a complaint brought against the Methodists in the olden time. I believe it was a great falsehood, but it was stated that they were so earnest in listening to sermons that they made bad servants and bad trades people. If it were so it was a very grievous fault, but I do not think it ever was the case. However, let none of us fall into it. If I were a Christian and a fisherman, I should like to catch more fish than anybody else. If I were a Christian and a shoe-black, I should desire to clean people's boots so that they shone better than any other shoe-black could make them shine. If I were a Christian master, I should desire to be the best master, and if a Christian servant the best servant.

Our Christianity, I think, shows itself more, at any rate to the *world*, in the pursuits of daily life, than it does in the engagements of the House of God. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." I scarcely need give that exhortation here, but when you do assemble yourselves together, come not up to God's House having the blood of other duties upon your spirits.

You are a mother with little children, and it is probably your duty to be at home rather than to be at the Prayer Meeting. It may sometimes be your business, as a husband, to take turns with your wife and let her come out to the House of God, instead of always taking the privilege yourself. It may be the case with some of you that your trade may absolutely require you to be behind the counter both on lecture and on Prayer Meeting night, and though I would have you here if possible, and if you do go anywhere, go to the House of God, yet do not let it ever be said, or even whispered that you did not attend to your business, and that you came to grief because the things of God were cared for, and your business, in consequence, neglected!

I think it never should be so. I like to remember that after Jesus Christ had gone away—after He was crucified, died, had been buried and had risen again—where did He find Peter? Why, He found him fishing again! That is right, Peter. Follow Christ by all manner of means when He bids you, but when there is nothing to do in the service of Christ, come back to fishing again. Oh, but some people seem to think that hard work in attending to ordinary business is not spiritual-minded in a Christian. Nonsense! Out with that difficulty, if any of you are troubled by it. Just ask the Lord to clear your brains and brush away such cobwebs as these, for we shall never have genuine Christianity in the world while such nonsense remains—nonsense about giving up the world—meaning thereby living in laziness!

The truest Christian is the working man who so labors for God that he does not neglect the common duties of life. The best form of Christianity is

found in the Christian who is a Christian behind the counter, a Christian in the street, a Christian in the marketplace, a Christian anywhere—and who, wherever and whenever he may be found, is like his Master—“diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”

I think no man will ever serve Christ aright who does not show some energy in other things. I think the Savior chose these two men, not only out of Sovereign Grace unto salvation, but also because He saw about them a zeal in the pursuit of fishery which seemed to mark them out as being the very men to be made useful in His own cause. Notice the character of the men who were thus called to work for Christ! They were active, diligent men, engaged in their own calling. Notice what their occupation was. When Christ called them He said, “You are fishers, and you shall be fishers all your lives. But now you are fishers of fish, and I want you to be fishers of men.”

He mentions their vocation, and the work He is going to give them. O my Brothers and Sisters, if you are saved I pray that Jesus may give you that second call, so that you may be earnest “fishers of men”! There is a great deal in that sentence, “fishers of men,” a very great deal more than we can bring out now. A fisherman, you know, must be acquainted with the sea. Peter knew the Lake of Galilee. I dare say there was not a creek or an inlet in it with which he was not acquainted. He knew the deep places where some kinds of fish were to be found, and the shallow places where others could be caught.

And so if you would serve Christ you must know a good deal about *men*. You must study human nature and you must watch your opportunities of doing good. You know there are some places where you can meet with more sinners than in others, and there is a certain way of dealing with one disposition and quite another way of dealing with another. If you are to be a “fisher of men,” you must take good stock of the neighborhood where you live. If you would be a “fisher of men” in the Tabernacle, I hope you will know the people near whom you sit, for as you know them, and their pursuits in daily life, and their characters and dispositions, you will be more likely to be blessed, by the help of God’s Spirit, in bringing them to a knowledge of the Truth of God.

A fisherman must be acquainted with the locality where he has to work. A fisherman must also know how to allure the fish. I saw on Lake Como, when we visited Bellagio, some men fishing. They had torches burning in their boats, and the fish were attracted to them by the glare of the light. You must know how to get the fish together. You know there is such a thing as the bait for the fishes. You must know how to allure men. The preacher does this by using images, symbols, and illustrations.

You must know how to catch the fish, throwing out first, perhaps, not a remark directly to the point, because that might be unwise, but a side remark, which shall lead to another, and yet another. If you are to be a “fisher of men” you will need your wits about you. It will not do to blunder over men’s souls. Fish are not caught by every boy who chooses to take a pin and a piece of cotton and make his way to the pond. Fish need a *fisherman*, and there is a sort of congruity between the fish and the man who catches them.

I do not wonder that Isaac Walton could catch fish. He seems to have been born and made on purpose for it, and so there are some men who

are made on purpose for winning souls. They naturally care for their fellows, and they have such a way of putting the Truth of God that as soon as they speak men say, "Here is a man come who knows all about me, and knows how to deal with me," and they at once yield to his influence. Oh that I had hundreds of such in this Church! I have a good share of them, and I bless God every time I remember them. God has called them, and has made them true fishers of men—they know about men, and also how to allure them.

The fisherman must be a man who can wait with patience. Oh the patience of a fisherman! "We have toiled all night," said the disciples, "and have taken nothing." You cannot be a fisherman unless you are willing to sit and watch, especially if you angle. There you may sit for hours and hours together, and at last, when the float begins to move, you think you have got your fish, but probably it is only a weed or a frog. And you may watch, and watch, and watch again, and nothing will come of it.

Ah, but it is harder work, still, to wait in Christ's service, to preach twenty times and have no conversions, perhaps to go on teaching in a Sunday school and to see no heart-breaking work done, no sinners crying "What must I do to be saved?" You have to go to your knees and say, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" You will need something within to help you to wait thus—you will need the Holy Spirit of Grace Himself dwelling in you to supply you with Divine patience, or else you will throw up your work, give away your nets, and say, "I will do something that pays me better than this!"

A fisherman, too, is one who must be able to take risks. Especially was this so on the Lake of Galilee, for that, like many other lakes, was subject to fierce storms. The winds sometimes came rushing down from the mountains, and before the fisherman could take in his sail his boat would be upset. And truly every worker for Christ must expect squalls and stormy weather. Do not think, dear Friends, to serve Jesus Christ in those kid gloves and in that nice dainty style of yours! That is not the way in which fish are caught out at sea! It is rough work and requires a man who can let the wind howl about him without being afraid of his fine curls, or of having the perfume taken out of them.

It needs a man that has a bold face and a brave heart, and who, when the storm comes, looks up to the God of Storms and feels that he is on his Master's service and may therefore count upon his Master's protection. May the Lord call many members of this Church to such work as this, and when the Master shall drag home our net full of big fishes, we shall have a rich reward for all the toils of Christian labor!

The fisherman, once again, must be one who has learned both how to persevere and how to expect. The fisherman goes on, and on, and on, and fishes, not sometimes but *continually*. As Christ's good sower must take the precept, "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand," so also must His fisherman. "We have toiled all night and taken nothing, nevertheless, at Your command we will let down the net." But I said he must also learn to *expect*. He must have twinkling in his soul, like a bright particular star, the hope that he shall drag his net to land full of fishes at the last!

Beloved, we shall not labor in vain. We shall not spend our strength for nothing. We may not live to see the result of the Truth which we proclaim, but—

***“The precious seed shall never be lost,
For Grace ensures the crop.”***

We must learn to believe in the indestructibility of every truthful testimony, in the immortality of every good deed, in the resurrection of every buried word to live in the sight of God. We must—

“Learn to labor and to wait.”

There are three words which have been running in my mind for the last few days, and have seemed to work themselves into me, and I hope I may long keep them. One word is Work, another is Wait, and the other is Pray. Work, work, work! Wait, wait, wait! Pray, pray, pray!

I think that these three words will enable a man to be, under God, a true and successful fisher of men. I have thus described the sort of men who were called, and the work which Christ gave them to do over and above the work in which they were engaged. I now want you to notice the prompt obedience of Peter to this call. I wonder how it was that Peter came directly. Christ said, “Follow Me.” We know that Peter was a disciple, and consequently, his heart was ready to receive the word which called him to be a servant. It is of no use for me to call some of you to follow Christ, and work for him as “fishers of men”—for if you were to obey, you could not do it acceptably—because you are not the children of God.

But you who are saved have something in your hearts that will echo to the exhortation, “Follow me,” so that I think you need only to have a good work set fairly before you, and to know what it is that the Master requires of you, and you will say at once, “Lord, I will do it,” for—

***“’Tis love that makes our cheerful feet
In swift obedience move.”***

When the heart loves Christ, then the path of duty, which before was rough and rugged, becomes straight and smooth, if not flowery, and the soul says—

***“Help me to run in Your commands,
’Tis a delightful road.
Nor let my heart, nor feet, nor hands,
Offend against my God.”***

Beloved Friend, very much of the excellence of our service to Christ will depend upon the instantaneous way in which we do it when we know it to be a duty. I believe that debating with oneself about duty is a very dangerous thing. David said, “I made haste, and delayed not to keep Your Commandments.” Peter did not say, “Lord, let me stop and dry these nets, and hang them up, and bring the boat to shore, and then cast anchor and leave it right.” Nor did James and John say, “Master, let us go home and kiss that dear mother of ours, and let us see that Zebedee has somebody to take our place.” No, *immediately* they left their nets and followed Christ.

May I urge upon you the habit of falling into the line of duty instantly. When soldiers are being drilled I like to see the way in which the word of command is obeyed the instant it is given. “Right about face!” and the whole line turns right about at once. The thing is done, we say, mechanically. It should be so with us. But I know how it is—we get a right good thought of something we ought to do, but we stop and say—“Now, shall I do it, and when shall I do it?” And for the first hour or two we mean to do

it, but by the next day we think it possible that we will decline it, and perhaps when a week is over we give it up altogether.

I believe that this is so with many, many Christians in the matter of Believers' Baptism. To give one instance out of many, they say, "Well, I used to think of it when I was young, and I then believed it was my duty, and I guess I think it is my duty now if I really came to consult the Word of God about it. But I have put it off so long—well, perhaps I may see to it one of these days." While there is another and far more likely "perhaps," namely, that having procrastinated so long over that one duty, they will suffer it to go by default. Do not toy with Christian service, Brethren! There would have been more earnest Whitfields in the world, more Wesleys, more devoted Brainerds and Martyns, if men obeyed the call of God instead of taking counsel of flesh and blood and considering this, that, and the other, and then resolving not to obey.

Remember, it is possible for us to have Divine Grace in the heart, and yet to be disobedient. We have many such mournful specimens. We cannot but hope that they will enter Heaven, for they are washed in the precious blood, and clothed in the Savior's righteousness. But they do little, if anything, for Christ because they have tampered with His calls, they have violated convictions, and have started back from duties in the exercise of their unbelief, instead of pressing forward in the glory and the majesty of a simple faith in Christ Jesus. If you feel that you have anything to do, do it immediately!

If God calls you to preach before you go home, do it in the street! And if there is anything which claims your immediate attention—if there is a poor person you ought to relieve, if there is anyone to whom you ought to speak before leaving this place—I beseech you do not trifle with the conviction! As faithful servants of Jesus Christ, being saved, and professing to love Him, I pray you, at once, to do whatever you feel you ought to do for Him. I have heard of the question being asked in a school, what was the meaning of the text, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." One said, it meant that it should be done truthfully. And another, that it should be done unanimously. But a third said, it meant that it should be done without asking any questions. That answer was a good one, for we who know and love Christ should be willing to do His will without asking any questions.

I must not, however, keep you much longer. I will notice, lastly, that when the call came to Peter in the shape of "Follow Me," it must have suggested to him many thoughts—for it contained, in addition to mere service—*privilege* as well as duty. There was a book written not many years ago by an excellent Divine, to which I cannot quite subscribe. I mean Dr. Bushnell's "Higher Life." I cannot subscribe to all that is in it, but I believe that there is a period in the life of some Christians when they rise to a platform elevated above ordinary Christianity, almost as much as ordinary Christianity is elevated above the world.

I think that in addition to the first call by which we are brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvelous light, there does come to the Christian, when the Spirit of God works mightily with him, another call by which he is brought into greater familiarity with the Lord Jesus, taught more of conformity to Him in His sufferings, and made to be more fully a partaker of the height, and depth, and breadth, and length of that love

which passes all understanding. Such a call seems to me to be imaged in this call of Peter.

Have you been living, my dear Sister, at a distance from Christ? Have you been obliged to sing the hymn—

***“Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought—
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?”***

I do pray for you, as one of the greatest privileges I could ask God for on your behalf, that Christ may come to you afresh now and be formed in your heart anew, the Hope of Glory, in such a way that you may follow Him into close practical fellowship and earnest, unstaggering faith. Believe me, it is life to believe in Christ, however little—but it is life in health and vigor to believe in Christ with a faith that does not flinch!

To have Christ and not to see Him is salvation, but to have Him and to see Him is salvation rapturously enjoyed! To be saved and not to know it is a small privilege, but to be saved and to know it, no, to *know* Him who is the Resurrection and the Life—to sit with Him, and sup with Him, and to feel that His shadow yields a great delight, and that His fruit is sweet unto one's taste—this is a way of living which angels might almost envy the favored men who possess it! May the Master call you in that sense now! Pray that prayer which Watts has put into rhyme—

***“Draw me away from flesh and sense,
One sovereign word shall draw me thence;
I would obey the voice Divine,
And all inferior joys resign.”***

May you get a call from the Master, “Follow Me unto the Mount of Transfiguration to see My Glory, and share in it, and abide with Me in sacred, rapt, secret fellowship which the world knows nothing of.”

But this was not merely a call to fellowship, but to practical fellowship. It seemed to say, “Peter, put down your net, and take up the cross. I am to be despised, come and be despised with Me. I am going outside the camp, I shall be scorned, and cast out from society. Come, Peter, come outside the camp with Me.” Oh may Christ give you such a call as that! You are saved, but still, to a great extent you are in the world. Oh that you might have a separating call—“Come you out from among them; be you separate; touch not the unclean thing.”

May you feel now as if you had got a new life over and above the life you have already! May you have fresh blood poured into the veins of your piety that you might rise to something better! Come out and confess your Master! Confess Him by nonconformity to the world in all respects.

To conclude. When Christ said, “Follow Me,” did He not mean that Peter was to follow Him in everything and in all things? May the Master call you and me to follow Him in that consecration to His Father's will which made Him say, “My meat and My drink is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” Oh, there are so many of you professors whose meat and drink are found in trade, or the making of money, or the reading of books, or the study of this and of that. May He call you to make Himself the *first* thing! To make His honor your grand object, and to make His Church your true mistress, the lady of your heart reigning in your spirit!

Oh, to be wholly given up to Christ! To be a sacrifice upon the altar, smoking, burning, utterly consumed—a living sacrifice which is your most

reasonable service. No, you need not shut up your shop! Oh no, but you will go and make money for Christ, and give it to His cause. No, you need not give up your daily labor, but you will be a priest unto God even while you are wearing the garments of your trade. No, you must not dare to think of such a thing as withdrawing from your present position and your little ones round about you! You must stay where you are and glorify Christ *there*. Feeling now that you have been called to the work of God, that service is to be done just where you are—you are not to be stargazing and looking aloft for some great thing, but to stand and do a day's work in a day in the sphere where Providence has called you, and where Divine Grace has blessed you.

Now, you see, I have put all this on the right footing. I have told none of you to serve Christ till you are saved. But when you *are* saved, I hope and pray that you and I may see Christ calling on us to be "fishers of men." May the Lord call some who have never been called at all. May it come to pass that this very evening some may look to the Lamb of God, dying, bleeding, and suffering. Sinner, He is the Sin-Bearer. He came to seek and to save that which was lost! That face was marred with sorrow, and there must you find your hope. Look to Him!

That bleeding Man is also the immortal God! Trust Him and you are saved! That one act of trust is the means of eternal salvation to everyone that exercises it. Then, being saved, may Christ call you, fishermen or whatever you may be, to serve Him until He comes to take you unto Himself—

***"Teach me, my God and King,
In all things You to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for You!
All may of You partake—
Nothing so small can be,
But draws when acted for Your sake,
Greatness and worth from You.
If done beneath Your laws,
Even servile labors shine!
Hallowed is toil, if this the cause,
The meanest work Divine."***

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SHEEP AMONG WOLVES

NO. 1370

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:
be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”
Matthew 10:16.***

WELL may the text begin with a, “Behold,” for it contains some special wonders such as can be seen nowhere else. First, here is a tender and loving Shepherd sending His sheep into the most dangerous position—“I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” It is the part of a shepherd to *protect* his sheep from the wolves, not to send them into the very midst of those ravenous beasts! And yet, here is the Good Shepherd, “that Great Shepherd of the sheep,” actually undertaking and carrying out this extraordinary experiment of conducting His sheep into the very midst of wolves. How strange it seems to poor carnal sense. Be astonished, but be not unbelieving—stand still awhile and study the reason.

The next remarkable thing is, “sheep in the midst of wolves,” because according to the order of Nature, such a thing is never seen, but, on the other hand, it has been reckoned a great calamity that in some lands wolves are too often seen in the midst of sheep! The wolf leaps into the midst of a flock and rips and tears on every side—it matters not how many the sheep may be—for one wolf is more than a match for a thousand sheep. But lo, here you see sheep sent forth among the wolves, as if *they* were the attacking party and were bent upon putting down their terrible enemies! It is a novel sight, such as Nature can never show, but Grace is full of marvels!

Equally extraordinary is the singular mixture, never yet seen by human eyes among beasts and birds—a mixture of the serpent with the dove in one person! What a strange blending! Creatures which are capable of cross-breeding must have some sort of kinship. But here is a reptile of the *dust* united with a bird of the *air*—“Be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” Grace knows how to pick the good out of the evil, the jewel out of the oyster shell, the diamond from the dunghill, the wisdom from the serpent—and by a Divine chemistry it leaves the good which it takes out of the foul place as good as though it had never been there.

Grace knows how to blend the most gentle with the most subtle, to take away from prudence the base element which makes it into cunning and, by mingling innocence with it, produce a sacred prudence most valuable for all walks of life. With these three wonders outside the text, lying, as it were, upon the very surface, we shall enter into a fuller consideration of it with great expectations. But if we do so, we shall be disappointed if we expect to learn anything very extraordinary unless we are prepared to practice what we learn! I may truly say of this text, he that does its bid-

ding shall understand its doctrine. He who follows its precept shall best know its meaning. May the Spirit of all Grace work in us according to His Divine power and perfect in us the will of the Lord.

Though primarily addressed to the Apostles, it seems to me that our text relates, in its measure, to *all* who have any talent or ability for spreading the Gospel and, indeed, to all the saints so far as they are true to their calling as the children of God. They are, all of them, more or less as sheep in the midst of wolves, and to them all is the advice given, "Be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Let us hear for ourselves as though the Lord Jesus spoke individually to each of us.

We may see in the text four things concerning the people of God. First, their prominent vocation—"Behold, I send you forth." Secondly, their imminent peril—"as sheep in the midst of wolves." Thirdly, their eminent authority—"Behold, I send you forth." And, lastly, their permanent instructions—"Be you wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

I. First, let us consider THEIR PROMINENT VOCATION. They had other callings, for some of them were fishermen, but their great calling was this—"Behold, I send you forth." The call of the Lord overrides all other vocations. Every child of God, according to the capacity of Grace which God has given him, should hear this voice of the Lord calling him and sending him forth to labor—"Behold, I send you forth." These disciples had been with Him and had been taught by Him that they might teach in His name. They had for some little time been His disciples or learners and now He calls them apart from the rest, and says, "I send you forth to teach and to make disciples."

The mode of operation in the Kingdom of God is, first make disciples, baptize them, *teach* them whatever the Lord has commanded and then let them go forth and do the same with others. When one light is kindled, other candles are lit from it. Drops of heavenly water are flashed aloft and scattered all around like dew upon the face of the earth and, behold, each one begets a fountain where it falls and thus the desert is made to rejoice and blossom as the rose! Do not try to teach till the Lord Jesus has first taught you! Do not pretend to instruct till you have been instructed! Sit at Christ's feet before you speak in Christ's name—but when once you are instructed, do not fail to become teachers.

The lessons of your Lord will be impressed upon your minds the more forcibly and indelibly when you have earnestly communicated them to your fellow men. First be taught, but afterwards fail not to teach! Hoard not up the treasure of Divine knowledge, for there is no shortage there—eat not, alone, the honey of redeeming love, for there is enough and to spare. Feed not upon the Bread of Heaven with selfish greed, as though there were a famine in the land and you had need to save each crumb for yourself—but break your bread among the hungry crowd about you and it shall multiply in your hands. Christ has called you that you may afterwards go forth and call others to His sacred feast of Grace.

Our Lord called them not only to teach those that came in their path, but to go after the lost sheep. "Behold," He said, "I send you forth." Some persons will hardly teach those who come immediately to their doors. Liv-

ing under your own roof, with some of you, there are neglected souls! Even in some professedly Christian families there are sons and daughters who are not being trained for holiness nor taught in the way of everlasting life. This is sad to the last degree! Friend, do you fail there? Let conscience be awake to judge! Your Master supposes that you have fulfilled home duties and then He calls you forth to attempt something further.

“Go your ways,” He says, “for I send you forth.” You have been sitting and hearing the Gospel—leave your seats at times and go forth to bring others to the faith! You have the power of the Word upon your hearts, now go and show its power upon your lips by speaking to others, however few or many. Go out, yourselves, as sowers and scatter the seed your Lord has given you for that end. Go where Providence guides you—to the Sunday school class to teach, to the street corner to preach, to the remote village or hamlet to bear witness for Christ, or to the densely crowded city slums to lift up the banner of Christ—but go your way somewhere!

Sit not down in idleness and fold your arms in indifference to the world’s woes. Behold, your compassionate Lord sends you, therefore go gladly anywhere, everywhere—where His wisdom appoints the way—where your business gives you opportunity, or your traveling gives you occasion. “I send you forth,” He says. He sent them forth, we are told, to work miracles as well as to preach. Now, He has not given us this power, neither do we desire it—it is more to God’s Glory that the world should be conquered by the force of the Truth of God than by the blaze of miracles! The miracles were the great bell of the universe which was rung in order to call the attention of all men all over the world to the fact that the Gospel feast was spread. We do not need the bell, now, for the thousands who have feasted to the full are the best announcers of the banquet!

Those of us who have fed upon Christ and His salvation will make the matter known wherever we go. No further announcement by miracle will be required, save only the standing miracle of the indwelling Spirit. We now have the great advantages of rapid traveling and of the printing press so that we need not the gift of tongues, since men can so much more readily learn a foreign language than they could before, and so much more quickly travel to the spot. The moral and spiritual forces of Truth to work by themselves, apart from any physical manifestation, is more to the Glory of the Truth of God and the Christ of the Truth than if we were all miracle workers and could destroy gainsayers!

But still, though we work no miracles in the physical world, we work them in the moral and spiritual world, yes, and the same miracles, too, for, behold, He has sent us forth to heal the sick as the Evangelist has it in the 8th verse of the chapter before us. Those who are depressed in spirit, faint and feeble, broken-hearted and desponding, bruised and mangled by the assaults of the great enemy—we are to go forth and pour in the oil and wine of the Gospel, apply the heavenly plaster of the promise and bind up with the sacred liniment of consoling doctrine—and bring before sin-sick sinners everywhere the matchless medicine of the precious blood of Christ! For every spiritual disease the Gospel is the sure remedy and we are to carry it to every land.

“Heal the sick.” This, also, we do. Such sicknesses as laugh at the physician and cannot be touched by mortal skill are healed by the servants of Him who came, Himself, to bear human sicknesses that He might bear them away. Go forth, you servants of God, with a better balm than that of Gilead! Sit not still in idleness while bleeding hearts and sickening souls are all around you! Men are perishing—go forth to heal them! You are, also, to “cleanse the lepers.” There is a leprosy abroad in the world which takes different shapes in different ages, but is the same, both in its cause and effect. In our land we see on all hands the foul leprosy of drunkenness, that brutish disease which degrades and destroys men’s souls. There is the leprosy of superstition which casts into the understanding and makes a man a fool! And, alas, there is the white leprosy of skepticism which, like an inward fire, consumes the very heart.

Sin is this leprosy and our business is, as God shall help us by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to make these lepers clean! It is to be done. It is done by us *now* in our Lord’s name. He that works in us mightily will cause the Word to be mighty to this end, also, that the leprosy may depart from men and that they may come into the congregation of the Lord. He bids us, also, raise the dead, which seems the sternest work of all. But as the others are impossible to us apart from Him, this is not more difficult than the rest. We are to “raise the dead.” Our Gospel begins with men where they are by nature and does not wait till they come part of the way. We go forth to preach to those who are careless and insensible, to those who have no feeling whatever and are furthestest gone from any tenderness of heart with regard to their own sin or the love of God.

Go with the Gospel to the sepulcher of vice and preach to the dead in sin! The Gospel has a quickening power, Beloved, and Jesus, who is the Resurrection and the Life, sends you forth that by His Word in your mouths, dead souls may be raised! None are too dull to be awakened, too hardened to be renewed. And then He adds, “Cast out devils.” This commission He gave to His Apostles and, in a spiritual sense, to us, too. The devil and his legions reign over the hearts of men, subjecting them to sin and unbelief. Behold, they claim this world as their dominion, but it is not so! They are usurpers, for the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof! Go with the Truth of God and cast out the demon of error—go with the glad tidings of joy and cast out the demon of despair! Go with the message of peace and cast out the demon of war! Go with the Word of holiness and cast out the demons of iniquity! Go with the Gospel of liberty and cast out the demons of tyranny. These blessed deeds can be done and shall be done, God being with you, and to this end He bids you go in His name, for He will gird you with His strength.

Now, when I say that every Christian, according to his ability, is called to do this, I mean precisely what I say. I mean that Christian men nowadays, while they should be attached to the Church to which they belong—and the more intense that attachment the better for a thousand reasons—yet they should not regard the Church as being a peaceful dormitory where they are all to sleep, but a common barracks where they are all to

be trained and out of which they are to issue and carry on the sacred crusade for Christ! We are not to be frozen together with the compactness of a mass of ice, through mere agreement of creed, but welded together like bars of iron by the fire of a common purpose and a common zeal.

If we are what we should be, we shall be continually breaking forth on the right hand and on the left—each man, each woman, according to the calling that God has given to us—we shall be seeking to extend the Redeemer's Kingdom in all directions. My dear Brothers and Sisters, you are arrows in the quiver—how gladly would I see you shot forth upon the enemy from the bow of the Lord! Many of you are as battleaxes and weapons of war hanging on the wall. O that you may be taken down and used of the Lord in His glorious fight! Lo, on the walls of Zion hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men! But the great need of the age is that these weapons be removed from their resting and rusting and carried into the thick of the fray!

May the Lord send you forth, O you who have been saved under my ministry! May He hurl you forth with Divine power, like a mighty hail against His adversaries. May each man among you be eager to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints and to save souls from going down into the Pit. Here, then, is your permanent vocation—try to realize it.

II. Secondly, we shall consider THEIR IMMINENT PERIL. "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." That is to say, the task is one of great danger and difficulty. Our Divine enterprise is no child's play. The work has its charms—it looks very pretty upon paper and sounds well when eloquently described. At missionary meetings and revival services it stirs your blood to hear of what is to be done and you resolve to rush upon it at once! But while we would not dampen the ardor of one eager aspirant, we would have him *count the cost* and know what the warfare is. Enlist, by all means, but stop a bit and know what you are doing, lest you quit the field as hurriedly as you entered it—and bring disgrace both on yourselves and the cause.

Old soldiers who know the smell of gunpowder talk not so lightly of a battle as the raw recruits may do. They remember the blood and fire and vapor of smoke and, though they are not timid, they are very serious. Come, you who have never thought about it, and look upon that which will dishearten every man who is a coward and test the brave as to whether their courage is that of Nature or of Grace. You are to go forth as sheep among wolves, that is to say, you have to go among those who will not in any way sympathize with your efforts.

Sometimes we go among amiable, quiet, almost-persuaded people, and it is somewhat pleasant work, though even there it is very discouraging, for those who are not far from the kingdom are often the hardest to be won. People on the border are a difficult sort of people to deal with and for real success one may as well go among the decidedly ungodly at once. If you discharge your souls and behave zealously before God, you will have to deal with people who cannot enter into your feelings or agree with your aims. The bleating sheep finds no harmony in the bark or howl of the wolf!

The two are very different animals and by no means agree. You do not suppose that you are going to be received with open arms by everybody, do you?

And if you become a preacher of the Gospel you do not imagine that you are going to please people, do you? The time may come when, perhaps, the wolves will find it best, for their own comfort, not to howl quite so loudly, but my own experience goes to show that they howl pretty loudly when you first come among them—and they keep up the hideous concert year after year until, at last, they somewhat weary of their useless noise. The world raves as a wolf if any man is in double earnest for the Kingdom of Christ. Well, you must bear with it. What sort of sympathy can a lamb expect from wolves? If he expected any, would he be not disappointed? Be not disappointed, for you know your surroundings and you know your mission!

When our Savior used similar words to the 70, He did not call them sheep, but *lambs*, (see Luke 10:3), for they were not so far advanced as the 12, yet He sent them into the same trying circumstances and they returned in peace. Even the weak ones among us should, therefore, be of good courage and be ready to face opposition and ridicule. Sheep in the midst of wolves are among those who would rip them, tear them, devour them. Luther used to say Cain will go on killing Abel to the world's end, if he can, and so he will till that millennial day when the wolf shall lie down with the lamb! The disposition and nature of the wolves cause them to be opposed to the sheep—and it is the nature of the world to hate the children of God!

All through history you see the two seeds in contention—if there is Abel there is Cain who slays him. If there is Noah, you see an ungodly world all round him. If there is an Isaac, so, also, is there an Ishmael who will mock him. And if there is a Jacob, there is an Esau who seeks to kill him. There cannot be an Israel without Pharaoh, or Amalek, or Edom, or Babylon to oppose! David must be hunted by Saul and the Son of David by Herod. There is an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman—and that enmity will always remain. The ungodly roar upon the righteous and seek to bring cruel accusations against them, even as against their Lord. No matter how pure the lives of the godly, the wicked will slander them! No matter how kind their actions, they will render evil in return. No matter how plain and honest their behavior, they will suspect them and no matter how disinterested in their motives, they will be sure to attribute to them the most evil designs, for the wolf comes to kill and to devour—and he will do it to the best of his ability.

Ah, how red are his fangs in times of persecution! How the wolf raged and raved over, this, our country, in the days of Mary and Charles the Second. And afterwards when, first as a Protestant and next as a Puritan, the godly were devoured and he that followed his conscience was made to suffer bitterly! Scotland can tell how the wolf's fangs were wet with the blood of her covenanting sons! And were it not for God's own strong hand put upon them, the wolves would be tearing the sheep to this day in our own land! Again, they were to go like sheep among wolves, among a people

who would hinder their endeavors, for their business was to seek the lost sheep and the wolves would not help them in *that*. On the contrary, the wolves, themselves, desire to seize upon the lost sheep as their prey.

You must expect, if you are faithful to Christ and put forth zealous efforts, that there will be others who will put forth their strength and cunning to oppose you! It is often an awful game that we have to play for a man's soul. Each move we make is met by the devil and, unless God directs us, we shall lose the man. If we draw him to a Prayer Meeting, another takes him to the theater. If we set before him the Truth of God, another puzzles him with skepticism. If we persuade him, others entice him in the wrong direction. The cunning of our foe is something terrible! We go forth to hunt for precious souls, but there are others who, in another sense, hunt for the precious life.

The streets at night tell of those whom Satan hires that he may use them as his decoys! The vicious literature scattered abroad so plentifully is another form of the nets of Satan, the great fowler, who catches the sons of men in his snares. If we are not earnest, the devil is! He never sleeps—he lost his eyelids long ago. We may slumber if we dare, but the powers of evil will never suspend their activities—day and night the deadly work goes on and the wolves howl over their prey. Therefore we go forth like sheep, not among the *images* of wolves, but in the midst of *real* active wolves that are doing all they possibly can to destroy those sheep who are as yet lost, but whom Christ has, nevertheless, purchased with His precious blood!

We are to go forth like sheep among wolves in this sense, that we are quite powerless against them. What can a sheep do if a wolf sets upon it? It has no strength to resist! And so those 70 disciples of Christ, if the Jews had hunted them down, would have gone to prison and to death, for they could not fight. “My Kingdom,” said our Lord, “is not of this world, else would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews.” All through the history of the Church, when the wolves actually set upon the sheep, they make no active resistance, but as the flock of slaughter they suffer and die. I know there *was* a time in history when the sheep began fighting, but it was not their Master's mind that they should—He bids us put our sword in its scabbard. Our place is to bear and bear and bear continually—as He did!

He says, “If a man strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other, also.” Fighting sheep are strange animals and fighting Christians are self-evident contradictions. They have forsaken the Master's way—they have gone off from the platform where He stands whenever it comes to carnal weapons. It is ours to submit and to be the anvil which bears the blows but outlasts all the hammers! After all, the wolves have had, by far, the worst of it—the sheep are multiplied and the wolves grow fewer and fewer! As a matter of fact, the sheep have lived in *this* country to see the last of the wolves—and they will in other lands, too!

The wild dogs of Australia are very fierce against the sheep, but the sheep will surely, in the end, live, and the wild dog will die. Everywhere it is so. They are weak in themselves and yet they conquer the strong. “Ah,”

you say, "it is the Shepherd who gives them this victory." Precisely so! And that is where our strength lies—even in "that Great Shepherd of the sheep." Though called to bow down as the street that men may go over us, by this endurance we conquer! In suffering we are invincible and in this sign we conquer—the cross of self-denial and self-sacrifice leads the way. "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing! Being provoked, you return gentleness and, being persecuted, you *pray* for your enemies!

"Ah," says one, "I do not like the looks of such a mode of warfare!" I thought you would not and you may go your way. As notice was given of old in the camp of Israel that he who had lately married a wife, or built a house, or was fainthearted, might go home, so do we say—"To your beds, you cowards! If you cannot undertake this for your Master, He does not need that His hosts should be encumbered by your presence!" Our Master calls out men to whom He gives Divine Grace that they may be strong to endure even unto the end! The Spirit of the Lord gives patience and forbearance to those who, in true faith, seek to be like their suffering Lord.

Brethren, it is trying work for the sheep to go forth among wolves, but it has to be done. Picture it in your mind's eye. The timid sheep trembles at it. The wolves are rough, unmannerly, coarse-minded, irritating, annoying. The poor sheep does not feel at home in such company! He sees, every now and then, the white teeth glittering within the wolf's mouth and he is ill at ease. The sheep wishes he were back in the quiet fold among his happy brethren, but the Shepherd knows what He is doing and it is the duty of the sheep to obey and to go into the midst of the wolves if his Shepherd bids him. It is very testing, too, because if a man is not truly one of God's own, he will not obey so trying a command, but will neglect duty and seek comfort.

It will try even you who are most sincere. You think you have much patience—get among the wolves and see how much is left! You fancy you could put up with a great deal of annoyance—let it come upon you and you will see how it torments you. When it comes to the loss of your good name, to downright lying and slander against the most tender part of your character. When it comes to bitter sneers and sarcasms and words which eat like acid into the flesh and burn like coals of fire flung into the bosom, it is not easy, then, to maintain the love which hopes all things, endures all things. Grace, alone, makes Believers press forward in their work of love, seeking with gentleness to win souls.

Oh to say—though the wicked man curses me and foams at the mouth with rage—I will still seek his good! This is the victory of faith, but the battle will test all your Graces and make you see that all is not gold which glitters. You will soon see whether the Spirit of God is in you or not, for patient love is not natural, but *supernatural*—and only he who is filled with the supernatural indwelling of the Holy Spirit will be able to live as a sheep among wolves! If you can accomplish this work it will be very instructive to you.

You will never know why Christ wept over Jerusalem till you get among the Jerusalemites and painfully feel the cruel wrongs which make men

weep because they love! You cannot understand the Savior's death throes, the bloody sweat, the heaviness even unto death and the broken heart until you go, like a sheep, into the midst of wolves! Then you will be where Jesus was and you will have fellowship with Him! Practical learning is best—books cannot teach us fellowship with our Lord, but when we get to do Christly work, *then* we come to mourn the evil which He lamented and prize the remedy which He supplied. Thus we gather knowledge and are, ourselves, the better for our labor for others.

III. Let us now look at God's servants sent forth and note THEIR EMINENT AUTHORITY. "Behold *I* send you forth." What a grand expression! It could be used by no mere man! He who spoke thus is Divine. Brothers and Sisters, our commission justifies us in what we do. For a sheep to go into the midst of wolves of its own accord would be a foolish courting of peril. But when the Great Shepherd says, "I send you," it would be a grievous fault to linger. Who is this who says, "I send you"? First, it is "The Lord of the Harvest." Did you notice while we were reading in the 10th of Luke, how the two verses ran on, "Pray you, therefore, the Lord of the Harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. Go your ways; behold, I send you."

The same connection is here, only there is a little parenthesis—read the last verse of the ninth chapter of Matthew, and you will see that it is the same. It is the Lord of the Harvest to whom we pray, who actually sends us forth in answer to our own prayers! He is the Master of all worlds and owner of the souls of men. He puts His sickle into your hands and bids you go forth and reap the golden grain which is the reward of the travail of His soul. "I send you,"—the Lord of the Harvest. Armed with His authority, who shall daunt you? Go even to the gates of Hell if Jesus commands!

Next, "I send you"—I, who prize you, for you are My sheep. I who love you, for I bought you with My blood. I, who would not expose you to a needless danger. I, who know by My infinite wisdom that I am doing a wise and a kind thing. I send you, you, My sheep, My dear sheep, for whom I laid down My life—I send you into the midst of wolves—therefore you may safely go, for I, who love you, send you there. Lord, we ask no questions, but we go at once. "I send you," that is I who have gone on the same errand Myself.

Did He not come into the world like a sheep in the midst of wolves? Remember with what patience He endured and with what glory He triumphed! Remember His poverty and shame and death! Remember how, like a sheep before her shearers, He was dumb, like a lamb that is taken to the slaughter, He opened not His mouth. He does not bid you go where He has not gone Himself. It is dangerous, but then He has passed through the danger, endured it and triumphed in it. "I send you"—mark that—I who overcame in the very Character in which I send you! Have you not read in the book of Revelation, "The Lamb shall overcome them"? And again, "They overcame by the blood of the Lamb." And know you not that Heaven's high songs go up to Him that sits upon the Throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever?

The Lamb in the midst of wolves has conquered the wolves and is Lord of All! And so He, in effect, says, “You are My lambs, therefore, go forth,, as I did. Endure, as I did. Conquer, as I did, and you shall sit on my Throne and the Lamb shall lead you to the living fountains of water.”

IV. We close by noticing THEIR PERMANENT INSTRUCTIONS. You have a tough task before you, to act as sheep among wolves! Your Lord leaves you not without guidance in the form of plain precepts. What are you to do, then? Be bold as lions? Yes, but that is not the principal thing. Be swift as eagles? Yes, by all means, but that is not the main requirement. For everyday life, for the wear and tear of this great battle, there are two grand requisites. The first is *prudence*—be wise as serpents. And the next thing is *innocence*—be harmless as doves.

First, be prudent and wise as a serpent. Do not imitate a serpent in any other respect but in this. Never let the devil enter into you as he did the serpent, nor become groveling and cunning. But, still, the serpent is an exceedingly wise creature and it had need to be, for it lives in a world where it is hated by a deadly foe. It is natural for man to hate the whole serpent tribe. The very first thing you do if you see a viper is to look for a stick to kill it. Everybody is the enemy of serpents and if they are to exist, at all, they must be very wary—in this you are to copy them.

What does a serpent do to preserve itself? What is it which proves its wisdom? First, it gets out of the way of man as much as it can. Our Lord meant this, for immediately after our text He says, “But beware of men.” It is well to get out of the society of ungodly men and let them see that their habits and modes of conversation are not ours. Seek to benefit them, but do not seek their society! Their wolfish propensities are most seen in their leisure time, in their drinking and reveling and, therefore, keep far from these. You have no business in their parties, their frivolous assemblies, their drinking bouts and places of lascivious song.

Do not accept their invitations when you know that they will be under no restraint. Do not linger near them when they are talking lewdly or profanely. Your moving away will be your most telling protest. You must be with them in your business—indeed, you are sent to them—but while you are with them you must not be *of* them! And you should discreetly avoid them when you know that you can do no good. You younger ones should get out of the way of old blasphemers and scoffers as much as you ever can, for they delight to worry the lambs. Do not attempt to answer them, but keep out of their way. Do not court quarrelling and controversy, but avoid all disputing upon the Gospel.

Your workmates will chaff you and, no doubt, you will receive many opprobrious epithets, but neither provoke this treatment nor resent it in any way. Do not cast pearls before swine and do not introduce religion at unseasonable times. Hold your principles very firmly, but when you know a man will only blaspheme if he hears you name the name of Jesus, do not give him the occasion. Stand up for Jesus when the time is fit, but do not exercise zeal without knowledge. When a man is half drunk, or in a passion, leave him to himself and thus escape many a brawl. At another opportunity, when the occasion is more favorable, *then* endeavor to in-

struct and persuade, but not when failure is certain. Be very prudent and hold your peace when silence is better than speech.

How else does the serpent act? It glides along very quietly. It can hiss, but it does not very often do so. As it glides along, it neither sings, nor roars, nor barks. It does not court observation. It slips off quietly, gracefully, swiftly and without noise. Now, do not seek after great publicity. There may be times when it may be well to ring the great bell. If you can get multitudes of people together to hear the Gospel, by all means ring the bell as loudly as you can! But as far as *you* are personally concerned, do not make a fuss, do not blazon abroad what you are going to do, do not call upon everybody, saying, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of Hosts."

Glide along through a useful life as quietly as the serpent which does what he finds to do and says nothing, dreading, rather than courting the eyes of man. Unobtrusive earnestness, quiet, simple-minded resolution to achieve your purpose—whether men will bear or whether they will forbear, whether they will praise, or whether they will laugh at you—this is your wisdom. Then, again, the serpent is famous for finding his way where no other creature could enter—any little space, any tiny opening will be sufficient for his purpose. His form is adapted to progress among obstacles. You may block the way to other creatures, but he will wriggle in somehow.

So should it be with us. If we cannot get at men's hearts one way, we must try another. If you cannot induce them to read the Gospel, get them to *hear* it. If you cannot induce them to hear a sermon, drop a verse into their ears. If a tract is refused, put a word in edgeways for your Lord and Master. There is a way into everyone's heart if you know how to find it—be wise as serpents and discover it. Though it seems very difficult to reach some minds, yet with holy perseverance and serpentine adroitness continue the attempt and you will succeed. There is a weak point in the strongest man's mind, where his opposition can be wounded. Even Leviathan that laughs at the spear has a tender place where the spear's point may come at him—and so the most ungodly, wicked, blaspheming, profane infidel has some point where you may reach his better feelings if you do but search it out. Be wise as serpents in this respect.

But then you are to add to this—which might otherwise degenerate into cunning—the innocence of the dove. The Greek for, "harmless," is, "without horn." The dove is without horn, hoof, fang, or other means of defense. You are to have positively no weapons! Like the dove, you are to be defenseless. It seems an amazing thing to set doves flying at eagles, and lambs at war with wolves, but this is what the Lord has done! This defenselessness, however, which looks like our weakness, is our real strength! Our being harmless appears to predict sure destruction, but it is to be the means of certain victory!

You are to be gentle and easily entreated. You are not to fly into a passion because you are contradicted, nor to be angry because you are reviled. You are to endure contradiction and slander with tenderness and gentleness, as a dove bears all things. You are not to be driven into any sin by opposition. The dove is pure—it loves to be by the rivers of waters, in the quiet and clean places. So should you never be driven to sinful

word or deed, but do good to all men and glorify God in all things by being both gentle and pure as a dove. And as the dove is very simple and is altogether artless and unworldly, so let your strength and your wisdom lie in your artless truthfulness and childlike dependence upon God.

See how Christ explains His own utterance a little further down. "Harmless as doves," then He adds, "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak." Be like a dove, confident because fearless, gentle, artless, simple and restful. Do no ill, and fear none. You Christian people, if you are going to defend the Gospel, need not study oratory or become expert in pleading such as are used at law. Tell the truth and baffle the devil! The Truth of God is the most powerful weapon and the most subtle policy.

I believe that even in affairs of State, truth is wisdom. No diplomatic agent would so confound intriguers as a man who should tell the truth. They would conclude that what he said was a lie because they are accustomed to regard everything as having another meaning. An ambassador, it was formerly said, was to be a gentleman who is sent abroad to lie for the good of his country—but I hope it is not so now. If straightforward truth should ever become the policy of any country it would be invincible in council! If in politics a man were to throw away all arts and tricks and adhere only to principle, he must gain respect. The greatest art in all the world is to fling all art away and the grandest policy is to have no policy, but honest dealing. The bravest thing that can ever be done and the most noble, is to be artless and harmless as a dove.

There, then, is the policy of your warfare—be prudent, but be innocent and simple-minded. Oh, the power of truthfulness! Do not believe that men are strong in proportion as they are artful. By no manner of means! Do not believe that they are strong in proportion as they can bend a fist. No, the power of a Christian must lie in his holy heart, in his earnest tongue and in his look of love. By this he shall vanquish, and by nothing else! The conclusion of my sermon is this. Does it come home to you, Brothers and Sisters? Do you hear the Lord sending you out to work? Then I entreat you, go forth! Suppose I make that one sentence my last word—"go forth"?

You may have heard of the Scot officer who had his men drawn up for the battle and felt bound to make them a speech. He pointed to the enemy, and said, "There they are, lads. If you don't kill them, they will kill you." My words are the same—There are the enemies of all righteousness, the enemies of Christ, the enemies of the good of men, the enemies of progress—if you do not overthrow them by publishing the Gospel to all according to your ability, they will overthrow you! Which is it to be? By the Grace of the Eternal and the Omnipotence of Him who bled for us, we will conquer even by His Cross after His own fashion! Only let His Holy Spirit rest upon us. Amen.

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ENDURING TO THE END

NO. 554

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 14, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He that endures to the end shall be saved.”
Matthew 10:22.***

THIS particular text was originally addressed to the Apostles when they were sent to teach and preach in the name of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps bright visions floated before their minds of honor and esteem among men. It was no mean dignity to be among the twelve first heralds of salvation to the sons of Adam. Was a check needed to their high hopes? Perhaps so, lest they should enter upon their work without having counted its cost, Christ gives them a very full description of the treatment which they might expect to receive and reminds them that it was not the commencement of their ministry which would win them their reward, but, “He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved.”

It would be well if every youthful aspirant to the Gospel ministry would remember this, if merely to put our hand to the plow proved us to be called of God, how many would be found so? But alas, too many look back and prove unworthy of the kingdom. The charge of Paul to Timothy is a very necessary exhortation to every young minister—“Be you faithful unto death.” It is not to be faithful for a time, but to be “faithful unto death,” which will enable a man to say, “I have fought a good fight.”

How many dangers surround the Christian minister! As the officers in an army are the chosen targets of the sharpshooters, so are the ministers of Christ. The king of Syria said to his servants, “Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel,” even so the arch-fiend makes his main attack upon the ministers of God. From the first moment of his call to the work the preacher of the Word will be familiar with temptation. While he is yet in his youth there are multitudes of the softer temptations to turn the head and trip the feet of the youthful herald of the Cross.

And when the blandishments of early popularity have passed away, as soon they must, the harsh croak of slander and the adder’s tongue of ingratitude assail him. He finds himself stale and flat where once he was flattered and admired. No, the venom of malice succeeds to the honeyed morsels of adulation. Now let him gird his loins and fight the good fight of faith in his after days to provide fresh matter Sunday after Sunday, to rule as in the sight of God, to watch over the souls of men—to weep with them who weep, to rejoice with those who rejoice!

His duties include to be a nursing father unto young converts, sternly to rebuke hypocrites, to deal faithfully with backsliders, to speak with solemn authority and paternal pathos to those who are in the first stages of spiritual decline. To carry about with him the care of the souls of hundreds is enough to make him grow old while yet he is young and to mar his visage with the lines of grief, till, like the Savior, at the age of thirty

years, men shall count him nearly fifty. "You are not yet fifty years old and have You seen Abraham?" said the adversaries of Christ to Him when He was but thirty-two.

If the minister should fall, my Brethren, if, set upon a pinnacle, he should be cast down. If, standing in slippery places, he should falter. If the standard-bearer falls, as fall full well he may, what mischief is done to the Church? What shouts are heard among the adversaries! What dancing is seen among the daughters of Philistia! How has God's banner been stained in the dust and the name of Jesus cast into the mire—when the minister of Christ turns traitor, it is as if the pillars of the house did tremble—every stone in the structure feels the shock.

If Satan can succeed in overturning the preachers of the Word, it is as if yon broad-spreading tree should suddenly fall beneath the axe—prone in the dust it lies to wither and to rot. But where are the birds of the air which made their nests among its boughs and where fly those beasts of the field which found a happy shadow beneath its branches? Dismay has seized them and they flee in fright. All who were comforted by the preacher's words, strengthened by his example and edified by his teaching are filled with humiliation and grief, crying, "Alas, my Brother!" By these, our manifold dangers and weighty responsibilities, we may very justly appeal to you who feed under our ministry and beseech you, "Brethren, pray for us."

Well we know that though our ministry is received of the Lord Jesus, if up to now we have been kept faithful by the power of the Holy Spirit, yet it is only he who endures to the end who shall be saved. But, my Brethren, how glorious is the sight of the man who does endure to the end as a minister of Christ! I have photographed upon my heart just now the portrait of one very, very, dear to me. And I think I may venture to produce a rough sketch of him, as no mean example of how honorable it is to endure to the end. This man began while yet a youth to preach the Word. Sprung of ancestors who had loved the Lord and served His Church, he felt the glow of holy enthusiasm.

Having proved his capabilities, he entered college and after the close of its course, settled in a spot where for more than fifty years he continued his labors. In his early days his sober earnestness and sound doctrine were owned of God in many conversions both at home and abroad. Assailed by slander and abuse, it was his privilege to live it all down. He outlived his enemies, and though he had buried a generation of his friends, yet he found many warm hearts clustering round him to the last. Visiting his flock, preaching in his own pulpit, and making very many journeys to other Churches, years followed one another so rapidly that he found himself the head of a large tribe of children and grandchildren, most of them walking in the Truth of God.

At the age of fourscore years, he preached on still. Finally, laden with infirmities but yet as joyful and as cheerful as in the heyday of his youth, his time had come to die. He was able to say truthfully, when last he spoke to me, "I do not know that my testimony for God has ever altered as to the fundamental doctrines. I have grown in experience, but from the first day until now I have had no new doctrines to teach my hearers. I

have had to make no confessions of error on vital points, but have been held fast to the Doctrines of Grace and can now say that I love them better than ever.”

Such an one was he, as Paul the Aged, longing to preach so long as his tottering knees could bear him to the pulpit. I am thankful that I had such a grandfather. He fell asleep in Christ but a few hours ago and on his dying bed talked as cheerfully as men can do in the full vigor of their health. Most sweetly he talked of the preciousness of Christ and chiefly of the security of the Believer. The truthfulness of the promise. The immutability of the Covenant. The faithfulness of God and the infallibility of the Divine decree.

Among other things which he said at the last was this, which is, we think, worth your treasuring in your memories. “Dr Watts sings—

***‘Firm as the earth Your Gospel stands,
My Lord, my Hope, my Trust.’***

“What? Doctor, is it not firmer than that? Could you not find a better comparison? Why, the earth will give way beneath our feet one day or another, if we rest on it. The comparison will not do. The Doctor was much nearer the mark, when he said—

***‘Firm as His throne His promise stands,
And He can well secure
What I’ve committed to His hands.
‘Till the decisive hour.’***

“Firm as His throne,” said he, “He must cease to be King before He can break His promise, or lose His people. Divine Sovereignty makes us all secure.”

He fell asleep right quietly, for his day was over and the night was come—what could he do better than go to rest in Jesus? Would God it may be our lot to preach the Word so long as we breathe, standing fast unto the end in the Truth of God! And if we see not our sons and grandsons testifying to those doctrines which are so dear to us, yet may we see our children walking in the Truth. I know of nothing, dear Friends, which I would choose to have as the subject of my ambition for life than to be kept faithful to my God to death—still to be a soul-winner—still to be a true herald of the Cross and testify the name of Jesus to the last hour!

It is only such who in the ministry shall be saved. Our text, however, occurs again in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, at the thirteenth verse, upon which occasion it was not addressed to the Apostles, but to the *disciples*. The disciples, looking upon the huge stones which were used in the construction of the Temple, admired the edifice greatly and expected their Lord to utter a few words of passing praise.

Instead of which, He, who came not to be an admirer of architecture but to hew living stones out of the quarry of nature, to build them up into a spiritual temple, turned their remarks to practical account by warning them of a time of affliction in which there should be such trouble as had never been before and He added, “No, nor ever shall be.” He described false prophets as abounding and the love of many as waxing cold and warned them that, “He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved.” So that this solemn Truth of God applies to every one of you.

The Christian man, though not called to the post of danger in witnessing publicly of the Grace of God, is destined in his measure to testify concerning Jesus, and in his proper sphere and place, to be a burning and a shining light. He may not have the cares of a Church, but he has far more—the cares of business. He is mixed up with the world. He is compelled to associate with the ungodly. To a great degree he must, at least six days in the week, walk in an atmosphere uncongenial with his nature—he is compelled to hear words which will never provoke him to love and good works, and to behold actions whose example is obnoxious. He is exposed to temptations of every sort and size, for this is the lot of the followers of the Lamb.

Satan knows how useful is a consistent follower of the Savior, and how much damage to Christ's cause an inconsistent professor may bring—and therefore he empties out all his arrows from his quiver that he may wound, even unto death, the soldier of the Cross. My Brethren, many of you have had a far longer experience than myself. You know how stern is the battle of the religious life, how you must contend, even unto blood striving against sin. Your life is one continued scene of warfare, both without and within. Perhaps even now you are crying with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

A Christian's career is always fighting, never ceasing—always plowing the stormy sea and never resting till he reaches the port of Glory. If my God shall preserve you, as preserve you He must, or else you are not His—if He shall keep you, as keep you He will if you have committed your souls to His faithful guardianship—what an honor awaits you! I have in my mind's eye, just now, one who has been for about sixty years associated with this Church and who, this week, full of years and ripe for Heaven, was carried by angels into the Savior's bosom! Called by Divine Grace while yet young, he was united with the Christian Church early in life.

By Divine Grace he was enabled to maintain a consistent and honorable character for many years. As an officer of this Church he was acceptable among his Brethren and useful both by his godly example and sound judgment. While in various parts of the Church of Christ he earned unto himself a good degree. He went last Sunday twice to the House of God where he was accustomed of late years to worship, enjoying the Word and feasting at the Communion table with much delight. He went to his bed without having any very serious illness upon him, having spent his last evening upon earth in cheerful conversation with his daughters.

Before the morning light, with his head leaning upon his hand, he had fallen asleep in Christ, having been admitted to the rest which remains for the people of God! As I think of my Brother, though of late years I have seen but little of him, I can but rejoice in the Grace which illuminated his pathway. When I saw him the week before his departure, although full of years, there was little or no failure in mind. He was just the picture of an aged saint waiting for his Master and willing to work in His cause while life remained. I refer, as most of you know, to Mr. Samuel Gale. Let us thank God and take courage—thank God that He has preserved, in this

case, a Christian so many, many years! And let us take courage to hope that there will be found in this Church, many, at all periods, whose gray heads shall be crowns of Glory. “He that endures to the end,” and only he, “shall be saved.”

But, dear Friends, perseverance is not the lot of the few. It is not left to laborious preachers of the Word, or to consistent Church officers—it is the common lot of every Believer in the Church. It *must* be so, for only thus can they prove that they are Believers! It must be so, for only by their perseverance can the promise be fulfilled, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” Without perseverance, they cannot be saved. And, as saved they must be, persevere they shall through Divine Grace!

I shall now, with brevity and earnestness, as God enables me, speak upon our text thus—perseverance is the *badge* of saints—the *target* of our foes—the *Glory* of Christ—and the *care* of all Believers.

I. First, then, PERSEVERANCE IS THE BADGE OF TRUE SAINTS. It is their Scriptural mark. How am I to know a Christian? By his words? Well, to some degree words betray the man. But a man’s speech is not always the copy of his *heart*, for with smooth language many are able to deceive. What does our Lord say? “You shall know them by their fruits.” But how am I to know a man’s fruits? By watching him one day? I may, perhaps, form a guess of his character by being with him for a single hour, but I could not confidently pronounce upon a man’s true state even by being with him for a week.

George Whitfield was asked what he thought of a certain person’s character. “I have never lived with him,” was his very proper answer. If we take the run of a man’s life, say for ten, twenty, or thirty years, and, if by carefully watching we see that he brings forth the fruits of Grace through the Holy Spirit, our conclusion may be drawn very safely.

As the truly magnetized needle in the compass, with many deflections, yet does really and naturally point to the pole, so if I can see that despite infirmities, my friend sincerely and constantly aims at holiness, then I may conclude with something like certainty that he is a child of God. Although works do not justify a man before God, they do justify a man’s profession before his fellows. I cannot tell whether you are justified in calling yourself a Christian except by your *works*. By your *works*, therefore, as James says, shall you be justified.

You cannot by your *words* convince me that you are a Christian, much less by your *experience* which I cannot see but must take on trust from you. But your *actions* will, unless you are an unmitigated hypocrite, speak the truth and speak the truth loudly, too. If your course is as the shining light which shines more unto the perfect day, I know that yours is the path of the just. All other conclusions are only the judgment of charity such as we are bound to exercise. But this is as far as man can get it—the judgment of *certainty* when a man’s life has been consistent throughout.

Moreover, analogy shows us that it is *perseverance* which must mark the Christian. How do I know the winner of the foot race? There are the spectators and there are the runners. What strong men! What magnificent muscles! What strength and sinews! Yonder is the goal and there it is that I must judge who is the winner—not here—at the starting point! “They

which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize." I may select this one, or that other person, as likely to win, but I cannot be absolutely sure until the race is over.

There they fly! See how they press forward with straining muscles. But one has tripped, another faints, a third is out of breath and others are far behind. Only one wins—and who is he? Why, he who continues to the end! So I may gather from the analogy which Paul constantly allows us from the ancient games, that only he who continues till he reaches the goal may be accounted a Christian at all. A ship starts on a voyage to Australia—if it stops at Madeira, or returns after reaching the Cape—would you consider that it ought to be called an emigrant ship for New South Wales?

It must go the whole voyage, or it does not deserve the name. A man has begun to build a house and has erected one side of it—do you consider him a builder if he stops there and fails to cover it in or to finish the other walls? Do we give men praise for being warriors because they know how to make one desperate charge, but lose the campaign? Have we not, of late, smiled at the boasting dispatches of commanders in fights where both combatants fought with valor and yet neither of them had the common sense to push on to reap the victory?

What was the very strength of Wellington but that when a triumph had been achieved he knew how to reap the harvest which had been sown in blood? And he only is a true conqueror and shall be crowned at the last who continues till war's trumpet is blown no more. It is with a Christian as it was with the great Napoleon—he said, "Conquest has made me what I am and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, conquest has made you what you are and conquest must sustain you. Your motto must be, "Excelsior," or, if it is not, you know not the noble spirit of God's princes.

But why do I multiply illustrations when all the world rings with the praise of perseverance? Moreover, the common-sense judgment of mankind tells us that those who merely begin and do not hold out will not be saved. Why, if every man would be saved who began to follow Christ, who would be damned? In such a country as this, the most of men have at least one religious spasm in their lives. I suppose that there is not a person before me who at some time or other did not determine to be a Pilgrim.

You, Mr. Pliable, were induced by a Christian friend who had some influence with you, to go with him some short way till you came to the Slough of Despond and you thought yourself very wise when you scrambled out on that side which was nearest to your own home. And even you, Mr. Obstinate, are not always dogged! You have fits of thoughtfulness and intervals of tenderness. My Hearer, how impressed you were at the Prayer Meeting! How excited you were at that revival service! When you heard a zealous Brother preach at the theater what an impression was produced! Ah, yes. The shop was shut up for a Sunday or two! You did not swear or get drunk for nearly a month, but you could not hold on any longer.

Now, if those who were to begin were saved, why you would be secure though you are at the present time as far from anything like religion as

the darkness at midnight is from the blazing light of midday! Besides, common sense shows us, I say, that a man must hold on or else he cannot be saved because the very worst of men are those who begin and then give up. If you would turn over all the black pages of villainy to find the name of the Son of Perdition, where would you find it? Why, among the Apostles!

The man who had worked miracles and preached the Gospel sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver—Judas Iscariot betrays the Son of Man with a kiss! Where is a worse name than that of Simon Magus? Simon, “believed also,” says the Scripture and yet he offered the Apostles money if they would sell to him the Holy Spirit! What an infamous notoriety Demas has obtained who loved the present evil world! How much damage did Alexander the coppersmith do to Paul? “He did me much evil,” said he, “the Lord reward him according to his works.” And yet that Alexander was once foremost in danger and even exposed his own person in the theater at Ephesus that he might rescue the Apostle.

There are none so bad as those who once seemed to be good. “If the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be seasoned?” That which is best when ripe is worst when rotten. Liquor which is sweetest in one stage, becomes most sour in another. Let not him that puts on his armor boast as though he puts it off—for even common sense teaches you that it is not to begin—but to continue to the end which marks the time of the child of God. But we need not look to analogy and to mere common sense. Scripture is plain enough.

What says John? “They went out from us.” Why? Were they ever saints? Oh, no—“They went out from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us, but they went out from us, that it might be manifest that they were not of us.” They were not Christians, or else they had not thus apostatized. Peter says, “It has happened unto them according to the Proverb, the dog has returned to its vomit and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire,” indicating at once most clearly that the dog, though it did vomit, always was a dog.

When men disgorge their sins unwillingly—not giving them up because they dislike them, but because they cannot retain them—if a favorable time comes they will return to swallow once more what they seemed to abandon. The sow that was washed—yes, bring it into the parlor, introduce it among society. It was washed and well-washed, too! Whoever saw so respectable a member of the honorable confraternity of swine before? Bring it in! Yes, but will you keep it there? Wait and see. Because you have not transformed it into a man, on the first occasion it will be found wallowing in the mire. Why? Because it was not a man, but a sow.

And so we think we may learn from multitudes of other passages, if we had time to quote them, that those who go back into perdition are not saints at all, for perseverance is the badge of the *righteous*. “The righteous shall hold on his way and he that has clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.” We not only get life by faith, but faith sustains it—“the just shall live by faith”—but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.” What we have learned from Scripture, dear Friends, has

been abundantly confirmed by observation. Every day I bless God that in so numerous a Church we have comparatively so few who have proved false.

But I have seen enough and the Lord knows more than enough to make me very jealous over you with a godly jealousy. I could tell of many an instance of men and women who did not run well. "What did hinder them that they should not obey the Truth?" I remember a young man of whom I thought as favorably as of any of you and I believe he did at that time deserve our favorable judgment. He walked among us, one of the most hopeful of our sons and we hoped that God would make him serviceable to His cause. He fell into bad company. There was enough conscience left, after a long course of secret sin, to make him feel uncomfortable in his wickedness though he did not give it up.

And when at last his sin stared him in the face and others knew it, so ashamed was he, that, though he bore the Christian name, he took poison that he might escape the shame which he had brought upon himself. He was rescued—rescued by skill and the good Providence of God. But where he is and what he is, God only knows, for he had taken another poison more deadly still which made him the slave of his own lusts. Do not think it is the young alone, however. It is a very lamentable fact that there are, in proportion, more backslidings among the old than the young. And, if you want to find a great sinner in that respect, you will find him, surely, nine times out of ten, with gray hairs on his head.

Have I not frequently mentioned that you do not find in Scripture many cases of young people going astray? You do find Believers sinning, but they were all getting to be old men. There is Noah—no youth. There is Lot, when drunken—no child. There is David with Bathsheba—no young man in the heat of passion. There is Peter denying his Lord—no boy at the time. These were men of experience and knowledge and wisdom. "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." With sorrow do we remember one whom, years ago, we heard pray among us and sweetly, too. He was esteemed and trusted by us all.

I remember a dear Brother saying very kindly, but not too wisely, "If he is not a child of God, I am not." But what did he, my Brethren, to our shame and sorrow, but go aside to the very worst and foulest of sins and where is he now? Perhaps the ale-house may tell or worse places still. So have we seen that earth's sun may be eclipsed, earth's stars may go out and all human glory melt into shame. No true child of God perishes—*hold that fast*. But this is the badge of a true child of God—that a man endures to the end.

And if a man does not hold on, but slinks back to his old master and once again fits on the old collar and wears again the Satanic yoke, that is sure proof that he has never come out of the spiritual Egypt through Jesus Christ, his Leader, and has never obtained that eternal life which cannot die because it is born of God. I have thus, dear Friends, said enough to prove, I think beyond dispute, that the true badge of the Christian is perseverance and that without it, no man has proved himself to be a child of God.

II. Secondly, PERSEVERANCE IS THEREFORE THE TARGET OF ALL OUR SPIRITUAL ENEMIES. We have many adversaries. Look at the world! The world does not object to our being Christians for a time. It will cheerfully overlook all misdemeanors in that way if we will now shake hands and be as we used to be. Your old companions who used to call you such good fellows, when you were bad fellows—would they not very readily forgive you for having been Christians, if you would just go back and be as in days gone by? Oh, certainly, they would look upon your religion as a freak of folly, but they would very easily overlook it if you would give it up for the future.

“O,” says the world, “Come back! Come back to my arms once more! Be enamored of me and though you have spoken some hard words against me and done some cruel deeds against me, I will cheerfully forgive you.” The world is always stabbing at the Believer’s perseverance. Sometimes she will bully him back—she will persecute him with her tongue—cruel mocking shall be used. And at another time she will trick him, “Come back to me! O come back! Why should we disagree? You are made for me and I am made for you!” And she beckons so gently and so sweetly, even as Solomon’s harlot of old. This is the one thing with her—that you should cease to be a Pilgrim and settle down to buy and sell with her in Vanity Fair.

Your second enemy, the flesh. What is its aim? “Oh,” cries the flesh, “We have had enough of this. It is weary work being a Pilgrim, come, give it up.” Sloth says, “Sit still where you are. Enough is as good as a feast, at least, of this tedious thing.” Then, Lust cries, “Am I always to be mortified? Am I never to be indulged? Give me at least a furlough from this constant warfare!” The flesh cares not how soft the chain, just so it does hold us fast and prevents our pressing on to Glory. Then comes in Satan and sometimes he beats the big drum and cries with a thundering voice, “There is no Heaven. There is no God! You are a fool to persevere.”

Or, changing his tactics, he cries, “Come back! I will give you a better treatment than you had before. You thought me a hard master, but that was misrepresentation! Come and try me! I am a different devil from what I was ten years ago! I am respectable to what I was then. I do not want you to go back to the low theater or the casino—come with me and be a respectable lover of pleasure. I tell you I can dress in broad cloth as well as in corduroy and I can walk in the courts of kings as well as in the courts and alleys of the beggar. O come back!” he says, “and make yourself one of mine.” So that this hellish trinity—the world, the flesh and the devil—all stab at the Christian’s perseverance.

His perseverance in service they will frequently attack—“What profit is there in serving God?” the devil will say to me sometimes, as he did to Jonah. “Flee unto Tarshish and do not stop in this Nineveh. They will not believe your words, though you speak in God’s name!” To you he will say, “Why, you are so busy all the six days of the week, what is the good of spending your Sunday with a parcel of noisy brats in a Sunday school? Why go about with those tracts in the streets? Much good you will get from it. Would not you be better with having a little rest?”

Ah, that word *rest*—some of us are very fond of it. But we ought to recollect that we spoil it if we try to get it here, for rest is only beyond the grave. We shall have rest enough when once we come into the Presence of our Lord. Perseverance in service, then, the devil would murder outright. If he cannot stay us in service, he will try to prevent our perseverance in suffering. “Why be patient any longer?” says he. “Why sit on that dunghill, scraping your sores with a potsherd? Curse God and die! You have been always poor since you have been a Christian—your business does not prosper! You see you cannot make money unless you do as others do. You must go with the times, or else you will not get on. Give it all up. Why be always suffering like this?”

Thus the foul spirit tempts us. Or you may have espoused some good cause and the moment you open your mouth many laugh and try to put you down. “Why,” says the devil, “be put down? What is the use of it? Why make yourself singularly eccentric and expose yourself to perpetual martyrdom? It is all very nice,” says he, “if you will be a martyr, to be burnt at once and have done with it. But to hang, like Lord Cobham—to be roasted over a slow fire for days—is not comfortable. Why,” says the Tempter, “why be always suffering? Give it up!”

You see, then, it is also perseverance in suffering which the devil shoots at. Or, perhaps, it is perseverance in steadfastness. The love of many has waxed cold, but you remain zealous. “Well,” says he, “What is the good of your being so zealous? Other people are good enough people—you could not censure them—why do you want to be more righteous than they are? Why should you be pushing the Church before you and dragging the world behind you? What need is there for you to go two marches in one day? Is not one enough? Do as the rest do—loiter as they do. Sleep as do others, and let your lamp go out as other virgins do.”

Thus is our perseverance in steadfastness frequently assailed. Or else, it will be our doctrinal sentiments. “Why,” says Satan, “do you hold to these denominational *creeds*? Sensible men are getting more liberal—they are giving away what does not belong to them—God’s Truth. They are removing the old landmarks. Acts of uniformity are to be repealed! Articles and creeds are to be laid aside as useless lumber, not necessary for this very enlightened age! Fall in with this and be an Anythingarian! Believe that black is white! Hold that Truths of God and lies are very much akin to one another and that it doesn’t matter which we believe—for we are all of us right—though we flatly contradict each other! Believe that the Bible is a nose of wax to fit any face—that it does not teach anything material but you may make it say anything you like. Do that,” says he, “and be no longer firm in your opinion.”

I think I have proved—and need not waste more words about it—that perseverance is the target for all enemies. Wear your shield, Christian, close upon your armor and cry mightily unto God that by His Spirit you may endure to the end.

III. Thirdly, Brethren, PERSEVERANCE IS THE GLORY OF CHRIST. That He makes all His people persevere to the end is greatly to His honor. If they should fall away and perish, every office and work and attribute of Christ would be stained in the mire. If any *one* child of God should perish,

where were Christ's Covenant engagements? What is He worth as a Mediator of the Covenant and the Surety of it if He has not made the promises sure to all the seed? My Brethren, Christ is made a Leader and Commander of the people to bring many souls into Glory.

But if He does not bring them into Glory, where is the Captain's honor? Where is the efficacy of the precious blood if it does not effectually redeem? If it only redeems for a time and then suffers us to perish, where is its value? If it only blots out sin for a few weeks and then permits that sin to return and to remain upon us, where, I say, is the Glory of Calvary and where is the luster of the wounds of Jesus? He lives, He lives to intercede! But how can I honor His intercession, if it is fruitless?

Does He not pray, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am"? And if they are not finally brought to be with Him, where He is—where is the honor of His intercession? Has not the Pleader failed and the great Mediator been dismissed without success? Is He not at this day in union with His people? But what is the value of union to Christ if that union does not insure salvation? Is He not today at the right hand of God preparing a place for His saints? And will He prepare a place for them and then lose them on the road?

Oh, can it be that He procures the harp and the crown and will not save souls to use them? My Brothers and Sisters, the perishing of *one* true child of God would be such dishonor to Jesus that I cannot think of it without considering it as blasphemy! One true Believer in *Hell*? Oh, what laughter in the Pit—what defiance, what unholy mirth! "Ah, Prince of Life and Glory," says the Prince of the Pit, "I have defeated You! I have snatched the prey from the Mighty! The lawful captive I have delivered! I have torn a jewel from Your crown! See, here it is! You did redeem this soul with blood and yet it is in Hell."

Hear what Satan cries—"Christ suffered for this soul and yet God makes it suffer for itself! Where is the justice of God? Christ came from Heaven to earth to save this soul and failed in the attempt and I have him here!" And as he plunges that soul into deeper waves of woe, the shout of triumph goes up more and more blasphemously—"We have conquered Heaven! We have rent the Eternal Covenant! We have foiled the purposes of God! We have defeated His decree! We have triumphed over the power of the Mediator and cast His blood to the ground!"

Shall it ever be? Atrocious question! It can never be! They who are in Christ are saved. They whom Jesus Christ has really taken into union with Himself shall be with Him where He is. But how are you to know whether you are in union with Christ? My Brethren, you can only know it by obeying the Apostle's words, "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure."

IV. I close, therefore, with but a hint on the last point, PERSEVERANCE SHOULD BE THE GREAT CARE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN—his daily and his nightly care. O Beloved! I implore you by the love of God and by the love of your own souls—be faithful unto death. Have you difficulties? You must conquer them. Hannibal crossed the Alps for his heart was full of fury against Rome. And you must cross the Alps of difficulty, for I trust your heart is full of *hatred of sin*.

When Mr. Smeaton had built the lighthouse upon the Eddystone, he looked out anxiously after a storm to see if the edifice was still there. It was his great joy when he could see it still standing—for a former builder had constructed an edifice which he thought to be indestructible. He expressed a wish that he might be in it in the worst storm which ever blew and he was so—and neither himself nor his lighthouse were ever seen afterwards.

Now you have to be exposed to multitudes of storms! You must be in your lighthouse in the worst storm which ever blew—build firmly, then, on the Rock of Ages and make sure work for eternity! If you do these things you shall never fall. For this Church's sake, I pray you do it—for nothing can dishonor and weaken a Church so much as the falls of professors. A thousand rivers flow to the sea and make rich the meadows but no man hears the sound. But if there is one waterfall its roaring will be heard for miles and every traveler will mark the fall.

A thousand Christians can scarcely do such honor to their Master as one hypocrite can do dishonor to Him. If you have ever tasted that the Lord is gracious, pray that your foot slip not. It would be infinitely better to bury you in the earth than see you buried in sin. If I must be lost, God grant it may not be as an apostate. If I must, after all, perish—were it not better never to have known the way of righteousness than after having known the theory of it and something of the enjoyment of it—turn again to the beggarly elements of the world? Let your prayer be not against death, but against SIN. For your own sake, for the Church's sake, for the name of Christ's sake, I pray you do this!

You cannot persevere except by much watchfulness in the closet, much carefulness over every action, much dependence upon the strong hand of the Holy Spirit who alone can make you stand. Walk and live as in the sight of God, knowing where your great strength lies and depend upon it you shall yet sing that sweet doxology in Jude, "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be Glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

A simple faith brings the soul to Christ, Christ keeps the faith alive—that faith enables the Believer to persevere and so he enters Heaven. May that be your lot and mine for Christ's sake. Amen.

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LEARNING IN PRIVATE WHAT TO TEACH IN PUBLIC

NO. 2674

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 13, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 24, 1882.**

*“What I tell you in darkness, speak in light: and what you
hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.”
Matthew 10:27.*

I HOPE that many who are now present desire, beyond everything else, to be useful to their fellow creatures. We do not want to go to Heaven alone—we are most anxious to lead others to the Savior! I remember a very remarkable telegram which was sent from England by a lady who had sailed from New York with all her children. She landed in England after being shipwrecked and she sent her husband this brief but suggestive telegram, “Saved—alone.” Ah, that last sad word seemed as if it took almost all the sweetness out of the first one. “Saved alone.” May that never be what we shall have to say as we enter Heaven, but may we have the privilege of saying, “Here am I, Father, and the children whom You have given me.” May it be my joy to be able to say, “Here am I and all my congregation, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.”

So we begin with the assurance that all of you who know the Lord want to be useful, but, if that is to be the case, preparation is necessary. You say that you are going out to battle, young man, do you? Well, do not be in such a hurry! You have no rifle or sword—you will be in the way of the other soldiers rather than an addition to them. Unless you are, first of all, properly trained, you will certainly make a failure of your soldiering. The man who jumps into the army is not a warrior all at once—there must be drills, there must be a certain course of training before he can be of any service to the Queen. So is it with Christ's disciples. He did not send them out to preach at once—He called them from their former occupations—but He kept them with Himself for a time till they had learned at least some of the lessons they were to impart to others, for how could they teach what they did not know? Can a thing which is not in a man come out of him? And if it has never been put into him, how can it be gotten out of him? So our Savior, in the words of our text, encouraged His disciples to proclaim, even from the housetops, the Gospel which He had revealed to them, but He also gave them to understand that, first of all, they had need of preparation before they would be qualified to deliver their message. “What I tell you in darkness, that speak you

in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you on the house-tops.”

I. I want, first, to speak to you who desire to work for Jesus, concerning His own definition of AN INVALUABLE PRIVILEGE FOR ALL CHRISTIANS—“What I tell you in darkness.” “What you hear in the ear.”

From our Lord’s words, I learn that it is the great privilege of Christians to realize, first, that *Christ is still alive and still with His people*, still conversing with His chosen ones, still, by His Divine Spirit, speaking out of His very heart into the hearts of His true disciples. Christ was born an Infant, but He is no Infant now. Christ died, but He is not dead now. He is risen! He has gone up into His Glory! He sits upon the Throne of God, but, at the same time, by a very real spiritual Presence, He is with all His people, as He said to His disciples, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” And there is nothing that can so fit a man for holy service as to have Christ’s eyes looking into his eyes and reading him through and through—and to have Christ’s pierced hand laid on his heart till the very imprint of its wound is reproduced, filling that heart with a loving grief for others!

“Oh,” says one, “I think that I could speak for Christ if that should ever be true to me!” Ah, my Friend, you will *never* speak aright until it is true to you! Not with those mortal eyes will you see Him, but your *heart* shall behold Him without any help from those dull eyes. Not with your ears shall you hear His voice, but your *heart* shall attend to His message without the use of those poor impediments of ears. You shall know that He is with you—you shall be sure of it—for His life shall touch your life, His Spirit shall flood your spirit and then, but not till then, shall you be fit to speak in His name! That is the first part of this invaluable privilege—we are permitted to realize our Lord’s Presence with us personally.

Next, *we are enabled to feel Christ’s Word as spoken to us*—“I tell you.” The message of the Gospel is applied directly and distinctly to our own soul by Christ! We do not look for any new Revelation, but we do expect the old Revelation to be made known to our hearts and consciences in all its wondrous power. We expect that the Words which Jesus spoke should ring in our souls with such music as they evoked when He first uttered them and that we should, by the working of His Spirit, feel the force of those Words just as they did who heard Him with their outward ears! And we shall never fully preach the Gospel till then. A man may go to Seminary, he may learn all about the letter of Scripture, but he is no minister of God if he has not sat at Jesus’ feet and learned of Him. And when he *has* learned of Him and the Truth of God has come home to his heart as his own personal possession given to him by Christ, *then* shall he speak with more than mortal power, but not till then! Step back into the rear rank, Sir, if Christ has never spoken to you thus—and wait there until He has done so. If the Master has given you no message, do not run—what is the use of running if you have nothing to tell? Do you think that you are to make up your own message as you run? Ah, then, you are not Christ’s servant, for His servant waits until he has heard the message from his Master—and then it is both his duty and his privilege

to proclaim it just as he has heard it! “What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear”—“I myself whispering it into your ear, that you may receive it directly from Me—this it is which you are to go and proclaim upon the housetops.”

The text seems to imply that *these communications are made to us again and again*. There are some of us who are called to spend our whole lives in our Master’s service. And unless we are often alone with Him, listening to the message He has for us to deliver, our streams will not continue to run. I thank God that during the last few weeks, while I have been in the South of France, I have had a blessed period of privately hearing the Word afresh from the Master. It has been a constant joy and delight to me to meditate again and again upon the Truths which I have preached, to feed upon them in my own soul and, in quiet communion with God, to be gathering spiritual stores of nourishment for you, of which, first of all, I had proved the power and preciousness to my own heart. I would earnestly urge all Christian workers to be sure to get some time alone for the prayerful study of the Word. The more of such time that you can get, the better will it be both for yourself and for others. You know that it is impossible for a sower of seed to be always scattering, and never gathering—the seed basket must be filled again and again, or the sowing must come to an end. You cannot keep on distributing bread and fish to the multitude, as the disciples did, unless every now and then you go back to the Master and say, “My Lord, I need more bread and more fish, for my supply is running short. Give me more, that I may give out more.”

Make such occasions as often as you can. I am glad to see so many of you, my young Friends, busy for the Master, but I pray you not to forget that it was Mary, who sat at the Master’s feet, of whom He said that she had chosen that good part which should not be taken away from her! It is well to be like Martha, busy on your Lord’s behalf, but you cannot do without Mary’s quiet meditation. You must have the contemplation as well as the activity, or else you will do mischief and not really honor the Master. Suppose you see a carpenter with a little hammer in his hand go round the workshop and gently tap a hundred nails on the head? You would rightly say that he has not done any good at all! But here is another workman with a good heavy hammer—and when he hits a nail, he drives it home—and he does not leave it till he has driven it home and clinched it, too. There is a way of *seeming* to be doing a great deal and yet really doing nothing. And there is also a way of apparently doing but little, but then it is good solid work, thoroughly well done. Nobody can do this solid, permanent work, in a spiritual sense, without often getting alone with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Avail yourselves also, dear Friends, of those special opportunities which God makes for you to receive His messages. Sometimes He takes one of His servants and puts him away for a while. “Be you silent,” He says, “and I will talk to you.” Perhaps the Lord takes away the strength, the bodily vigor of His servant. There is the Christian woman who longs to be going up and down her district, laid upon a sick bed. Or there is

the earnest, faithful Sunday school teacher no longer able to instruct his class. Yet it is in God's wisdom that the nets are sometimes drawn out of the water, that there may be an opportunity to mend them—otherwise they would not always take the fish that are ready to be caught! It is true economy to let the cannon rest till it gets cool, or else there may be mischief done to the men who are firing it, instead of to the enemy! And all of us need rest, every now and then, if we are to be fitted for future service. Above all, we need often to go to Christ, to get from His hand a fresh stock of that Gospel provision which we are afterwards to dispense to the people in His name. I pray you who are seeking to serve the Savior, to take good note of the advice I have been trying to give you.

II. Now, secondly, this going to Christ, to hear the Word directly from Him, is itself A MOST BLESSED PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR ALL CHRISTIAN WORKERS. Let me show you how it is so.

First, if you get your message of mercy directly and distinctly from the living Christ, *you will have the Truth of God in its personality*—living, acting, feeling, for He is “the way, the truth and the life.” The message will come to you with power because He uttered it and you will, therefore, preach *Him* as well as it. We do not want a misty, cloudy Christ—a sort of impalpable phantom, to comfort us—we want a real Christ, God and Man, really among us and really able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. So, my dear Brother, if you go to Him for your message, you will be sure not to forget Him! He will be real to you and your teaching will make Him real to other people. Some ministers preach very finely about Christ, but that which saves sinners is preaching Christ Himself. He is our salvation and we shall never put that salvation in tangible, graspable, real form unless we go to Him and get distinctly from Himself the message we are to deliver on His behalf.

By doing this, we shall also have *the Truth of God in all its purity*. You know that when the light of the Gospel shines through me, it takes a little tinge of color from me, just as when it shone through Luther, there was a Lutheran shade about the Truth. And when it shone through John Calvin, there was a Calvinistic tinge. Shining through any man, God's light will be tinged to a certain extent, just as it is when shining through the very best glass that was ever made. You had better get into the sunlight for yourself, so that you may have it in all its purity. I am of the mind of that man who said that the milk was so bad where he lived that he would move into the country and keep a cow for himself. It is just so with the Gospel—there is nothing like going to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, as to the wellhead of doctrine, and saying to Him, “Master, what do You teach? What can I learn from *You?*” Our unflinching rule is—What did Jesus say about this or that? How did His Spirit speak by the Apostles? It is that living with Christ, from day to day, which will give us the Truth of God in all its purity!

And it will also give us *the Truth of God in its due proportions*. We are, all of us, lopsided in one way or another. I suppose that there is not a pair of eyes in this world that is absolutely a pair. There is scarcely anything about us that is exactly as it ought to be—we are, all of us, some-

what wrong and, therefore, there is no man who teaches all the Truth of God in its exact proportions. One man sees the responsibility of man and he preaches it. Another sees the Sovereignty of God and he preaches that. Cannot we find a Brother who preaches both those Truths? Yes, no doubt we can, but, then, that Brother will probably fail to see some other Truth of God. If we knew all Truths in their right proportions, we would be God rather than man, for we would practically possess Omniscience! But to avoid giving undue prominence to any one Truth of God and casting another Truth into the shade, the best remedy is to get your teaching directly from Christ, Himself. You think you see a certain doctrine in the Bible. Well, then, take it to Him who gave you the Bible and say, "Blessed Lord Jesus, by Your Spirit, teach this doctrine to me. Let me know, by Your teaching, what this passage of Scripture means, for I am prepared to receive whatever You impart to me."

If you do this, dear Friends, you will get the Truth of God in its personality, in its purity and in its due proportions.

And, let me add, that you will then get *the Truth of God in its power*. When the Truth of God has broken your heart and, afterwards, bound it up. When Christ has so spoken it to you that you have felt the power of it, then you will speak it as men should speak who are ambassadors for God! George Fox was called a Quaker because, when he preached, he often trembled and quaked. Was that folly on his part? No, for he had so felt the power of what he spoke that his very body was full of emotion while he delivered the Truths of God to others. And well may you and I also tremble at the Word of the Lord. But, on the other hand, whenever that Word comes home with sweetness to the heart, you must often have noticed with what sweetness the man proclaims it to others. There is nobody who can preach the Gospel like the man who has experienced its power! You know that the tale of a tale, the report of a report, is a very poor thing—but when a man gets up and says, concerning some notable event, "I was there, I saw it all"—then you listen to him. So, if you can say of Christ, "He is, indeed, precious, for He is precious to *me*. He can save, for He has saved *me*. He can comfort, cheer and gladden, for He has done all that to *me*"—then you speak with power to others because Christ has spoken with power to you!

And there is something more than that. A man who receives the Gospel distinctly from Christ will speak *the Truth in Christ's spirit*. Did you ever hear a man preach the Gospel in a passion? You wonder at my question, yet such a thing has happened. But if you are present on such an occasion, you feel sure that the man did not get his message—or, at any rate, he did not get his manner—from his Master! The other day I saw a man offer a bit of bread to a poor, lean, half-starved dog. The animal did not seem to care for bread, so he turned away and, then, directly, the man was so angry with the creature because he would not have the bread that he threw a stone at it. There is a certain kind of preaching that is just like that—the minister seems to say, "You dogs of sinners, there is the Gospel for you—will you have it? If you do not, I will throw a stone at you!" Well now, neither dogs nor men admire that sort

of treatment and, certainly, the Lord Jesus Christ never intended us to deliver His message in that kind of fashion!

There are some, I believe, who preach the Doctrines of Grace very much as a dog of mine acts with his rug. When I go home tonight, he will bring it out and drag it up to my feet just because he wants me to try and take it away from him, that he may growl over it. So have I seen some people preach the Doctrine of Election and other Truths of God like it, as if they wanted some Arminian to try to run away with them, or have a fight over them! Now that is *not* the way which Christ teaches us to preach! He never bids us proclaim the Gospel in such a way that we seem to want to make an Irish fight over it. No, no, no—go direct to Christ for the Truth of God and you will preach it strongly, honestly, openly, positively—and you will always preach it with *love*.

That is the plan I recommend to you—the system of getting the Gospel fresh from the mouth of Jesus—and then delivering it, as far as we can, in Jesus Christ’s tones and in Jesus Christ’s spirit. I can assure you, my dear Friends, that we shall never know how Jesus preached till we hear Him speak in our hearts and then endeavor to imitate the tone of that speech which our inward ears have heard. Oh, to preach Christ in a Christly way—to tell of mercy in the spirit of mercy and to preach Divine Grace in a truly gracious way!

Here is the time to say that if you go to Christ for all the Truth of God you preach and if you proclaim it in His way, then you will preach it with what is called “unction.” Do you know what unction is? I do, but I cannot tell you. I can tell when a man has *not* any unction, and I can tell when he has, but I do not know exactly how to define and describe it, except by saying that it is a special anointing from the Spirit of God. There is an old Romish tale of a monk who had been the means of converting great numbers of persons, but, on a certain occasion, he was detained in his journey and could not reach the congregation in time to conduct the service. The devil thought it was a fine opportunity for him to speak to the people, so, putting on the robe of the monk, he went into the pulpit and preached. According to the story, he preached about Hell—a subject with which he was well acquainted—and the hearers listened very attentively. Before he finished his discourse, the holy man appeared and made the devil disclose himself in his proper form. “Get out of here,” said he to Satan, “but however dared you preach the Truth of God as you were doing when I came in?” “Oh,” replied Satan, “I did not mind preaching the Truth, for there was no unction in it, so I knew that it could not do any hurt to my cause.” It is a curious legend, but there was a great truth at the bottom of it—where there is no unction, it does not matter what we preach, or how we preach it!

One of my friends behind me sometimes says to me, after the service, “I believe that God has been blessing the people, for there has been plenty of dew about.” That is what we need—that holy dew which the Spirit of God so graciously bestows! You may preach to one congregation, but it is all in vain, for there is no dew about. But, at another time, it is sweet preaching and blessed hearing because there is plenty of dew

about. And the way to get that dew is by coming straight out of the Master's Presence, with the Master's message ringing in your own ears, to proclaim it as nearly as possible as He has told it to you!

Once more, this preparation for declaring the Truth is very valuable because it enables a man to have *the Truth of God in its certainty*. Concerning the Truth of God, questions are continually being raised nowadays. Many people ask, with Pilate, "What is truth?" Even preachers ask that question. Why do they not hold their tongues until they know? Suppose a servant comes to the door to bring you the answer to a question which you have sent to her mistress. She begins to talk on all sorts of subjects and you say to her, "Do you not know what the reply is from your mistress to my enquiry?" She says, "Well, to tell you the truth, I have not been to her to know what her reply is, but I am making up an answer myself." Of course you say to her, "I do not want to hear your answer. Go to your mistress at once and whatever message she has to send to me, kindly report it to me, for that is all I want to know." So we say to the minister, "Tell us what your Master has told you—we don't want to hear anything else." If he says, "I think—, uh, I beg your pardon, I am very anxious not to appear dogmatic, but with great diffidence I submit to you," you reply, "My dear Sir, we want you to be dogmatic! If you have been to your Master and He has given you a message for us, tell it to us! And if you have not been to Him and He has not told you anything to say on His behalf, then clear out of that pulpit, for you have no right to be there! Go and earn an honest living at breaking stones, or something of that sort."

An ambassador who is not commissioned by his sovereign had better be sent home by the first ship that is going that way. He who comes professedly as a messenger from God and yet declares that, for the life of him, he does not know what God would have him preach, proclaims his own condemnation! And we say to him, "We cannot let our souls run the risk of being lost, so, if you have no message from Christ for us, we will not waste our time by listening to you." Be sure, dear Friends, to have as your minister a man who lives with God and walks with God—a man who leans his head on the bosom of Jesus and then comes forward and speaks what his Master has whispered into his ear. Men are startled when they hear him—they say, "Who is this fellow? Where did he learn such things?" But, with awful earnestness, so that his hearers sometimes think him half-demented, he tells what he feels that he must tell because he has received it from his Lord and Master! He says, "That is the Truth of God, whether you take it or leave it. I will preach to you nothing but what God has told me. I cannot and I dare not turn aside from what I believe to be His teaching."

Look at Martin Luther whom God raised up to speak so bravely for Him. People said, "This man is so positive, so dogmatic"—but he could not be otherwise—his whole heart and soul were possessed by certain great Truths of God and he felt that he must proclaim them, whether men put him in prison, or dragged him away to the stake! And such a man, speaking after that fashion, shook the Vatican and the most power-

ful empires of the earth! And he was the means of bringing the Light of God to multitudes who otherwise would have remained in darkness! In like manner as the Reformer did, get you to your Lord, my Brother—receive your message from Him and what He speaks privately into your ear. Tell that wherever you have the opportunity, but mind that you do not tell anything else.

III. Now I must finish with THE CONSEQUENT PROCLAMATION. “What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops.”

First, it has been told me in the ear and whispered into my very soul that *there is pardon for the greatest guilt through faith in Jesus Christ*—that His precious blood, shed on Calvary’s Cross, is able to cleanse from all sin of every kind—and that as many as believe in Him are saved. “Their sins, which were many, are all forgiven.” I heard this said, once, and I thought it was true. No, I heard it many times from those who would not have said what was false. But, on a never-to-be-forgotten day, I, myself, looked to Him who did hang upon the Cross. It had been dark days with my spirit until then and my burden had been exceedingly heavy. I was like a man who would have preferred to die rather than to live and I might even have laid violent hands upon myself, in the hope of ending my misery, but that the dread of something worse after death did haunt me.

I found neither rest nor respite until I heard one say, “Look unto Christ and you shall be saved. Look, young man, look, for He says, ‘Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.’” And then and there I did look unto Him and my sins were, at that moment, forgiven me! I know as surely as I know that I am standing here, and speaking to you, that they were forgiven! I might be made to doubt some things about which I feel tolerably certain, but I must absolutely lose my reason before I can ever doubt the fact that I then passed out of despair into something higher than hope—and rose from the very gates of Hell into a joy that is with me even now! Shall I not tell others what the Grace of God has done for me? Shall I not lay hold of every poor sinner’s hand and say, “Look you to Christ and you, also, shall be saved, even as I was”? Shall I not, from the very housetops, shout again and again—

***“There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you!”***

Further, there is another thing that has been whispered in my ear. It is that by *faith in Christ, the ruling power of sin is immediately broken* and that every sin, of every kind, may be overcome by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. I heard one man laughing at another because he said that he had a clean heart. Ah, me, but that may have been true, for every man who believes in Christ has a clean heart. Are you nominally a Christian and yet your Christianity does not make you holy? I implore you to throw such worthless Christianity to the dogs, for it is worse than useless to you! If your religion does not make you holy, it will damn you as surely as you are now alive! It is simply a painted pageantry to go to Hell in—it is not the true religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. He that believes in Christ shall be delivered from sin! He shall trample it under his feet! He

may have a lifelong battle with it—no, I am *sure* he will have that, else Christ would never have taught His disciples to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” When there is no more sin in us, we need not fear temptation—there is no risk of fire to the man who has no tinder in his heart. The Lord can keep His people and He will preserve them. “He will keep the feet of His saints.” Brother, have you fallen into drunkenness? Faith in Christ can turn that cup bottom upwards for you! Are you a swearer? My Master can rinse your mouth out so that you shall never speak in that shameful fashion again, or even be tempted to do so, for I have known swearers cured in a moment and the temptation to blaspheme has never come back to them! Have you been a thief, or a liar? Have you been a fornicator, or an adulterer? Are you unjust, unholy and unclean? There is provision for washing sinners such as you are! There is a Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness—and Christ can deliver you from the power as well as from the penalty of sin! Only trust Him about it. Come and rest your soul upon Him. Oh, if there is a harlot here, or a man who has fallen into all sorts of gross sin, Christ can and will deliver you if you will only come and repose your heart’s trust in Him!

I cannot tell you all that I have had whispered into my ear, but I must mention one other thing that I know. It is that *faith in Christ can save a man from every sort of fear in life and in death*. Faith in Christ can make even trouble to be welcome and affliction to be regarded as a gain! Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can make poverty to be sweet and sickness to be borne with patience. The ills of life are turned into blessings when once a man believes in Jesus and fully trusts in Him. I am not now saying what I, alone, know, but what a great many others here also know. There are hundreds—I might truthfully say thousands—here who can say the same as I can about these matters. Let me prove my assertion. You who have found that faith in Christ sweetens life to you, speak out and say, “Yes.” Has Christ sweetened life to you who have believed in Him? If so, say, “Yes.” [Many voices: “Yes.”] Of course you can say it and you are not ashamed to say it over and over again! Is He the joy of your heart? [Voices: “Yes.”] Has He made your very soul to leap within you when you have kept close to Him? [Voices: “Yes.”] I knew that you would answer “Yes” to that question, for it is even so with you! There is a joy which sometimes comes upon the Christian—which I cannot attempt to describe—but it bears us right away above all physical pain and everything that might depress the spirit. The heart is made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Oh, He is a precious Christ! Is there one person here who has trusted in Christ who is willing to give Him up? [Voices: “No.”] There is not one, I am sure. You hardly need to answer the question, for there never was one individual who really knew Christ, who could give Him up! They who leave Him have only fancied that they knew Him—they never really trusted Him.

Possibly, dear Friend, you are in trouble because you say that you feel afraid to die tonight. Well, but perhaps you are not going to die tonight and, therefore, dying Grace has not yet been given to you! But when the time comes for you to die, then very likely you will not feel the slightest

fear. My brother said to me, the other day, when he had been seeing one of our members pass away, “Brother, we can say to one another what the two Wesleys said, ‘Our people die well.’” So they do. They often die shouting for very joy and, at any rate, they go Home peacefully, quietly welcoming the everlasting future and the Glory that Christ has laid up for them. Oh, yes, we know that “to die is gain.” Some of us have been laid very low and we have thought that we were about to die—and we have had the greatest joy, then—greater than we ever knew, before, in all our lives! And, therefore, we proclaim it to others and we mean to tell it as long as we live!

Salvation by Grace, through faith in Jesus, is no dream, no fiction! Let skeptics say what they will. Our experience—and we are as honest as they are and no more fanatical than they are—our experience agrees with what our Lord has revealed to us in His Word and, therefore, when we preach the Gospel, or relate what Grace has done for us, we use Christ’s very Words and say, “We speak what we do know and testify what we have seen.” God grant that many of you may be able to bear similar testimony, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 10:1-27.**

Verses 1-4. *And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now the names of the twelve Apostles are these. The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.* The lesson to be learned from these names is, first, that these men are mentioned in couples and I think that, as a rule, God’s servants work best in pairs. In other senses than the matrimonial one, it is not good that man should be alone. Moses needs Aaron; Peter needs Andrew; James needs John. It is well to be of such a temperament and disposition that you can work harmoniously with another of your Lord’s servants. If you cannot, pray God to change you! Notice that expression, in the 3rd verse, “and Bartholomew.” I think there is not a single instance in the New Testament where Bartholomew is mentioned without the word, “and,” before or after his name—“and Bartholomew,” or, “Bartholomew and” someone else. Perhaps he was not a man who ever began any work by himself, but he was a grand man to join in and help it on when somebody else had started it. So, dear Friend, if you are not qualified to be a leader in the Church of Christ, be willing to be Number Two—but do serve the Master, in some capacity or other, with all your might! Be a Brother who carries an, “and,” with him wherever he goes. Be like a horse that has his harness on and is ready to be hooked into the team. That is the lesson of the two words, “and Bartholomew.” The last lesson from the names is at the

end of the 4th verse—“and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.” He preached of Christ. He worked miracles in the name of Christ. He was ordained as one of the Apostles of Christ, yet he was, “the son of perdition.” Oh, let none of us be content merely with our official position, or trust in the good which we hope we have done, or in any gifts with which the Master has entrusted us! Judas Iscariot had all these marks of distinction, yet he betrayed his Lord. God grant that no one among us may turn out to be a Judas Iscariot!

5, 6. *These twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* The Gospel is now to be preached to every creature in all the world, but, in those days, it was to be proclaimed first to the Jews, then to the Samaritans and afterwards to the Gentiles as a whole. The largeness of our commission to “preach the Gospel to every creature” need not prevent our following Providential directions to make it known in one place rather than in another. It is well for the servants of Christ to always ask their Master where they are to go. You know how it is recorded, in the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul and Silas “essayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not.” Ask the Lord, therefore, where you shall work, as well as what your work shall be, for your Master knows how you can best serve Him.

7. *And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* That blessed Kingdom, which is now set up among men, of which Christ is the King, and I hope many of us are the subjects. That Kingdom was then “at hand.”

8. *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give.* “Exercise your healing arts most freely. They cost you nothing—let them not cost anything to those who receive the benefit of them.”

9, 10. *Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.* They were to “quarter on the enemy,” as we say. Wherever they went, they would be furnished with food, raiment and shelter if they faithfully executed the commission with which their Master had entrusted them.

11-13. *And into whatever city or town you shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till you go thence. And when you come into an house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.* How about your houses, dear Friends? Are they “worthy” houses in this New Testament sense? If an Apostle came there, could he bring “peace” to it? Or would he have to take the peace away with him to some other house that was more worthy to receive it?

14, 15. *And whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city.* Despised and rejected privi-

leges make the fiercest fuel for the fires of Hell. They who might have heard the Gospel, but would not hear it, shall find the hand of God more heavy upon them than it will be even upon the accursed Sodomites! Woe, then, unto such as live in London, yet who will not hear the Word of the Lord, or, when they do hear it, will not accept it!

16, 17. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men. "Do not trust yourselves with them."*

17-19. *For they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. "Let it not fret you that you are not orators, that you are not men of culture—speak what God the Holy Spirit shall teach you to say—and leave the result with Him."*

20. *For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you. Oh that is grand—when a man has so communed with God that the very Spirit of the Father has entered into him—then shall there be a wondrous power about his speech! Men may not understand from where it came, but they will be obliged to feel the force of it.*

21. *And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. Read the martyrologies and see whether it was not exactly as our Lord foretold that it would be! In martyr times men often burst all the bonds of natural affection and betrayed even their own fathers or children to death! Yet the saints quaffed not—they were content to let every earthly tie be snapped so that the tie of their heavenly and eternal relationship might be confirmed. So may it be with us, also!*

22-27. *And you shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another, for verily I say unto you, You shall not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household? Fear them not, therefore, for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hidden, that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you on the housetops. God help us to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—785, 766, 658, 538.

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

PROVIDENCE

NO. 187

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, APRIL 11, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”
Matthew 10:30.*

DURING this week my mind has been much directed to the subject of Providence and you will not wonder when I relate a portion of one day's story. I was engaged to preach last Wednesday at Halifax, where there was a heavy snow storm. Preparations had been made for a congregation of 8000 persons and a huge wooden structure had been erected. I considered that owing to the severe weather, few persons could possibly assemble and I looked forward to the dreary task of addressing an insignificant handful of people in a vast place. However, when I arrived, I found from 5000 to 8000 people gathered together to hear the Word. And a more substantial looking place it has not been my lot to see.

It certainly was a huge uncomely building, but, nevertheless, it seemed well adapted to answer the purpose. We met together in the afternoon and worshipped God and again in the evening and we separated to our homes, or rather, we were about to separate. And all this while the kind Providence of God was watching over us. Immediately in front of me there was a huge gallery, which looked an exceedingly massive structure, capable of holding 2000 persons. This, in the afternoon, was crowded and it seemed to stand as firm as a rock. Again in the evening there it stood and neither moved nor shook.

But mark the provident hand of God—in the evening, when the people were about to retire and when there was scarcely more than a hundred persons there, a huge beam gave way and down came a portion of the flooring of the gallery with a fearful crash. Several persons were precipitated with the planks, but still the good hand of God watched over us and only two persons were severely injured with broken legs, which it is trusted will be re-set without the necessity of amputation. Now, had this happened any earlier, not only must many more have been injured, but there are a thousand chances to one, as we say, that a panic must necessarily have ensued similar to that which we still remember and deplore as having occurred in this place. Had such a thing occurred and had I been the unhappy preacher on the occasion, I feel certain that I should never have been able to occupy the pulpit again.

Such was the effect of the first calamity, that I marvel that I ever survived. No human tongue can possibly tell what I experienced. The Lord, however, graciously preserved us. The fewness of the people in the gallery

prevented any such catastrophe and thus a most fearful accident was averted. But we have a more marvelous Providence still to record. Overloaded by the immense weight of snow which fell upon it and beaten by a heavy wind, the entire building fell with an enormous crash three hours after life had left it, splitting the huge timbers into shivers and rendering very much of the material utterly useless for any future building.

Now mark this—had the snow begun three hours earlier, the building must have fallen upon us and how few of us would have escaped we cannot guess. But mark another thing. All day long it thawed so fast, that the snow as it fell seemed to leave a mass—not of white snow, but of snow and water together. This ran through the roof upon us, to our considerable annoyance and I was almost ready to complain that we had hard dealing from God's Providence. But if it had been a frost instead of a thaw, you can easily perceive that the place must have fallen several hours beforehand and then your minister and the greater part of his congregation would probably have been in the other world. Some there may be who deny Providence altogether. I cannot conceive that there were any partakers of this scene who could have done so. This I know, if I had been an unbeliever to this day in the doctrine of the supervision and wise care of God, I must have been a believer in it at this hour. Oh, magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together! He has been very gracious unto us and remembered us for good!

Now, when we look abroad into the world we see, as we think, such abundant proofs that there is a God that we are apt to treat a man who denies the existence of a God with very little respect or patience. We believe him to be willfully blind, for we see God's name so legible upon the very surface of creation that we cannot have patience with him if he dares to deny the existence of a Creator. And in the matter of salvation—we have each of us seen in our own salvation positive marks of the Lord's dealings with us. We are apt to be somewhat censorious and harsh towards any who propound a doctrine which would teach salvation apart from God. And I think we shall be very apt this morning to think harshly of the man who, having seen and heard of such a Providence as that which I have just related, could fail to see God's hand in it. It seems to me that the hand of God in Providence is as clear as in creation. And while I am sure that if saved at all I must be saved by God, I feel equally certain that every matter which concerns all of us in daily life bears upon itself the evident trace of being the handiwork of Jehovah, our God.

We must, if we would be true believers in God and would avoid all Atheism, give unto Him the kingship in the three kingdoms of creation, grace and Providence. It is in the last, however, that I think we are the most apt to forget Him. We may easily see God in creation if we are at all enlightened and if saved we cannot avoid confessing that salvation is of the Lord alone. The very way in which we are saved and the effect of grace in our hearts always compels us to feel that God is just. But Providence is such

a checkered thing and you and I are so prone to misjudge God and to come to rash conclusions concerning His dealings with us, that perhaps this is the greatest stronghold of our natural Atheism—a doubt of God's dealings with us in the arrangements of outward affairs. This morning I shall not be able to go deeply into the subject, but very heartily can I enter into it, after being so great a partaker of His wonder-working power.

From the text I shall draw one or two points. First of all, the text says, "the very hairs of our head are all numbered." From this I shall infer the *minuteness of Providence*. Again, inasmuch as it is said of Believers that the hairs of their head are all numbered, I shall infer the *kind consideration and the generous care which God exercises over Christians*. And then, from the text and from our Savior's reason for uttering these words, I shall draw a *practical conclusion of what should be the spirit and temper of the men who believe this Truth of God*—that the very hairs of their head are all numbered.

I. First, then, our text very clearly teaches us THE MINUTENESS OF PROVIDENCE. Every man can see Providence in *great* things. It is very seldom that you find any person denying that when an avalanche falls from the summit of the Alps, the hand, the terrible hand of God is there. There are very few men who do not feel that God is present in the whirlwind and in the storm. Most men will acknowledge that the earthquake, the hurricane, the devastation of war and the ravages of pestilence come from the hand of God. We find most men very willing to confess that God is God of the hills, but they forget that He is also Lord of the valleys.

They will grant that He deals with great masses, but not with individuals—with seas in the bulk, but not with drops. Most men forget, however, that the fact which they believe of Providence being in great things involves a Providence in the little—for it would be an inconsistent belief that the mass was in God's hand, while the atom was left to chance. It is indeed a belief that contradicts itself. We must believe *all* chance or else *all* God. We must have all ordained and arranged, or else we must have everything left to the wild whirlwind of chance and accident. But I believe that it is in little things that we fail to see God—therefore, it is to the little things that I call your attention this morning.

I believe my text means literally what it says. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." God's wisdom and knowledge are so great that He even knows the number of the hairs upon our head. His Providence descends to the minute particles of dust in the summer gale. He numbers the gnats in the sunshine and the fishes in the sea. While He certainly controls the massive orbs that shine in Heaven, He does not blush to deal with the drop that trickles from the eye.

Now, I shall want you to notice how little circumstances of daily life, when we come to put them all together, evidently betray their origin. I will take a Scripture history and show how the little events must have been of God, as well as the great results. When Joseph was sent into Egypt by his

brothers, in order to provide for them against a day of famine, we all agree with Joseph's declaration, "It was God that sent me here." But now, if we notice each of the little ways through which this great result was brought to pass, we shall see God in each of them.

One day Joseph's brothers are out with the sheep. Jacob wants to send to them. Why does he send Joseph? He was his darling son, he loved him better than all his brothers. Why does he send him away? He sends him. Then why should it have happened at that particular time that Jacob should want to send at all? However, he did want to send and he did send Joseph. A mere accident you will say, but quite necessary as the foundation of the structure.

Joseph goes. His brothers are in want of pasture and therefore leave Shechem, where Joseph expected to find them and journeys on to Dothan. Why go to Dothan? Was not the whole land before them? However Joseph goes there. He arrives at Dothan just when they are thinking of him and his dreams and they put him into a pit. As they are about to eat bread, some Ishmaelites came by. Why did they come there at all? Why did they come at that particular time? Why were they going to Egypt? Why might they not have been going another way? Why was it that the Ishmaelite wanted to buy slaves? Why might they not have been trading in some other commodity? However Joseph is sold.

But he is not disposed of on the road to Egypt—he is taken to the land. Why is it that Potiphar is to buy him? Why is it that Potiphar has a wife, at all? Why is it again, that Potiphar's wife should be so full of lust? Why should Joseph get into prison? How is it that the baker and the butler should offend their master? All chance, as the world has it, but every link necessary to make the chain. They do both offend their master. They are both put into prison. How is it that they both dream? How is it that Joseph interprets the dreams? How is it that the butler forgets him? Why, because if he had remembered him, it would have spoiled it all. Why is it Pharaoh dreams? How can dreams be under the arrangement of God's Providence? However, Pharaoh does dream, the butler then thinks of Joseph. Joseph is brought out of prison and taken before Pharaoh.

But take away any of those simple circumstances—break any one of the links of the chain and the whole of the design is scattered to the winds. You cannot get the machine to work. If any of the minute cogs of the wheels are taken away, everything is disarranged. I think it seems very clear to any man who will dissect not only that but any other history he likes to fix upon, there must be a God in the little accidents and dealings of daily life, as well as in the great *results* that tell upon the pages of history and are recounted in our songs. God is to be seen in little things.

We will now notice in the minutiae of Providence, how *punctual* Providence always is. You will never wonder more at Providence than when you consider how well God keeps time with Himself. To return to our history—how is it that the Ishmaelites should come by just at that time? How

many thousand chances there were that their journey might have been taken just before! There certainly was no special train to call at that station at that particular time so that Joseph's brothers might arrange to go and call him. No such thing. And yet if there had been all this arrangement, it could not have happened better. You know Reuben intended to fetch Joseph out of the pit half an hour later and "the child was not." God had these Ishmaelites ready—you do not know how He may have sped them on their journey, or delayed them so as to bring them on the spot punctually at the exact moment.

To give another instance, there was a poor Roman whose son had been raised from the dead by Elisha. She, however, had left her country at the time of famine and had lost her estate. She wanted to get it back. God determined that she should have it. How was it to be done? The king sends for Gehazi, the servant of Elisha and he talks to him—he tells him one instance about a woman who had had a child raised from the dead. How strange! In comes the woman herself. My lord, this is the woman! She comes to obtain her suit. Her desire is granted just because at the very moment the king's mind is interested concerning her.

All chance, was it not? Nothing but chance? So fools say. But those who read Bibles and those who have judgment, say there is something more than chance in such a coalition of circumstances. It could not be a mere coincidence, as men sometimes say. There must be God here—for it is harder to think that there is not God than that there is. And while a belief in God may be said by some to involve a great stretch of faith, the putting Him *out* of such things as this would involve an infinitely greater amount of credulity. No, there was God there.

There is another instance that I remember in the New Testament history. Paul goes into the temple and the Jews rush upon him in a moment to kill him. They drag him out of the temple and the doors are shut against him. They are just in the very act of killing him and what is to become of poor Paul's life? Five minutes longer and Paul will be dead—up comes the chief captain and delivers him. How was it that the chief captain knew of it? Very probably some young man of the crowd who knew Paul and loved him, ran to tell him.

But why was it that the chief captain was at home? How was it that the ruler was able to come on a moment's emergency? How was it that he did come at all? It was only just a Hebrew, a man that was good for nothing, being killed. How was it that he came and when he came the streets were full. There was a mob about Jerusalem? How did he come to the right street? How did he come at the exact nick of time? Say, "It is all chance"? I laugh at you, it is Providence. If there is anything in the world that is plain to any man that thinks, it is plain that God—

***"Overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs."***

But mark—the running of the youth and his arrival at the precise time and the coming of the chief governor at the precise time just proved the

punctuality of Divine Providence. And if God has a design that a thing shall happen at twelve, if you have appointed it for eleven, it shall not happen till twelve. And if He means it to be delayed till one, it is in vain that you propose any earlier or any later. God's punctuality in Providence is always sure and very often apparent.

Nor is it only in the minutes of time that we get an idea of the minuteness of Providence, but it is in the use of little things. A sparrow has turned the fate of an empire. You remember the old story of Mohammed flying from his pursuers. He enters a cave and a sparrow chirps at the entrance and flies away as the pursuers pass. "Oh," say they "there is no fear that Mohammed is there, otherwise the bird would have gone a long while ago." And the imposter's life is saved by a sparrow. We think, perhaps, that God directs the motions of the leviathan and guides him in the sea, when He makes the deep to be hoary.

Will we please recollect that the guidance of a minnow in its tiny pool is as much in the hand of Providence as the motion of the great serpent in the depths? You see the birds congregate in the autumn, ready for their flight across the purple sea. They fly here and there in strange confusion. The believer in Providence holds that the wings of every bird have stamped upon them the place where they shall fly and fly with each action of its own wild will. They cannot diverge so much as the millionth part of an inch from their predestinated track. They may whirl about, above, beneath—east, west, north, south—wherever they please. Still, it is all according to the providential hand of God.

And although we see it not, it may be that if that swallow did not take the precise track which it does take, something a little greater might be affected thereby. And again, something a little greater still might be affected until at last a great thing would be involved in a little. Blessed is that man who sees God in trifles! It is there that it is the hardest to see Him. But he who believes that God is there may go from the little Providence up to the God of Providence. Rest assured when the fish in the sea take their migration, they have a captain and a leader, as well as the stars, for He who marshals the stars in their courses and guides the planets in their march, is the Master of the fly and wings the bat and guides the minnow and does not despise the tiniest of His creatures.

You say there is predestination to the path of the earth. You believe that in the shining of the sun there is the ordinance of God. There is as much His ordinance in the creeping of an insect or in the glimmering of a glow-worm in the darkness. In nothing is there chance but in everything there is a God. All things live and move in Him and have their being. Nor could they live or move otherwise. For God has so ordained them. I hear one say, "Well, Sir, you seem to be a fatalist!" No, far from it. There is just this difference between fate and Providence. Fate is blind. Providence has eyes. Fate is blind, a thing that must be. It is just an arrow shot from a bow that must fly onward, but has no target.

Not so, Providence! Providence is full of eyes. There is a design in everything and an end to be answered. All things are working together and working together for good. They are not done because they must be done, but they are done because there is some reason for it. It is not only that the thing is because it must be. But the thing is, because it is right it should be. God has not arbitrarily marked out the world's history. He had an eye to the great architecture of perfection when He marked all the aisles of history and placed all the pillars of events in the building of time.

There is another thing that we have to remember also which will strike us perhaps more than the smallness of things. The minuteness of Providence may be seen in the fact that even the thoughts of men are under God's hand. Now, thoughts are things which generally escape our attention when we speak of Providence. But how much may depend upon a thought! Oftentimes a monarch has had a thought which has cost a nation many a bloody battle. Sometimes a good man has had a thought which has been the means of rescuing multitudes from Hell and bearing thousands safely to Heaven. Beyond a doubt, every imagination, every passing thought, every conception that is only born to die, is under the hand of God.

And in turning over the pages of history, you will often be struck when you see how great a thing has been brought about by an idle word. Depend upon it, then, that the will of man, the thought of man, the desire of man—that every purpose of man is immediately under the hand of God. Take an instance—Jesus Christ is to be born at Bethlehem, His mother is living at Nazareth—He will be born there to a dead certainty. No, not so. Caesar takes a whim into his head. All the world shall be taxed and he will have all of them go to their own city. What necessity for that? Stupid idea of Caesar's!

If he had had a parliament, they would have voted against him. They would have said, "Why make all the people go to their own peculiar city to the census? Take the census where they live. That will be abundantly sufficient." "No," says he, "it is my will and Caesar cannot be opposed." Some think Caesar mad. God knows what He means to do with Caesar. Mary, great with child, must take a laborious journey to Bethlehem. And there is her child born in a manger. We should not have had the prophecy fulfilled—that Christ should be born at Bethlehem and our very faith in the Messiah might have been shaken—if it had not been for that whim of Caesar's. So that even the will of man—the tyranny, the despotism of the tyrant—is in the hand of God and He turns it wherever He pleases, to work His own will.

Gathering up all our heads into one short statement, it is our firm belief that He who wings an angel guides a sparrow. We believe that He who supports the dignity of His Throne amidst the splendors of Heaven maintains it also in the depths of the dark sea. We believe that there is nothing above, beneath, around which is not according to the determination of His

own counsel and will and while we are not fatalists, we do most truly and sternly hold the doctrine that God has decreed all things whatsoever that come to pass and that He overrules all these things for His own glory and good—so that with Martin Luther, we can say—

***“He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might.
His every act pure blessing is,
His path unsullied light.”***

II. The second point is THE KIND CONSIDERATION OF GOD, IN TAKING CARE OF HIS PEOPLE. In reading the text, I thought, “There is better care taken of me than I can take care of myself.” You all take care of yourselves to some extent but which of you ever took so much care of himself as to count the hairs of his own head? But God will not only protect our limbs but even the outgrowth of hair is to be seen after. And how much this excels all the care of our most tender friends!

Look at the mother, how careful she is. If her child has a little cough, she notices it—the slightest weakness is sure to be observed. She has watched all its motions anxiously, to see whether it walked right, whether all its limbs were bound and whether it had the use of all its powers in perfection. But she has never thought of numbering the hairs of her child’s head and the absence of one or two of them would give her no great concern. But our God is more careful of us, even than a mother with her child—so careful that He numbers the hairs of our head. How safe are we, then, beneath the hand of God!

However, leaving the figure, let us again notice the kind, guardian care which God exerts over His people in the way of Providence. I have often been struck with the Providence of God in keeping His people alive before they were converted. How many are there here who would have been in Hell at this hour if some special Providence had not kept them alive till the time of their conversion! I remember mentioning this in company and almost every person in the room had some half-miracle to tell concerning his own deliverance before conversion. One gentleman, I remember, was a sporting man, who afterwards became an eminent Christian. He told me that a little time before his conversion he was shooting and his gun burst in four pieces—which stood upright in the earth as near as possible in the exact form of a square, having been driven nearly a foot into the ground—while he stood there unharmed and quite safe, having scarcely felt the shock.

I was noticing in Hervey’s works, one day, a very pretty thought on this subject. He says, “Two persons who had been hunting together in the day, slept together the following night. One of them was renewing the pursuit in his dream and having run the whole circle of the chase, came at last to the fall of the stag. Upon this he cries out with a determined ardor, *I’ll kill him, I’ll kill him*, and immediately feels for the knife which he carried in his pocket. His companion, happening to awake and observing what passed, leaped from the bed. Being secure from danger and the moon shining in

the room, he stood to view the event, when, to his inexpressible surprise, the infatuated sportsman gave several deadly stabs in the very place where a moment before the throat and the life of his friend lay. This I mention, as a proof, that nothing hinders us, even from being assassins of others, or murderers of ourselves, amidst the mad sallies of sleep—only the preventing care of our Heavenly Father.”

How wonderful the Providence of God with regard to Christian people in keeping them out of temptation. I have often noticed this fact and I believe you are able to confirm it, that there are times when if a temptation should come you would be overtaken by it. But the temptation does not come. And at other times when the temptation comes you have supernatural strength to resist it. Yes, the best Christian in the world will tell you that such is still the strength of his lust that there are moments when if the object were presented to him, he would certainly fall into the commission of a foul sin. But then the object is not there, or there is no opportunity of committing the sin. At another time, when we are called to go through a burning fiery furnace of temptation, we have no desire towards the peculiar sin—in fact we feel an aversion to it—or are even incapable of it. Strange it is, but many a man’s character has been saved by Providence. The best man that ever lived little knows how much he owes for preservation to the Providence as well as to the Grace of God.

How marvelously, too, has Providence arranged all our places. I cannot but recur to my own personal history, for, after all, we are obliged to speak more of what we know of ourselves as matters of fact than of others. I shall always regard the fact of my being here today as a remarkable instance of Providence. I should not have occupied this hall probably and been blessed of God in preaching to multitudes if it had not been for what I considered a troublesome accident. I should have been at this time studying in College instead of preaching here, but for a singular circumstance which happened.

I had agreed to go to College—the tutor had come to see me and I went to see him at the house of a mutual friend. I was shown by the servant into one drawing-room in the house—he was shown into another. He sat and waited for me two hours—I sat and waited for him two hours. He could wait no longer and went away thinking I had not treated him well. I went away and thought that he had not treated me well. As I went away this text came into my mind, “Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.” So I wrote to say that I must positively decline—I was happy enough among my own country people and got on very well in preaching and I did not care to go to College.

I have now had four years of labor. But, speaking after the manner of men, those who have been saved during that time would not have been saved, by my instrumentality at any rate, if it had not been for the remarkable Providence turning the whole tenor of my thoughts and putting things into a new track. You have often had strange accidents like that.

When you have resolved to do a thing, you could not do it. It was quite impossible. God turned you another way and proved that Providence is, indeed, the master of all human events.

And how good, too, has God been in Providence to some of you, in providing your daily bread. It is remarkable how a little poverty makes a person believe in Providence—especially if he is helped through it. If a person has to live from hand to mouth—when day by day the manna falls—he begins to think there is a Providence, then! The gentleman who sows his broad acres, reaps his wheat and puts it into his barn, or takes his regular income gets on so nicely that he can do without Providence. He does not care a bit about it. The rents of his houses all come in and his money in the Three per Cents is quite safe—what does he want with Providence? But the poor man who has to work at day labor and sometimes runs very short and just then happens to meet with somebody who gives him precisely what he wants, he exclaims, “Well, I know there is a Providence—I cannot help believing it. These things could not have come by chance.”

III. And now, in conclusion, Brothers and Sisters—if these things are so, if the hairs of our head are all numbered and if Providence provides for God’s people all things necessary for this life and godliness and arranges everything with infinite and unerring wisdom, what manner of persons ought we to be?

In the first place, we ought to be a bold race of people. What have we to fear? Another man looks up and if he sees a lightning flash he trembles at its mysterious power. We believe it has its predestined path. We may stand and contemplate it—although we would not presumptuously expose ourselves to it—yet can we confide in our God in the midst of the storm. We are out at sea. The waves are dashing against the ship, she reels to and fro. Other men shake because they think this is all chance. We, however, see an order in the waves and hear a music in the winds. It is for us to be peaceful and calm. To other men the tempest is a fearful thing. We believe that the tempest is in the hand of God. Why should we shake? Why should we quiver?

In all convulsions of the world, in all temporal distress and danger, it is for us to stand calm and collected, looking boldly on. Our confidence should be very much the same, in comparison with the man who is not a believer in Providence, as the confidence of some learned surgeon, who, when he is going through an operation sees something very marvelous, but yet never shudders at it—while the ignorant peasant, who has never seen anything so wonderful, is alarmed and fearful and even thinks that evil spirits are at work. We are to say, by God’s grace—let others say what they please—“I know God is here and I am His child and this is all working for my good. Therefore will I not fear though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.”

Especially may I address this remark to timid people. There are some of you who are frightened at every little thing. Oh, if you could but believe

that God manages all, why you would not be screaming because your husband is not home when there is a little thunder and lightning, or because there is a mouse in the parlor? Or because there is a great tree blown down in the garden? There is no necessity you should believe that your brother-in-law, who has gone to Australia, was wrecked because there was a storm when he was at sea. There is no need for you to imagine that your son in the army was necessarily killed because he happened to be before Lucknow. Or, if you think the thing necessary, still, as a believer in God's Providence, you should just stand and say that God has done it and it is yours to resign all things into His hands.

And I may say to those of you also who have been bereaved—if you believe in Providence you may grieve, but your grief must not be excessive. I remember at a funeral of a friend hearing a pretty parable which I have told before and will tell again. There was much weeping on account of the loss of a loved one and the minister put it thus. He said, "Suppose you are a gardener employed by another. It is not your garden, but you are called upon to tend it and you have your wages paid you. You have taken great care with a certain number of roses. You have trained them up and there they are, blooming in their beauty.

"You pride yourself upon them. You come one morning into the garden and you find that the best rose has been taken away. You are angry. You go to your fellow servants and charge them with having taken the rose. They declare that they had nothing at all to do with it. And one says, 'I saw the master walking here this morning. I think he took it.' Is the gardener angry, then? No, at once he says, 'I am happy that my rose should seem so fair as to attract the attention of the master. It is his own—he has taken it, let him do what seems him good.'"

It is even so with your friends. They wither not by chance. The grave is not filled by accident—men die according to God's will. Your child is gone, but the Master took it. Your husband is gone, your wife is buried—the Master took them—thank Him that He let you have the pleasure of caring for them and tending them while they were here. And thank Him that as He gave, He Himself has taken away. If others had done it, you would have had cause to be angry. But the Lord has done it. Can you, then, murmur? Will you not say—

***"You at all times will I bless.
Having You I all possess,
How can I bereaved be,
Since I cannot part with You?"***

And pardon me when I say, finally, that I think this doctrine, if fully believed, ought to keep us always in a steady frame of mind. One of the things we most want is to have our equilibrium always kept up. Sometimes we are elated. If I ever find myself elated I know what is coming. I know that I shall be depressed in a very few hours. If the balance goes too much up, it is sure to come down again. The happiest state of mind is to be always on the equilibrium. If good things come, thank God for them.

But do not set your heart upon them. If good things go, thank God that He has taken them Himself and still bless His name. Bear all. He who feels that everything comes to pass according to God's will has a great mainstay to his soul. He need not be shaken to and fro by every wind that blows. For he is fast bound, so that he need not move. This is an anchor cast into the sea. While the other ships are drifting far away, he can ride calmly through.

Strive, dear Friends, to believe this, and maintain as the consequence of it that continual calm and peace which renders life so happy. Do not get to fearing ills that may come tomorrow—either they will not come, or else they will bring good with them. If you have evils today, do not multiply them by fearing those of tomorrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Oh, I would to God that some of you who are full of carking care and anxiety could be delivered from it by a belief in Providence! And when you once get into that quiet frame which this doctrine engenders, you will be prepared for those higher exercises of communion and fellowship with Christ to which distracting care is ever a fearful detriment, if not an entire preventive.

But as for you who fear not God—remember—the stones of the field are in league against you. The heavens cry to the earth and the earth answers to the heavens for vengeance upon you on account of your sins. For you there is nothing good. Everything is in rebellion against you. Oh that God might bring you into peace with Him and then you would be at rest with all beside. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you." The Lord bless you in this, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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THE HAIRS OF YOUR HEAD NUMBERED NO. 2005

PREACHED
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”
Matthew 10:30.*

IT is most delightful to see how familiarly our Lord Jesus talked with His disciples. He was very great and yet He was among them as one that serves. He was very wise but He was gentle as a nurse with her children. He was very holy and far above their sinful infirmities but He condescended to men of low estate. He was their Master and Lord and yet their friend and servant. He talked with them, not as a superior who domineers but as a brother full of tenderness and sympathy.

You know how sweetly He once said to them, “If it were not so, I would have told you.” And thus He proved that He had hidden nothing from them that was profitable to them. He laid bare His very heart to them—His secret was with them. He loved them to the uttermost and caused the full river of His life to flow for their behalf.

Now, in this chapter, if you read it at home, you will see how wisely the Lord Jesus deals with their fears. He is afraid lest they should be afraid, anxious that they should not be anxious—so He talks to them as a very tender friend would talk to some very nervous person—some weak-minded brother or sister. And He speaks in such a way that if they were not comforted, surely they must have willfully resolved to put comfort from them. He says to them, “Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear you not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.”

Brethren, admire the tenderness of our Lord Jesus and imitate it. Let us try to be equally kind to our fellow-Christians. Let us never attempt to show off, or to make ourselves somebody, or to exhibit our strength of faith—for that will grieve the tender little ones and make them shrink into self-doubts. Let us consider their weakness and the help that we can render them, their sorrow and the comfort that we can afford them. Jesus was Himself a Comforter, or He could not have spoken of “*another* Comforter.” And so let us be comforters in our measure, treading in His steps.

This reminds me, also, to say how very homely the Savior’s talk became with His disciples in consequence of this desire to cheer their hearts. Why, He talks, I have often thought, just in the way in which anyone of us would have talked to our children when desirous to encourage them!

There is nothing about the Savior's language which makes you say to yourself, "What a grand speech! What a rhetorician! What an orator He is!" If any man makes you say that of him, suspect that he is off the lines a little. He is forgetting the true object of a loving mind and is seeking to be a fine speaker and to impress people with the idea that he is saying something very wonderful and saying it very grandly.

The Savior quite ignores all idea of beautiful expression in just trying to bring forth His meaning in the plainest possible manner. He sought the shortest way to the hearts of those whom He addressed and He cared nothing whether flowers grew or did not grow by the roadside. Hence there is no eloquence like the eloquence of Jesus—there is a style of majestic simplicity about Him that is altogether His own and in this lies unsurpassed sublimity. I now and then see in books quotations and the names of the authors are put at the foot of the extracts. But when ever I observe that the name of Christ is put below a quotation I regard it as a superfluity which ought to be struck out. For there is never any fear of mistaking the language of the Son of God for that of any of the sons of men.

He has a style all His own. This, however, is incidental to the design aimed at. For He does not study style of rhetoric in any degree but simply aims at conveying His thought. Hence He speaks in homely words, such as those of our text—"The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Your great and learned men will not talk about the hairs of your head. All their discourse is upon the nebulae and the stars, geological periods and organic remains, evolution and the solidarity of the race, and I know not what besides. They will not stoop to common things.

They must say something great, sublime, dazzling, brilliant, full of fireworks. The Master is as far removed from all this as the heavens are from the gaudiest canopy that ever bedecked a mortal's throne. He talks in homely language because He is at home. He speaks the language of the heart because He is all heart, and wants to reach the hearts of those to whom He speaks. I commend the text to you for that reason, though for many others besides. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Thinking over these words, they seem to have in them four things at least, and we may take four views of their meaning—and the first is, foreordination—"The very hairs of your head have been all numbered." You will find that to be a more accurate version of the text than that which is before us. The verb is not in the present but in the perfect tense. The very hairs of your head have been all numbered before worlds were made.

Secondly, I see in the text, knowledge. This is very clear—God so knows His people that the very hairs of their head are all numbered by Him. Thirdly, there is here valuation—He sets such a high estimate upon His own servants, that of them it is said, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." You are so precious that the least portion of you is precious. The King keeps a register of every part of you, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

And, lastly, here is most evidently preservation. The Savior has been telling them not to fear those that can kill the body and are not able to kill

the soul. He speaks of God's preserving them. In another place He told His disciples, "There shall not a hair of your head perish," and He intends the same sense in this case. There shall be a perfect preservation of His people. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

I. Come, then, to the first thought. Here is FOREORDINATION. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Most Christian people believe in the Providence of God but all Christian people are not prepared to follow out the Truth of God which that involves. They appear to believe that there is a Providence overruling but they seem to have forgotten that there always was such a Providence and that Providence must be, after all, a matter of Divine foresight. God must have foreseen, or He could not have provided, for "Providence" is, after all, but the Latin for foresight. And the provision which God makes is but the result of His vision beforehand of such-and-such a thing as needful to us. Foresight must essentially belong to any true and real Providence.

How far does God's foresight extend? It extends, we believe, to the entire man and all about him. God ordained of old when we should be born and where and who our parents should be and what our lot in infancy and what our path in youth and what our position in manhood. From the first to the last it has all happened according to the Divine purpose, even as it was ordained by the Divine will. Not only the man but all that concerns the man, is foreordained of the Lord—"The very hairs of your head," that is to say, all that which has anything to do with you, which comes into any kind of contact with you and is in any sense part and parcel of yourself, is under the Divine foresight and predestination.

Everything is in the Divine purpose, and has been ordered by the Divine wisdom—all the events of your life—the greater, certainly—the smaller, with equal certainty. It is impossible to draw a line in Providence and say this is arranged by Providence and that is not. It must take everything in its sweep, all that happens. It determines not only the movement of a star but the blowing of a grain of dust along the public road. All this, from the very nature of the thing, is clear. God's Providence knows nothing of things so little as to be beneath its notice, nothing of things so great as to be beyond its control. Nothing is too little or too great for God to rule and overrule.

All that a man undergoes is also ordained of Heaven. The hairs of your head, should they turn white in a single night by grief, will not do so without Divine permission. Should you be spared till every hair constitutes a part of the crown of glory of your old age, you shall not be older than God wills. You shall neither die before your time, nor live beyond it. All that concerns you, I say, from first to last, all that is of you and in you and around you—

***"All shall come and last and end,
As shall please your heavenly Friend."***

"The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

And this is what I call your attention to—what is the source of this numbering? It is not that they are all numbered by some recording angel

who is set to do the work. It may be so but that is not the thing we have to consider tonight. This numbering is done by your Father, who is in Heaven. The ordinances that rule your life are in His hands. Unto Him belong the issues from death. And this makes it to be such a happy fact. Fate is hard and cruel. But predestination is fatherly and wise and kind. The wheels of Providence are always high and terrible. But they are full of eyes, and those eyes look with the clear sight of wisdom and righteousness and love—and they look towards the good of them that love God and are the called according to His purpose.

Terrible, indeed, it is to think of things as fixed by an eternal plan. But the terror is taken from it when we feel that we are children of this great Father and that He wills nothing but what shall, in the end, work out our conformity to the image of His Son and display the glory of His own righteousness and Divine Grace and Truth. Dear Friend, perhaps you are blind! You will feel sweet content in the dark when you can say, “This blindness was determined of my tender and loving Father. I know it was so, since the very hairs of my head are all numbered.”

Or it may be that you have from childhood been the subject of another physical infirmity, which has caused you great loss and pain and even now it is a threat to bring you suddenly to the grave. Had this cross been laid upon you by an enemy, you might have complained but it has been ordained for you by Him who cannot be unkind or unjust. Therefore say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems Him good.” We are taught to pray, “Your will be done.” Dare we contradict our own prayers by kicking against that will? Job glorified God and yet he spoke no more than he should have done when he said, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

I always admire in Job his ascribing all his afflictions to the Lord, because apparently it was the Sabeans that took away his oxen and asses. It was the Chaldeans that took away his camels. It was the wind from the wilderness, raised by the devil, that took away his children. Job does not care so much for Sabeans and Chaldeans and devils, as to mention them. But he cries, looking to the First Cause of all events, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” When we can get at the back of visible things and see, not merely the puppets, but the strings that move them, then we come near to wisdom.

Wicked beings act according to their own free will and therefore the whole of the moral evil of their doings rests wholly and solely with themselves. But the great God, somehow, mysteriously, quite clear of all complicity with human sin, effects His own purposes, which are always good and right. He it is who from evil, either real or seeming, still produces good and better still, in infinite progression. When, I say, we get to this First Force and real source of power, then we get where we learn wisdom and we are helped in the struggle of life. When we see that all things are arranged by Him who orders all things according to the counsel of His own will, then we bow our heads and worship.

The practical outcome of all this, to every Christian, should be just this, "If it is so, that all things in my life are ordered of God, even to the hairs of my head, then let me learn submission. Let me bow before the Supreme will which ought to have its way. Though it cost me many a tear and many a pang, yet will I never be content until I can say, 'Father, Your will be done.'" Human nature prompts us to ask that, if it is possible, the bitter cup may pass away from us. But the Divine nature, which God has put into His true children, helps them still to struggle after full submission, till at last they are conquerors over themselves and God is glorified in the temple of their being. I am sure, my Brothers, our happiness lies very much in our complete submission to the Lord our God.

If you cannot bring your estate to your mind, bring your mind to your estate. The old Proverb bids us cut our coat according to our lot and he that can clothe his mind with the garments which Providence allots him needs not to envy my Lord Mayor in his robes. Joy lies more in the mind than in the place or the possession. He that has enough, though he has but a few shillings a week, has more than the possessor of millions. He that is content is the truly rich man. Your money-grubber is always poor, how can he be otherwise but poor in the worst sense of the word? Oh, it is a blessed thing when one can think of all the events of Providence. That God is ordering them all—then we dissolve our own will into the sweetness of God's will and our sorrow is at an end!

This, I think, should, in addition to teaching us submission, always give us such a degree of consolation in the time of trouble that we even rise into something like joy. I was reading today of old Mr. Dodd, who is a person the Puritans are always quoting—a man who did not write books but he seems to have said things with which other people made their books attractive. This old Mr. Dodd, it is said, had a great trouble, a bodily complaint I will not mention but it is one of the most painful a man can suffer from. And when he was told that this had come upon him and that it was incurable, the old man shed a few natural tears at the great and excruciating pain.

But at last he said, "This is evidently from God and God never sent me anything but it was for my good, therefore let us kneel down together and thank God for this." It was well said of the old man and it was well done of him that he thanked God most heartily. Oh yes, let us kneel down together and thank God for our trouble! Is it consumption? A dying child? A farm that does not pay? A business that is gradually leaking away?—Let us firmly believe that our God has never sent us anything but what He meant good by it. Therefore, let us kneel down and thank God with all our hearts. If your child should come to you and say, "Father, I thank you for the rod. I know it has been for my good," you would feel it was time to have done correcting him.

Evidently he is not so dull and foolish as to need a sharp awakening by chastisement. He sees the evil of his disobedience and the necessity of chastisement and now he can be left to follow out the lessons he has learned. When you and I begin to be familiar with affliction and to thank

God for it, we are pretty nearly getting through it. I believe, myself, that there is a period often set to the sorrows of saints and that the period is usually coincident with their perfect acquiescence in them. When they are content to have all things as God wills, God will be content to let them have it as much as they will. When two wills run together, our will and God's will, then we shall find a sweet double stream of silver peace flowing throughout the rest of our lives.

Therefore, let us come to this—if even the very hairs of our head are all numbered, if everything is really ordained of the Most High concerning His people—let us rejoice in the Divine appointment and take it as it comes and praise His name, whether our allotment is rough or smooth, bitter or sweet. Let us cheerfully say, “If the Lord wills it then we will it, too. If He has purposed it, even so let it be, since all things work together for good to them that love God, even to them that are called according to His purpose.”

I shall not plunge into the slough of difficulties which some of you are sure to see lying in the way. I trip over the mire with the nimble feet of faith. I shall not discuss how foreordination can be shown to be consistent with the responsibility of man and the free will of man and all that. I believe in the responsibility of man and the free will of man as much as I believe in predestination. I believe in the responsibility of man as much as you do, and I believe in the free agency of man as much as anybody living. How can I believe both doctrines? I evidently can believe them both, for I do believe them.

I have learned this—that the man whose creed is consistent in the judgment of others usually has a very scanty, poverty-stricken creed. And a good deal of it is rather theory than Revelation. When you come to make up your theology into a system, you are very apt to act like a builder, who fills in between the great stones mortar of his own mixing. I am content to pile up the unhewn stones and put in no cement of my own. I will not shape the Truth of God, much less add to it. “If you lift up your tool upon it, you have polluted it.” He who takes the Truth of God as he finds it in the inspired Book has enough material and it is all sound.

I believe that all the so-called “contradictions” in Scripture are only apparent ones. I cannot expect to understand the mysteries of God, neither do I wish to do so. If I understood God, He could not be the true God. A doctrine which I cannot fully grasp is a Truth of God which is intended to grasp me. When I cannot climb, I kneel. Where I cannot build an observatory, I set up an altar. A great stone which I cannot lift serves me for a pillar, upon which I pour the oil of gratitude and adore the Lord my God. How idle it is to dream of our ever running parallel in understanding with the infinite God! His knowledge is too wonderful for us. It is so high—we cannot attain to it.

Have you never heard of the inquisitive boy who had been forbidden to go into his father's study. He tried the door but it was fastened—all proper and safe entrance was out of the question. But he could not be content till he had satisfied his curiosity and therefore he climbed up to the window.

To his father's horror, up two stories high, stood his little boy, looking in upon him and crying with childish pride, "Father, I can see you." What a position of danger for the child! He must be gotten down and taught not to climb there again. Shall we imitate this childish folly? Brethren, I will not attempt it. I do not want to endanger my soul and perhaps even my reasoning powers, by straining after the unknowable.

Poor child that I am, I would rather love God and wonder at Him, than regard Him with cold, intellectual apprehensions and dream that I know Him altogether. I pray to grow in the knowledge of that which the Lord reveals—and I pray for grace to limit my curiosity by the boundaries of His revelation. Surely these are far enough apart for the largest researches. As for the difficulty before us, I do not understand it. And what good would it be to me if I did understand it? I know that whatever a man does that is wrong, he does it of his own free will. And all the sin in the world I believe to be caused by the willful and censurable choice of the transgressor.

But I know that, at the same time, there is a grasp of foresight and predestination so comprehensive that everything accords with the Divine foreknowledge and predestination. Let our hair grow as it will, or let us pluck out what hairs we please, let nothing interfere with our absolute liberty in that matter. And yet the hairs of our head are all numbered. So much for foresight.

II. Now, secondly, here is KNOWLEDGE—God's intimate knowledge of His people. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Observe what a full knowledge God has of each one of His children. If there were nobody else in the world except you—and God had nothing else to do but to think of you. If there were no objects of His attention beyond yourself and His eternal mind had no object of consideration but you, only, the Lord would not then know more about you than He does now. The omniscience of God is concentrated upon every single being and yet it is not divided by the multiplicity of its objects. It is not the less upon any single one because there are so many.

How it should astonish us that the Lord knows us at this moment so intimately as to count every hair of our heads! The knowledge which the Lord has concerning His people is most minute and takes in those small matters which men set down as unconsidered trifles. He knows what you and I hardly wish to know—He knows that which we may be content to leave unknown—"The very hairs of your head are all numbered."

He knows us better than our friends know us. Many a man has a kind friend who knows his affairs most accurately, but even such a familiar acquaintance has never counted the hairs of his head. No man's wife has done that, nor even the doctor who has, by his long attendance upon us, become aware of the condition and health of every part of our body. God knows us better than we know ourselves. Nobody knows how many hairs he has upon his own head. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered by One who knows us better than we know ourselves. God knows matters about us that we could not of ourselves discover. There are secrets of the heart which are unknown even to ourselves but they are not

secrets to Him. His penetrating knowledge reaches to the most hidden things of life and spirit.

Do you not think that a charmingly tender knowledge is intended when we are told that the Lord counts the very hairs of our heads? Does it not intimate how much He thinks of them? There are some who love us very much and they are always aiming at our good—God goes beyond them all in a more than motherly care of us, strikingly minute in its thoughtfulness. We see that His love passes the love of women, for the very hairs of our head are numbered—and that at every period of our lives. Does it not imply a very sympathetic care? When one has a sick child and watches over it night and day, every little fact about it is known and noted.

The darling looks a little pale today, or he fails a little in his appetite. The symptom is anxiously noted. You know how easily love can degenerate into foolishness in that direction. But, without any folly, God is infinitely careful and kind towards us, for He knows when we have lost a hair from our head. We cannot make one hair white or black but He knows when they turn white with grief or age. He understands all about our fading and our growing gray, the little details concerning our body as well as the minute circumstances that try our souls. It seems to me—I do not know how it strikes you—as meaning a very, very, very intimate, tender, and affectionate knowledge of us. And the fact that the Lord thus graciously looks upon us should fill us with joy.

This careful, tender knowledge on God's part is constant. He knows the number of the hairs of our head today, tomorrow and all the days—He without ceasing watches all the processes which even in the least manner affect our lives. So intimate is His knowledge of us that our lying down and our rising up, our thoughts and our ways, are all continually before Him. And what are we to learn from this? Does it not make life a solemn business? Who will dare to trifle with the Lord God so near? Do you keep bees? Have you ever taken out one of the frames from their hive and held it up to observe what they are doing on both sides of the comb?

Or have you looked at them through one of those interesting hives, furnished with a glass, through which the whole business is visible? The bees scarcely notice that you watch them, certainly they are not eye-servers, for they are so industrious that they could not do more even if all eyes in the universe were fixed on them. What manner of persons ought we to be when we know that God is observing us and noting every movement of our being! What care there should be as to our feeling, our thinking, our resolving, our desiring, our doing and our speaking, when everything is minutely known to God, even to the counting of the very hairs of our head!

What perfect consecration we ought to maintain! If God so values me, so knows me, that He counts the very hairs of my head, ought I not to give to God my whole self even to the minutest detail? Should I not give Him not merely my head but my hair, as that penitent woman did, who unbound her tresses that she might make a towel of them, to wipe the feet that she had washed with her tears? Ought we not to consecrate to God

the very least things as well as the greater things? Is it not written, “Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God”? “You are not your own, you are bought with a price”—and when the inventory was taken, the Lord did not leave a hair of your head out of the catalog.

Certainly He has not left your hair to any of you Christian women to indulge your vanity and pride. It is every tress of it your Lord’s. He does not leave to you men even a part of your talent, of your mind, or of your body. Your whole self is altogether His and He takes stock of it and expects you to include it in your practical consecration. He observes what you do with little things—He notes even those minor matters which seem too inconsiderable to come under rule at all. We are under Law to Christ and that Law covers the whole man. Should not our belief in this knowledge of us by the Lord, help us in prayer? Do not some Brethren pray as if they were informing God about themselves?

I think I have heard remarks in prayer which seemed to imply that God was not acquainted with the Shorter Catechism—friends have even gone over the doctrines of grace as if the Lord was not aware of them. I have heard others pray as if God did not know the experience of Christians—as if they have had to explain to Him some of their doubts and fears. When we pray we do not need to explain anything, for the Lord knows all about us, even to the hairs of our head. Dear friends, we have no need to explain our difficulties and perplexities to our God. “Your heavenly Father knows”—let this be your comfort.

He knows what things we have need of before we ask Him. This is a great help in prayer. It may shorten your prayer a good deal if you go to God with the expression of your desire and plead His promise and submit your spirit to His Divine discretion. Such a shortening of its length will be an addition to the strength of prayer. You need not be afraid, as if God did not know, but come sweetly to Him who knows all about you and will not act upon your faulty information but upon His own certain knowledge.

This persuasion will help us to feel that the Lord will deliver us out of all difficulties for He knows the way out of every labyrinth—He perceives the answer of every enigma. If He counts the very hairs of your head, depend upon it, He has a high discretion for greater things and He is a matchless Pilot whereby, through waves and rocks and quick sands, He will gently steer your way and bring you to the desired haven. There is so much of comfort in this doctrine of the infinite knowledge of God that I wish every poor sinner here would remember that God knows all about him and consequently can deal with all his sins and fears.

If you want mercy, come to the Lord at once. He knows your way, He knows your position, He knows your broken heart, He knows your weary struggles, He knows what you cannot express. The whole of the wrong you have worked and the whole of the right you desire, He perceives. For “the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

III. Now, thirdly and very briefly—Does not this text express VALUATION? “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” It seems, then, that

lowly saints are exceedingly precious to their Lord. The whole of Christ's flock on earth were very poor people. If they had a boat and a few nets, it was all they were worth. If anybody had seen Christ in His little Church on earth, he would have said, "There is not a respectable person among them." That is how we talk nowadays. As if it were respectable to have money. As if respect did not belong to character but only to possessions. Yet those twelve poor men *He* picked out and He thought so much of them that He numbered the hairs of their heads.

Yonder is a poor old man in the aisle and he has a fustian jacket on. Never mind his fustian jacket—the very hairs of his head are all numbered. Yonder is a poor old woman just come out of the workhouse and she loves to hear the Gospel. She is such a very poor old woman that nobody likes to invite her into a pew. I speak to the shame of such pride. She is one of Christ's saints and saintship is a patent of nobility. If you sold a farm you might count the trees but not the boughs and the leaves. But if you sold a jeweler's shop, you would count all the pins and all the diamond rings, because everything is precious there. Now God reckons everything about His people to be so precious that He even takes stock of the hairs of their heads.

How precious in the sight of the Master His saints are! I have been trying to work out a calculation—if the hairs of their heads are worth so much that God registers them, what are their heads worth? Who shall tell me that? If their heads are worth so much that the Lord Jesus Christ died to redeem them, who can tell what their souls are worth, or rather what they are not worth? They are worth more than all the worlds put together. Ask a mother what her child is worth. "What will you take for your boy, Mistress?" My Friends, if she sold him at the price she would consider a fair compensation, we could not all of us make up the money if we put all that we have into one common fund.

The Lord set such a value on His children that He gave His Son Jesus Christ to die rather than He would lose one of them. And Jesus Himself chose to die on the Cross that none of His little ones should perish. Oh, the value and the preciousness of a child of God! Worlds would not serve for pence to be the basis of the valuation. Let us prize the people of God very highly, feeling as the Psalmist did when he said, "O God, You are my God—my goodness extends not to You. But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight."

You please Jesus when you do good unto one of the least of these, His children. He reckons that you have done it unto Him. If they are so dear to Him, let them be dear to you. And as some of those whom Christ has purchased with His blood are still lost—

***"O come, let us go and find them!
In the paths of death they roam."***

If the hairs of their head are counted, what must their souls be worth? Let us feel that all we can do to save a soul from death is but cheap work compared with the priceless gem we seek.

O come, you Divers, plunge into the sea—the pearls you bring up shall well repay your utmost risk and toil! Come, you Hunters after souls, there is no such chase as this! Hunt after souls as the brave Switzer chases the chamois upon the mountains and let no difficulties daunt you, for “he that wins souls is wise.” There is no more profitable purchase than this, though you should lay down your lives to bring men to Christ. How very much does God value the souls of His people!

IV. Lastly, here is PRESERVATION. See how carefully God intends to preserve His own people, since He begins by counting the hairs of their heads. I say it, for there is Scripture at the back of my assertion, that none of the people of God shall suffer in the long run the smallest loss. “There shall not a hair of your head perish,” said Christ to His believing people. If I were to lose a hair from my head, I should not know it—should you? But God would know if His servants lost a hair of their heads and He makes the promise to them of such complete protection that there shall not a hair of their head perish. Remember that other text, “The Lord keeps all His bones, not one of them is broken.”

Now, a Christian man may break the bones of his body but in a real and spiritual sense he is free from such danger, God will keep him—yes, keep him to all eternity! “There shall not a hoof be left behind,” said Moses to Pharaoh and there shall not a bone, nor a piece of a bone of the ransomed, be left in the dominion of death and the grave. When the trumpet shall sound, the whole of redeemed manhood shall start into life. When Peter came out of prison, the angel smote him, and his chains fell off and he came out of prison but he did not quit till he had put on his sandals. He did not leave even a pair of old shoes for Herod and his jailers.

So shall it be with the children of God at last—“from beds of dust and silent clay,” when the angel’s trumpet shall ring out, they shall arise and they shall leave nothing behind. They shall not leave an essential particle in the tomb. They shall rise, body, soul and spirit completely redeemed of the Lord. “The very hairs of your head are all numbered.” Christ knows what He has bought and He will have it. Even to the last atom He will have that which He has purchased. We shall not enter into our new life maimed or having one eye. He will preserve His people in their entirety, and present them, “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”

Observe that in the close neighborhood of the text, we read of persecution. Beloved, if persecution should come, it cannot really harm you. The three Hebrew children, when they came out of the fire, were not scorched or singed. There was not the smell of fire upon their hats, their hose, or their hair. When God’s people pass through the fires of persecution, they shall not be losers. They shall go through the fires altogether unharmed—no—they shall win the martyr’s palm and crown, which shall make them glorious forever, even if they die in the flames. Therefore, fear nothing. Nothing shall by any means harm you. In the end your sufferings shall be your enrichment. Though you count not your lives dear unto you, precious shall your blood be in His sight.

Besides persecution, there may come to you an accident or sudden calamity. Never be afraid. It is half the battle, in an accident, to exhibit presence of mind—therefore let the child of God be calm and self-possessed. For although you should suffer in body, your true self will be safe. Though in the tornado, or in the shipwreck, or in cholera, or in fire—you shall be placed in outward peril even as others are—yet your real life is insured by the Covenant of Grace from all injury. Therefore rest in the Lord, for you shall be safe though a thousand should fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand. If you lose, your loss shall be transmuted into a real gain.

Sickness, if sickness comes, shall work your health. God's children have often been ripened by sickness. They are like the sycamore fig, which never gets sweet until it is bruised. Amos was a bruiser of sycamore figs and affliction is God's Amos to bruise us into sweetness. Maturity comes by affliction. Alas, you say, "I have lost a dear friend." Trust in God and by Divine friendship the void in your heart shall be more than filled. Have you lost a child? The Lord will be better to you than ten sons. Should your father and your mother be taken from you, you shall find them both in Christ and be no orphan. Thus does the promise stand—"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Trust, then, in the Lord at all hazards. Trust in Him in deep waters as well as on the shore. When the waves are raging, trust your God as well as when the sea is as glass. When the sea roars and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, trust in Jehovah without the shade of a doubt, for "the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Why should you fear? Your vessel carries Jesus and all His fortune. If you are drowned He cannot swim, He sinks or swims with you. For thus has He put it, "Because I live, you shall live, also." If your Lord lives, you must live. Therefore, comfort one another with these words and go quietly, patiently, happily, joyfully through the world, under Divine preservation, since "the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

As for you who are not in Christ, I feel a great sorrow for you because you cannot partake in the joy of this preservation. As for the righteous, the stars in their courses fight for them and the beasts of the field are in league with them. But as for you, earth groans to bear the weight of such a sinner, and the elements are impatient to avenge the quarrel of God's covenant by destroying you. All things work together to bring upon you the justice which you provoke. Flee! Flee! Flee! You have but one friend left—flee to Him! That Friend, "the Friend of Sinners," entreats you to come to Him. Hear Him as He cries in most tender accents, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest."

Come to Jesus—come at once, for His dear love's sake! O, may His Father draw you to Him now! Amen.

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CONFESSION OF CHRIST

NO. 3405

A SERMON
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“Whoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is Heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven.”
Matthew 10:32, 33.

INCESSANTLY do we preach, and do you hear, that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, that whoever trusts in Him shall be saved. This is the great and master-duty—the believing, the trusting. It is here that salvation hinges and hangs—“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” We conceive that it is never possible to preach that Truth of God too often—that this ought to be in some sense the burden of every sermon—that it is the message, above all others, which every minister of Christ is sent to deliver! There is salvation in Him and in no other. We are to insist upon it perpetually and constantly, and never are we to forget it, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief, and that, by Him, everyone that believes is justified from those things from which he could not be justified by the Law of Moses.

But, Brothers and Sisters, there are other matters beside faith. And while believing in Christ is the great and the main thing, yet it would be unprofitable for you—it would be unfaithful on our part—if we were to neglect other commands of Christ which come after this foundation, faith, and have a very close relation to it. Now, I am persuaded that there are in this professing Christian England hundreds and thousands of persons who have some kind of faith in Christ, and I trust, also, a sincere one, who, nevertheless, pass over in silence the plain command of Christ about professing Him before men. And there may be some, even in this congregation gathered here, who, having given Jesus Christ their hearts, have been slow to think of the next thing which He requires, and will, perhaps, feel as though I break their quiet all too roughly when I shall try to press upon them that they go a step further and, having believed with the heart, will remember that the promise is, “He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth confesses, shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The outward confession is as much

commanded as the inward believing—the one the natural fruit and expression of the other.

We shall, therefore, first of all, consider *what is the duty taught here*. And secondly, *why it is a duty*. And then, thirdly, *what are the sanctions of reward and penalty appended to the performance or neglect of this duty?*

I. WHAT IS THE DUTY HERE MENTIONED?

“Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess.” Observe the word. It is not “*profess*.” It means that, but it means more. It is “*confess*.” I take it a difference worthy of observation. To “*profess*” Christ may be work which anyone would do, especially in soft and silken times, when a profession may even be remunerative, when it may even add respectability to a man’s character and make his path smooth! But the “*confession*” has this difference in it—it is a kind of thing that comes out when a sort of accusation is brought. A man professes Christ before his brethren because they will all be pleased with him for it. Another man in the midst of enemies, who will revile and persecute him, pleads guilty to the blessed impeachment of being a Christian. He confesses that what they count a crime, he counts a virtue—while they have him brought up, as it were, before their judgment seat. The crime alleged is that this man is a follower of Christ and, therefore, to be scoffed at, to be badgered and otherwise maltreated! The man says, “I am guilty, if it is guilt. I am thus vile, and rejoice in it—and I hope to be viler in it! I confess Christ, that He is mine and I am His.” I think that is an obvious difference between profession and confession—there may be other differences, but we shall not be detained with them now. This seems to me to be clear beyond dispute. To “*profess*” Christ is but an easy thing. To “*confess*” Him implies that the circumstances make that confession a deed of courage, exposing the confessing soul to peril and penalty. But he gladly accepts the suffering or the shame, and confesses that what may seem to be a foolish thing to others, is a wise thing to him. He confesses Christ.

I will also remark that in the Greek it is, “Whoever confesses *in* Me before men,” by which is meant that *he makes a confession of being in with Christ*. He holds Christ’s Doctrines—desires to imbibe Christ’s Spirit, to follow Christ’s example. He does in effect say, “There are two sides, Sirs. You ask me which I take—I confess that I am in with Christ for the battle of life. I am His servant, His soldier, I will follow His banner and, come what may of it, I throw down the gauge of battle to all His adversaries. I confess in Christ. You may confess in the world, you may confess your love for pleasure, for wealth, for sin, but I will make my confession in Christ.” That is, without doubt, the meaning of these words. It is not the profession by taking up the name of Christian—it is the confession, under dangerous circumstances, of the whole of Christ’s teaching and Kingdom—and taking all the consequences thereof.

Now, when ought a man to do this? It is a duty. When and how ought he to do it? I answer that *as soon as ever a soul has believed in Christ, its next duty is to confess in Christ*. It ought never to be delayed. And where it has been, the delay ought to be made up by a speedy obedience. If you ask me what is the first confession a man ought to make, I shall reply that according to Scripture, it is *by Baptism*. As soon as ever the Philippian jailor had believed, Paul took him, the same hour of the night, and baptized him—baptized him into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit! When Philip met the eunuch and had explained to him the Scriptures and so disciplined him, the very next thing the eunuch said was, “See, here is water—what does hinder me to be baptized?” Everywhere throughout Scripture we read sentences like this, “They that gladly received His Word were baptized.” And from the days of John, the precursor of Christ, to the conclusion of the history of the Apostle, we continually find that to all Believers the command was given, “Rise, and be baptized.” It is the confession of Christ. Peter says that Baptism is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.” It is a conscience enlightened and instructed, saying in outward symbol to God, “I desire to be buried with Christ and to rise with Christ—henceforth to be a dead man to my old self and my old sin, and being, now a new creature, wholly Christ’s, to live alone for Him.” Oh, how men have marred this most instructive ordinance! How they first of all put away the very ordinance, itself, in reducing it to drops of water which never could set forth as in parable or picture, a burial! How they then took away the proper subjects of it, and substituted unconscious infants for the intelligent Believer in Christ, who comes forth and says, “Thus I follow Christ, who in the waters of Jordan went down and commenced His glorious Kingdom upon the earth by Himself fulfilling righteousness by His Baptism there!”

I charge you, my Brothers and Sisters, search the Scriptures! I am preaching to you only what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. We are no inventors of this Doctrine—the grand old classic of God’s Inspired New Testament is our warrant! And if men would cast away all mere ecclesiastical, habit, and once more bring everything to the test of the Bible, and the Bible, alone, I think they would see that the Scripture Baptism is an ordinance for Believers, wherein and whereby they confess Christ to be Savior, and Lord and King! And they devote themselves, their powers and influence, as well as possessions, to His service. I ask none of you to accept this merely because it is my teaching, but because it is according to the Old Book and, if so, accept it and obey it as Christ’s Law! But the next thing every Believer ought to do is this—we read in the Epistle to the Corinthians, thus they gave—“They gave themselves first to the Lord and afterwards to us by the will of God.” It is the duty, then, of the Believer in Christ to confess his Master by giving himself up to some

Christian Church. Let him find out under whose ministry he will be best edified, in whose membership he can most sweetly find rest. Let him not be ashamed to go to that Church and say, "Receive me, I am a Brother in Christ." Let him not blush. Let our Sisters never blush to acknowledge that they have trusted in the Crucified, that they are His servants, that they desire now and henceforth to dwell with His people, and to be numbered with His disciples! Some of you, I am sure, are doing very wrong and losing much benefit to your own souls, by not casting in your lot with the people of God. "When these were met together," we read in the Acts of the Apostles, "they went to their own company." Birds of a feather flock together, and if you are a bird of Paradise, seek out others and say, "I cast in my lot with you—where you dwell, I will dwell, where you worship, I will worship—your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God." Let me but be numbered with them, and I would rather be a doorkeeper in their assemblies than dwell in the tents of wickedness!

There are two forms of confession in Christ, but after them, and yet at the same time, also, it behooves every Christian to make a *confession in his family*. I shall not say that you are ostentatiously to stand up and declare yourself a Christian in so many words. But I shall say that according to your position, you are to make it sufficiently known that you are a follower of Jesus. The servant in a family may have a very different way of rightly confessing Christ from that of her master. And for the child, the same method might not be suitable which ought to be adopted by the parent. To my mind, the father ought to say, "My children, our household has been ill-ordered aforesaid. There has been no prayer, no gathering as a family round the home altar. But God has looked upon me in mercy and now, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. My prayer shall be for you all, that you shall be saved." And I can imagine as the good man bowed his knee that morning, a change would pass over the whole constitution of his family. They would all ask one another, "What has happened to our father? What is this strange thing?" And it may be that, as it was with the jailor at Philippi, so it would be with the whole house—"He himself believed in God, rejoicing with all his house."

But it shall be made somehow. It must be a distinct declaration made in some form or other by the Christian, that he is no longer what he was, but called out from the rest to be a follower of Jesus, "separated," as Paul puts it, "separated unto the Gospel of Christ."

This confession, next, should *be seen in the whole of a man's affairs*. He is not to ticket his goods, or advertise his conversion in his shop window. But from that moment, if there has been anything of trickery, if there has been anything of foul sailing, if there has been anything in him that was according to the customs of the trade, but not according to the Laws of Christ, his immediately ceasing from all that without ostentation or Pharisaism is to be his confession of Christ! Others may continue to

do the same and the customs of the trade may permit it. But as for him, he cannot touch the unclean thing. If he still continues to follow out the same customs and maxims, or if, out of business, he finds his pleasure and amusements in the same places as before. Or if, in any way, he remains exactly the same man as he was aforetime as to sin and wrong, then surely he has denied Christ and let him be baptized as he may, and join the Church as he will, he is nothing but a pretender and imposter, for the life does not agree with the confession that he is Christ's! "If any man is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, and lo, *all* things have become new!"

There is no true confession where there is not a changed spirit and a transformed life, or rather the confession is such as shall suffice to condemn the man out of his own mouth and send him out from God's Presence a revealed pretender!

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you members of this Church, I ask you to put it to your consciences! Do you confess Christ in your business? You working men, do you confess my Lord and Master by fleeing those vicious and evil habits that are so common among your class? Are you no longer the lover of the lewd song? Do you no longer laugh over the indecent story, or the one that covers vile language? Have you foresworn the pothouse and all the company that frequents it? And you merchants and you that call yourselves ladies and gentlemen, have you given up those frivolities, those empty vanities, those time murderers, those soul-destroyers of which the most of your class are so fond? If Divine Grace does not make you to differ from your own surroundings, is it really Divine Grace at all? Where there is not a thorough separation from the world, there is cause to fear there is no close union to Christ! The best part of our confession to Christ lies in the practically giving up everything which Christ would not sanction, and the following out of whatever Christ would ordain!

Sometimes to follow Christ thus by confessing in Him will involve persecution. And then, let me say *it will be a test point with you*. We cannot confess Christ at all unless we are willing to give up every connection, however dear—every relationship, however fond—sooner than let the conscience bow the knee to natural affection. You are to love as you never loved before those that are one with you in the flesh, but still Christ is to be above all on your bosom's throne! Oh, there are some professors who do not stand to this—they have not learned the meaning of Christ's words, "If any man loves father, or mother, or husband, or child, or wife more than Me, he is not worthy of Me. And if any man loves house or land more than Me, he is not worthy of Me." You tell me there are no persecutions now? Ah, indeed, perhaps if you followed Christ more fully, you would find out that there were! There is many a timid woman who has to play the martyr, still, and many a trembling young Believer who has to

find that if there are no burnings, there are trials of cruel mocking—and blessed are they that bear these things without fear, for the sake of Jesus! But if you flinch, if you are afraid of men, ah, then you count yourself unworthy and you shall not inherit the Kingdom of God! Oh, to go with Christ through all weather! To bear His Cross up the stiff hillside when the snowflakes sting in your face! To stand with the gentle, but heroic woman in the pillory! To wear the fool's cap for Christ, and so have the hoots of half an age about one's brow, were glory, and honor, and immortality! And yet many forego the honor, shrink back into their ignoble cowardice, counting themselves not fit to be the followers of Jesus!

There will occasionally happen—I will only mention this and then conclude this first part—there will occasionally happen in the course of conversation, times when the confessing of Christ will become to the Christian an imperative duty—as when coarse infidelity is being avowed, or the Gospel of Jesus derided.

I do not say that you are always to speak, for sometimes it would be casting pearls before swine. But I will say that if any unholy cowardice will make you hold your tongue and keep silence when you might have spoken for your Master's name, you have need to confess this sin with bitter tears and trembling, lest that denial should not be the denial of Peter, for which there is forgiveness after sore repentance—but the denial of Judas, which followed only by remorse, made him the son of perdition. Oh, stand up for Jesus! To be ashamed to acknowledge yourself a Christian, ah, then Christianity may well be ashamed of you! I know that is not the name—it is Presbyterian, Puritan, Methodist, hypocrite—oh, confess the impeachment whatever it may be! If they choose to make even the term, “hypocrite,” a synonym for Christian, tell them that by the way which they call hypocrisy, even so do you in all sincerity worship the Lord God of your fathers! Be bold enough to stand in the front rank for Christ and never hide yourself behind for fear of feeble man! He is worthy to be confessed, so dare to confess Him, I beseech you! Thus much in explanation of the duty argument for it.

II. WHY IS IT A DUTY?

To be very brief, first, *the genius of the Christian religion requires it.* The genius and spirit of the Christian religion is, first, *light.* Everything is above board with Christianity. We have no mysteries which are only revealed to a special few. We are not like those teachers of philosophy who keep their tenets for the initiated. The religion of Jesus Christ, as far as men are able to comprehend it, is as plain as a pikestaff. We, my Brothers and Sisters, have no learned books to which to point you and say, “There is the secret locked up in the dead languages. And there in the process of reading some twenty tomes, you may fish out the secret almost as clearly as the secret of alchemy.” No, but here is our secret—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was made flesh, died for sinners, the Just

for the unjust, and whoever believes in Him shall be saved! If there is any mystery, it is only because there must be something mysterious in that which comes of God and tells of Him. But the Gospel never aims at mystery!

The old Church of Rome has written upon her brazen brow, "Mystery. Babylon. Mother of Harlots!" But the Church of Jesus Christ says in the language of Paul, "We use great plainness of speech." Now, where the very spirit and genius of Christianity is openness, bold display, a keeping back of nothing—it seems to be natural that every Believer in it should never keep in concealment in his own breast his conviction, but should publish upon the housetop that which he has received!

Again, the genius of our religion is *life*, as well as light. Life is sure, ultimately, to be revealed. It cannot be altogether hidden. It is sure to sprout from the seed, though buried deep in the earth. Our religion is not a thing of churches, and Sundays, and Good Fridays, and Easters, and Christmases and I know not what besides! It is a thing of everyday life, for the kitchen and the parlor, the office and factory, the court of justice, the Houses of Parliament. It intertwists itself with all the rootlets of our inner nature and comes out in all our actions of outward behavior and conversation. Hence, to hide it is impossible! "He could not be hid," should be as true of our Christian life as it was of our Lord. If it were a mere ceremony, it might be performed in and confined to crypt or sepulcher—but since religion is a principle which acts upon the entire life—it ought to be and must be confessed!

The genius of our religion is also *fire*. Light, life, fire, by which I mean energy, Divine energy. The Christian is, above all, a propagandist. He it is who, having a better Truth than the Pharisees ever had, excels them in the missionary spirit. He will compass sea and land to make one proselyte, for the flaming religion of Jesus Christ can never be kept in the bosom of the man who receives it. Even fire cannot be kept still, for once it falls among the stubble, the conflagration must spread. The God that answers by fire is a God who shall reign over this world! And the God of Christianity is that God of fire! Hence, Beloved, since you are expected to operate upon others by your life and teaching, you must not dream of concealing your faith, for your religion requires it.

In the next place, *genuine love dictates it*. Ashamed of Jesus who bought you with His blood, forgave you all your sins, made you a child of God? Oh, by the five wounds, and by the glorious passion, and the bloody sweat and the travail of His soul, by the hands that bore your name in Heaven, by the heart that beats with love for you, how can you deny Him? Beloved in the heart of Jesus—

***"When you blush be this your shame,
That you no more revere His name."***

But never, never be ashamed of one so dear to you. Love inspires it.

But *gratitude also requires it*. Surely, Brothers and Sisters, those that are converted to God owe no small gratitude to the Church of Christ, which was the instrument, in most cases, of their conversion. How can we prove that gratitude so well as by assisting that Church in all its work, that others, also, may be blessed? When I think of some Christians who say they love Christ but have never joined the Church, I put it to them, “Suppose everybody else did the same—every other Christian has the same rights as yourself—suppose, then, that all Christians should refuse to join in Church organization—how would there be any hope for the world?” “Oh,” you say, “all others may do it!” No, if you may neglect it, others may. Was it not through some minister of Christ that you first heard the Gospel? Was it not through the Sunday school or through some printed word that you first came to know Christ? Repay the debt you owe to the Church by casting in your lot with your fellow Christians and seeking to do the same for some other, who, as yet, is unrenewed by Grace.

Prudence, also, let me say, *suggests it to you*. “Prudence,” you answer, “why, I thought it was prudence to keep out of the Church, for fear I should dishonor Christ.” That is imprudence! For it is going on your own way, a road Christ never marked for you. The truest prudence is to do exactly what the Master bids, for then, if anything should come amiss, you are not accountable for it. “But,” you say, “suppose I should dishonor Christ?” Yes, and suppose you are dishonoring Christ now? I think you had better run that risk than take the absolute certainty that you are dishonoring Him by your disobedience! “Well,” says one, “if I were to avow myself a Christian, I should feel it such a solemn thing.” Therefore, do it—for we need solemn things to keep us back from sin. “I should feel it such a bond to keep me in holiness.” You require such a bond—accept it, and it shall be no more a chain to you, if you are sincere, than wings are a burden to a bird, or sails become a clog to a ship—

***“Take His easy yoke and wear it,
Love will make the burden light!
Grace will teach you how to bear it,
You shall bear it with delight.”***

But, Beloved in Christ, for your own good’s sake, be not slow to do what your Master bids.

One other word will suffice. Over and above all other reasoning comes this—*Christ requires it*. Hear you His words tonight. Mine are but feeble, but let His roll in your souls like thunder, “Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father who is in Heaven; but whoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven.”

Now, mark from the connection that denial means “whoever shall *not* confess.” The two verses are put in apposition and opposition. There is a blessing to the confessor. The curse is to the non-confessor. “Whoever

shall not confess Me”—for that is the denying here meant—“before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in Heaven.” Will you willfully disobey the Master you profess to serve? Will you raise quibbles to His face and questions in His very Presence? They are His words! They can bear no other meaning. They are not to be disputed, but to be obeyed! These are not the decrees of the Council of Trent, or you might fling them to the winds. They are not the ordinances of a bench of bishops, or you might tread them under foot. These are not the commands of any minister of any sect, or you might, if you would, reject them! But they are the royal, authoritative words of Jesus Christ Himself! I charge you, by your loyalty to your King—I charge you by your indebtedness to your Redeemer—I charge you by your love to Him whom you call Master and Lord, if hitherto you have not confessed Him, make haste and delay not to keep His commandment and acknowledge Him, that He may acknowledge you! And never be ashamed of Him again, lest at the last He should be ashamed of you!

I shall urge no other reason. If that last convinces not, the spirit of obedience is lacking. And I would not even ask any of you to confess Christ if you did not mean to obey Him. Were it otherwise, I would say, “Stand back! Stand back! If you do not love Him, He has never washed you from your sins! If He is not your Savior. If you have never been born-again. If you are not truly His servant in the name of God, do not touch Baptism, or His Supper! Never come to the Communion Table if you have no right there! Profess not to be a Christian if you are not! And say not, “Our Father who are in Heaven,” for your Father is not in Heaven—you have no part or lot in this matter, you are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity and, harsh as the words may sound, these words are true, “Repent, and be converted,” that you may obtain these blessings. Fly to Christ and trust in Him, for until you do, you have no right to the ordinances of God’s house! There is no room for you in God’s family! You are not His child, but an alien, a stranger, an outcast! May the Lord, in His mercy, bring you to know it, and then bring you to Jesus, and adopt you into His household—and you will give Him the praise!

Now, the last thing is to be treated with brevity, but great solemnity because we are to enquire—

III. WHAT ARE THE REWARDS AND PENALTIES ATTACHED TO THIS DUTY?

Here we have two sanctions. “He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in Heaven.” Take this sentence home with you, everyone of you. What Christ is to you on earth, that you will be to Christ in Heaven. I shall repeat that Truth of God. Whatever Jesus Christ is to you on earth, you will be to Him in the Day of Judgment. If He is dear and precious to you, you will be precious and dear to Him. If you thought everything of Him, He will think everything of you.

There are in my text, it appears to me, two Judgment Seats. There is one on which you sit and there is one before you, which is better. Shall I take the world—the world which contemns two things—it contemns civil vices and holy duties! Shall I take the world, which will call me a bigot, a fanatic, if I go with Christ? Shall I take the world with its pleasures and amusements? Shall I take it with its sins and laxities of morals, with its looseness and general trifling? Shall I take that, or shall I take my Lord and Master, and be thought a fool because I dare not, cannot do as others do? Shall I keep in the narrow path which He has mapped out? Which shall it be? I believe that salvation is of Grace, but there is such a thing as a human will, and God does not violate it. There is a time when every man sits just on that Judgment Seat and, blessed be he to whom God gives Grace to say—

***“Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow You.”***

On that judgment which you now make, sitting on that judgment seat here, humanly speaking, will depend that other judgment from the other Judgment Seat of the Great White Throne! I think I see the Master. He has come in the clouds of Heaven. Listen how the silver trumpets ring! The dead are rising; the pillars of Heaven are shaking; stars are falling; solemnities, unseen before, attend the dread assize and the books are opened and every soul may be judged by this one thing—did he confess Christ before men? Did he call Christ his Master in his heart, and give himself up to His cause? “Then I confess that he is Mine and though he were poor and despised, rotted in a dungeon, or was burnt at the stake amidst execrations—I confess him—he is Mine! He said that I was his and now I say in return that he is Mine! He judged that he would take Me. I judged that I have taken him. He confessed Me. I confess him!

But see the other—see the timorous wretch who knew something about Christ, but knew too much about the world—who loved the silver of Demas, or the pleasures of Jezebel—let him come forward.

What is the Master’s sentence about him? It is very short, but very full, “I never knew you.” They did not know Christ on earth—and now He does not know them. He is the only Savior, and that only Savior does not know them. They were the gay party, and there was much ridicule poured upon belief in Christ. The gay young lady thought that she must take her share in this, or she might be suspected of falling in with the despised people of God. She did not know Christ. No, and He will not know her in that day when the beauty will have gone from her cheeks and the Grace and charm will have departed from her form! Yes, that man of business who was talking the other day with his fellows, and the conversation turning upon religion, there was some joke made against the Gospel, or some of its sacred Doctrines—and though he knew it was wrong and mean, he thought he must joke, too, unless he should be thought to be one of the class who follow Jesus of Nazareth! He was too

respectable to know Christ, and Christ will be too respectable to know him! Let me say to all the counts and countesses, the dukes and duchesses, the royal highnesses and royal personages of all denominations that are fretting out their little hour—the true dignity will be to know Christ! And the true horror to be unknown of Him! Oh, happy shall that man be whose name was handed down from man to man amidst scorn, shame and spitting, because he took Christ's part. "Stand back, you angels!" the King will say. "Stand back, you seraphim and cherubim! Make way for him! He loved Me in the days of My scorn. He suffered for Me on earth. I know him. My Father, I confess him before You in Heaven amidst the glories of My Throne! I confess him before You—he is Mine." But the apostate, the turncoat, the careless, the non-confessing, whatever are their dignities, and names, and honors, and glories here—though the world's church may count them good and offer a song for them beneath its domes—if they have not trusted Christ with their own heart and have not loved Him with their own soul, it shall be all in vain! Though they have been decorated and almost adored, Christ shall turn coldly upon them with, "I never knew you!" "But, Lord, we ate and drank in Your courts!" "I know you not! Depart from Me." "But, Lord! Are we then to be forever banished from Your Presence?" "I never knew you! Your loss is eternal—your ruin must be final."

Choose you, this night, whom you will serve! By the living God, before whom I stand, I beseech you this night, decide for Christ! If God is God, serve Him. If the Devil is God, serve him. One way or the other! If Jesus Christ is worthy of your love, let Him have it and take up your cross. But if He is not, then trifle with religion and go on your way.

But I cannot finish so. Consider, think and turn unto Him with full purpose of heart. Give yourselves to Him. Unite yourselves with God's people, wherever you may find them. Cast in your lot with the lovers of Jesus in whatever Christian denomination you may happen to meet with them. The Lord bless you and them—and acknowledge you in the day when He shall appear! May God add His solemn sanction, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 10:16-23.**

Verse 16. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you, therefore, wise as serpents and harmless as doves.* It is a strange errand that you are sent upon—not as dogs to fight with wolves. Yet you *are* to fight with them, but you are to go as lambs in the midst of wolves! Expect, therefore, that they will rend you. Bear much, for even in that you shall conquer! If they kill you, you shall be honored in your death. As I have often said, the fight looks very unequal between sheep and

wolves, yet at the present moment there are vastly more sheep in the world than wolves, the sheep having outlived the wolves. In this country, at any rate, the last wolf is gone and the sheep, with all their weaknesses, continue to multiply. “That is due,” you say, “to the shepherd.” And to Him shall your safety and your victory be due! He will take care of you. “I send you forth as sheep among wolves.” But do not, therefore, provoke the wolves. “Be wise as serpents.” Have a holy prudence. “Be as harmless as doves,” but not as silly as doves.

17-19. *But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak.* And very remarkable were the answers given by the martyrs to those who persecuted them! In some cases they were altogether unlettered men, feeble women—unused to the quibbles and the catches which ungodly wise men use—and yet with a holy ability they answered all their adversaries and often stopped their mouths! It is amazing what God can make of the weakest of men when He dwells in them and speaks through them!

20, 21. *For it is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death.* Strange venom of human nature! It never grows so angry against anything as against God’s Truth. Why is this? False religions will tolerate one another, but they will not tolerate the religion of Christ! Is not this all accounted for by that old dark saying at the gates of Eden, “I will put enmity between you and the woman—between your seed and her Seed.” That enmity is sure to come up as long as the world stands.

22, 23. *And you shall be hated of all men for My name’s sake: but he that endures to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another, for verily I say unto you, You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man is come.* They had not been able to get all through Palestine before the destruction of Jerusalem. Perhaps we shall scarcely have been able to preach the Gospel in every part of the world before our Master’s speedy footsteps shall be heard.

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

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

PREACHING FOR THE POOR

NO. 114

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 25, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS**

***“The poor have the Gospel preached to them.”
Matthew 11:5.***

John, the forerunner of Christ, had some followers who continued with him after Christ had come in the flesh and openly manifested Himself among the people. These disciples were in doubt as to whether Jesus was the Messiah or not. I believe that John, himself, had no doubt whatever upon the matter, for he had received positive Revelations and had given substantial testimonies on the subject. But in order to relieve their doubts, John said to his disciples, in some such words, “Go and ask Him yourselves.” And, therefore, he dispatched them with this message, “Tell us whether You are He that should come, or do we look for another?” Jesus Christ, discontinuing His preaching for a while, said, “Stay and receive your answer.” And instead of giving them an affirmative reply, “I am that Messiah,” He said, “Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.” As much as to say, “That is My answer, these things are My testimonies—on the one hand that I come from God and—on the other hand, that I am *the Messiah*.” You will see the Truth and force of this reply if you will observe that it was prophesied of the Messiah, that He should do the very things which Jesus at that moment was doing. It is said of Messiah, in the 35th Chapter of Isaiah, at the 5th and 6th verses, “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert.” The Jews had forgotten this. They only looked for a Messiah who should be clothed with temporal grandeur and dignity and they overlooked the teaching of Isaiah that he should be “a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” And besides that, you observe they overlooked the miracles which it was prophesied should attend the coming of the Glorious One, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus gave this as His answer—a practical demonstration of John’s problem, proving it to an absolute certainty! But He not only referred to the *miracles*, He gave them a further proof—“The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” This, also, was one evidence that He was Messiah. For Isaiah, the great Messianic Prophet, had said, “He shall preach

the Gospel unto the meek.” That is, the poor. And in that Jesus did so, it was proved that He was the Man intended by Isaiah. Besides, Zechariah mentions the congregation of the poor who attend on Him and therein evidently foretold the coming of Jesus Christ, the Preacher to the poor!

I shall not, however, dwell upon these circumstances this morning. It must be apparent to every hearer that here is sufficient proof that Jesus Christ is the Person who had been foretold under the name of Shiloh, or Messiah. We all believe *that* and, therefore, there is little need that I should try to prove what you have already received. I rather select my text this morning as one of the constant marks of the Gospel in all ages and in every land. “The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” This is to be its *semper idem*, its constant stamp! And we believe where the poor have *not* the Gospel preached unto them, there is a departure from the dispensation of the Gospel—the forsaking of this which was to be a fundamental trait and characteristic of the Gospel dispensation. “The poor have the Gospel preached to them.”

I find that these words will bear three translations, I shall, therefore, have three heads, which shall be composed of three translations of the text. The first is that of the *authorized version*—“The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” It is also Tyndal’s version. The second is *the version of Cranmer and the version of Geneva* which is the best, “The poor are evangelized,” that is to say, they not only *hear* the Gospel, but they are influenced by it—the poor receive it. The last is a translation of *some eminent writers* and above all, of *Wycliffe*, which amused me when I read it, although I believe it to be as correct as any of the others. Wycliffe translates it—“pore men ben taken to prechyng of the Gospel.” The verb may be equally well translated in the active as in the passive sense—“The poor have taken to the preaching of the Gospel.” That is to be one of the marks of the Gospel dispensation in all times!

I. First, then, THE AUTHORIZED VERSION, “The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” It was so in Christ’s day. It is to be so with Christ’s Gospel to the end of time. Almost every impostor who has come into the world has aimed principally at the rich and the mighty and the respectable—very few impostors have found it to be worth their while to make it prominent in their preaching that they preach to the poor. They go before princes to promulgate their doctrines. They seek the halls of nobles where they might expatiate upon their pretended revelations. Few of them think it worth their while to address themselves to those who have been most wickedly called, “the swinish multitude,” and to speak to them the glorious things of the Gospel of Christ. But it is one delightful mark of Christ’s dispensation that He aims, first, at the poor! “The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” It was wise of Him to do so. If we would fire a building, it is best to light it at the basement—so our Savior—when He would save a world and convert men of all classes and all ranks, be-

gins at the lowest rank that the fire may burn upwards, knowing right well that what was received by the poor will ultimately, by His Grace, be received by the rich also. Nevertheless, He chose this to be given to His disciples and to be the mark of His Gospel—"The poor have the Gospel preached to them." Now, I have some things to say this morning which I think are absolutely necessary, if the poor are to have the Gospel preached unto them.

In the first place, let me say that *the Gospel must be preached where the poor can come and hear it*. How can the poor have the Gospel preached to them, if they cannot come and listen to it? And yet how many of our places of worship are there into which they cannot come and into which, if they could come, they would only come as inferior creatures? They may sit in the back seats but are not to be known and recognized as anything like other people. Hence the absolute necessity of having places of worship large enough to accommodate the multitude and hence, moreover, the obligation to go out into the highways and hedges! If the poor are to have the Gospel preached unto them, then we must take it where they can get it. If I wanted to preach to English people, it would be of no use for me to go and stand on one of the peaks of the Himalayas and begin preaching—they could not hear me there. And it is of little use to build a gorgeous structure for a fashionable congregation and then to think of preaching to the poor. They cannot come any more than the Hottentots can make their journey from Africa and listen to me here. I would not expect them to come to such a place, nor will they willingly enter it. The Gospel should be preached, then, where the poor will come. And if they will not come after it, then let it be taken to them. We should have places where there is accommodation for them and where they are regarded and respected as much as any other rank and condition of men! It is with this view, alone, that we have labored earnestly to be the means of building a large place of worship, because I feel that although the bulk of my congregation in New Park Street Chapel are poor, yet there are many poor who can by no possibility enter the doors because we cannot find room for the multitudes to be received. You ask me why I do not preach in the street. I reply, I would do so and am constantly doing so in every place except London. Here I cannot do it, since it would amount to an absolute breach of the peace—it being impossible to conceive what a multitude of people must necessarily be assembled. I trembled when I saw 12,000- on the last occasion I preached in the open air and, therefore, I have thought it best, for the present at least, to desist, until happily there shall be fewer to follow me. Otherwise my heart is in the open air movement. I practice it everywhere else and I pray God to give to our ministers zeal and earnestness, that they may take the Gospel into the streets, highways and byways and compel the people to come in, that the house may be filled! Oh that God would give

us this characteristic mark of His precious Grace—that the poor might have the Gospel preached unto them!

“But,” you reply, “there are plenty of Churches and Chapels to which they might come.” I answer, yes, but that is only one half of the matter. *The Gospel must be preached attractively* before the poor will have the Gospel preached unto them. Why, there is no attraction in the Gospel to the great mass of our race as it is currently preached. I confess that when I have a violent headache and cannot sleep, I could almost wish for some droning minister to preach to me. I feel certain I could go to sleep, then, for I have heard some under the soporific influence of whose eloquence I could most comfortably snore! But it is not at all likely that the poor will ever go to hear such preachers as these. If they are preached to in fine terms—in grandiloquent language which they cannot lay hold of—the poor will not have the Gospel preached to them, for they will not go to hear it! They must have something attractive to them. We must preach as Christ did. We must tell anecdotes and stories and parables as He did. We must come down and make the Gospel attractive. The reason why the old Puritan preachers could get congregations was this—they did not give their hearers dry theology. They illustrated it! They had an anecdote from this and a quaint passage from that classic author. Here a verse of poetry. Here and there even a quip or pun—a thing which nowadays is a sin above all sins but which was constantly committed by these preachers, whom I have always esteemed as the patterns of pulpit eloquence. Christ Jesus was an attractive Preacher! He sought above all means to set the pearl in a frame of gold, that it might attract the attention of the people. He was not willing to place Himself in a parish church and preach to a large congregation of thirteen and a half, like our good Brothers in the city, but would preach in such a style that people felt they must go to hear Him! Some of them gnashed their teeth in rage and left His Presence in wrath, but the multitudes still thronged to Him to hear and to be healed. It was no dull work to hear this King of Preachers—He was too much in earnest to be dull and too humane to be incomprehensible! I believe that until this is imitated, the poor will not have the Gospel preached to them. There must be an interesting style adopted to bring the people to hear. But if we adopt such a style, they will call us clownish, vulgar and so on. Blessed be God, we have long learned that vulgarity is a very different thing from what some men suppose! We have been so taught that we are willing to be even clowns for Christ’s sake, and as long as we are seeing souls saved, we are not likely to alter our course! During this last week I have seen, I believe, a score of persons who have been in the lowest ranks, the very meanest of sinners, the greatest of transgressors who have, through preaching in this place, been restored and reclaimed. Do you think, then, that I shall shear my locks to please the Philistine? Oh no! By the Grace of God, Samson knows

where his strength lies and is not likely to do that to please any man or any set of men! Preaching must reach the popular ear. And to get at the people, it must be interesting to them and, by the Grace of God we hope it shall be!

But, in the next place, if the poor are to have the Gospel preached to them, *it must be preached simply*. It is a waste of time to preach Latin to you, is it not? To the multitude of people it is of no use delivering a discourse in Greek. Possibly five or six of the assembly might be mightily edified and go away delighted. But what of that? The mass would retire unedified and uninstructed! You talk about the education of the people, don't you, and about the vast extent of English refinement? For the most part it is a dream! Ignorance is not yet buried. The language of one class of Englishmen is a dead language to another class and many a word which is very plain to many of us, is as hard and difficult a word to the multitude as if it had been culled out of Hindustani or Bengali! There are multitudes who cannot understand words composed of Latin but must have the Truth of God told them in round homely Saxon if it is to reach their hearts! There is my friend the Reverend So-and-So, Doctor of Divinity he is—a great student—and whenever he finds a hard word in his books, he tells it next Sunday to his congregation. He has a little intellectual circle who think his preaching must be good because they cannot understand it and who think it proven that he must be an intelligent man because all the pews are empty! They believe he must be a very useful member of society. In fact, they compare him to Luther and think he is a second Paul because nobody will listen to him, seeing it is impossible to understand him! Well, we conceive of that good man that he may have a work to do, but we do not know what it is!

There is another friend of ours, Mr. Cloudyton, who always preaches in such a style that if you should try to dissect the sermon for a week afterwards, you could by no possibility tell what he meant. If you could look at things from *his* point of view you might possibly discover something. But it appears by his preaching as if he, himself, had lost his way in a fog and were scattering a whole mass of mist about him everywhere! I suppose he goes so deep down into the subject that he stirs the mud at the bottom and he cannot find his way up again. There are some such preachers whom you cannot possibly understand. Now, we say and say very boldly, too, that while such preaching may be esteemed by some people to be good, we have no faith in it at all! If ever the world is to be reclaimed and if sinners are to be saved, we can see no likelihood in the world of its being done by such means! We think the Word must be understood before it can really penetrate the conscience and the heart. And we would always be preaching such as men can understand, otherwise the poor will not “have the Gospel preached to them.” Why did John Bunyan become the Apostle of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire and

round about? It was because John Bunyan, while he had a surpassing genius, would not condescend to cull his language from the garden of flowers but he went into the hayfield and the meadow and plucked up his language by the roots and spoke out in words that the people used in their cottages! Why is it that God has blessed other men to the stirring of the people, to the bringing about of spiritual revivals to the renewal of the power of godliness? We believe it has always been owing to this—under God’s Spirit—that they have adopted the phraseology of the people and have not been ashamed to be despised because they talked as common people did!

But now we have something to say more important than this. We may preach, very simply, too, and very attractively and yet it may not be true that “the poor have the Gospel preached to them,” for the poor may have something else preached to them beside the Gospel. It is, then, highly important that we should, each of us, ask what the Gospel is and that when we think we know it, we should not be ashamed to say, “This is the Gospel and I will preach it boldly, though all men should deny it.” Oh, I fear that there is such a thing as preaching another Gospel “which is not another, but there are some who trouble us”! There is such a thing as preaching science and philosophy attractively but not preaching the Gospel! Mark—it is not *preaching*, but it is *preaching the Gospel* that is the mark of Christ’s dispensation and of His Truth. Let us take care to preach fully the depravity of man. Let us dwell thoroughly upon his lost and ruined estate under the Law and his restoration under the Gospel. Let us preach of these three things for as a good Brother said, “The Gospel lies in three things, the Word of God, only, the blood of Christ, only, and the Holy Spirit, only.” These three things make up the Gospel! “The Bible, the Bible, alone—the religion of Protestants! The blood of Christ the only salvation from sin, the only means of the pardon of our guilt and the Holy Spirit, the only Regenerator, the only converting power that will alone work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Without these three things there is no Gospel! Let us take heed, then, for it is a serious matter that when the people listen to us, it is *the Gospel* that we preach. Otherwise we may be as guilty as was Nero, the tyrant, who, when Rome was starving, sent his ships to Alexandria, where there was corn in plenty. But he sent them not for wheat but for sand to scatter in the arena for his gladiators. Ah, there are some who seem to do so—scattering the floor of their sanctuary—not with the good corn of the Kingdom of God upon which the souls of God’s people may feed and grow, but with sand of controversy, sand of logic—which no child of God can ever receive to his soul’s profit! “The poor have the Gospel preached to them.” Let us take heed that it is the Gospel. Hear then, you chief of sinners, the voice of Jesus—“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” “Whoever believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” “For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

And just one more hint on this point, namely, this—it must be said of us, if we would keep true to Christ’s rule and Apostolic practice—that “the poor have the Gospel *preached* to them.” In these days there is a growing hatred of the pulpit. The pulpit has maintained its ground many a year, but partially by its becoming inefficient, it is losing its high position. Through a timid abuse of it, instead of a strong stiff use of the pulpit, the world has come to despise it and now, most certainly, we are not a priest-ridden people one-half as much as we are a press-ridden people! By the press we are ridden, indeed! Dispatches, Journals, Gazettes and Magazines are now the judges of pulpit eloquence and style! They thrust themselves into the censor’s seat and censure those whose office it should rather be to censure them! For my own part, I cheerfully accord to all men the liberty of abusing me. But I must protest against the lying conduct of at least one editor who has misquoted in order to pervert my meaning and has done more. He has, to his eternal disgrace, manufactured a quotation from his own head which never did occur in my works or words. The pulpit has become dishonored. It is esteemed as being of very little worth and of no esteem. Ah, we must always maintain the dignity of the pulpit. I hold that it is the Thermopylae of Christendom! It is here the battle must be fought between right and wrong—not so much with the pen, valuable as that is as an assistant—as with the living voice of earnest men, “contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.” In some Churches the pulpit is put away, there is a prominent altar but the pulpit is omitted. The most prominent thing under the Gospel dispensation is not the altar which belonged to the Jewish dispensation but the pulpit! “We have an Altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle!” That Altar is Christ, but Christ has been pleased to exalt “the foolishness of preaching” to the most prominent position in His House of Prayer. We must make sure that we always maintain preaching. It is this that God will bless! It is this that He has promised to crown with success! “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” We must not expect to see great changes nor any great progress of the Gospel until there is greater esteem for the pulpit—more said of it and thought of it. “Well,” some may reply, “you speak of the dignity of the pulpit. I take it, you lower it yourself, Sir, by speaking in such a style to your hearers.” Ah, no doubt you think so. Some pulpits die of dignity. I take it the greatest dignity in the world is the dignity of *converts*—that the glory of the pulpit is, if I may use such a metaphor, to have captives at its chariot wheels, to see converts following it—and where there are such and those from the very worst of men! *There* is a dignity in the pulpit beyond any dignity which a fine mouthing of words

and a grand selection of fantastic language could ever give to it! “The poor have the Gospel preached to them.”

II. Now, the next translation is THE TRANSLATION OF GENEVA, principally used by Calvin in his commentary. It is also the translation of Thomas Cranmer, whose translation, I believe, was at least in some degree molded by the Geneva translation. He translates it thus—“The poor receive the Gospel.” The Geneva translation has it, “The poor receive the glad tidings of the Gospel,” which is a tautology, since glad tidings mean the same thing as Gospel. The Greek has it, “The poor are evangelized.” Now, what is the meaning of this word, “evangelized”? They talk with a sneer in these days of evangelical drawing rooms and evangelicals and so on. It is one of the most singular sneers in the world—for to call a man an evangelical by way of joke is the same as calling a man a gentleman by way of scoffing at him! To say a man is one of the Gospellers by way of scorn, is like calling a man a king by way of contempt! It is an honorable, a great, a glorious title and nothing is more honorable than to be ranked among the evangelicals! What is meant, then, by the people being evangelized? Old Master Burkitt, thinking that we should not easily understand the word, says that as a man is said to be Italianized by living among the Italians, getting their manners and customs and becoming a citizen of the State, so a man is *evangelized* when he lives where the Gospel is preached and gets the manners and customs of those who profess it. Now, that is one meaning of the text. One of the proofs of our Savior’s mission is not only that the poor hear the Word but are influenced by it and Gospelized. Oh, how great a work it is to Gospelize any man and to Gospelize a poor man! What does it mean? It means, to make him *like* the Gospel!

Now, the Gospel is holy, just, true, loving, honest, benevolent, kind and gracious. So, then, to Gospelize a man is to make a rogue honest, to make a harlot modest, to make a profane man serious, to make a grasping man liberal, to make a covetous man benevolent, to make the drunken man sober, to make the untruthful man truthful, to make the unkind man loving, to make the hater the lover of his species and, in a word, to Gospelize a man is, in his outward character, to bring him into such a condition that he labors to carry out the command of Christ, “Love your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.” Gospelizing, furthermore, has something to do with an inner principle. Gospelizing a man means saving him from Hell and making him a Heavenly character. It means blotting out his sins, writing a new name upon his heart—the new name of God! It means bringing him to know his election, to put his trust in Christ, to renounce his sins and his good works, too, and to trust solely and wholly upon Jesus Christ as his Redeemer! Oh, what a blessed thing it is to be Gospelized! How many of you have been so Gospelized? The Lord grant that the whole of us may feel

the influence of the Gospel! I contend for this, that to Gospelize a man is the greatest miracle in the world! All the other miracles are wrapped up in this one. To Gospelize a man, or, in other words, to convert him, is a greater work than to open the eyes of the blind—for is it not opening the eyes of the blind soul that he may see spiritual matters and understand the things of Heavenly wisdom? And is not a surgical operation easier than operation on the soul? Souls we cannot touch, although science and skill have been able to remove films and cataracts from the eyes. “The lame walk.” Gospelizing a man is more than this. It is not only making a lame man walk, but it is making a dead man who could not walk in the right way, walk in the right way ever afterwards! “The lepers are cleansed.” Ah, but to cleanse a *sinner* is greater work than cleansing a leper! “The deaf hear.” Yes, and to make a man who never listened to the voice of God, hear the voice of his Maker is a miracle greater than to make the deaf hear, or even to raise the dead! Great though that is, it is not a more stupendous effort of Divine power than to save a soul since men are naturally dead in sins and must be quickened by Divine Grace if they are saved. To Gospelize a man is the highest instance of Divine might and remains an unparalleled miracle, a miracle of miracles! “The poor are evangelized.”

Beloved, there have been some very precious specimens of poor people who have come under the influence of the Gospel. I think I appeal to the hearts of all of you who are now present, when I say there is nothing we more reverence and respect than the piety of the poor and needy. I had an engraving sent to me the other day which pleased me beyond measure. It was an engraving simply but exquisitely executed. It represented a poor girl in an upper room, with a lean-to roof. There was a post driven in the ground, on which was a piece of wood. Standing on the table were a candle and a Bible. She was on her knees at a chair, praying, wrestling with God. Everything in the room had on it the stamp of poverty. There was the mean coverlet to the old stump bedstead. There were the walls that had never been papered and perhaps scarcely whitewashed. It was an upper story to which she had climbed with aching knees and where, perhaps, she had worked away till her fingers were worn to the bone to earn her bread at needlework. There it was that she was wrestling with God. Some would turn away and laugh at it. But it appeals to the best feelings of man and moves the heart far more than does the fine engraving of the monarch on his knees in the grand assembly! We have had lately a most excellent volume, the *Life of Captain Hedley Vicars*. It is calculated to do great good and I pray God to bless it. But I question whether the history of Captain Hedley Vicars will last as long in the public mind as the history of the Dairyman’s Daughter, or the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain. The histories of those who have come from the ranks of the poor always lay hold of the Christian mind. Oh, we love piety any-

where! We bless God where coronets and Divine Grace go together, but if piety in any place does more brightly than anywhere else, it is in rags and poverty! When the poor woman in the almshouse takes her bread and her water and blesses God for Truth—when the poor creature who has not where to lay his head, yet lifts his eye and says, “My Father will provide,” it is then like the glowworm in the damp leaves, a spark more conspicuous for the blackness around it! Then religion gleams in its true brightness and is seen in all its luster. It is a mark of Christ’s Gospel that the poor are evangelized—that they can receive the Gospel! True it is, the Gospel affects all ranks and is equally adapted to them all, but yet we say, “If one class is more prominent than another, we believe that in Holy Scripture the poor are most of all appealed to.”

“Oh,” say some very often, “the converts whom God has given to such a man are all from the lower ranks, they are all people with no sense! They are all uneducated people that hear such-and-such a person.” Very well, if you say so. We might deny it if we pleased, but we do not know that we shall take the trouble, because we think it no disgrace whatever. We think it rather to be an honor that the poor are Gospelized and that they listen to the Gospel from our lips. I have never thought it a disgrace at any time! When any have said, “Look, what a mass of uneducated people they are.” Yes, I have thought, and blessed be God they are, for those are the very people that need the Gospel most! If you saw a physician’s door surrounded by a number of ladies of the sentimental school who are sick about three times a week and never were ill at all—if it were said he cured them, you would say, “No great wonder, too, for there never was anything the matter with them.” But if you heard of another man, that people with the worst diseases have come to him and that God has made use of him and his medicine has been the means of healing their diseases, you would then say, “There is something in it, for the people that need it most have received it.” If then, it is true that the poor will come to hear the Gospel more than others, it is no disgrace to the Gospel—it is an honor to it—that those who most need it do freely receive it!

III. And now I must close up by briefly dwelling on the last point. It was the third translation, WYCLIFFE’S TRANSLATION. To give it to you in old English—“Poor men are taking to the preaching of the Gospel.” “Ah,” say some, “they had better remain at home, minding their plows or their blacksmith’s hammer. They had better have kept on with their tinkering and tailoring and not have turned preachers.” But it is one of the honors of the Gospel that poor men have taken to the preaching of it! There was once a tinker and let the worldly-wise blush when they hear of it—there was once a tinker, a tinker of whom a great divine said he would give all his learning if he could preach like he did. There was once a tinker who never so much as brushed his back against the walls of a college, who wrote a *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Did ever a doctor in divinity write

such a book? There was once a pot-boy—a boy who carried on his back the pewter pots for his mother, who kept the Old Bell. That man drove men mad, as the world had it—but led them to Christ, as we have it—all his life long until, loaded with honors, he sank into his grave, with the goodwill of a multitude round about him! With an imperishable name written in the world's records, as well as in the records of the Church! Did you ever hear of any mighty man, whose name stood in more esteem among God's people than the name of George Whitefield? And yet these were poor men, who, as Wycliffe said, were taking to the preaching of the Gospel!

If you will read the life of Wycliffe you will find him saying that he believed that the Reformation in England was more promoted by the labors of the poor men whom he sent out from Lutterworth than by his own. He gathered round him a number of the poor people whom he instructed in the faith and then he sent them two and two into every village, as Jesus did. They went into the marketplace and they gathered the people around. They opened the Book and read a Chapter and then they left them a manuscript of it. And for months and years after, the people would assemble to read that manuscript and would remember the Gospelers who had come to tell them the Gospel of Christ! These men went from marketplace to marketplace, from town to town and from village to village—and though their names are unknown to fame, they were the real Reformers! You may talk of Cranmer and Latimer and Ridley—they did much—but the real Reformers of the English nation were people whose names have perished from the annals of time but are written in the records of eternity! God has blessed the poor man in preaching His Truth!

Far be it from me to depreciate learning and wisdom. We would not have had the Bible translated without learning, and the more learning a man can have, if he is a sanctified man, the better! He has so many more talents to lay out in his Master's service. But it is not absolutely necessary for preaching of the Word. Rough, untamed, untaught energy has done much in the Church. A Boanerges has stood up in a village. He could not put three words together in grammatical English. But where the drowsy parson had for many a year lulled all his people into an unhallowed rest, this man started up, like the herdsman Amos, and brought about a great awakening! He began to preach in some cottage. People thronged around him. Then a house was built and his name is handed down to us as the Reverend So-and-So, but then he was known as Tom the plowman, or John the tinker! God has made use of men whose origin was the most obscure, who seemed to have little except the gifts of nature which could be made use of in God's service. And we hold that this is no disgrace but, on the contrary, an honor that poor men are taking to preaching the Gospel!

I have to ask you, this morning, to help some poor men in preaching the Gospel. We are constantly receiving letters from our poor Brothers and it is very seldom that we say, "No," to their appeals for assistance. But we must do so, unless our friends, more especially those who love the Gospel, will really do something towards the maintenance of God's faithful servants. I have, during the past year, preached many times for ministers on this basis—that they could not live unless some preached a sermon and made a collection for them. In some places the population was so small that they could not maintain their minister and in others it was a new movement and, therefore, they were unable to support him. Some of you subscribe to the Church Pastoral Aid Society. That is a very excellent Society, but I never could see any good in it. There are many poor clergy in the Church of England who need assistance bad enough. But if you want to know the right way of keeping poor curates, I will tell you—split a bishop up into 50 and that will do it! If that could be done at once and speedily, there would be no need of Pastoral Aid Societies! You will say, perhaps, "Let such a thing be done in our denomination." I answer that we have no bishops with whom such a thing could be done. I believe there is not to be found one minister in the whole Baptist denomination whose salary has ever exceeded £600 and there are only three, I believe, who receive as much as that, of which I am *not* one. And these three men are in such a position that their demands are great and they have not one penny too much, while the great mass of our denomination receive £20, £30, £40, £50, £60 and so on, but below £100. The sum collected today will be given to those whose incomes are below £80 and whose needs are great.

And now, Beloved, I have opened my mouth for the dumb and pleaded the cause of the poor, let me end by entreating the poor of the flock to consider the poor man's Christ. Let me urge them to give Him their thoughts and may the Lord enable them to yield Him their hearts! "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved but he who believes not shall be damned."

May God bless the high and low, the rich and poor. Yes, all of you, for His name's sake!

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

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

OFFENDED BECAUSE OF CHRIST? NO. 1398

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

***“And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”
Matthew 11:6.***

THE connection of the passage assists us in feeling its force. John had sent his disciples to ask the Master whether He was, indeed, the Messiah. The Savior, after giving abundant proof that He was the Sent One who had long been promised, then adds, “And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” Had John begun to suspect a stumbling block in reference to the Nazarene? Did he question if so lowly a Person could, indeed, be the promised Christ? Had he expected Messiah to be a glorious prince with an earthly kingdom? Was he staggered to find himself in prison under Herod’s power? Was John, himself in doubt and did the Savior, therefore, say, “Blessed is he who is not made to stumble concerning anything about Me”?

There have been many suggestions as to why John sent his disciples and, perhaps, we shall never know why. And we need not wish to know, seeing it did not please God to leave it on record. Some have said he sent the messengers for his own sake, for he was then under a fainting fit of unbelief. I hardly think so and yet, it is possible, for John was an Elijah-like man—a man of stern iron mold—and such men are apt to have occasional sinking of a terrible sort. With most of the children of God, their weakness is most seen where their strength lies. Elijah failed in courage though he was one of the most courageous of men! After he had slain the priests of Baal, he was afraid of a woman—afraid of Jezebel—and fled to hide himself. He said, “Let me die! I am no better than my fathers.”

It seems to be a law of Nature that the strongest men should have the worst fits of weakness. Martin Luther’s life is remarkable as illustrating this. He fainted as few men ever fainted—his despair, on some occasions, was almost equal to his confidence at other times! So it is possible that John, being of that class of men, after having boldly confronted Herod and declaring, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife,” may have fainted in spirit when he found himself shut up in prison with no known and manifest token of Messiah’s kingdom coming. Prison may have been a severe trial to the Baptist—we are all affected by the atmosphere in which we dwell.

Today has been a very heavy day to many a spirit because the atmosphere has been loaded with damp and smoke. I believe that there is more than a little truth in the rhyme—

***“Heaviest the heart is
In a heavy air,
Every wind that rises
Blows away despair.”***

Now John the Baptist, after living in the wilderness in the open air by the riverside, must have felt a strange difference when he was shut up in the close, oppressive dungeon of Herod—and the body may have helped to act upon the soul. And so the mind, after its extraordinary tension in the great service to which John was called, may have been dragged down by the half-stifled body till faith began to tremble. And so it may be that John, for his own satisfaction, found it necessary to ask, “Are You He that should come, or do we look for another?” If so, the Savior well said, “Blessed is he that is not offended because of Me,” for, after all, notwithstanding his severe trial and deep depression, John was not really offended *because* of Christ. He was not actually scandalized because of the Lord whose forerunner he had been, but he held on to his testimony and sealed it with his death. Blessed is his memory as that of one who was not offended because of Christ!

Others, however, think that John sent these disciples not at all for his own sake, but for theirs. That strikes me as being the more probable. He wished to transfer them from himself to his Lord and he, therefore, bade them go and enquire for themselves. He felt that the answer which Jesus would be sure to give would be the best means of convincing them that they ought to follow the servant no longer, but cast in their lot with his Master. Our Lord, after showing that He was, indeed, the Messiah, by working miracles in their presence and preaching the Gospel, then said to them, “And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me. You see Me here despised and rejected of men, notwithstanding that I work miracles. You see that I am called Beelzebub and treated with the utmost scorn. You shall be blessed if, believing Me to be the Christ of God, you follow Me without being staggered at anything you see, or annoyed at anything you are called to bear for My sake.”

Whatever may have been John’s motive, the text will, I trust, serve us for a useful purpose. May we be among the number of those who are blessed because we are not offended because of Christ. And let us now look at various characters that we may know to which class we belong. First, there are some who are so offended because of Christ that they never accept Him as their Savior at all. Secondly, there is another class of persons who, after *professing* to accept Him and apparently casting in their lot with Him, are, after all, scandalized. They find stumbling blocks and go back and forsake the way which they professed to tread. But then, thirdly, there are others who, by the Grace of God, take Christ as He is with all their hearts and are not offended because of Him. These are they that are blessed in very deed and shall enter into eternal blessedness in Heaven!

I. First, then, I shall try to speak and God help me to speak effectually, TO SOME WHO ARE SO OFFENDED BECAUSE OF CHRIST THAT THEY NEVER TRUST HIM AT ALL, OR ACCEPT HIM AS THEIR SAVIOR. Let us tell the reasons why some men do not receive Christ and are offended because of Him. O that the Spirit of God may drive these unreasonable reasons from their souls and lead them to Jesus! Some in His own day were offended with Him because of the humbleness of His appearance. They

said, "He is the son of a *carpenter*. His father and His mother we know and His brothers, are they not all with us? When Messiah comes, we know not from where He is, but as for this Man, we know from where He is."

He came among them as a mere peasant. He wore the ordinary raiment of the people. A garment without seam, woven from the top throughout, served His purpose. No soft raiment and gorgeous apparel decorated and distinguished Him. He did not affect any dignity. He came with no chariot and horses and pomp of a prince. He was meek and lowly. Even in the grandest day of His triumph, He rode upon a colt, the foal of an ass and, therefore, they said, "Is this the Son of David? Is this the King, the glorious One of whom Prophets spoke in ages long gone by?" And so they were scandalized and offended because of Him because there was a lack of that earthly glory and splendor for which they had looked.

Men feel the same today. There are some who would be Christians, but then Christianity must be a very respectable thing—and if the Truth of God is to be found among *poor* people, well, then, the Truth of God may be for them, but they will not go with them to hear a plain preacher and mix with common people! If the Truth of God walks the streets in silver slippers, then they do not mind acknowledging it and walking with it—but if it toils in rags through the back streets and by miry pathways—then they say, "I pray you have me excused." The religion of Jesus Christ never was, nor ever can be, the religion of this present evil world. He has chosen a people out of the world who believe it, but the world itself has always hated it. Did not our Lord tell us (John 14:17), concerning the Spirit of Truth, that the world cannot receive Him because it sees Him not, neither knows Him? Whenever you find a religion which unites itself with pomp, show and worldly power, if there is any truth in it at all, it has, at any rate, deteriorated from the standard of its purity and is not according to the mind of Christ.

But there are some who are so fond of everything that is fashionable—everything that is great and famous—that, if the Lord Jesus Christ is despised and rejected of men, they despise and reject Him, too. Ah, but I hope that I address some to whom the Lord has given a nobler spirit! I hope some men and women are here, tonight, who will never reject the Truth because it is unfashionable, or refuse to follow Christ because He is despised. No, but the noble spirit says, "Is it right? Then I will espouse it. Is it true? Then I will believe it in the name of God. Though it may mean poverty and shame, yet that is the side on which I will enlist." There is a nobler chivalry than all the chivalry of war—it is the chivalry of the heart that dares be nailed to the Cross with Christ sooner than turn aside to seek flowery pathways and follow the trail of the serpent. Many reject Christ because of the humbleness of His exterior. Who is on the Lord's side and will dare declare it before a scoffing world?

Again, there are others who reject Him because of the fewness of His followers. They like to go where many go and they say, "Well, but there are so few that go that way, I do not wish to be singular." Yet every honest heart must admit that truth could never yet be decided by votes, for, as a rule, it has been in the minority. If we are to count heads we must go to

the Pope, or the Sultan, or the Brahmin. For my part I think that a minority of one with Christ is stronger than a majority of fifty millions against Him, for Christ, the Son of God, in His own Person, sums up a total greater than all the multitudes that ever can be against Him! There are some who quite forget that our Lord has said, "Broad is the way that leads to destruction and many there are which go in that way." And again, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it."

The way that leads to eternal life, though it is the King's highway, is often as little frequented as a country lane. If you must be on the side of the majority, then you will certainly be on the side of deadly error unless there should come some happier times when the Lord has more greatly increased the number of His people than at the present! May you be spared to see such days, but those days have not come as yet—and if you will not go with the Lord until the multitudes are with Him—you will perish in your sin! Do not, I pray, stumble at Him because of this. Some are offended with Christ for quite another reason, namely, because of the grandeur of His claims. He claims to be God over all, blessed forever. He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, though He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant.

Now some spirits quibble greatly at this. They did so in His own day. They took up stones to stone Him because He made Himself equal with God. Proud, carnally wise minds cannot endure the doctrine that the Redeemer is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, very God of very God! To my mind it is a reason why I accept Him! If He were *not* God, how could He save me? The weight of my sins would stagger all the angels and cherubim and seraphim if they should try to lift it! I must have a God to save me, or saved I can never be! And to me it is the greatest consolation possible that He who was the son of Mary is also the Son of God—that though human, even as we are human, sin excepted—He was altogether Divine. Oh do not—do not be offended with Him because of this, but rather rejoice in Immanuel, God With Us—and trust your soul into His hands!

A certain number of unconverted men are grievously offended with our Lord because of His Atonement. This which to us is the very center of all His excellence—that He saves us by standing in our place and bearing the wrath of God on our behalf—this is dreadfully kicked at by some. And I have heard these fastidious people finding fault with ministers for talking too much of the blood. They cannot endure the term, "the precious blood of Christ." We shall never listen to their fastidiousness, not for a single moment! And if we knew such to be present, we would go out of our way, on purpose, to shock them because we think that no respect should be shown to such a wicked taste! If the doctrine of the Atonement is kicked at, the answer of Christ's minister should be to preach the Atonement again and again and again in the plainest possible terms—and declare with even greater vigor and frequency the glorious substitutionary Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ in the place of His people!

This is the very heart of the Gospel and should be preached in your hearing at least every Lord's Day! Leave that out? You have left out the life of the Gospel, for "the blood is the life thereof." Without shedding of blood there is no remission and, therefore, as remission is the great privilege of the Gospel, we have no salvation to declare and we have no remission to preach unless the blood—

"From His riven side which flowed"

is continually set forth before you Oh, why should men quibble at that which is their salvation? If they ever are redeemed, it must be, "not with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ." If they ever are cleansed from all sin, it must be because of that Divine declaration, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." May we never stumble at Christ because of His Cross, for that were to reject our only hope! That were to quarrel with our life! That were to insist upon shutting the gates of mercy upon our own souls! That were to become enemies to our best Friend and to ourselves! God save us from such an infatuation as that!

We have found a good many, also, who are offended because of Christ for a different reason altogether, namely, because of the graciousness of the Gospel. It has too much free Grace in it for them. They would like a mingle-mangle of Grace and works. You will constantly hear it said that the doctrine of Justification by Faith is very dangerous and ought to be preached with great caution. Occasionally our secular papers, which, as you know, understand a great deal about religion, will instruct us as to what we should preach. The *moral virtues* ought to be our main theme and Justification by Faith should be so qualified as to be virtually denied. It is very wrong, they say, to sing that hymn—

***"Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, Sinner, no!
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago."***

And to tell the sinner that until he believes in Jesus Christ—

***"Doing is a deadly thing:
Doing ends in death,"***

is regarded as a crime so manifest that it needs only to be mentioned and every reader of the paper will be dreadfully shocked! And yet the editor of the paper, or the writer, probably calls himself a Protestant, and Justification by Faith is the one doctrine upon which all Protestantism turns! Very likely the writer of the stinging article calls himself a churchman and yet even the doctrine of the Church of England about that matter is as plain as words could possibly make it.

Yes, and then they suppose us to be some modern sect of revivalists that have newly sprung up, although we are preaching that which is and always was the Gospel—the doctrine by which you may test whether a Church stands or falls—salvation, not by the works of the Law—but according to the Grace of God! Crowds of people cannot endure Grace! And as to the term, "free Grace," they say that it is a tautological expression! It may be so, but it is a very expressive term and because they do not like it, I always intend to use it! It will do them good to be made to know that we

mean it and, therefore, use doubly strong language. It shall not only be, "gratis," which is free, but, "free gratis!" And we will, one of these days, put something else on to make it plainer still, if possible, and say, "free, gratis, for nothing!"

Salvation through eternal love, salvation through mercy alone—salvation, not of merit, salvation, not of the will of man, nor of blood, nor of the flesh—but salvation by the eternal purpose of Divine Sovereignty! Salvation by the will of God, who has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"—this we will, by the Grace of God, always preach! Grace free as the air, spontaneous, undeserved, but given of God because He delights in mercy! Yes, they kick against this but, if they knew themselves, they would know that nothing else will ever suit the sinner but this!

He who has broken the Divine Law is never in a right state of heart till he feels salvation by himself to be hopeless! When he is shut up in the condemned cell and hears the sentence read against him condemning him to die and knows that nothing he can do, can, by any possible means, reverse that sentence—and then sees Jesus interposing in all the freeness of His love and saying, "Now you have nothing to pay. I frankly forgive you all"—then, I say, he realizes that Free Grace is the glory of the Gospel! Do not be offended with it, I pray you, or you will be offended with your own life!

Then, on the other hand, there is another class of persons who are offended with our blessed Lord and Master because of the holiness of His precepts. Alas that there should be traitors in the camp who can get on very well with Grace and Free Grace, but then, alas, they turn it into licentiousness and take liberty to sin because of the freeness of Divine Mercy. If you begin to declare that, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." If you preach, as Jesus did, that he who forgives not his brother abides in death. If you tell them that the omission of these outward virtues will prove that the inward life is absent. If you declare that the axe is laid to the root of the trees and every tree that brings not forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. If you go on to insist upon it that there must be the outward marks and evidences of saintship or else the pretense of experience is a mere lie—then, by-and-by, they are offended and exhibit a bitter spirit!

Oh that none of us may act so. The highest holiness is the delight of the true Believer. If he could be absolutely perfect, he would rejoice above measure! It will be his Heaven to be perfect—and the one thing he strives after here below is to get the mastery over all sin—not that he hopes to be saved by that, but because he *is* saved and, being saved, out of love to Jesus Christ he desires to adorn the doctrine of God His Savior in all things! May we never be offended by the purity and perfection of our Lord and His teaching! I might continue this long list of things by which men have been offended with Christ—some because the Gospel is so mysterious, they say, and others because it is so very simple that it is not deep enough for such great intellects as theirs. Men, if they want to be offended because of Christ, will be sure to find something or other to quarrel with. They stum-

ble at this stumbling stone, "Whereunto also," says the Lord very solemnly, "they were appointed." They put this stumbling block in their own way and God appoints that they shall fall. They fall upon it now and are broken—and one of these days that stone will fall on them and grind them to powder!

My dear Hearers, I cannot stay longer on this subject, but if there are any of you that are offended because of Christ, I pray the Lord will make you feel your extreme folly and wickedness. Offended with the Redeemer? What madness! May you go and confess this insult to your Savior and accept Him at this very moment as your All in All!

II. Now I want to speak to professing Christians. THERE ARE SOME WHO JOIN THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST WHO, AFTER A TIME, ARE OFFENDED. Now, why is it that some who profess to *know* Him are offended because of Christ? Well, with some it is because the novelty wears off. Very earnest services were held and they were greatly affected. They thought that they repented and believed, so they joined the Church. Now the good men who held the services are gone and everything seems rather flat after such excitement. And so they have gone back again. They jumped into religion like a man into a bath—and they have jumped out again, put on their clothes—and gone back to the world and to what they were before!

Persons of this sort are very plentiful just now. If they were ever born again they were born with a fever upon them. And if you do not keep up the heat and let them live in an oven, they will die. We know that such hothouse plants will never pay for the fuel used in forcing them—we are grieved that it is so, but we have seen it so often that we do not wonder at it so much as we used to do! Hot weather breeds flies and warm showers bring out reptiles. There are not a few who professed to become Christians and who thought that they were always going to be happy. The evidence that they gave of being Christians was "that they felt so happy." I do not know that mere *happiness* is any evidence of being a Christian at all, for many are living far from God and yet account themselves very happy—while some of those who live near to God are groaning because they cannot get nearer still!

Yet a joyful feeling is regarded by many as conclusive evidence of salvation! And they add to this the notion that as soon as ever they believed in Jesus Christ the conflict was all over and there remained nothing more to be done in the way of resisting sin and denying the lusts of the flesh. They dreamed that they had only to start on pilgrimage and get to the Celestial City in a very short period of time—they thought they only had to draw the sword from the scabbard and all Canaan was conquered in an hour! Very soon they find that it is not so. Their old corruptions are alive. The flesh begins to pull a different way from that which they profess to have chosen. The devil tempts them and they are so disappointed by their new discovery that they become offended with Christ altogether! A sudden victory would suit them—but to carry a cross before winning a crown is not to their mind.

Others of them have met an opposition they did not expect from their adversaries, while from their friends they have not met with all the respect that they think they ought to have. Their friends and acquaintances have laughed at them! Their workmates in the shop have jeered at them! They did not count on this—they never counted the cost—and so they are offended because of Christ. Is it not a strange thing that we who begin our religion at the Cross, if we begin aright, should ever be astonished that the Cross keeps close to us, or should be surprised that the world treats us with disdain? But so it is. Persecution arises and many are offended.

It is not that the world burns them to death or puts them in prison. No, no—they only make a joke or two—or they give them the cold shoulder and shut them out of society. But the poor creatures are so thin-skinned that they cannot endure even these light afflictions and so they are offended and miss the blessing. When they joined the Christian Church everybody was so glad to see them at first, as we always are when there is a new-born child. But many more new converts have come since then—and the former ones feel that they are not pampered so much as they were—and so they become annoyed and under one pretense or another slink away. Because Christ's people do not carry them about as wonders and cry, "Hosanna," over them all their days, they are ready to go back to the world and complain that they have been disappointed with religion and with Christians!

Oh, but this is evil! This is a wrong spirit which must by no means be displayed! Yet I fear it is to be seen in many places. This is an offense which ought never to arise. We have known some who have become offended because of Christ, or were in great danger of it because they began to find that religion entailed more self-denial than they had reckoned upon. The precepts of our blessed Master come very close home to their consciences and gall them somewhat. He told them that the yoke was easy and that the burden was light—and so it is to the meek and lowly in heart—but they are not changed in heart and, therefore, they find the burden heavy and the yoke galling. I do not wonder that it is so, for that which is the delight of the renewed heart is bondage to the unregenerate spirit, and self-denials, which really are no denials at all to the man who is born again, are an iron bondage to those who still remain in their unregenerate state—they get offended and they go away from the Master whom they professed to serve.

I have known some good souls almost offended at the Master through the hard speeches of those who ought to have encouraged them. I was speaking not long ago with a young lady who had, for some, time been devoting herself very earnestly to the cause of Christ. I do not know one who had done more than she had done in her own sphere, but she was in great distress because the person with whom she had worked for many months had spoken very bitterly of her. Though she had been his best helper, he seemed to regard her as his worst enemy! And as she told me what he had said, I was very sorry, but the worst part about it was the temptation which the devil put in her way. The Evil One whispered, "Never

take a prominent place again! Give up your work. You are said to be eager to help—now be quiet and do nothing.”

Now, it will happen to all of us, more or less, that if we try to be zealous in the Master’s cause we shall be misunderstood. Wet blanket factories are pretty numerous and some benevolent Brother is sure to bring one of these articles for our use. He thinks that it will do us good, but it is mischievous to our spirits. Blessed is he who cannot be offended in that way. It may encourage you to know that, generally, those whom God largely blesses have to go through a great fight at first, from their own brothers and sisters. Look at David. He was to bring home giant Goliath’s head, but those elder brothers of his all said, “Because of the pride and the naughtiness of your heart, you are come to see the battle.”

They recommended him to stay at home with his sheep, even as they told us to keep clear of a pulpit—but God did not mean that he should remain hidden. If the Lord means to bless you, some of His very dear people will be for putting you back among the sheep—but do not be scandalized at Christ on that account! Stand firm as you have done. Press forward! Be not disgusted or discouraged, but, on the contrary, remember that opposition is very often the sign of coming success. Press forward, for, “Blessed is he that is not offended because of Me.” Moreover, many young Christians are greatly staggered by the ill conduct of professors. I think that there is no worse trial to a babe in Christ than to see elderly Christians walking inconsistently and living in a lukewarm state—and even speaking as if they were antagonistic to all earnest attempts to spread the kingdom of Christ. If you are one of God’s children you will not die at their hands any more than Joseph at the hands of his brothers! If the Lord has, indeed, quickened you with spiritual life, you will press on and work for the Master and not be ashamed.

It has frequently occurred to me to deplore that some professors fall back through trials of Providence. We occasionally miss members of the Church because they were pretty well-to-do when they joined with us, but things have gone badly with them and they feel as if they could not show themselves. They will even say that they have not any clothes fit to worship in. I have often told you that *any* clothes are fit to worship in as long as you have paid for them! Clothing, be it fine or threadbare, is nothing to me! As far as I am concerned, I really do not know what people wear. It never strikes my eye—I am too busy looking at your *faces*, when I can see you—to even notice what you may happen to wear. Come, oh come, to the House of God, my suffering Brothers and Sisters! Never let the devil prevail upon you to stay away!

If your shoe leaks. If there is a hole in the elbow of your coat. So what? The Lord does not look at that, nor do we! You come along. We shall be glad to see you, the most of us, and if there are some who will not be glad, they are nobodies—do not take any notice of them! But never stay away from the House of God because of your shabbiness. What can it matter? When you begin to get low in circumstances do not be proud and say, “I can’t dress as I once did, or make such a dash as I did and so I shall not go.” Why, you are still the same person—a man is a man notwithstanding

the little or the much which he possesses—and when earthly comforts are going, you ought to seek *heavenly* comforts all the more! And the poorer you get in substance, the richer you ought to seek to be in Divine Grace! “The poor have the Gospel preached unto them.”

But I know that this is a temptation. I have heard it said that in Jamaica in the Negro churches, when wages are low, attendance at the means of Grace begins to decline. I know that it is so, but so it ought not to be. Do not be offended with Christ! If He chooses to let you be poor, be satisfied to be poor! Yes, if you get to be as low as Job who sat on a dung-hill, scraping himself with a piece of an old pot, yet learn to say with the heroic Patriarch, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” If He is not ashamed of me, I will not be ashamed of Him, or ashamed to follow, even in rags, the standard of Him who hung upon the cross and triumphed there for me! “They parted His garments among them, and for His vesture did they cast lots.” I cannot be worse clad than He! Be not ashamed of Him, then.

III. The last head is that THERE ARE SOME WHO ARE NOT OFFENDED BECAUSE OF CHRIST AND THEY ARE DECLARED TO BE BLESSED. They are so because if God had not blessed them they would not be found clinging to their Lord, but would have gone back like others. Apart from anything else, it is a blessed thing to have Grace enough given you to hold fast to Christ under all circumstances. If you were not one of those whom He has chosen from before the foundations of the world. If you were not one of those whom Christ specially redeemed with His blood. If you were not one of those in whom the Holy Spirit has placed a new heart and a right spirit you would go back. But if you hold out to the end, you have in *that* the evidence that the Lord has loved you with an everlasting love!

Oh, you that are on and off with Jesus, what a poor hope yours must be! You that can run with the hare and hold with the hounds. You that try to serve God and Mammon—you have no marks of being God’s children! But those of you who put your foot down for Christ and cannot be moved—you who have said unto your souls, “By His Grace I will not depart from following the Lord”—you have, in that very fact, the evidence of being blessed! And then you shall find a blessedness growing out of your fidelity. I believe that persecuted ones have more blessedness than any other saints. There were never such sweet revelations of the love of Christ in Scotland as when the Covenanters met in the mosses and on the hill-side.

No sermons ever seemed to be so sweet as those which were preached when Claverhouse’s dragoons were out and the minister read his text by the lightning’s flash! The saints never sang so sweetly as when they let loose those wild bird notes among the heather. The flock of slaughter—the people of God that were hunted down by the foe—these were they who saw the Lord! I guarantee you that in Lambeth Palace there were happier hearts in the Lollards’ dungeon than there were in the Archbishop’s Hall! Down there where men have lain to rot, as did Bunyan in Bedford Jail, there have been more dreams of Heaven and more visions of celestial

things than in the courts of princes! The Lord Jesus loves to reveal Himself to those of His saints who dare take the bleak side of the hill with Him. If you are willing to follow Him when the wind blows in your teeth and the snow flakes come thickly till you are almost blinded, and if you can say—

***“Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I’ll follow where He goes,”***

you shall have such unveilings of His love to your soul as shall make you forget the sneers of men and the sufferings of the flesh! God shall make you triumphant in all places!

You know this already by experience, do you not? You that are His people must know that whenever you have had to suffer for Christ it has been a blessed thing for you. Whenever anybody jeered at you and you have felt it for the time, yet, if you have been able to bear it well, it has brought many a sweet reflection afterwards. Somebody pushed good Mr. Kilpin into the gutter and slapped him at the same time and said, “Take that, John Bunyan!” Whereupon the good man took off his hat and said, “I would take 50 times as much as that to have the honor to be called John Bunyan.” Learn to look upon insults for Christ in the same light and when they call you by an ill name reply, “I could bear a thousand times as much as that for the pleasure of being associated with Christ in the world’s derision.”

But what blessedness awaits you if you are not offended because of Jesus! You are blessed while you are waiting for Him, but your best reward is to come! In that hereafter, when the morning breaks on the everlasting shore, how will they be ashamed and disgusted with themselves who sought their own honor and esteem and denied their Lord and Master! Where will Demas be then, who chose the present world and forsook his Lord? Where will that son of perdition be who chose the 30 pieces of silver and sold the Prince of Life? What shame will seize upon the coward, the fearful, the unbelieving, the people who checked conscience and stifled conviction because a fool’s laugh was too much for them! Then they will have to bear the Savior’s scorn and the everlasting contempt of all holy beings.

But the men who stood meekly forward to confess their Lord—who were willing to be set in the pillory of scorn for Christ, ready to be spit upon for Him, ready to be called ill names for His sake, ready to lose their character, their substance, their liberty and their lives for Him—oh how calmly will they await the Great Assize when loyalty shall receive honor from the great King! How bright will be their faces when He that sits on the Throne will say, “They confessed Me before men, and now will I confess them before My Father which is in Heaven. These are Mine, My Father,” He will say, “they are Mine. They clung unto Me and now I acknowledge them as My jewels.”

These are they that followed the Lamb where ever He went. They read the Word and what they found there they believed! They saw their Lord’s will in the Scriptures and they labored to do it. They were faithful to conscience and to conviction—and the Spirit dwelt in them and guided their

lives. They shall be the Redeemer's crown and the beloved of His Father. They were the poor of this world—they were considered to be mere idiots by some—and were thought to have gone mad by others. But they are the Lord's own elect! Jesus will say, "They were with Me in My tribulation. They were with Me in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation and now they are Mine, and they shall be with Me on My Throne. Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world."

Oh, you are happy, you people of God who lose good situations because you cannot do dishonest things! You who cannot break the Sabbath and therefore shut the shop and lose a large part of your incomes! You who, for Christ's sake, dare to be singular and are not ashamed to be called "puritanical" and to be pointed out as hypocrites! You who bravely refuse to indulge in the intoxicating cup and utterly turn aside from evil companions! You who will not be found in the haunts of vice which men call pleasure! You, who, though you may think a thing to be lawful will, nevertheless, deny yourselves because it is not expedient and will avoid the appearance of evil! You who try to put your feet down in the footprints of Christ and follow Him in all things—you *are* and *shall be* truly blessed!! With all your faults and imperfections which you mourn over, your Lord is not ashamed of you and He will confess you at the last!

Oh, may you all be true adherents of Jesus! I set up a standard tonight and will try to act as recruiting officer. Who will be enlisted into the army of Christ tonight? Is any young man ready to say, "I will"? Yes, but count the cost! Are you prepared to be ridiculed? Are you prepared to suffer? Are you willing to put up with the hatred of your own family sooner than forsake God and His Christ and the Truth? We will not have you if you won't! Christ will not acknowledge you if you won't! It must be a thorough coming to Him. "Come you out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters."

Who is on the Lord's side?—Who? Let your hearts answer, for there shall come a day when that same word shall thunder over all the earth, "Who is on the Lord's side? Who?" Many then will rue the day in which they were ashamed to confess a persecuted Christ! May we be on His side tonight—first trusting Him, relying upon Him, alone, for salvation—and then surrendering ourselves to Him to be His forever. Amen.

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HOLY VIOLENCE

NO. 252

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 15, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“From the days of John the Baptist until
now the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence
and the violent take it by force.”
Matthew 11:12.***

WHEN John the Baptist preached in the wilderness of Judea, the throng of people who pressed around him became extremely violent to get near enough to hear his voice. Often when our Savior preached did the like scene occur. We find that the multitudes were immense beyond all precedent. He seemed to drain every city, every town and every village as He went along preaching the Word of the Gospel. These people, moreover, not like our common Church and Chapel-goers—content to hear, if they could, and yet more content to keep without hearing, if it were possible—were extremely earnest to get near enough to hear Jesus. So intense was their desire to hear the Savior that they pressed upon Him, insomuch that they trod one upon another. The crowd became so violent to approach Him, that some of the weaker ones were cast down and trod upon.

Now, our Savior, when He witnessed all this struggling round about to get near Him, said, “This is just a picture of what is done spiritually by those who will be saved. As you press and throng about Me,” said Christ, “and thrust one another with arm and elbow, to get within reach of My voice, even so must it be if you would be saved, ‘For the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.’” He pictured to Himself a crowd of souls desiring to get to the living Savior. He saw them press and crowd and throng and thrust and tread on one another, in their anxious desire to get at Him. He warned His hearers that unless they had this earnestness in their souls, they would never reach Him savingly. But if they had it, they should certainly be saved. “From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.”

“But,” says one, “do you wish us to understand that if a man is to be saved he must use violence and vehement earnestness in order to obtain salvation?” I do, most assuredly. That is the doctrine of the text. “But,” says one, “I thought it was all the work of God.” So it is, from first to last. But when God has begun the work in the soul, the constant effect of God’s work in us is to set us working. And where God’s Spirit is really striving with us, we shall begin to strive, too. This is just a test whereby

we may distinguish the men who have received the Spirit of God from those who have not received it. Those who have received the Spirit in verity and truth are violent men. They have a violent anxiety to be saved and they violently strive that they may enter in at the strait gate. Well they know that seeking to enter in is not enough, for many shall seek to enter in but shall not be able and therefore do they strive with might and main.

I shall this morning, first, direct your attention to these violent men. Look at them. Secondly, we shall show their conduct. What makes them so violent? Are they justified in this impetuous vehemence? We shall next rejoice in the fact that they are sure to be successful in their violence. And then I shall endeavor to arouse in your hearts, by the help of God's Holy Spirit, that holy violence, without which the gates of Heaven will be shut in your teeth and you will never be able to enter the pearly portals of Paradise.

I. First then, LET US LOOK AT THESE VIOLENT MEN. Understand that what they are they have been made by Divine Grace. They are not naturally so of themselves. But there has been a secret work of grace in them and *then* they have become violent men. Look at these violent men who are violently in earnest to be saved. You will observe them when they come up to the House of God. There is no yawning with them, no listlessness or inattention, no imagination that if they do but sit in the place the hour-and-a-half which is regularly allotted to Divine worship, they will have done enough. No. They hear with both their ears and they look with both their eyes and all through the service they have an intense desire that they may find Christ.

Meet them as they go up to the House of Prayer and ask them why they are going there. They know right well what they are going after. "I am going there to find mercy and to find peace and rest to my soul. For I am in anguish about sin and I want to find the Savior. I am in hopes that being in the way the Lord will meet with me, so I am about to lay myself down by the side of the pool of Bethesda, in the hope that the Holy Spirit will stir the pool and enable me to step in." You do not find these people like the most of modern hearers, critical, or else careless. No. They are all awake to see whether there is not something to be had which may be a balm to their wearied spirits and a cordial to their troubled breasts.

Mark these violent people after they have gone home. They go to their chambers and they begin to pray. Not that prayer between sleeping and waking that some of you are used to attend to—not that drowsy supplication which never gets beyond the ceiling of your bedroom. But they fall on their knees and with a holy anxiety they begin to cry, "Lord, save or I perish! O Lord save me. I am ready to perish, Lord. I beseech You, stretch out Your hand and rescue my poor soul from that destruction which now haunts my spirit." And see them after they have prayed, how they turn

over the Word of God. They do not read its chapters as if the mere looking at the letters was enough, but they read just as Watts says in his hymn—

***“Yet save a trembling sinner, Lord,
Whose hope, still hovering round Your Word
Would light on some sweet promise there,
Some sure support against despair.”***

And down they are on their knees again. “O Lord speak to my soul through Your Word! Lord help me to lay hold on the promise, enable me to grasp it! Oh, let not my soul perish for lack of Your help and Your Grace.” And then see these violent men whom God has made in earnest about being saved. You will not find them leaving their devotions in their closets, or in their House of Prayer. Wherever they go there is a solemn earnestness upon them which the world cannot understand. They are seeking after Jesus and rest they neither will nor can until they find Him. Their nights are disturbed with dreams and their days are made sad with their partings after the blessing—without which they cannot live and without which they dare not die.

My Hearer, have you ever been one of these violent men, or are you so now? Blessed be God if this holy violence is in your spirit—you shall take Heaven by force yet—you shall take it by storm and carry the gates of Heaven by the battery of your prayers. Only persevere with importunity. Plead, wrestle, continue to strive and you must at length prevail. But ah, my Hearer, if you have never had a strong unconquerable anxiety about your soul, you are as yet a stranger to the things of God. You do not understand that violence victorious without which the gates of Heaven never can be stormed. Some of us can look back to the time when we were seeking Christ. I could myself awake of a morning easily then. The first ray of light that came into my chamber would awaken me to take up Baxter’s Call to the Unconverted that lay under my pillow. I believed I had not repented enough and I began to read that. Oh, how I hoped that would break my heart. And then I would get Doddridge’s Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul and Alleine’s Alarm and read them.

But, still, I think I might have read them to this day and not been a whit the better if I had not something better than alarm, in remembering that Christ came into the world to save every sinner who was willing to cast himself upon His blood and righteousness and take him at His Word and trust God. Have you not seen many—and are there not many among us—men who have said “I must have mercy, I must have it—it is not a thing which I may have, or may not have but I am a lost soul if I have it not”? And when they have gone to pray they have seemed like Samsons, they have got hold of the two posts of Heaven’s gate of mercy and they have pulled as if they would pull them up by their eternal roots sooner than not get the blessing. They have hammered at the gates of Heaven until it seemed as if they would split the golden bolts rather than be turned

away. No man ever gets peace until he gets into such a passion of earnestness to be saved that he cannot find peace until Christ speaks pardon to his soul and brings him into life and liberty. "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force."

But this violence does not end when a man finds Christ. It then begins to exercise itself in another way. The man who is pardoned and who knows it, then becomes violently in love with Christ. He does not love Him just a little, but he loves Him with all his soul and all his might. He feels as if he could wish to die for Christ and his heart pants to be able to live alone with his Redeemer and serve Him without interruption. Mark such a man who is a true Christian. Mark his prayers and you will see there is violence in all his supplications when he pleads for the souls of men. Mark his outward actions and they are violently sincere, violently earnest. Mark him when he preaches—there is no dull droning out of a monotonous discourse—he speaks like a man who means what he says and who must speak it, or else woe would he unto him if he preached not the Gospel.

As I look around on many of the Churches, yes, on many members of my own Church, I am apt to fear that they are not God's children at all, because they have nothing of this holy violence. Have you ever read Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*? I dare say you have thought it one of the strongest imaginations ever put together, especially that part where the old mariner represents the corpses of all the dead men rising up—all of them dead, yet rising up to manage the ship. Dead men pulling the ropes, dead men steering, dead men spreading the sails. I thought what a strange idea that was. But do you know I have lived to see that true—I have seen it done. I have gone into Churches and I have seen a dead man in the pulpit and a dead man as a deacon and a dead man holding the plate at the door and dead men sitting to hear. You say, "Strange!" but I have. I have gone into societies and I have seen it all going on so regularly. These dead men, you know, never overstep the bounds of prudence—not they—they have not life enough to do that. They always pull the rope orderly, "as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen."

And the dead man in the pulpit, is he not most regular and precise? He systematically draws his handkerchief from his pocket and uses it at the regular period, in the middle of the sermon. He would not think of violating a single rubric that has been laid down by his old-fashioned Church. Well, I have seen these Churches—I know where to point them out—and have seen dead men doing everything. "No," says one, "you can't mean it?" Yes, I do, the men were *spiritually dead*. I have seen the minister preaching without a particle of life, a sermon which is only fresh in the sense in which a fish is fresh when it has been packed in ice. I have seen the people sit and they have listened as if they had been a group of statues—the chiseled marble would have been as much affected by the sermon as

they. I have seen the deacons go about their business just as orderly and with as much precision as if they had been mere automatons and not men with hearts and souls at all. Do you think God will ever bless a Church that is like that? Are we ever to take the kingdom of Heaven with a troop of dead men? Never! We want living ministers, living hearers, living deacons, living elders and until we have such men who have got the very fire of life burning in their souls, who have got tongues of life and eyes of life and souls of life, we shall never see the kingdom of Heaven taken by storm. "For the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force."

Frequently complaints are made and surprise expressed by individuals who have never found a blessing rest upon anything they have attempted to do in the service of God. "I have been a Sunday-School teacher for years," says one, "and I have never seen any of my girls or boys converted." No, and the reason most likely is you have never been violent about it. You have never been compelled by the Divine Spirit to make up your mind that converted they should be and no stone should be left unturned until they were. You have never been brought by the Spirit to such a passion that you have said, "I cannot live unless God bless me. I cannot exist unless I see some of these children saved." Then, falling on your knees in agony of prayer and putting forth afterwards your trust with the same intensity towards Heaven, you would never have been disappointed, "for the violent take it by force."

And you, too, my Brother in the Gospel, you have marveled and wondered why you have not seen souls regenerated. Did you ever expect it? Why, you preach like one who does not believe what he is saying. Those who believe in Christ may say of you with kind partiality, "Our minister is a dear good man." But the careless young men that attend your ministry, say, "Does that man expect to make me believe that which he only utters as a dry story and to convince me when I see him go through the service with all the dullness and monotony of dead routine?" Oh, my Brethren, what we want today in the Churches is violence, not violence against each other, but violence against death and Hell—against the hardness of other men's hearts and against the sleepiness of our own. In Martin Luther's time, truly the kingdom of Heaven suffered violence. The whole religious world was wide awake, Now, I fear for the most part it is sound asleep. Go where you may, our Churches have come to be old established businesses. They do not care to extend themselves.

We must have new blood, no—we must have new *fire* from Heaven to fall upon the sacrifice or else like Baal's priests, they may cut and hack our bodies and distract our minds in vain. There will be "no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regard." The sacrifice shall lay unburnt upon the altar and the world will say our God is not the living God, or surely we are not His people. "And you shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in

darkness and you shall not prosper in your ways—and you shall be only oppressed and spoiled evermore and no man shall save you.” Violent men, then, are those that take the kingdom of Heaven by force.

II. Now, BRING THESE VIOLENT MEN FORWARD, AND LET US ASK THEM WHAT THEY ARE ABOUT. When a man is very earnest, he ought to be ready to give a reason for his earnestness. “Sirs, what is all this strife about? Why all this earnestness? You seem to be boiling over with enthusiasm. What is up? Is there anything that is worth making such a stir about?” Hear them and they will soon convince you that all their enthusiasm and striving to enter the kingdom of Heaven by force is not a whit more strong than reasonable.

The first reason why poor sinners take the kingdom of Heaven by force is because they feel they have no natural right to it. And, therefore, they must take it by force if they would get it at all. When a man belongs to the House of Lords and knows that he has got a seat there by prescriptive right and title, he does not trouble himself at the time of the elections. But there is another man, who says, “WELL, I should like a seat in the House of Commons, but I have no absolute right to it. If I get it, it will be by a desperate struggle.” Do you not see how busy he is on the day! How the carriages fly about everywhere? And how earnest are his supporters that he may stand at the head of the poll and win the day? He says, “I have no absolute right to it. If I had, then I would just take it easy and walk into my seat at the proper time.” But now he labors and strives and wrestles, because without so doing he does not expect to succeed.

Now, look at those who are saved. They have no right to the inheritance they are seeking. What are they? Sinners, the chief of sinners. In their own esteem the vilest of the vile. Now, if they would get Heaven they must take it by force, for they have no right to it by birth or lineal entail. And what else are they? They are the poor ones of this earth. There stands the rabbi at the gate and he says, “You can’t come in here. This is no place for the poor to enter.” “But,” says he, “I will.” And pushing the rabbi aside, he takes it by force. Then, again, they were Gentiles, too. And Jews stood at the gate and said, “Stand back, you Gentile dogs, you cannot come in.” Now, if such would be saved, they must take the kingdom of Heaven by storm for they have no rights to assert. Ah, my fellow men, if you sit down and fold your arms and say, “I am so good I have a right to Heaven”—how deceived you will be. But if God has convinced you of your lost, ruined and undone condition and if He has put His quickening Spirit within you, you will use a bold and desperate violence to force your way into the kingdom of Heaven. The Spirit of God will not lead you to be insincere in the presence of foes, or fainthearted in the overwhelming crisis. He will drive you to desperate labor that you may be saved.

Ask one such man, again, why is he so violent in prayer. He replies, “Ah, I know the value of the mercy I receive. Why, I am asking for pardon,

for Heaven, for eternal life and am I to get these with a few yawns and sleepy prayers? I am asking that I may wear the white robe and sing the never-ending song of praise. And do you think that a few poor supplications are to be enough? No, my God, if You would make me tarry a hundred years and sigh and groan and cry through that long century—yes, if I might but have Heaven at last, all my prayers would have been well spent—no, had they been a thousand times as many, they were well rewarded if You would hear me at last. But,” says he again, “if you want to know why I am so earnest, let me tell you it is because I cannot bear to be lost forever.”

Hear the earnest sinner when he speaks. You say to him, “Why so earnest?” The tear is in his eye, the flush is on his cheek, there is emotion in every feature, while he says, “Would to God I could be far more earnest. Do you know I am a lost soul, perhaps before another hour is over I may be shut up in the hopeless fires of Hell! Oh, God, have mercy on me, for if You do not, how terrible is my fate. I shall be lost—lost forever!”

Once let a man know that Hell is beneath his feet and if that does not make him earnest, what will? No wonder that his prayers are importunate, that his endeavors are intensely earnest—when he knows that he must escape, or else the devouring fire will lay hold on him. Suppose now you had been a Jew in the olden time and one day while taking a walk in the fields you had seen a man running with all his might. “Stop!” you say, “stop! My dear Friend, you will exhaust yourself.” He goes on and on, with all his might. You run after him. “Pause awhile,” you say, “and rest. The grass is soft, sit down here and take your ease. See, here I have some food and a bottle. Stop and refresh yourself.” But without saluting you he says, “No, I must away, away, away.” “Why? Why?” you say. He is gone so far ahead, you run after him with all your might. And scarcely able to turn his head, he exclaims, “The city of refuge! The city of refuge! The manslayer is behind me.” Now, it is all accounted, for you do not wonder that he runs with all his might, now. When the manslayer is after him, you can well understand that he would never pause for rest until he has found the city of refuge. So let a man know that the devil is behind him, that the avenging Law of God is pursuing him and who can make him stop? Who shall endeavor to make him stay his race until he enters Christ, the City of Refuge and finds himself secure? This will make a man earnest indeed to dread “the wrath to come,” and to be laboring to escape from there.

Another reason why every man who would be safe must be in earnest and be violent is this—there are so many adversaries to oppose us—that if we are not violent we shall never be able to overcome them. Do you remember that beautiful parable in John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim*? “I saw also, that the Interpreter took him by the hand and led him into a pleasant place, where was built a stately palace, beautiful to behold—at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted. He saw also upon the top thereof certain

persons walking, who were clothed all in gold. Then said Christian, ‘May we go in there?’ Then the Interpreter took him and led him up toward the door of the palace. And behold, at the door stood a great company of men, as desirous to go in, but dare not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door, at a table side, with a book and his ink-horn before him, to take the name of him that should enter therein. He saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armor to keep it, being resolved to do to the men that would enter what hurt and mischief they could. Now was Christian somewhat amazed.

“At last, when every man started back for fear of the armed men, Christian saw a man of a very stout countenance come up to the man that sat there to write, saying, ‘Set down my name, Sir;’ the which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword and put a helmet upon his head and rush toward the door upon the armed men, who laid upon him with deadly force, but the man, not at all discouraged, fell to cutting and hacking most fiercely. So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, (Matt. 11:12; Acts 14:22), he cut his way through them all and pressed forward into the palace, at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those that walked upon the top of the palace, saying—

**‘Come in, come in,
Eternal glory you shall win.’**

So he went in and was clothed with such garments as they.” And surely the dreamer saw the Truth of God in his dream It is even so. If we would win eternal glory we must fight—

**“Sure we must fight, if we would reign,
Increase our courage, Lord!”**

You have enemies within you, enemies without, enemies beneath, enemies on every side—the world, the flesh and the devil. And if the Spirit of God has quickened you, He has made a soldier of you and you can never sheathe your sword till you gain the victory. The man who would be saved must be violent, because of the opposition he has to encounter.

But do you still condemn this man and say that he is an enthusiast and a fanatic? Then God Himself comes forth to vindicate His despised servant. Know that this is the sign, the mark of distinction between the true child of God and the bastard-professor. The men who are not God’s children are a careless, stumbling, coldhearted race. But the men that are God’s in sincerity and truth, are burning as well as shining lights. They are as brilliant constellations in the firmament of Heaven, burning stars of God. Of all things in the world, God hates most the man that is neither hot nor cold. Better have no religion than have a little—better to be altogether without it—enemies to it, than to have just enough to make you respectable but not enough to make you earnest. What does God say concerning the religion of this day? “So then because you are lukewarm and

neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of My mouth.” Lukewarmness, of all things, God abhors and yet of all things it is the predominant mark of the present day.

The time of the Methodists, of Whitfield and Wesley, was a time indeed of fire and of Divine violence and vigor. But we have gradually cooled down, now, into a delightful consistency and though here and there, there is a little breaking out of the old desperado spirit of the Christian religion, yet for the most part, the world has so mesmerized the Church that she is as nearly asleep as she can be. And much of her teaching and much of the doings of her religious societies is sheer sleepwalking. It is not the wide-awake earnestness of them that walk with their eyes open. They walk in their sleep—very nimbly they walk, too, and very nicely they “trim their way.” But very little is there of the life of God in anything they do and very little of Divine success attending their agencies, because they are not violent with regard to the matters of the kingdom of God.

III. Having thus endeavored to screen the violent men from harsh criticism, I shall now invite you for a moment to reflect that THE VIOLENT MAN IS ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL. Do you think you are going to be carried to Heaven on a feather bed? Have you got a notion in your heads that the road to Paradise is all a lawn with the grass smoothly mown, still waters and green pastures ever and now and then to cheer you? You have got to clear your heads of that deceitful fancy. The way to Heaven is up hill and down hill. Up hill with difficulty, down hill with trials. It is through fire and through water, through flood and through flame, by the lions and by the leopards. Through the very mouths of dragons is the path to Paradise. But the man who finds it so and who desperately resolves in the strength of God to tread that path—no, who does not resolve as if *he* could do nothing else *but* resolve, and who feels driven, as if with a hurricane behind him, to go into the right road—this man is never unsuccessful—never!

Where God has given a violent anxiety for salvation he never disappoints it. No soul that has ever cried for it with a violent cry has been disappointed. From the beginning of creation until now there has never been raised to the Throne of God a violent and earnest prayer which missed its answer. Go, Soul, in the strong confidence that if you go earnestly you go successfully. God may sooner deny Himself than deny the request of an earnest man. Our God may sooner cease to be “the Lord God, gracious and merciful,” than cease to bless the men who seek the gates of Heaven with the violence of faith and prayer. Oh, reflect that all the saints above have been led by Divine Grace to wrestle hard as we do now with sins and doubts and fears. They had no smooth path to Glory. They had to dispute every inch of the way at the sword’s point. So must you—and as surely as you are enabled to do so, so surely will you conquer. Only the violent are saved and *all* the violent are saved. When God makes a man violent after

salvation, that man cannot perish. The gates of Heaven may sooner be unhinged than that man be robbed of the prize for which he has fought.

IV. And, now I have to close, for I find my voice fails me this morning, when most I need it. I have to close abruptly by endeavoring earnestly TO EXCITE EACH OF YOU TO A VIOLENCE AFTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. In this great crowd there is surely some of the class I am about to describe. There is one man here who says, “I don’t know that I have done much amiss in my life—I am about as regular a man as there is living. Don’t I attend a place of worship regularly? I believe that I shall most certainly be saved. But I don’t take much trouble about it, it never disquiets me particularly. I don’t like”—says this man—“that intrusive brand of religion that always seems to be thrusting itself in everybody’s way. I think it is quite right that people should go to their place of worship, but why take any further trouble? I just believe that I shall fare as other people fare. I am a steady, unpretending sort of man and I have no reason to doubt that I shall be saved.”

Ah, Friend, you have never seen the gate of Heaven. It is obvious that you have never seen it, or else you would know better. For at the gate of Heaven multitudes are struggling—the gates of Heaven are thronged and he that would enter there must press and elbow and push—or he may go away certain that he can never enter. No, your easy religion will just bring you in too late. It may carry you nine miles out of ten. But what is the good of that to a man who must perish unless he is carried the whole way?

It will go a good way with you when you follow the counsels of a Gospel ministry with outward propriety, but at the bar of God it will utterly fail you—when you lack the inward witness of strong crying and supplications. No, an easy religion is the way to Hell—it is not the way to Heaven. Let your soul alone and you need not expect much good fruit to come of it, any more than a farmer who leaves his fields alone, need expect to reap a harvest. Your religion is vain and futile if that is all. “Ah” cries another “but I am in quite a different case. I am a sinner so vile, Sir, that I know I never can be saved, therefore, what is the use? I never think about it now, except with blank despair. Have I not long rebelled against God—will He ever pardon me? No, no. Don’t exhort me to try. I may as well take my full swing of pleasure while I am here, for I feel I never shall enjoy the pleasures of Heaven hereafter.”

Stop Friend, “The violent take it by force.” If the Lord has taught you your utter sinfulness, go and try. Say—

***“I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try.
For if I stay away,
I know I must forever die.”***

Go home, go to your closet, fall on your knees, put your trust alone in Christ and, my Friend, if the Lord does not have mercy upon you, then He is not the God we have preached to you and He has not substantiated His faithful promise—you cannot—you shall not seek in vain. But mark, you must not think that your once seeking is enough—continue in it. If God has given you His Spirit you will continue—you will never leave off praying until you get the answer. Oh, my Friend if God has given you this day a longing after His love—if He has caused you to say, “I will never give it up, I will perish at the foot of the Cross if I perish at all.” You can no more perish than the angels in Paradise. Be of good cheer. Use violence again and again and you shall take it by force.

And then, let each one of us, as we retire, and if we have tasted that the Lord is precious, determine to love Him more earnestly than before. I never leave my pulpit without feeling ashamed of myself. I do not remember a time when I have been able to go home without being suffused with humiliation and cast down with self-reproach because I had not been more earnest. I very seldom flog myself for using an ugly word, or anything of that sort. It is for not having been earnest enough about the salvation of men. When I sit down, I begin to think of this vast stream of people being swept along towards the gulf of eternity—bound for Heaven or Hell and I wonder how it is that I do not weep all the time I am here—why it is that I do not find red-hot burning words with which to address you? I find fault with others sometimes but far more with myself in this matter. Oh, how is it that a man can be God’s ambassador and yet have so callous, so insensitive a heart, as many of us have in this work? Oh, how is it that we tell the tale of death and life, of Heaven and Hell, of Christ crucified and His Gospel despised, so quietly as we do?

Condemn not the minister for excitement or fanaticism—condemn him because he is not half in earnest as he ought to be. Oh my God! Impress me, I beseech You, more with the value of souls and then impress my Hearers, also, with the value of their own souls. Are you not going today, many of you, post-haste to perdition? Is it not a fact that your conscience tells you that many of you are enemies to God? You are without Christ, you have never been washed in His blood—never been forgiven. Oh, my Hearers, if you continue as you are, a few more rising suns and then your sun must set forever. Only a few more Sundays have you to waste, a few more sermons have you to hear and the pit of Hell must open wide its jaws—and then where are you?

But a few more days and the heavens shall be rent and Christ shall come to judge the earth and Sinner, where are you? Oh, I beseech you now by the living God and by His Son, Jesus Christ, think of your state! Repent of your sins—turn to God! Oh Spirit of God, turn, I pray You, turn the hearts of sinners now! Remember, if you now repent, if you now confess your sins, Christ is preached to you. He came into the world to save

*sinner*s. Oh, believe on Him! Throw yourselves before His Cross. Trust in His blood. Rely on His righteousness—

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

Oh, if I had the tongue of Whitfield, or the mouth of an archangel! If I could speak like a cherubim, I would pour out my heart before you and pray in Christ’s stead, that you would be reconciled to God. I must face you soon before God’s great bar and shall your blood be laid to my door? Shall you perish and must I perish with you for unfaithfulness? May God forbid it!

Now may He—

***“Let you see your lost estate,
And save you before it is too late,
Wake you to righteousness.”***

The Lord have mercy upon you all for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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

THE SINNER'S FRIEND

NO. 556

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

***“A friend of publicans and sinners.”
Matthew 11:19.***

MANY a true word is spoken in jest and many a tribute to virtue has been unwittingly paid by the sinister lips of malice. The enemies of our Lord Jesus Christ thought to brand Him with infamy, hold Him up to derision, and hand His name down to everlasting scorn as “a friend of publicans and sinners.” Short-sighted mortals! Their scandal published His reputation. To this day the Savior is adored by the title which was minted as a slur. It was designed to be a stigma that every good man would shudder at and shrink from. It has proved to be a fascination which wins the heart and enchants the soul of all the godly.

Saints in Heaven and saints on earth delight to sing of Him thus—“Savior of sinners they proclaim, Sinners of whom the chief I am.” What the invidious Jews said in bitter spleen has been turned by the Holy Spirit to the most gracious account! Where they poured out vials of hate, odors of sacred incense arise. Troubled consciences have found a sweet balm in the very sound. Jesus, “the friend of publicans and sinners,” has proved Himself friendly to them and they have become friends with Him. He has completely justified the very name which His enemies gave Him in ribald affront.

We shall take this title of Jesus tonight as an order of distinction which sets forth His excellency and as God helps us, we shall try to exalt His name and proclaim His fame while we attempt to explain how He was the Friend of sinners. And how He shows that He is still the same.

I. OUR LORD PROVED HIMSELF IN HIS OWN TIME TO BE THE FRIEND OF SINNERS. What better proof could He give of it than coming from the majesty of His Father's house to the meanness of Bethlehem's manger? What better proof could He give than leaving the society of cherubim and seraphim to lie in the manger where the horned oxen fed and to become the associate of fallen men? The Incarnation of the Savior in the very *form* of sinners! Taking upon Himself the *flesh* of sinners! Being *born* of a sinner! Having a sinner for His reputed father—His very Being a Man which is tantamount to being in the same form with sinners—surely this were enough to prove that He is the sinner's Friend!

When you take up the roll of His earthly lineage and begin to read it through, you will be struck with the fact that there are but few women mentioned in it. And yet three out of those mentioned were harlots, so

that even in His lineage there was the taint of sin and a sinner's blood would have run in His veins if He had been the true son of Joseph. But inasmuch as He was begotten by the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin, in Him was no sin. Yet His reputed pedigree ran through the veins of sinners.

Tamar and Rahab and Bathsheba are three names which bring to remembrance deeds of shame and yet these stand in the records as the ancestors of the Son of Mary, the sinner's Friend! As soon as Jesus Christ, being born in the likeness of sinful flesh, has come to years of maturity and has commenced His real life-work, He at once discloses His friendship for sinners by associating with them. You do not find Him standing at a distance, issuing His mandates and His orders to sinners to make themselves better. No, you find Him coming among them like a good workman who stands over his work!

He takes His place where the sin and the iniquity are and He personally comes to deal with it. He does not write out a prescription and send by another hand His medicines with which to heal the sickness of sin. He comes right into the lazar-house, touches the wounded, looks at the sick. And there is healing in the touch. There is life in the look! The Great Physician took upon Himself our sicknesses and bore our infirmities and so proved Himself to be really the sinner's Friend.

Some people appear to like to have a philanthropic love towards the fallen, but yet they would not touch them with a pair of tongs. They would lift them up if they could, but it must be by some machinery—some sort of contrivance by which they would not degrade themselves or contaminate their own hands. Not so the Savior! Up to the very elbows He seems to thrust those gracious arms of His into the mire to pull up the lost one out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay. He takes, Himself, the mattock and the spade and goes to work in the great quarry that He may get out the rough stones which afterwards He will Himself polish with His own bitter tears and bloody sweat that He may make them fit to shine forever in the glorious temple of the Lord His God.

He comes Himself into direct, personal contact with sin, without being contaminated with it. He comes as close to it as a man can come. He eats and drinks with sinners. He sits at the Pharisee's table one day and does not rise because there is a crowd of people no better than they should be coming near Him. Another day He goes to the publican's house and the publican had, no doubt, been a great extortioner in his time. But Jesus sits there and that day does salvation come to that publican's house. Beloved, this is a sweet trait about Christ and proves how real and how true was His love, that He made His associations with sinners and did not shun even the chief of them.

No, He not only came among them, but He was always seeking their good by His ministry. If there were anywhere a sinner, a lost sheep of the

house of Israel, Christ was after that sinner. Never such an indefatigable shepherd—He sought that which was lost till He found it. One of His earliest works of mercy we will tell you of in brief. He was once on a journey and Samaria was a little out of His way. But there lived in a city of that country a woman—ah, the less said of her the better. She had had five husbands and he whom she then had was not her husband, nor were any of the others either.

She was a disgrace to that city of Samaria. But Jesus, who has a keen eye for sinners and a heart which beats high for them, means to save that woman and He must and He will have her. Being weary, He sits down on a well to rest. A special Providence brings the woman to the well. The conventionalities of society forbid Him to talk with her. But He breaks through the narrow bigotry of caste. She is a Samaritan by birth—He cares not for that. But will that most holy Being condescend to have familiar conversation with her—a dishonor to her sex?

He will. His disciples may marvel when they come back and find Him talking with her, but He will do it. He begins to open up the Word of Life to her understanding and that woman becomes the first Christian missionary we ever hear of—for she ran back to the city, leaving her water pot and crying, “Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” And they came and believed. And there was great joy in that city of Samaria!

You know, too, that there was another sinner. He was a bad fellow—I fear him. He had been constantly grinding the faces of the poor and getting more out of them by way of taxation than he should have done. But the little man had the bump of curiosity and he must see the Preacher, and the Preacher must love him—for I say there was a wonderful attraction in Jesus to a sinner. That sinner's heart was like a piece of iron—Christ's heart was like a loadstone. And wherever there was a sinner the loadstone began to feel it and soon the sinner began to feel the loadstone, too.

“Zaccheus,” said Christ, “make haste and come down, for today I must abide at your house.” And down comes the sinner and salvation has come to his house at that hour! Oh, Christ never seemed to preach so sweetly as when He was preaching a sinner's sermon. I would have loved to have seen that dear face of His when He cried, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”! Or better still, to have seen His eyes running with whole showers of tears when He said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not come!”

Or to have heard Him preach those three great sermons upon sinners when He described the woman as sweeping the house and taking away the dust that she might find the lost piece of her money. And the shep-

herd going from hill to hill after the wandering sheep. And the father running to welcome that rag-clad prodigal, kissing him with the kisses of love, clothing him with the best robe and inviting him into the feast while they did dance and make merry because the lost was found and he who was dead was alive again!

Why, beyond a doubt He was the mightiest of preachers for sinners! Oh, how He loved them! Never mind the Pharisees—He has thunderbolts for them. “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees!” But when publicans and harlots come, He always has the gate of mercy ajar for them. For them He always has some tender word, some loving saying, such as this—“Him that comes unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,” or such like words of tender wooing. The very chief of sinners was thus drawn into the circle of His disciples. And you know, dear Friends, He did not prove His love merely by preaching to them and living with them. Nor by His patience in enduring their contradiction against Himself and all their evil words and deeds—He proved it by His prayers, too.

He used His mighty influence with the Father in their behalf. He took their polluted names on His holy lips. He was not ashamed to call them Brethren. Their cause became His own and in their interests His pulse throbbed. How many times on the cold mountains He kept His heart warm with love to them! How often the sweat rolled down His face when He was in an agony of spirit for them I cannot tell you. This much I do know, that on that *same night* when He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, He prayed this prayer—after having prayed for His saints, He went on to say—“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.”

Here, truly, the heart of the Savior was bubbling up and welling over towards sinners! And you never can forget that almost His last words were, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Though willfully and wickedly they pierced His hands and His feet, yet were there no angry words, but only that short, loving, hearty prayer—“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

Ah, Friends, if there ever was a man who was a friend to others, Jesus was a friend to sinners His whole life through. This, however, is but little. As for the river of the Savior's love to sinners, I have only brought you to its banks. You have but stood on the bank and dipped your feet in the flood. But now prepare to swim. So fond was He of sinners that He made His grave with the wicked. He was numbered with the transgressors. God's fiery sword was drawn to strike a world of sinners down to Hell. It must fall on those sinners. But Christ loves them. His prayers stay the arm of God a little while, but still the sword must fall in due time.

What is to be done? By what means can they be rescued? Swifter than the lightning's flash I see that sword descending. But what is that in the

vision I behold? It falls—but where? Not on the neck of *sinners*. It is not *their neck* which is broken by its cruel edge. It is not their heart which bleeds beneath its awful force. No. The “Friend of sinners” has put Himself into the sinner’s place! And then, as if *He* had been the sinner, though in Him was no sin, He suffers, bleeds and dies—no common suffering—no ordinary bleeding—no death such as mortals know.

It was a death in which the second death was comprehended—a bleeding in which the very veins of God were emptied. The God-Man *Divinely* suffered. I know not how else to express the suffering. It was more than a mortal agony, for the Divine strengthened the human and the man was made vast and mighty to endure through His being God. Being God and Man He endured more than ten thousand millions of men all put together could have suffered. He endured, indeed, the hells of all for whom He died. The torments, or the equivalent for the torments, which all of them ought to have suffered—the eternal wrath of God condensed and put into a cup, too bitter for mortal tongue to know—and then drained to its utmost dregs by the loving lips of Jesus.

Beloved, this was love. “Herein is love, that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” This Christ has done and He is, therefore, demonstrated to be the Friend of sinners. But the trial is over. The struggle is passed. The Savior is dead and buried. He rises again and after He has spent forty days on earth—in that forty days proving still His love for sinners for He rose again for their justification—I see Him ascending up on high. Angels attend Him as the clouds receive Him—

**“They bring His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His Throne,
Clap their triumphant wings and cry,
“The glorious work is done.”**

What pomp! What a procession! What splendor! He will forget His poor friends the sinners now, will He not? Not He! I think I hear the song, “Lift up your heads, O you gates. And be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in.” The bars are all unloosed—the pearly gates are all flung wide open. And as He passes through, mark you, the highest joy which swells His soul is that He has opened those gates, not for Himself, for they were never shut on Him—but that He has opened them for *sinners*! It was for this, indeed, He died. And it is for this that He ascends on high, that He may “open the kingdom of Heaven for all Believers.”

See Him as He rides through Heaven’s streets! “You have ascended up on high. You have led captivity captive. You have received gifts of men.” Ah, but hear the refrain, for this is the sweetest note of all the hymn—“Yes, for the rebellious, also—yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” The scattered gifts of His coronation—the

lavish bounties of His ascension—are still for SINNERS! He is exalted on high—for what? To give repentance and remission of sins.

He still wears upon His breastplate the names of sinners! Upon His hands and upon His heart does He still bear the remembrance of those sinners. And every day for the sinner's sake He does not hold His peace! And for the sinner's sake He does not rest, but cries unto God until every sinner shall be brought safely home! Every sinner who believes, every sinner who was given to Him, every sinner whom He bought with blood—He will not rest, I say, till all such are gathered to be the jewels of His crown, world without end. I think we cannot say more.

And I think you will say we could not have said less concerning the way in which the Savior proved Himself to be the sinner's Friend. If there are any of you who dare to doubt Him after this, I know not what further to say. If there can be one who has proved himself your friend, surely Jesus did it and He is willing to receive you now. What He has done He still continues to do. O that you might have Divine Grace to perceive that Jesus is the lover of your soul! That you might find the blessedness which all these tokens of friendship, of which we have been speaking, have brought for believing sinners!

II. While we change the subject a little, we shall still keep to the text and notice WHAT CHRIST IS DOING NOW FOR SINNERS. There is a deep principle involved here—a principle the Pharisee of old could not understand and the cold heart of humanity is slow to embrace today. I have two explanations to offer of the way in which Jesus personally discovers Himself to be the Friend of sinners and I will just mention these before I come to the application of the subject I intend.

Once upon a time a woman was brought to Jesus by the Scribes and Pharisees—she was an adulteress—she had been taken in the very act. They tell “the sinner's Friend” what sentence Moses would pronounce in such a case and they ask Him, “What do you say?” This they said tempting Him. They were not much concerned about the unhappy creature. The accusation they were intent to lay was against the Man of Nazareth. You know how He disposed of the case and put her accusers out of countenance. He did not bring the sinner up before the magistrate. No, He would not act the judge's part and pronounce sentence—rather would He act the neighbor's part—He acquitted Himself as a friend.

There is a proverb among a certain class of hard-dealing tradesmen, “We know no friendship in business,” and full well they carry it out while they grind the faces of the poor without pity and strive to over-reach one another without fairness. And there was in like manner no friendship, no mercy whatever, among those gentlemen of the long robes. Righteousness, to their idea, stood in exacting justice with rigid severity. And as for wickedness, it was only shameful when it was found out.

She who was taken in the act must be stoned. They who had done it secretly must prosecute. The real friendship of Jesus appears in His singling out the object of pity. And where they accused Him of winking at crime and harboring the criminal, He was truly laying the axe at the root of the tree and sheltering the victims while He upbraided the arrogant rulers—whose secret vices were the genuine cause of the wretchedness which had fallen upon the dregs of the nation.

I commend this thought to your consideration. When it is said of Him, He is a “friend of publicans and sinners,” it was implied that He was *not* a friend of Scribes and Pharisees. Yet again, I want you to notice that the office which Christ came to fulfill towards sinners was that of pure, unmingled *friendship*. Let us give you an illustration. There is an awful story abroad—a murder has been committed—and the poor wretch who committed it has cut his own throat. The policeman and the surgeon are quickly on the spot.

The one comes there in the interest of law, the other attends in the interest of humanity. Says the officer of police, “Man, you are my prisoner!” Says the doctor, “My dear fellow, you are my patient.” And now he lays a delicate hand upon the wound, he stanches the blood, applies soft liniments, binds it up with plasters and, bending down his ear, listens to the man’s breathing. Taking hold of his hand, he feels his pulse—gently raising his head, he administers to him some wine or stimulant. He takes him to the hospital, gives the nurse instructions to watch him and orders that he shall be given a nutritious diet as he is able to bear it.

Day after day he still visits him and uses all his skill and all his diligence to heal the man’s wounds. Is that the way to deal with criminals? Certainly it is not the manner in which the police deal! Their business is to find out all the traces and evidences of his guilt. But the medical attendant is not concerned with the man as an evil doer—but as a sufferer. So is it with the sinner. Moses is the officer of justice who comes to arrest him. Christ is the Good Physician who comes to heal him. He says, “O Israel, you have destroyed yourself but in Me is your help.”

Christ deals with the disease, with the wounds, with the sufferings of sinners. He is, therefore, their Friend. Of course the parallel will only go a little way. In the instance of the murderer, the surgeon would hand his patient over to the officers as soon as his wound was recovered. But in the conduct of our Savior, He redeems the soul from under the Law and delivers it from the penalty of sin, as well as restores it from the self-inflicted injuries. But oh, if I could but show you that Christ treats the sinner with pity rather than with indignation! The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them! His visit to our world was mediatorial, not to condemn the world, but to give His life a ransom for many—surely, then, you would see reason enough why the sinner should look to Him as a Friend, indeed!

Ah, then, I would go further. I would entreat you to make the case your own. You are a sinner! Can I not convince you that He is your Friend? You were sick the other day. The physician looked very grave and whispered something to your wife. She did not tell you what it was, but your own life trembled in the scale and it is a wonder you are here tonight. Shall I tell you why you are here? Do you see that tree yonder? It has been standing in its place for many years, but it has never yielded any fruit and several times the master of the garden has said, "Cut it down."

The other day the woodman came with his axe. He felt its edge—it was sharp and keen enough—and he began to cut and the chips were flying as he made a deep gash. But the gardener came by, one who had watched over the tree and had hope of it even yet and he said, "Spare it—spare it yet a little longer. The wound you have made may heal. And I will dig about it and fertilize it and if it brings forth fruit, good. Spare it another year and if not, then cut it down." That tree is yourself. The woodman is Death. That chipping at the trunk of the tree was your sickness. Jesus is He who spared you.

You had not been here tonight—you had been there in Hell among damned spirits, howling in unutterable woe, if it had not been that the Friend of sinners had spared your life! And where are you tonight? Perhaps, my Hearers, you are in an unusual place for you. Your Sunday evenings are not often spent in the House of God. There are other places which know you, but your seat there is empty tonight. There has been much persuasion to bring you here and it may be that you have come against your will.

But some friend has asked you to conduct him to the spot and here you are. Do you know why you are here? It is a friendly Providence, managed by the sinner's Friend which has brought you here that you may hear the sound of mercy and have a loving invitation tendered to you. Be grateful to the Savior that He has brought you to the Gospel-pool. May you—O, may *you* this night be made to step in and be washed from sin! It is kind of Him and proves how true a Friend He is of sinners, that He has brought you here. I will leave you now where you are and I will tell you how He has dealt with other sinners, for perhaps this may lead you to ask Him to deal the same with you.

I know a sinner—while I live I must know him. Full well do I remember him when he was hard of heart and an enemy to God by a multitude of wicked works. But this Friend of sinners loved him. And passing by one day, He looked right into his soul with such a look that his hard heart began to break. There were deep throes as though a birth of a Divine sort were coming on. There was an agony and there was an unutterable grief. And that poor soul did not think it kind of Jesus—but, indeed, it was kindness too intense ever fully to estimate—for there is no saving a soul except by making it feel its need of being saved.

There must be in the work of Grace an emptying and a pulling down before there can be a filling and a building up! That soul knew no peace for many a year and the sole of its foot had no rest. But one day—

***“I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto Me and rest.
Lay down, you weary one, lay down
Your head upon My breast.
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad.
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad!
I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water, thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live.
I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream.
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.
I heard the voice of Jesus say,
I am this dark world's Light,
Look unto Me, your morn shall rise,
And all your days be bright.
I looked to Jesus and I found
In Him my star, my sun
And in that Light of Light I'll walk,
By His Grace,
Till traveling days are done.”***

Yes, said I, Christ is the Friend of sinners! So say I and so will I say while this poor lispings, stammering tongue can articulate a sound! And I think God had a design of abundant mercy when He saved my soul. I had not then believed it, though a mother's loving accents might have whispered it in my ears. But He seems to remind me of it over and over again, till love and terror mingle in my breast, saying, “Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.” O my blessed Master, You do trust my lips when You bear witness to my heart. You give charge to my tongue when You constrain my soul.

Am I a chosen vessel? It is to bear His name to sinners. As a full bottle seeks vent, so must my testimony pant for utterance. O Sinner, if you trust Him, He will be such a Friend to you! And if you have now a broken heart and a contrite spirit, these are *His* works. And it is a proof of His great love to you if He has made you to hunger and thirst after Him. Let me impress upon you that Jesus is the Friend of the friendless.

She who had spent all her money on physicians without getting relief, obtained a cure, gratis, when she came to Him. He who has “nothing to pay” gets all his debts cancelled by this Friend. And he who was ready to perish with hunger finds not only a passing meal, but a constant supply at His hands. We know of a place in England, still existing, where there is

a dole of bread served to every passer-by who chooses to ask for it. Whoever he may be he has but to knock at the door of St. Cross Hospital and there is the dole of bread for him. Jesus Christ so loves sinners that He has built a St. Cross Hospital so that whenever a sinner is hungry, he has but to knock and have his wants supplied!

No, He has done better! He has attached to this hospital of the Cross a bath. And whenever a soul is black and filthy it has but to go there and be washed. The fountain is always full, always efficacious. There is no sinner who ever went into it and found it could not wash away his stains. Sins which were scarlet and crimson have all disappeared and the sinner has been whiter than snow.

As if this were not enough, there is attached to this hospital of the Cross a wardrobe. And a sinner, making application simply as a sinner, with nothing in his hands, but being just empty and naked, may come and be clothed from head to foot! And if he wishes to be a soldier, he may not merely have an undergarment, but he may have armor which shall cover him from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. No, if he wants a sword he shall have that given to him and a shield, too. There is nothing that his heart can desire that is good for him which he shall not receive! He shall have spending money so long as he lives and he shall have an eternal heritage of glorious treasure when he enters into the joy of his Lord.

Beloved, I cannot tell you all that Christ has done for sinners, but this I know—if He meets with you tonight and becomes your Friend, He will stand by you to the last. He will go home with you tonight. No matter how many pairs of stairs you have to go up, Jesus will go with you. No matter if there is no chair to sit down on, He will not disdain you. You shall be hard at work tomorrow, but as you wipe the sweat from your brow He shall stand by you. You will, perhaps, be despised for His sake, but He will not forsake you. You will, perhaps, have days of sickness, but He will come and make your bed in your sickness for you.

You will, perhaps, be poor, but your bread shall be given you and your water shall be sure, for He will provide for you. You will vex Him much and grieve His Spirit. You will often doubt Him—you will go after other lovers. You will provoke Him to jealousy, but He will never cease to love you. You will, perhaps, grow cold to Him and even forget His dear name for a time but He will never forget you. You may, perhaps, dishonor His Cross and damage His fair fame among the sons of men, but He will never cease to love you.

No, He will never love you less—He cannot love you more. This night He does espouse Himself unto you. Faith shall be the wedding ring which He will put upon your finger. He pledges His fidelity to you—

***“Though you should oftentimes forget Him
His loving kindness fast is set.”***

His heart shall be so true to you that He will never leave you nor forsake you. You will come to die soon, but the Friend of sinners who loved you as a sinner and would not cast you off when your sinnership kept breaking up, will still be with you when you come to the sinner's doom, which is to die.

I see you going down the shelving banks of Jordan, but the sinner's Friend goes with you. Ah, dear Heart, He will put His arm beneath you and bid you fear not. And when in the thick shades of that grim night you expect to see a fearful visage—the grim face of Death—you shall see, instead, His sweet and smiling face, bright as an evening star, by your soul, and you shall hear Him say, "Fear not, I am with you. Be not dismayed, I am your God." You will land in the world of spirits by-and-by.

But will the sinner's Friend forsake you then? No, He will be pleased to acknowledge you. He will meet you on the other side of the Jordan and He will say, "Come, My Beloved, I have loved you with an everlasting love and have bought you, though you were a vile sinner, and now I am not ashamed to confess you before my holy angels. Come with Me and I will take you to My Father's face and will confess you there." And when the day shall come in which the world shall be judged, He will be your Friend then, too. You shall sit on the bench with Him. At the right hand of the Judge shall you stand, accepted in Him who was your Advocate and who is now your Judge, to acquit you.

And when the splendors of the millennium shall come, you shall partake of them—when the end shall be and the world shall be rolled up like a worn-out vesture and these arching skies shall have passed away like a forgotten dream—when eternity, with its deep-sounding waves, shall break upon the rocks of time and sweep them away forever—then, on that sea of glass mingled with fire you shall stand with Christ, your Friend still, claiming you, notwithstanding all your misbehavior in the world which has gone and loving you now, loving you on as long as eternity shall last! Oh, what a Friend is Christ to sinners!

Now do remember that we have been talking about *sinners*. There is a notion abroad that Jesus Christ came into the world to save *respectable* people, and that He will save decent sort of folks—those of you who go regularly to a place of worship and are good sort of people will be saved. Now Jesus Christ came into the world to save SINNERS. And who does that mean? Well, it includes some of us who have not been permitted to go into outward sin. But it also includes, within its deep, broad compass, those who have gone to the utmost extent of iniquity.

Talk of sinners! Walk the streets by moonlight, if you dare, and you will see sinners, then! Watch when the night is dark and the wind is howling and the picklock is grating in the door and you will see sinners, then! Go to yon jail and walk through the wards and see the men with heavy, overhanging brows—men whom you would not like to meet out at night—and

there are sinners there! Go to the Reformatories and see those who have betrayed an early and a juvenile depravity and you will see sinners there!

Go across the seas to the place where a man will gnaw a bone upon which is reeking human flesh and there is a sinner there! Go where you will and ransack earth to find sinners, for they are common enough! You may find them in every lane and street of every city and town and village and hamlet. It is for such that Jesus died. If you will select me the most gross specimen of humanity—if he is but born of woman—I will have hope of him because the Gospel of Christ is come to sinners and Jesus Christ is come to seek and to save sinners!

Electing love has selected some of the worst to be made the best. Redeeming love has bought, especially bought, many of the worst to be the reward of the Savior's passion. Effectual Grace calls out and compels to come in many of the vilest of the vile. And it is therefore that I have tried tonight to preach my Master's love to sinners!

Oh, by that love, looking out of those eyes in tears! Oh, by that love, streaming from those wounds flowing with blood! By that faithful love, that strong love, that pure, disinterested and abiding love! Oh, by the heart of the Savior's compassion, I do implore you—turn not away as though it were nothing to you! But believe on Him and you shall be saved! Trust your souls with Him and He will bring you to His Father's right hand in Glory everlasting. May God give us a blessing for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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“EVEN SO, FATHER”

NO. 394

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 26, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You O Father,
Lord of Heaven and earth because You have hid these
thing from the wise and prudent and have
revealed them unto babes. Even so,
Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”
Matthew 11:25, 26.*

THAT is a singular way with which to commence a verse—“At that time Jesus answered.” If you will look at the context you will not perceive that anybody had asked Him a question, or that He was indeed in conversation with any human being. Yet it says, “Jesus answered and said, I thank you, O Father.” Now when a man answers, he answers a person who has been speaking to him. Who, then, had been speaking to Jesus? Why, His Father! Yet there is no record of it which should just teach us that Christ had constant fellowship with His Father and often did His Father silently speak into His ear.

As we are in this world even as Christ was, let us imitate this lesson. May we likewise have silent fellowship with the Father, so that often we may answer Him. And when the world knows not to whom we speak, may we speak to God and respond to that secret voice which no other ear has heard—while our own ear—opened by the Spirit of God has attended to it with joy. I like the Christian sometimes to find himself obliged to speak out, or if not to speak out, to feel an almost irrepressible desire to say something though no one is near, because a thought has been brought to him by the Holy Spirit—a suggestion has been just cast into the midst of his soul by the Holy Spirit—and he answers it.

God has spoken to him and he longs to speak to God—either to set to his seal that God is true in matter of revelation or to confess some sin of which the Spirit of God has convinced him, or to acknowledge some mercy which God’s Providence has given, or to express assent to some great Truth which God the Holy Spirit has then opened to his understanding. Keep your hearts, my Brethren, in such a state that when God speaks to you, you may be ready to answer in spite of whatever troubles may ruffle you or whatever trials may disturb you. Jesus Christ had just had a time of weeping and it was succeeded by a season of grateful communion. Like Him maintain an ear ready to listen to the voice of God and at that time answer thankfully and bless the Lord your God.

Now it seems to me, in looking through these two verses that the Savior would teach us three things. When we have learned these three things, I shall endeavor to turn them to practical account. He will have us first of all *seek after an enlightened apprehension of the character of God as Fa-*

ther and yet Lord of Heaven and earth. He would have us next observe carefully *the manifest discrimination of hidden grace*—"You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes." He would have us, thirdly, *cultivate a spirit entirely in harmony with the divine will*, thanking Him that He has done all things according to His own purpose—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

I. First of all, then, THE SAVIOR WOULD HAVE US ATTAIN TO AN ENLIGHTENED APPREHENSION OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

What gross mistakes men make concerning the character of God! I believe it is a mistake about God Himself which has been the root and foundation of all the mistakes in theology. Our conviction is that Arminian theology, to a great extent, makes God to be less than He is. The professors of that system have come to receive its doctrines because they have not a clear understanding either of the omnipotence, the immutability, or the sovereignty of God. They seem always to ask the question, "What ought God to do to man who is His creature?"

We hold that that is a question that is never to be put for it infringes on the sovereignty of God who has absolute right to do just as He wills. They ask the question, "What will God do with His promises if man change his habit or his life?" We consider that to be a question not to be asked. Whatever man does God remains the same and abides faithful though even we should not believe Him. They ask the question, "What will be done for men who resist God's grace, if in the struggle man's will should be triumphant over the mercy of God?" We never ask that question—we think it is blasphemous.

We believe God to be omnipotent and when He comes to strive with the soul of man, none can stay His hand. He breaks the iron sinew and dashes the adamant heart to shivers and rules in the heart of man as surely as in the army of the skies. A right clear apprehension of the character of God, we believe, would put an end to the Arminian mistake. We think, too, that ultra-Calvinism, which goes vastly beyond what the authoritative teaching of Christ, or the enlightened ministry of Calvin could warrant, gets some of its support from a wrong view of God. To the ultra-Calvinist His absolute sovereignty is delightfully conspicuous. He is awe-stricken with the great and glorious attributes of the Most High. His omnipotence appalls him and His sovereignty astonishes him.

And he at once submits as if by a stern necessity to the will of God. He, however, too much forgets that God is love. He does not make prominent enough the benevolent character of the Divine Being. He annuls to some extent the fact that while God is not amenable to anything external from Himself, yet His own attributes are so blessedly in harmony that His sovereignty never inflicted a punishment which was not just—nor did it ever bestow a mercy until justice had first been satisfied. To see the holiness, the love, the justice, the faithfulness, the immutability, the omnipotence and the sovereignty of God—all shining like a bright corona of eternal and ineffable light—has never been given perfectly to any human being. And inasmuch as we have not seen all these and as we hope yet to see them,

our faulty vision has been the ground of many mistakes. Hence has arisen many of the heresies which vex the Church of Christ.

Now, my Brethren, I would have you this morning look at the way in which our Lord Jesus Christ regards God—“Father, Lord of Heaven and earth.” If you and I cannot know the Almighty to perfection because of *His* greatness and of *our* shallowness, nevertheless let us try to apprehend these two claims upon our adoration, in which we owe to God the reverence of children and the homage of subjects. Father!—Oh what a precious word is that! Here is authority. “If I am a father where is My honor?” If you are sons where is your obedience?

But here is affection mingled with Authority. An authority which does not provoke rebellion. An obedience demanded which is most cheerfully rendered—which would not be withheld even if it might. Father!—here is a kingly attribute so sweetly veiled in love that the king’s crown is forgotten in the king’s face and his scepter becomes not a rod of iron but a silver scepter of mercy—the scepter indeed seems to be forgotten in the tender hand of Him that wields it. Father!—here is honor and affectionateness. What is a father’s heart to his children? That which friendship cannot do and mere benevolence will not attempt to do, a father’s heart and hand must do.

They are his offspring, he must bless them. They are his children, they spring from his own loins—he must show himself strong in their defense. Oh get that thought of God, that while you obey Him as Father, yet you love Him as Father! Do not go about the service of God as slaves about the taskmaster’s toil, but run in the way of His commands because it is your Father’s way. Yield yourselves up to be the instruments of righteousness, because righteousness is your Father’s will and His will is the will of His child.

In a father, then, you will observe there is mingled authority with affection and there is also mingled origination with relationship. The man is not father to everything he produces. He may make the vessel—he may spend much skill upon it as he turns it upon the wheel but he is not its father. Even so God made the stars but He is not their Father. He made the very angels, but I know not that He said unto them at any time, “You are My sons.” It is true in the sense of origination we are all His offspring, for He made us all. But oh, again we repeat the sweet word—Father! Father! There is *relationship* here as well as origination. We are like He that made us—we, His chosen, are the next of kin to the King of kings, His children! Then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus—a relationship which never can be dissolved.

A child can never be anything but the son of his own father—a relationship which no sin can ever break and no pains can ever loosen. The father is a father still, though his child be dragged in the mire—although he spit in his very father’s face. The relationship is not to be removed by any act either of father or of son. So stands it with the people of God. They are not only His creatures but *doubly* His creatures, for He has created them anew in Christ Jesus. They have a relationship, for they are partakers of

the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust.

They are so near to Him that none can stand between the sons of God and God their Father, save Jesus Christ the only begotten Son who is the link of union between the two. Father! He that can lisp that word upon his knees has uttered more eloquence than Demosthenes or Cicero ever knew. Abba, Father! He that can say that has uttered better music than cherubim or seraphim can reach. Abba, Father! There is Heaven in the depth of that word! Father! There is all I need. All I can ask. All my necessities can demand. All my wishes can contrive. I have all in all to all eternity when I can say, “Father.” Oh, do not, I pray you, look upon God as a great King unless you can also regard Him as your Father.

Do not dare to come into the intense brightness of His sovereignty or it will be to you thick darkness unless you can call Him Father. While you stand amazed at Him, dare not to look at the sun till you have the eagle eye of the spirit of adoption lest it blind you. Launch not upon the sea of sovereignty till you have Fatherhood at the helm—but then your little vessel may go from the shallows to the great deeps and the deeper the sea shall be the farther shall you be from the rocks and the higher shall you be lifted above the quicksand. You may go as far as you can in having Him to be Lord of Heaven and earth if you can first recognize Him as being Father to your soul.

Permit me here, however, to remark that many Christians are effeminate in their theology. They are weak in their faith because while they can say, “Father,” they do not know God as being Lord of Heaven and earth. I take it that Jesus meant by this expression that the Father was by power and by *right* Lord of Heaven and earth. We all concede that He is Lord of Heaven and earth by *power*. From the dazzling wing of the angel down to the painted wing of the fly—all nights of beings are controlled by Him. From the roar of earth’s direst convulsions down to the gentle falling of a rain drop—all sounds that break on mortal ears are modulated by Him.

From the flash of lightning down to the glimmer of the glow-worm’s lamp—there is no light or spark that His power does not kindle. He does as He wills. Fools see men doing—wise men discern God doing all. In the loftiest emperor we see Jehovah’s tool and nothing more. In the mightiest patriot we see but an instrument in the hand of God. In all that man has done, whether it be perverse or excellent we have learned to look beyond the material agents. While we award to one man curses and to another honor yet we see God working all things after the counsels of His will. I am verily persuaded that the wildest fury of the storm is ordered in the eye of God.

I am convinced that He has a bit in the mouth of the tempest to rein in the winds. And so it is when battle is let loose and war rages abroad and nations are broken as with a rod of iron—as though they were but potters’ vessels—in every catastrophe and calamity there is the reigning God, stalking victoriously over the battle-field to whichever side triumph may turn. He walks among cabinets and makes their folly serve His wisdom.

He enters the heart of man and makes its very stubbornness the pliant slave of His superior might. He rules everywhere by power.

There are some Christians who, not knowingly perhaps, but unwittingly, discountenance the fact that Jehovah is Lord of Heaven and earth by *right*. Brethren, I pray you learn this. You have not the key of a solid theology till you know this Great God you have has absolute right to do whatever He will with His own creatures. And especially since man has fallen does He have a right utterly to destroy him or to save him as seems good in His sight. No man has any right to anything from God. Whatever right he had as a creature he forfeited when he sinned.

Now God declares and we must acknowledge it to be a declaration of unimpeachable right—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” “So, then, it is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy. What if God, willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, so that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory?” Who shall find fault, or who shall dispute His will? I would that the Christian Church did not think so lightly of God’s sovereignty.

I grant you it is an awesome doctrine. All great Truths must produce awe upon little minds like ours. I grant you it is a doctrine which the boasted freedom of man’s thoughts will not readily receive. Be it so, it is the more true to me, for what is this freedom of men’s thoughts in modern times but licentiousness? What is it but a sort of mental dissoluteness by which they say, “We will cast off the yoke of God, we will break His bands in sunder and cast away His Words from us”? Oh, be wise. Kiss the Son for he is your King. Bow down before your God—for dispute it as you may—He is your Lord. Yield to His sovereignty for He will be sovereign even if you will not meekly yield.

Confess that He has a right to do as He wills, for He will do as He wills whether you confess it or not. Do not seek to deny His right to reign, but rather say, “The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice, let the multitudes of the isles be glad thereat.” Where could power be better placed—who better could be trusted with all strength than the infinitely Wise, the boundlessly Good? Great God! It were a calamity indeed if You had not an absolute right to do Your own will when that will is always good and always right and always kind and always best for the sons of men.

II. Well now, Brethren, if you have got a clear and enlightened apprehension of God’s relationship as Father and as Sovereign Lord, I am not afraid to trust you with the study of doctrine. You will not go far wrong.

But next, Christ would have us carefully observe THE DISCRIMINATING CHARACTER OF GOD’S GRACE. “You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.”

Is it not, my dear Friends, a notorious fact that the things of God are hidden from the wise and prudent? Cast your eye around now upon the great men in the literature of today—how very few of them are willing to receive the things of God! And though in the past we can number among

reasoners such men as Locke and Bacon. And among poetic minds such men as Cowper and Milton. And though we can go back and find some men of wisdom and some men of great mental caliber who have received the Truth as it is in Jesus—yet still it is to be confessed that they make but a very small part of the great whole. They are but the exception which proves the rule.

It is true of ancient and modern, the past and the present—“These things are hidden from the wise and prudent.” See what the wise and prudent do. A large number of them will disdain to listen to the things of God. “Pooh,” they say, “religion for the mob—it suits very well the poor, we dare say—but we are intelligent, we are instructed—we do not need to go and hear such mere simplicities and elementary teaching as that.”

So they turn upon their heel and go and speak against the thing which they have never heard, or which, if they have heard, they have not understood. Then those who will hear—do you not perceive how they laugh? Where the poor simple-minded man walks right straight into Heaven’s gate—these men have raised objections to the manner in which the nails are put in the gate—or to certain stones that pave the way and they cannot go in until they know the precise pattern of everything in the heavenly place. They raise objections where we should see none.

While we take the provisions of Truth and sit down and feed at the table they are objecting to the way in which the flesh is carved or the wine poured out. And then there are others of them who not only raise objections but set themselves willfully to oppose. Mark you this—I do not believe there is a single honest man living who, having heard the Gospel simply preached—does not in his conscience believe it to be true. I am persuaded that light will penetrate. There is such force, such energy in Christ—the power of God and the wisdom of God—it must and will pierce through some crevice and convince at least a natural conscience.

But this is the very reason why men oppose it—they do not want it to be true. It would be unpleasant for them if it were true. They would be compelled to live more strictly than they do. They feel it would cut against their previous notions and pull down their old prejudices. They love darkness. What they do not want to be true they try to prove not to be true and that is the easiest thing in the world. I could prove by syllogism any lie which I wanted to believe and so could you. You can either bid the Truth be quiet because its shrill note awakens you out of a sleep which you love—or else you can set up a counter-noise which shall drown the unwelcome sound, so that you cannot hear the celestial voice.

I know why men brag. We well understand why they speak loud words of blasphemy. As sure as ever a man is too bold, there is an unquiet conscience to prompt him. Do not set down the blasphemies of Voltaire to any real doubts. That man was as firm a believer as you and I, but he was not honest. Do not put down, I pray you, the blatant blasphemy of Tom Paine to a conviction that Christianity was not true. He knew it was true and he, perhaps, of all men was the grossest of liars to his own soul—for he fought against a Truth which his own conscience acknowledged to be taught of God.

Oh, let us see to it that while these wise and prudent men are discussing and disputing and objecting and dividing—let us see to it that we do not imitate them! Lest haply these things should be hidden from us and not revealed to us though we are babes.

But while these wise and prudent ones are passed by, how graciously God has revealed His Truth to babes, to men of simple minds! In the eye of the wise they might be credulous—in the judgment of the prudent they might be superstitious—but they heard the Gospel. It fitted their case. It was just the thing they wanted. They were guilty—it offered them pardon. They were lost—it provided them a Savior. They were cast away—it found them a Shepherd who had come to seek and to save that which was lost. They took it—they laid hold of it. They found it gave them joy and comfort, peace and rest.

They went on, they found their experience tallied with what they had learned. They examined more and more. They never found a flaw or discrepancy between the feelings within and the teaching without. And they, though they were but babes and could not argue, though they were but children and could not discuss, though they were fools and did not pretend to be wise—they entered into the kingdom of God—and attained to the enjoyment of the peace which Jesus gives to them that trust Him!

Do you ask why is it God has not been pleased to call by His grace the wise and prudent? Albert Barnes says as a reason why the wise and prudent do not come, “Because they have peculiar mental temptations, because they think the Gospel to be beneath their consideration, because it does not flatter their pride. And because again they are so occupied with their wisdom that they have no time for the things of God.” Now these are very good reasons why they do not accept the Gospel, but not the reason why God does not call them.

God’s reason for calling or not calling a man is not in man but in Himself. So we are told in the text—“Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” Why, then, did He not ask them? You may ask Gabriel before the Throne, but he cannot tell you. You may ask all the people of God everywhere—but they cannot tell you either—for the reason is that God willed it and there we must let it rest. “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” He could have converted emperors upon their thrones. He could have made the philosopher a preacher. He could, if He would, have subdued the loftiest mind to His service. If He chose the fishermen and the unenlightened peasants of the Lake of Galilee, He did so because He would. There we must leave it—ask no account of His Affairs—but tremble and be still.

III. Yet when we come to our last point, which we shall now do, I think we shall see some reason why we can in our very hearts most truly acquiesce and admire the wisdom and graciousness of the divine choice.

I come, then, to this third point, **THE SAVIOR WOULD HAVE HIS PEOPLES’ HEARTS IN PERFECT AGREEMENT WITH THE WILL AND ACTION OF GOD.**

“Father,” said Jesus, “I thank You that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.”

Brothers and Sisters, can you say, "I thank You, Father," too? Many of you can for personal reasons, for you were babes. Ah, we were each of us but babes. He who stands before you, if he is chosen of God, as he trusts he is, certainly never belonged to the wise and prudent. When I have sometimes had it flung in my teeth—"This man was never educated at college. This man came into the ministry in literary attainments totally unprepared for it. He is only fit to address the poor—his ministry is not polite and polished—he has but little classical instruction. He cannot read forty languages."

I say to them, Precisely so. Every word of it is true and a great deal more. I would not stop you if you would go on—if you will just show me more of my folly—if you will just point out to me yet more of my lack of prudence. If the wise man would say, "This man takes a daring project in hand and does not consult any man, does not tell anybody about it, but goes and does it like a madman"—just so, precisely so. I will agree to the whole of it. But when I have said this I will remind you, "God has chosen the base things of this world to confuse the mighty and the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are."

This time I will say it, in this thing I will become a fool in glorying—What have your college men done that is comparable to this work? What have the wisest and most instructed of modern ministers done in the conversion of souls compared with the work of this unlettered boy? It was God's work and God chose the most unfitting instrument so that He might have the more glory.

And He *shall* have the glory—I will not take any of it myself by pretending to an education I have not received, or an attainment I do not possess, or an eloquence which I never coveted. I speak God's Words and God, I know, speaks through me and works through me and unto Him be the glory. I can join with many of you personally for thanking Him that He has "revealed these things to babes, which have been hidden from the wise and prudent." But don't you understand, my Brethren, that if the Lord in His sovereignty had taken another course, it would have been our duty still to be thankful?

Ah, you that boast your pedigrees! He has dashed them. You that flaunt your golden eagles—you lack the splendor of His smile. You who are clothed in purple and you who fare sumptuously every day—what cares He for your greatness? Let the crowd stand and gape at you. Let the fool bow down in admiration but the King of kings, the Lord of lords, regards you no more than menials that serve His will but are not of His council and know not His secret. He has put a stain upon proud distinctions. See, too, how He spits upon the boastfulness of human learning! And you that have the key of Heaven and will not enter yourselves, neither suffer the poor and ignorant to enter—how has He laughed at your pretensions!

"The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat and they say, 'We are the men and wisdom will die with us.' " They come forth flaunting their degrees and boasting their high and lofty credentials but He casts dust into your faces and leaves you all to your blind confusion. Then, stooping

down from His mightiness, He takes up the babe. Though it be a learned babe, if it be a babe, He takes it. I mean, though it has riches, though it has skill, though it has credentials, He does not cast it away from Him for that reason but He does not choose it for that reason, either.

He takes it, it is a babe. It is willing to be nothing. It is willing to be a fool. The prince may be as willing to be saved as the pauper is. The great man may be willing to stoop and to lie at the feet of Jesus as though he were nobody. He takes these, these are the men that God has chosen—humble and contrite—they that tremble at His Word. Oh, because He has thus stained the pride of all glory, let His people rejoice. Let all His saints be glad thereat!

I wish, my dear Friends, that those who are so afraid of the doctrine of election would remember that it is the only lasting source of joy to a Christian. You say, “How is that? Surely we ought to rejoice most in our usefulness.” No, note the twelve Apostles went out to preach and they were so successful that Christ said, “I saw Satan as light fall from Heaven,” but He said to them, “Nevertheless, rejoice not in this but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.” Our election is a perennial spring. When other streams are dry, the fact that our names are written in Heaven shall yield us comfort still.

And you will remark, as I have before observed, Christ had just been exceedingly sorrowful because Capernaum and Bethsaida had rejected His Word, but He finds comfort and begins to thank His God because there was a remnant after all, according to the election of grace. People of God! Do not stand afraid of this precious Truth but love it, feed upon it, rejoice in it and it shall be as oil to your bones, it shall supply them with marrow and give strength to your very being!

IV. Having thus explained the text as best I could, I want your earnest attention while I try to make some practical use of it. Three or four things to three or four characters.

A word to those Christians who are downcast, trodden, afflicted. You have lost a friend, you have had losses in your business. You have been tried in body, you have been afflicted by the calumnies of your enemies. Very well, but you have still something to rejoice about. Come, dry those eyes, take that harp from the willow. Come now, sit no longer on the dunghill. Take off that sackcloth, remove those ashes. Take the oil of joy and put on the garment of praise and say this morning, “Father, I thank You that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.” At least you have this to thank God for—although you were a simpleton, a very fool in your own estimation—yet you have received the Truth as it is in Jesus and you have been saved thereby. Let all the chosen seed be glad and take heart and rejoice in God.

The next piece of practical instruction is this—let us learn, my Brethren, the wicked folly of those professed Christians who despise the poor. There is growing up, even in our Dissenting Churches, an evil which I greatly deplore—a despising of the poor. I frequently hear in conversation such remarks as this, “Oh, it is no use trying in such a place as this, you could never raise a self-supporting cause. There are none but poor living

in the neighborhood.” If there is a site to be chosen for a chapel, it is said, “Well, there is such a lot of poor people round about you would never be able to keep a minister. It is no use trying. They are all poor.”

You know that in the City of London itself, there is now scarce a Dissenting place of worship. The reason for giving most of them up and moving them into the suburbs is that all the respectable people live out of town and of course, they are the people to look after. They will not stop in London—they will go out and take villas—and live in the suburbs. And therefore, the best thing is to take the endowment which belonged to the old chapel and go and build a new chapel somewhere in the suburbs where it may be maintained.

“No doubt,” it is said, “the poor ought to be looked after, but we had better leave them to another order, an inferior order—the City Missionaries will do for them—send them a few street preachers.” But as to the idea of raising a cause where they are *all* poor people, why there is hardly a minister that would attempt it. Now my experience of poor people convinces me that all this talk is folly. If there are any people who love the cause of God better than others, I believe it is the poor—when the grace of God takes real possession of their heart. In this place, for instance, I believe we have but very few who could be put down among the rich.

There have been some who have cast in their lot among us just now but still the mass who did the work of building this house and who have stood side by side with me in the battle of the last seven years must be reckoned among the poor of this world. They have been a peaceable people, a happy people, a working people, a plain people and I say, “God bless the poor!” I would fear no difficulties whatever in commencing a cause of Christ, even though the masses were poor. I am persuaded that the rich who are truly the people of God love to come and assist where there are poor. If you were to cast out the poor you would cast out the Church’s strength—you would give up that which is after all, the backbone of the Church of Christ.

I think we have been doing wrong in neglecting the City of London itself. It is true, I do not believe some ministers could get congregations in London—it is a pity they have them anywhere—men who cannot call a spade a spade, or a loaf of bread a loaf of bread. They are so refined and speak such fine and polished language that you would think they were not natives of England and had never heard the people speak their own homely brogue.

May the Lord raise up among us men that speak market language, that have sympathy with the people and that speak the people’s tongue and we shall prove that it is an infamous falsehood, that the causes cannot be maintained in poor neighborhoods. They can be and they *shall* be. Why, Brethren, are we to say that we will give up the poor merely to the missionary? We complain that the artisan will not come to hear. That the coarse jacket will not listen. It is not true. The coarse jacket is as ready to listen as is the broadcloth if he had something to listen to.

If it is the Gospel, they that walk are as ready to come as they that ride, if they could but understand. I think that those who are gifted with this

world's goods, or with this world's wisdom, will do right well if instead of looking out for respectable positions they will look out for the poorest positions, for there they will find the most of those whom God has chosen—the poor in this world, rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom. I would not say a word to set glass against glass. For I suppose that the soul of a rich man is no less worth than the soul of the poorest. All stand alike in the sight of God. But I do enter my solemn protest against men who say that the religion of Christ is not fit for the poor neighborhoods and only meant for our respectable suburbs.

It is not true, Brethren! It is a great and gross heresy against the goodness of God and against the adaptation of the Gospel of Christ to the needs of the poor. They can sustain Churches. Look at the ragged churches in Glasgow and Edinburgh. They call them ragged. But you see as clean faces and as intellectual countenances there as you would anywhere. If they find a man who can preach that they can hear, they will maintain and support him. The Gospel of Christ will find as ready and faithful adherents among the poorest of the poor, as amongst the richest of the rich and far more so in proportion.

Another homily, which you will think rather strange, is this—How wrong the Church of Christ is when it neglects the rich. “Well,” you say, “that is not in the text. It says these things were hidden from the wise and prudent.” Yes, I know they were, but Christ thanked God they were. “I thank you,” He said “that you have hid these things.” What then? If I preach to the rich, to the wise, to the prudent and they reject it, have I lost my toil? No, no—there is cause for thankfulness even then. We are to preach the Gospel to every creature without any distinction whatever—high or low—great or small.

“Well, but the wise and prudent will not hear it.” We know. But if they reject it, still there is matter for thankfulness that they heard it. “Why?” you say. Why because we are unto God a sweet smelling savor both in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one we are a savor of life unto life and to the other a savor of death unto death but to God, still, a sweet smelling savor. What? Is God glorified in the damnation of the wise and prudent? Yes, tremendous fact! At the winding up of this world's drama, God will be glorified in the men that shut their eyes against His grace as well as in the men whose eyes are opened to receive it.

The yells of Hell shall be but the deep bass of the everlasting music of which the songs in Heaven are the air. God, the Terrible One, shall have praise from the wise and prudent when their folly shall be discovered, when their wisdom shall be dashed in pieces or torn to shreds. God, the terrible avenger of His own Gospel shall be glorified when those are cast out who having heard the Gospel were too wise to believe it and having listened to it were too prudent to give their praise to it. In either case God is glorified and in either case Christ gives thanks and devoutly gives thanks.

To the rich, then as well as to the poor. To the hopeless case as well as to the hopeful. To the wise as well as to the babe we should preach Christ—because even if they are not saved, still, God is glorified. He got

honor even upon Pharaoh His enemy, when he perished in the midst of the sea.

And now, last of all, you who are babes, you who perhaps, “know and know no more than the Bible true,” you who never read a word of Greek or Latin and sometimes cannot spell the hard words of English—you say, “I do not go to a place of worship, I am so ignorant.” Do you not perceive your own wickedness in staying away? God has revealed these things unto babes and if there are any men that ought to come certainly it is you. When the poor man says, “Oh, a place of worship is not for me,” he is without excuse because the Scripture expressly says, “God has chosen the base things and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are.”

I invite any man and every man to listen to the Gospel and if you do not come, you certainly do despise a very precious promise. You think the Gospel is not meant for hard-working men, but it is meant for you—for you above all others. You say, “Christ is a gentleman’s Christ.” No, He is the people’s Christ. “I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” Do you think our religion is meant for the learned? Not so—it is meant for the most foolish and most ignorant. We rejoice to know that the poor have the Gospel preached to them. But if they will not come and hear it their guilt shall be sevenfold—seeing there were special words of comfort for them—there were choice sentences of invitation for them.

If they do not come and listen they must perish miserably—without the pretense of a shadow—or a dream of an excuse. Ah, you who are so poor that you scarce know where to lay your heads. You that are so ignorant that a ragged school might perhaps be your best academy, “Come you, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.” Come you as you are to the great Teacher of your souls. Trust Him as you are. Trust His precious blood, His glorious Cross, His intercession before the Eternal Throne—and you shall have reason to say in the words of the Master, “Father, I thank You that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

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POWERFUL PERSUASIVES

NO. 3502

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

***“All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:27-28.***

I HAVE preached to you, dear Friends, several times from the words, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is such sweetness in the precept, such solace in the promise, that I could gladly hope to preach from it many times more! But I have no intention, just now, to repeat what I have said in any former discourse, or to follow the same vein of thought that we have previously explored. This kindly and gracious invitation needs only to be held up in different lights to give us different subjects for admiration. That it flowed like an anthem from our Savior’s lips we perceive—in what context it was spoken we may properly enquire. He had just made some important disclosures as to the Covenant relations that existed between Himself and God the Father. This interesting Revelation of heavenly Truth becomes the basis upon which He offers an invitation to the toiling and oppressed children of men, and assigns it as a reason why they should immediately avail themselves of His succor. Such is the line of discourse I propose now to follow. Kindly understand me that I want to deal with the hearts and consciences of the unconverted and, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to plead with them that they may at once go to Jesus and find rest for their souls. I shall require no stories or anecdotes, no figures or metaphors, to illustrate the urgent necessity of the sinner and the generous bounty of the Savior. We will make it as plain as a pikestaff and as sharp as a sword, with the intention of driving straight to our point. Time is precious, your time, especially, for you may not have many days in which to seek the Lord. The matter is urgent. Oh, that every laboring, weary sinner here might at once come to Jesus and find that rest which the Savior expresses Himself as so willing to give! With all simplicity, then, let me explain to you the way of salvation, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden.”

The way to be saved is to come to Jesus. To come to Jesus means to pray to Him, to trust in Him, to rely upon Him. Each man who trusts in another may be said to come to that other for help. Thus to trust in Jesus is to come to Him. In order to do this I must give up all reliance upon myself, or anything I could do or have done, or anything I do feel or can feel. Nor must I feel the slightest dependence upon anything that anyone else can do for me. I must cease from creature helps and carnal rites, to rest myself upon Jesus. That is what my Savior means when He says, "Come unto Me." The exhortation is very personal. "Come unto Me," He says. He says not, come to My ministers to consult them, nor come to My sacraments to observe them, nor come to My Bible to study its teaching—interesting and advantageous as under some circumstances any or all of these counsels might be—but He invites us in the sweetest tune of friendship, saying, "Come to Me." For a poor sinner this is the truest means of succor. Let him resort to the blessed Lord, Himself. To trust in a Crucified Savior is the way of salvation! Let him leave everything else and fly away to Christ and look at His dear wounds as He hangs upon the Cross. I am afraid many people are detained from Christ by becoming entangled in the meshes of Doctrine. Some with heterodox Doctrine, others with orthodox Doctrine, content themselves. They think that they have advanced far enough. They flatter their souls that they have ascertained the Truth of God! But the fact is, it is not the Truth as a letter which saves anybody. It is the Truth as a Person—it is Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life whom we need to apprehend!

Our confidences must rest entirely upon Him. "Come unto Me," says Jesus, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

The exhortation is in the present tense. "Come" now. Do not wait. Do not tarry. Do not lie at the pool of ordinances but come unto Me—come now at once, immediately, just where you are, just as you are. Wherever the summons finds you, rise without parley, without an instant's delay. "Come." I know that the human mind is very ingenious and it is especially perverse when its own destruction is threatened. By some means or other it will evade this simple call. "Surely," says one, "there must be something to do besides that." No, nothing else is to be done! No preliminaries are requisite. The whole way of salvation is to trust in Jesus. Trust Him now. That done, you are saved! Rely upon His finished work. Know that He has meditated on your behalf. Commit your sinful self to His saving Grace. A change of heart shall be yours. All that you need He will supply—

***"There is life in a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you."***

So sweet an invitation *d demands a spontaneous acceptance.* Come just as you are. "Come unto Me," says Christ. He does not say, "Come when you have washed and cleansed yourself." Rather should you come to be

cleansed! He does not say, “Come when you have clothed yourself and made yourself beautiful with good works.” Come to be made beautiful in a better righteousness than you can wear! Come naked, and let Him gird you with fine linen, cover you with silk, and deck you with jewels. He does not say, “Come when your conscience is tender, come when your heart is penitent, when your soul is full of loathing for sin, and your mind is enlightened with knowledge and enlivened with joy. But you that labor, you that are heavy laden, He bids you to come as you are! Come oppressed with your burdens, begrimed with your labors, dispirited with your toils. If the load that bends you double to the earth is upon your shoulders, just come as you are! Take no plea in your mouth but this—He bids you come. That shall suffice as a warrant for your coming and a security for your welcome. If Jesus Christ bids you, who shall say no?

He puts the matter very exclusively. “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden.” Do nothing else but come to Him. Do you need rest? Come to Him for it. The old proverb has it that between two stools we come to the ground.” Certainly, if we trust partly in Christ and partly in ourselves, we shall fall lower than the ground! We shall sink into Hell. “Come unto Me” is the whole Gospel. “Come unto Me.” Mix nothing with it. Acknowledge no other obedience. Obey Christ and Him, alone. Come unto Me. You cannot go in two opposite directions. Let your tottering footsteps bend their way to Him alone. Mix anything with Him, and the possibility of your salvation is gone. Yours is the happy resolve—

**“Nothing in my hands I bring—
Simply to Your Cross I cling.”**

This must be your cry if you are to be accepted at all. Come, then, you that labor, you calloused-handed sons of toil! Come to Jesus! He invites you. You that stew and toil for wealth, you merchants with your many cares, you are laborers. He bids you come! You students, anxious for knowledge, wary of sleep, burning out the midnight oil. You labor with exhausted brains—therefore, come! Come from struggling after fame. You pleasure-seekers, come! Perhaps there is no harder toil than the toil of the man who courts recreation and thinks he is taking his ease. Come, you that labor in any form or fashion, come to Jesus—to Jesus alone! And you that are heavy laden, you whose official duties are a burden, you whose domestic cares are a burden, you whose daily toils are a burden, you whose shame and degradation are a burden—all you that are heavy laden, come and welcome! If I attach no exclusive spiritual signification to these terms, it is because there is nothing in the Chapter that would warrant such a restriction. Had Christ said, “Some of you that labor and are heavy laden may come,” I would have said “some,” too. Howbeit He has not said, “some,” but, “all” that labor and are heavy laden.” It is amazing how people twist this text about. They alter the sense by misquoting the words. They say, “Come you that are weary and heavy la-

den.” After this manner some have even intended to define a character rather than to describe a condition—so they shut out some of those who labor from the kind invitation! But let the passage stand in its own simplicity. Let any sinner here who can say, “I labor,” though he cannot say *spiritual labor*, come on the bare warrant of the word as he finds it written here! He will not be disappointed of the promised mercy. Christ will not reject him. He has said it, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And any man that is heavy laden, even though it may not be a spiritual burden that oppresses him, yet if he comes heavy laden to Christ, he certainly shall find relief! That were a wonder without precedent or parallel, such as was never witnessed on earth throughout all the generations of men, that a soul should come to Jesus, be rebuffed, and told by Him, “I never called you, I never meant you—you are not the character—you may not come.” Hear, O Heaven! Witness, O Earth! Such thing was never heard of! No, nor ever shall it be heard of in time or in eternity! That any sinner should come to the Savior by mistake is preposterous! That Jesus should say to him, “Go your way, I never called for you,” is incredible! How can you thus libel the sinner’s Friend? Come, you needy—come, you helpless—come, you simple—come, you penitent—come, you impenitent—come, you who are the very vilest of the vile! If you do but come, Jesus Christ will receive you, welcome you, rejoice over you, and verify to you His thrice blessed promise, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

Now to the tug of war. It shall be my main endeavor to press the invitation upon you, my good Friends, by the arguments which the Savior used.

Kindly look at the text. Read the words for yourselves. Do you not see that the reason why you are solemnly bidden to come to Christ is because—

I. HE IS THE APPOINTED MEDIATOR.

“All things are delivered unto Me of my Father.” God, even the Father, your Creator, against whom you have transgressed, has appointed our Lord Jesus Christ to be the way of access for a sinner to Himself. He is no amateur Savior. He has not thrust Himself into the place officiously. He is officially delegated. In times of distress, every man is at liberty to do his best for the public welfare, but the officer commissioned by his Sovereign is armed with a supreme right to give counsel or to exercise command. Away there in Bengal, if there are any dying of famine, and I have rice, I may distribute it of my own will at my own charge. But the commissioner of the district has a special warrant which I do not possess—he has a function to discharge—it is his business, his vocation. He is authorized by the Government and responsible to the Government to do it. So the Lord Jesus Christ has not only a deep compassion of heart for the necessities of men, but He has God’s authority to support Him! The Fa-

ther delivered all things into His hands and appointed Him to be a Savior. All that Christ teaches has this superlative sanction. He teaches you nothing of His own conjecture. "What I have heard of the Father," He says, "that reveal I unto you." The Gospel is not a scheme of His suggestion. He reveals it fresh from the heart of God! Remember that the promises Christ makes are not merely His surmises, but they are promises with the stamp of the Court of Heaven upon them. Their truth is guaranteed by God! It is not possible they should fail. Sooner might Heaven and earth pass away than one word of His fall flat to the ground. Your Savior, O Sinner—your only Savior—is One whose teachings, whose invitations and whose promises have the royal seal of the King of kings upon them! What more do you need?

Moreover, the Father has given all things into His hands in the sense of government. Christ is King everywhere. God has appointed Christ to be a mediatorial Prince over all of us—I say over us all—not merely over those who accept His Sovereignty, but even over the ungodly! He has given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as He has given Him! It is of no use your rebelling against Christ and saying, "We will not have Him," or—the old cry, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." Have you not read in the Second Psalm, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Christ is supreme. You will either have to submit to His scepter willingly, or else to be broken by His iron rod like a potter's vessel! Which shall it be? You must either bow or be broken—make your choice. You must bend or break! God help you to wisely resolve and gratefully relent. Has the Father appointed Christ to stand between Him and His sinful creatures? Has He put the government upon His shoulders and given Him a name called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty, The Everlasting King? Is He Emmanuel, God With Us, in God's stead? With what reverence are we bound to receive Him!

Moreover, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of mercy and goodness, are laid up in Christ. You recollect when Pharaoh had corn to sell in Egypt, what reply he made to all who applied to him, "Go to Joseph." It would have been no use saying, "Go to Joseph," if Joseph had not the keys of the garner! But he had, and there was no garner that could be opened in Egypt unless Joseph lent the key. In like manner, all the garners of mercy are under the lock and key of Jesus Christ, "who opens, and no man shuts; who shuts, and no man opens." When you require any bounty or benefit of God, you must go to Jesus for it. The Father has put all power into His hands. He has committed the entire work of mercy to His Son, that through Him as the appointed Mediator, all blessings should be dispensed to the praise of the glory of His Grace,

wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. “Now, Sirs, do you want to be saved? I charge you to say whether you do or not, for if you care not for salvation, why should I labor among you? If you choose your own ruin, you need no counsel—you will make sure work of it by your own neglect! But if you want salvation, Christ is the only authorized Person in Heaven and earth who can save you. “There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved.” The Father has delivered all things into His keeping. He is the authorized Savior. “Come unto Me,” then, “all you that labor and are heavy laden.” This argument is further developed by another consideration. Christ is—

II. A WELL-FURNISHED MEDIATOR.

“*All things* are delivered unto Me,” He said, “of My Father.” Sum up all that the sinner needs and you will find Him able to supply you with all. You need pardon—it is delivered unto Christ of the Father. You need a change of heart—it is delivered unto Christ of the Father. You need righteousness in which you may be accepted—Christ has it. You need to be purged from the love of sin—Christ can do it! You need wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption—it is all in Christ. You are afraid that if you start on the road to Heaven, you cannot hold on. Persevering Grace is in Christ! You think you will never be perfect, but perfection is in Christ, for all Believers, being saints of God and servants of Christ, are complete in Him! Between the gate of Hell and Heaven’s gate there is nothing a sinner can need that is not treasured up in His blessed Person. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” He is “full of Grace and the Truth of God.” Oh, Sinner, I wish I could compel you to feel as I do, now—that had I never come to Christ before, I must come to Him now, right now! I understand that—

**“You, O Christ, are all I need,
More than all in You I find.”**

Why, then, should I not come? Is it because I need something *before* I come? Make the question your own! Where are you going to seek it? All things are delivered unto Christ. To whom should you go for *anything* you crave? Is there another who can aid you when Christ is in possession of all? Do you need a tender conscience? Come to Christ for it! Do you need to feel the guilt of your sin? Come to Christ to be made sensitive to its shame! Are you just what you ought *not* to be? Come to Christ to be made what you ought to be, for everything is in Christ! Is there anything that can be obtained elsewhere and brought to Him? The invitation to you is founded upon the explanation that accompanies it. “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father”—therefore, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The argument is so exclusive, that it only needs a willing mind to make it welcome! Only let God the Holy Spirit bless the Word, and sinners *will* come

to Christ, for unto Him shall the gathering of the people be! Now note the next argument. Come to Christ, you laboring ones, because—

III. HE IS AN INCONCEIVABLY GREAT MEDIATOR.

Where do I get that? Why, from this—that no man knows Him but the Father! So great is He, so good, so full of all manner of precious store for needy sinners! No man knows Him but the Father. He is too excellent for our puny understanding to estimate His worth! None but the Infinite God can comprehend His value as a Savior. Has anyone here been saying, “Christ cannot save me—I am such a big sinner”? You don’t know Him, My Friend! You don’t know Him! You are measuring Him according to your little insignificant notions. High as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His ways above your ways, and His thoughts than your thoughts! You don’t know Him, Sinner, and no one does know Him but His Father. Why, some of us who have been saved by Him, thought when we saw the blessed mystery of His substitutionary Sacrifice, that we knew all about Him—but we have found that He grows upon our view the nearer we approach, and the more we contemplate Him! Some of you have now been Christians for 30 or 40 years, and you know much more of Him than you used to, but you do not know Him yet—your eyes are dazzled by His brightness—you do not know Him. And the happy spirits before the Throne of God who have been there, some of them, three or four thousand years, have hardly begun to spell the first letter of His name! He is too grand and too good for them to comprehend! I believe that it will be the growing wonder in eternity to find out how precious a Christ, how powerful, how Immutable—in a word, how Divine a Christ He is in whom we have trusted! Only the Infinite can understand the Infinite. “God only knows the love of God,” and only the Father understands the Son. Oh, I wish I had a week in which to talk on this, instead of a few minutes! You need a great Savior? Well, here He is! Nobody can depict Him, or describe Him, or even imagine Him, except the Infinite God, Himself. Come, then, poor Sinner, sunk up to your neck in crime, black as Hell—come unto Him! Come, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and prove Him to be your Savior. The fact that no one knows how great a Savior He is except His Father may encourage you. Now for another argument. Come to Him because—

IV. HE IS AN INFINITELY WISE MEDIATOR.

He is a Mediator who understands both persons on whose behalf He mediates. He understands you. He has summed and reckoned you up and He has made you out to be a heap of sin and misery, and nothing else. The glory of it is that He understands God, whom you have offended, for it is written, “Neither knows any man the Father, save the Son,” and He knows the Father. Oh, what a mercy that is to have one to go before God for me who knows Him intimately! He knows His Father’s will! He knows His Father’s wrath. No man knows it but Himself. He has

suffered it. He knows His Father's love. He alone can feel it—such love as God felt for sinners. He knows how His Father's wrath has been turned away by His precious blood. He knows the Father as a Judge whose anger no longer burns against those for whom the Atonement has been made. He knows the Father's heart. He knows the Father's secret purposes! He knows the Father's will is that whoever sees the Son and believes on Him, shall have everlasting life. He knows the decrees of God and yet He says, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." There is nothing in that contrary to the decrees of God, for Jesus knows what the decrees are, and He would not speak in contradiction to them. He knows God's requirements. Sinner, whatever it is God requires of you, Christ knows what it is and He is ready to meet it! "The Law is holy, and just, and good," and Jesus knows it, for the Law is in His heart. Justice is very stern and Jesus knows it, for Jesus has felt the edge of the sword of Justice, and knows all about it. He is fully equipped for the discharge of His mediatorial office—and those who put their trust in Him shall find that He will bear them through. Often, when a prisoner at the bar has a barrister who understands his work and is perfectly competent for the defense, his friends say to him, "Your case is safe, for if there is a man in England who can get you through, it is that man." But my Master is an Advocate who never lost a case! He has a plea at the Throne of God that never failed! Give Him—oh, give Him your cause to plead, nor doubt the Father's Grace! Poor Sinner, He is so wise an Advocate that you may well come to Him and He will give you rest. But I must not weary you, although there is a fullness of matter on which I might enlarge. With one other argument I conclude—

V. HE IS AN INDISPENSABLE MEDIATOR.

The *only* mediator, so the text says. "Neither knows any man the Father, save the Son." Christ knows the Father—no one else knows Him, save the Son. There is none other that can approach God. It is Christ for your Savior, or no Savior at all! Salvation is in no other and if you will not have Christ, neither can you have salvation! Observe how that is. It is certain that no man knows God except Christ. It is equally certain that no man can come to God except by Christ. He says it peremptorily—"No man comes to the Father but by Me." Not less certain is it that no man can please the Father except through Christ, for, "without faith it is impossible to please Him." No faith is worth having except the faith that is founded and based upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and only Him. Oh, then, Souls, since you are shut up to it by a blessed necessity, say at once, "I will approach the gracious Prince, and take Jesus to be my All-in-All." If I might hope you would do this early, I could go back to my home and retire to my bed, praising God for the work that was done, and the result that was achieved. Let us reiterate again and again the Gospel we have to declare—the very essence of the Gospel it is which we proclaim! Trust

your souls with Jesus, and your souls are saved! He suffered in the place of all who trust Him. If you rely upon Him by an act of simple faith—the simplest act in all the world—you immediately so rely that you are forgiven and your transgressions are blotted out for His name’s sake! He stands in spirit among us at this good hour, and says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden”—and He gives you these arguments which ought to convince you. I pray they may. He is an authorized Savior, and a well-furnished Savior. He is the Friend of God, and the Friend of man. God grant you may accept Him and find the gift which He, alone, can bestow! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8.**

Verse 1. *There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* “No condemnation.” That is the beginning of the Chapter. No separation—that is the end of the Chapter. And all between is full of Grace and Truth! What a banquet this Chapter has often proved to the souls of God’s hungry servants! May it be so now as we read it. No condemnation even now. Many doubts, but no condemnation. Many chastisements, but no condemnation. Apparently even frowns from the Father’s face, but no condemnation! And this is not a bare statement, but an inference from powerful arguments. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” This is where they are. “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” This is how they behave themselves, not under the government of the old nature, but under the rule of the Divine Spirit of God!

2-4. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.* None keep the law so well as those who do not hope to be saved by it, but who, renouncing all confidence in their own works, and accepting the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ Jesus, are moved by gratitude to a height of consecration and a purity of obedience which mere legalism can never know! The child will obey better without desire of reward, than the slave will under the dread of the lash, or in hope of a wage. The most potent motive for holiness is Free Grace. A dying Savior is the death of sin. As we have been singing, we strive against its power until we learned that Christ was the Way—and then we conquered it.

5. *For they who live after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh, but they who live after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* Everything according to its nature. Water will rise as high as its source, but it will not naturally flow any higher. The great thing, then, is to be brought under the dominion of the Holy Spirit, and of that new nature which is the offspring of the Spirit. Then we try to rise up to our source, and we rise vastly higher than human nature ever can under any force that you can apply to it. The new nature can do what the old nature cannot do!

6. *For to be carnally minded—*To have the mind of the flesh.

6. *Is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* Flesh must die. Its tendency is to corruption, but the spirit never dies. Its tendency, its instinct, its growth advances immortality.

7. *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.* The old nature is hopelessly bad. There is no mending it. It is enmity, not merely *at* enmity—it is absolutely enmity. It is not subject to God's Law and you cannot make it so.

8. *So then, they who are in the flesh cannot please God.* So long as we are under the dominion of the old nature, the depraved and fallen nature, there is no pleasing God.

9. *But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if, indeed, the Spirit of God dwells in you.* Oh, this is a very amazing fact, that the Spirit of God should *dwell* in us! I have often said to you that I never know which of two mysteries most to admire—God Incarnate in Christ, or the Holy Spirit indwelling in man—they are two marvelous things, miracles of miracles!

9, 10. *Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* The regeneration of the body, so to speak, is not performed in this life—Resurrection is tantamount to that. The body is still under the old law of death, and so we have pain and weakness, and we die. But the Spirit, oh, how it triumphs, even in the midst of pain and weakness. “The Spirit is life, because of righteousness.” That will not die.

11. *But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you.* So there is coming a time for your body to experience the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. He does not say that He will give you a new body. Do not believe this modern doctrine. But He shall quicken your mortal body. That is to say, the same body, which is now subject to death, and so is mortal, is to be quickened at the Resurrection.

12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.* What do we owe the old nature? Nothing! Give it a decent burial.

Let it be buried with Christ in Baptism. Let the Spirit of God come and renew it. But we owe it nothing and we are not debtors to it.

13, 14. *For if you live after the flesh, you shall die: but if you, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* Your “universal fatherhood” is rubbish! “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,” and none others. This is the essential to sonship—that we should have the Spirit of God within us.

15, 16. *For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* That is, when we have the Spirit, when we are renewed in the Spirit of our minds, when we come into the domain of the Spirit and quit the tyranny of the flesh. Then the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God!

17. *And if children, then heirs.* It is not, of course, so in human families. All children are not heirs—but it is so in the family of God.

17. *Heirs of God.* What a heritage! God Himself becomes our heritage. We are heirs to all that God has and all that God is.

17. *And joint-heirs with Christ; if, indeed, we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* The whole Chapter is rather too long for our reading, so we will pass on to the 28th verse.

28. *And we know.* This is not a matter of opinion. This is scarcely a matter of faith. “We know.” We are sure of it. We have proved it.

28. *That all things work together for good to them who love God.* They all work. They work in harmony. They work for one purpose. That purpose is for good.

28. *To them who are the called according to His purpose.* That is their private character which God knows and which He reveals to them in course of time.

29. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.* This is their character, which they perceive, which others may in a measure perceive. We are to be like He, then, conformed to His image. And if we are joint-heirs with Him, what a joy it is that we are to be partakers of His Nature, made like He! Christ will be reflected and, in a measure, repeated, in all His people—this shall be the very glory of Heaven, that, look which way you will, you shall see either Christ, Himself, or His likeness in His people. If you have ever stood in a room that was full of mirrors everywhere, how wonderfully your own likeness has been repeated! And Heaven shall be a mirror chamber, wherein Christ shall be seen in everyone of His people. He did predestinate them to be conformed to the image of His Son.

30. *Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified!* That glorification we cannot see as yet. It is in the excessive brightness of the future, just as His Divine Election is in the brightness of the past. These are the two columns on either shore, but the swinging bridge in between is this—calling and justification! These are joined in one, and if you have either of these, you may know your predestination and your future glorification!

31. *What shall we say, then, to these things?* Oh, have you not often said that? When you have studied the plan of Grace, the Covenant of God, have you not said to yourself, “What can I say to all this? It is passing wonder! It exceeds the power of comprehension, for the greatness of this glory. “What shall we say, then, to these things?” Well, we will say something practical that shall cheer our hearts.

31-33. *If God is for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God who justifies.* It may be read, “God who justifies?” and properly may be read as a question.

34. *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died.* He is the Judge. Will He who died, condemn?

34. *Yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.* He alone is Judge. Has He done all this and will He condemn us?

35. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* These have been tried on the saints for ages.

36. *As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* But has this divided them from Christ? Hear them all, as with united voice they answer—

37, 38. *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded.* Somebody asked, “Pray, what persuasion may you have?” Well, this is my persuasion.

38. *That neither death, nor life, nor angels—Good or bad.*

38. *Nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present—Hard and grinding as they may be.*

38. *Nor things to come.* Unknown mysteries dreaded.

39. *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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

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

CHRIST'S WORD WITH YOU

NO. 1691

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING JUNE 12 1881,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.

**WHEN THE REGULAR CONGREGATION LEFT THEIR SEATS
TO BE OCCUPIED BY STRANGERS.**

***“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28.***

ONE is struck with the personality of this text. There are two persons in it, “you” and “Me”—that is to say, the laboring one and the tender Savior who entreats him to come, that he may find rest. It is most important, if we wish to see the way of peace, clearly, to understand that we must, each one, come *personally* to Jesus for rest—“Come unto Me, all you that labor”—and that coming, on our part, must be to a *personal* Christ. In effect He says, “Come, yourselves, to Me. Come not through sponsors, not through men whom you choose to call your priests, not through the petitions of ministers and teachers, but come, yourselves, for yourselves.”

Dear Hearers, the quarrel is between you and God, and this quarrel can only be made up by your approaching the Lord through a Mediator—it would be folly for you to ask another to come to the Mediator for you—you must trust in Him, yourself. Personal faith is indispensable to salvation. But the personality of Christ is equally brought out in our text. Jesus says, “Come unto Me”—“not to anybody else, but to Me.” He does not say, “Come to hear a sermon about Me,” but, “come to Me.” He does not say, “Come to sacraments which shall teach you something about Me,” but, “come to Me”—to My work and Person.

You will observe that no one is put between you and Christ. The text is, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden”—not to somebody that will stand between you and Me, but, “Come to Me at once, and without a go-between.” Come to Jesus directly, even to Jesus, Himself. You *do* need a Mediator between yourselves and God, but you do *not* need a mediator between yourselves and Jesus! Christ Jesus is the Mediator between you and the Father—you need no one to stand between you and Christ. To Him we may look at once, with unveiled face, guilty as we are! To Him we may come, just as we are, without anyone to recommend us, or plead for us, or make a bridge for us to Jesus. We are to come only to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom God has ordained to be the way of access.

I shall fail at this in setting forth the Gospel if I shall lead anybody to think that he can get salvation by going to a church, or going to a meeting house, or going to a minister, or going into an inquiry-room, or going to a penitent form. No, we are to go nowhere but to Jesus. YOU, just as you are, are to come to Christ as He is—and the promise is that on your com-

ing to Him, He will give you rest. That is the assurance of Jesus, Himself, and there is no deception in it. He will give you rest us surely as you come to Him. What a blessing it will be if those who have no rest in themselves should find rest at once in Jesus while yet this sermon calls them!

Why not? I hope many of you, my Brothers and Sisters, who have found rest, already, will be praying while I am preaching, that the unresting ones may come at this good hour and find rest in Jesus Christ the Savior. You see there are two persons. Let everybody else vanish and let these two be left alone to transact heavenly business with each other. Jesus says to you, "Come to Me." Your answer to Him, if it is, "Yes, Lord, I come," shall be the means of bringing peace to your heart from this time forth and forevermore! I want, at this time, to set forth the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who sends this pressing personal invitation to every laboring and heavy laden one in this place. I wish that I knew how to preach. I have tried to do so for 30 years or so, but I am only now beginning to learn the art. Oh, that one knew how to set forth Christ so that men perceived His beauty and fell in love with Him at first sight!

Oh, Spirit of God, make it so now! If men knew the grandeur of His Gospel—the joy, the peace, the happiness which comes of being a Christian, they would run to Him! As flies seek after sweet fruit, so would men seek after the Savior, if they did but know that sweeter than honey and the honeycomb is the word of His salvation!

I. I first call your attention to THE VALUE OF THE GIFT which, in this text, is set before weary, laboring men—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Rest of the heart is worth more than all California! To be at peace—to be no more tossed up and down in the soul—to be secure, peaceful, joyful, happy, is worth mountains of diamonds. A man's life consists not in the abundance of the *things* which he possesses—many a poor man is vastly happier than the possessor of large estates—for peace comes not with property, but with contentment. The music of peace is not the jingle of gold or silver.

Sweeter bells sound in the pardoned heart than ever wealth can ring. The herb called heart's-ease often grows in tiny gardens and happy is the man who wears it in his bosom. It is this gift which, for value, outshines the pearls and rubies which deck an Indian queen, which Jesus promises to give to all that come to Him for it! Oh, rare peace which comes from the Prince of Peace! This, if a man gets it, is practically helpful to him in all the affairs of life. I say that other things being equal, there is nobody so fit to run the race of life as the man who is unloaded of his cares and enjoys peace of mind. The man who is happily restful towards God is the man to fight the battle of life! I have known a man losing money on the market to quietly step aside and, getting into a quiet place, breathe a prayer to God and come back calm and composed. And, whereas before, in his distraction, he was ready to make bad bargains, plunge into speculation and lose terribly, he has come back rested and peaceful, and has been in a fit frame for dealing with his fellow men.

I know this, Brothers and Sisters, having many cares resting upon myself, that when I can feel calmly restful and quiet before God, I am a match for anybody! But when once the spirits sink and depression comes

in, then the grasshopper becomes a burden, and a trifle frets the soul! Bring solid rest to the heart and you have given the man a fulcrum upon which he may rest the lever with which he can lift the heaviest weight. But let him always be tossed up and down and he has nothing to give him force. When a man is afraid to die, he may well be afraid to live—he who could not look death in the face—yes that could not look *God* in the face, is a man who has a latent weakness about him that will rob him of force and courage in the heat of the battle.

I commend to you, Brothers and Sisters, in this busy London, the precious gift of my text called, “rest,” because it is not only a preparation for the world to come but for the life that now is. The peace of God will serve both as arms and armor! It is both battle-axe and breastplate. It will be your heart’s comfort and your hands’ strength. It will be good for day and night, for calm and storm. It has a thousand uses and all of them are essential to spiritual well-being. This rest is not found anywhere else but in Christ. Let me tell you what kind of rest it is, confessing that I now enjoy it and revel in it.

It is rest to the man’s entire spiritual being. Conscience troubles us till Jesus speaks it into rest. Conscience looks back and cries, “Things are not right! You were wrong here, wrong there and wrong altogether! There is no rest for you.” Conscience keeps a diary and writes with heavy pen a gloomy record which we read with alarm. “Tremble,” says Conscience, “for you will see this record again at the Judgment Day and find yourself condemned by it to eat the fruits of your doings.” Men laugh and say they do not believe it—but they *do* believe it. Deep in their hearts they must believe it, for God has a witness within which blurts out the truth. Conscience perpetually rouses some men, as a watchdog wakes a slumbering householder. “Down, Sir,” they say, “Lie down, lie down,” but this watchdog of God in the heart will not always lie down—every now and then it begins to howl horribly—and the man cannot sleep as he needs to sleep. Even if you drug Conscience, it will have fits of barking in its sleep.

Now, Jesus promises, to those who come to Him, a peaceful conscience which He will give through pardoning all the past, through changing the current of the man’s ideas in the present and through helping him to avoid, in the future, the faults into which he fell in the days that have now gone by—

***“Rest, weary soul,
The penalty is borne, the ransom paid,
For all your sins full satisfaction made.
Strive not to do, yourself, what Christ has done!
Claim the free gift and make the joy your own.
No more by pangs of guilt and fear distress,
Rest, sweetly rest!”***

It is a grand thing to have rest of conscience. But then we have minds—and minds are troublous things. In these days of doubt, it is not easy for a mind to get an anchorage and keep it. Many are searching for something to believe or, at least, they long to be quite sure that it would be the right thing *not* to believe. Minds are tossed about like ships at sea, or birds caught in a fierce gale.

My mind was once in that state. It drifted and was carried along, I knew not where. I, for a while, believed nothing, till at last it came to this—that I thought my own existence might be, after all, a mere thought! Having a practical vein in my character, I sat down and laughed at my own dreams of non-existence for I felt that I did exist! Up from the depths of doubt and unbelief I rose to feel there must be *something* sure. I cast my soul at Jesus' feet and I rested—and I am, now, perfectly content in mind. Thousands of us can say, "We know whom we have believed and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed to Him" and, therefore, we cannot leave the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

No new doctrines, no novelties, no skepticisms, no fresh information can now disturb us—at least they can but breathe a surface-ruffling—all is calm in the soul's deeps. Having found rest of intellect in the doctrine of Jesus, there will we stay till death and Heaven, or the Second Advent solves all riddles! But then we have hearts. I hope we all have hearts, though some are harsh and almost heartless. Men that have great, all-embracing hearts need a rest for their love. What a cause of trouble this heart of ours is, for it often clings to that which is unworthy of it and we are deceived and disappointed—and heart-break crushes us. The tempting fruit, like the apple of Sodom, crumbles into ashes in our hand.

Here, then, is rest and remedy for heart palpitations and the anguish of the breast. Let a man love Jesus and he will crave no other love, for this will fill his soul to the brim!—

***"Him on yonder Cross I love;
Nothing else on earth I count dear!"***

Christ fills a man's nature to the brim! The Incarnate Son of God, once known, gives rest of conscience, rest of intellect and rest of heart. In a word, He brings complete satisfaction to the spirit. Now, I do not know of any religion that offers perfect rest to the mind except the religion of Jesus Christ. Men go the world over to try and find this pearl of great price, but their quest is in vain. I often talk with religious people who have no idea of being saved, now, and finding rest at once because they do not understand that Christ came to give *immediate* salvation to those who trust Him.

I spoke with one earnest soul a little while ago, and she said, "I have no rest." I replied, "Have you believed in Jesus Christ?" She answered, "Yes." "But," I asked, "Do you not know that as soon as you believe in Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven you and you are saved?" "I did not grasp that," she said. Yet that is the Gospel—that whoever believes in Jesus is not condemned. He that believes in Him has everlasting life, and is saved the moment he believes—becomes changed from the power of sin and made into a new man—possessing a new life which can never die! This assurance is worth getting hold of and he that has it, let him hold it fast and rejoice in it! Yet it is not to be obtained *anywhere* except from the dear hands that were nailed to the Cross. This rest can never come from any lips but those that prayed upon the Cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This, then, is the gift which is presented by Christ Jesus at this moment to all that labor and are heavy laden. If they will come to Him for it, they shall have rest of soul. Some in this place are panting for rest. In this great city there must be much trouble, sorrow, unrest, misery and distraction. When I look on this congregation, I know that I could not bear to hear the tale of sorrow that would be unfolded if each man were to tell his inward anguish. We look cheerful, but many a cheerful face covers a sad heart. The weight of human misery is enough to make the axles of the earth to break! Oh, what a blessing it is that there is One who can lift us up—One who can make the poorest to be better than if he were rich, and the sad to be happier than the merry—and the afflicted to be more blest than the prosperous!

Jesus is here in our midst with hands loaded with mercy. May He prove His Presence among us by giving rest to all those who came in here laboring and laden. Thus have I spoken upon the value of the gift. Oh, Spirit of God, teach men its value!

II. Bear with me, in the second place, while I speak upon THE largeness of the Savior's heart. Oh, that I could stand aside and that He would come here, Himself, and utter the words of my text with His own dear lips! "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden." See the persons whom He invites to come to Him! None but a Man of great soul would keep such company! If we would be merry, we choose merry company. Some folks I should be glad to be in Heaven with, but I could dispense with their company here—for ten minutes with them on earth is enough to make one wretched! Only a generous spirit would say, "Come to Me, all you that are downcast—all you that are desponding—all you that are broken-hearted."

Yet that is exactly what the text says! Christ courts the company of the sorrowful and invites those who are ill at ease to approach Him. What a heart of love He must have! No, He invites *all* such to come. You know two or three that are really cast down are quite enough at a time for most of us. It happened some months ago, when I was sitting here to see people, that I had four or five cases so sad—so deplorable—and which I could render such little help, that, after trying to pray with them and encourage them, I said to a friend who was helping me, "I hope the next that comes to me will be cheerful, for I feel my head ache and my heart, too!" I tried as best I could to enter into these poor people's troubles till I became troubled myself!

The Savior has such a large heart that He does not forbid the sorrowing ones to come—none of them. "Come one," He says, "come all. All of you that labor and are heavy laden may at this hour come to Me." The love of my Master's heart is so great and the sympathy of His nature with man is so deep, that if all should come that ever labored or ever sorrowed, He would not be exhausted by the sympathy, but would still be able to give them rest in Himself! And what a large heart Jesus has, that He comes only to do men good and begins by doing good, first, to those that need it most. Oh, my Lords and Ladies, Jesus did not come to win your patronage that you might applaud Him! Oh, you frivolous and high-flying ones, Je-

sus did not come to win your approbation! It would be a small thing to Him for you to think well of Him!

But, O you despised and rejected, you oppressed and down-trod—you weary, you worn, you sad, you sick, you desponding, you despairing—the Great Physician of souls comes after you and it is to *you* He addresses the invitation at this time—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Come, such as you are, and come all of you! And, He says, come at once! He does not say, “Stop till you get your spirits raised. Stop till you get some measure of relief,” but come just as you are! There is a notion in some people’s minds that they cannot believe in Christ till they are better. Christ does not need your betterness! Will you only go to the physician when you feel better? Then you are foolish, indeed, for you do not need the physician when you are getting better! The best time to apply to a physician is when you are as bad as you can be—and the time to come to Jesus is when you are so bad that you cannot be worse!

You had better come just as you are—He invites you to do so. “Come,” He says, “all you that now labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Stay not to improve yourselves, but come to Him for improvement! If you cannot come with a broken heart, come *for* a broken heart! If you cannot come with faith, come *for* faith! If you cannot come repenting, come and ask the Lord to give you repentance! Come empty-handed, bankrupt, ruined, condemned and you will find rest! Oh, you that have written out your own sentence and have said, “I shall perish; there is no pardon for me”—come to Jesus, for depths of mercy! There is pardon even for you! Only come to the Savior and He will give you rest! He promises this rest to all who come to Him. My Master stakes His credit upon every case that comes to Him. He has already given rest to thousands, no, to millions! And He promises to each one that comes to Him that He will give rest to him.

If there is in this place; if there is in this country; if there is in this universe a single person who ever did come to Jesus Christ and He did not give him rest, I would like to know of it, because it is my daily habit to declare that Jesus gives rest to all that come to Him and I do not want to declare a lie! Let us know when Jesus fails. He says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” The first one of you that comes and He casts you out, let us know of it! We will post it up on the Royal Exchange—“A sinner came to Jesus and He would not receive him.” Woe to the world in that dark day, for the sun of hope will be quenched and the night will miss her stars. Till then, we beg you to remember that Jesus has said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Come and test my blessed Lord and see if He does not accept you!

We stake the veracity of Christ; we stake the Truth of the Gospel upon the case of everyone in this place who will come to Jesus Christ by faith and trust Him! Each heavy-laden one must and shall find rest if he will come to Jesus, or else the Redeemer’s promise is not true.

Thus have I spoken upon the largeness of our Lord’s heart in promising rest to all that come to Him for it.

III. But now, thirdly, and but a moment, let me speak to you about THE BLESSEDNESS OF HIS POWER. Our Lord Jesus Christ is able to give peace to all that labor and are heavy laden. He has not outrun His power in the promise that He has given. He is conscious that within Himself there resides a power which will be able to give peace to every conscience. Notice there is no reserve made, whatever—no way is left of backing out of the promise. “Come unto Me,” He says, “all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” No limiting clause is inserted. Some men will speak what looks to be a very large promise, but a little condition inserted in it narrows it horribly. But there is no condition here.

Whoever born of woman that labors and is heavy laden, and will come to Christ, must have rest. And Christ has said it because He can give it! There are desperate cases among the myriads of troubled hearts, but no single one is too far gone for Jesus. You have read the story of John Bunyan in, “Grace Abounding.” Was there ever a poor wretch that was dragged about by the devil more than poor John was? For five years and more he could not call his soul his own. He did not dare to sleep because he was afraid he would wake up in Hell. All day long he was troubled. He fretted and worried with this and that, and the other. Poor tinker that he was, he first thought this, and then thought that! And, as he says, he was “considerably tumbled up and down in his mind.” I am sure such a case as that would have been given up by men—but when Jesus took it in hand, John Bunyan found perfect rest and his blessed, “Pilgrim’s Progress,” remains a proof of the joy of heart which the poor tinker found when he came to rest in Christ.

Now, if within these walls there is a case in which poverty combines with sickness and disease. And if that poverty and disease are the result of vice. And if that vice has been carried on for many years—and if the entire man is now depressed and despondent, like one shut up in an iron cage—the Lord Jesus can still give rest in such a case! It matters not how black or horrible is your condition! If you believe in Jesus, you shall be delivered. As far as this trouble of soul is concerned and as far as the venom of sin in your nature is concerned, you shall be healed! You shall be made pure, though now you are filthy! You shall be restored, though now you are fallen! You shall be started again in life by a power that shall cause you to be born again, so that you shall be as though you were a little child commencing life again, only under happier skies and holier influences!

My Lord and Master has a power to comfort which reaches to the uttermost of human necessity. Some go a long way in sin and doubt, but they cannot rush beyond the uttermost and, therefore, they are within the boundaries of Divine Grace! Let the wind drive the bird far off the shore, yet the Lord has a rest for it in another land. Still does Jesus bid us sound the great trumpet and ring out the notes both clear and shrill—“Come to Me! Come to Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!” Blessed shall those ears be that hear the sound if their hearts obey it and come to Jesus—they will find rest at once! He is able. He is able to give rest. He is willing to cause joy. Doubt no more! Jesus speaks thus without reserve because He is con-

scious of power, for note this—Jesus Christ is God and He that made men's hearts can make them all anew!

The God at whose bidding sprang that mighty arch of the blue sky—who poured out the sea from the hollow of His hands and named the stars in their hosts—He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come to Him! This blessed God took upon Himself our nature and became Man and, being found in fashion as a man, He took men's grief and sin upon Himself and went up to the Cross loaded with it. And there He suffered in our place to make expiation for our guilt. There is such merit in His precious blood that no sin can ever overpower it! I can see man's sin before me—it towers aloft, defying Heaven! It rises like an awful alp shrouded in a storm of evil! It seems to thread the clouds, to be higher than the stars! Oh, mighty mountain, what shall become of you?

But, lo! I see Christ's precious blood and merit like an ocean of Grace poured forth to cover sin! Comparable to Noah's deluge, the power of the Atonement is revealed till, 20 cubits upward, the tops of the mountains of our sin are covered and not a speck of them remains—while on the top of the waters rides the ark of everlasting salvation—and all that believe in Jesus are safe, and safe forever! Oh, Sinner, Christ is able to cast your sins into the depths of the sea so that they shall never be mentioned against you again and thus He will give you the most serene rest. "Come to Me," He says, "and I will give you rest."

I wish I knew how to put this so that it would get into men's hearts. My Master knows that He can save you, for He had reckoned up every possible case before He spoke so positively. His Prescient eye discerned all men that have ever lived or that ever shall live—and He perceived *you*, dear Friend, whom nobody else knows. You up in the corner there, whom nobody understands, not even yourself—*He* understands you and He is able to give rest to your eccentric mind! He meant this promise to ring down the ages till it reached you! We have nearly completed the 19th Century, but if ever we should get to the 119th Century, His power to give rest will still be the same. Still will He cry—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Oh, the vastness of my Master's power, that in all ages and all places, to all the children of man He promises perfect rest of heart if they will but come to Him! Will not you come at once and test that power? Oh that the Holy Spirit may incline you to do so!

IV. Now, fourthly, and this is a very important point, I want you to notice THE SIMPLICITY OF THIS INVITATION. It only says, "Come to Me, come to Me, come to Me, and I will give you rest." The call is, as we say, plain as a pikestaff—it has not a fine word in it. What is the way of salvation? If any minister replies, "I should need a week or two to explain it to you," he does not know the way of salvation because the way of salvation which we need must suit a dying man, an illiterate man and a guilty man, or else it will be unavailing in many cases! We need a way of Grace which will answer all occasions—a mode of salvation suitable to all conditions!

Our Lord Jesus Christ proves how willing He is to save sinners by making the method of Grace so easy. He says, "Come to Me." "Well," asks one, "how am I to come?" Come any way. If you can run, come running. If you

can walk, come walking. If you can creep, come creeping. If you can only limp, come limping—come any way—so long as you come to Jesus. “But what is coming to Him?” asks one. “If He were at York, I would walk to York, tonight, to get at Him.” He is not at York any more than He is here. We are not to come to Him with our persons, or with our legs and feet by a *visible* motion. How, then, can we come to Him? Listen, you Friends in the front gallery, how can *I* come to you, and yet stand here? Why, by thinking about you, knowing about you and then confiding my thoughts to you, as I am now doing!

If you, over yonder, are a business man, I resolve in my mind that I will commit my affairs into your hands—and in so doing I have mentally come to you. We are to do with our Lord Jesus just what we do with a physician. We are very ill. It is a bad case. We hear that a certain eminent doctor has great skill in one particular disease. So, we go to him at once. Our physical going is not so much required as our mental resort to him, by putting our case into his hands. We say to him, “Sir, here is my afflicted person. I will tell you all about my state as far as I know it. Ask me any questions. I will make a clean breast of all. Whatever you prescribe for me, I will take. Whatever regimen you lay down as to diet, I will follow. I place myself entirely in your hands because I have faith in your skill. You cured my mother of this disease. You cured my brother and I believe you can cure me.” Such is faith in Christ!

A man says, “Jesus, You have died to save men, and You have revealed Yourself as a Savior. I need saving. You have saved a great many like I. I now put myself into Your hands. I will do what You bid me. I will follow any directions You may lay down, I confide myself to You.” Now, if this is a genuine surrender and a hearty confidence, you are already a healed man! Your power to trust Christ is evidence of spiritual sanity—you would not have been able to trust the blessed Jesus if a sound work of restoration had not *already* commenced in you. “Oh,” says one, “do I understand, then, that if I trust Christ, I may do as I like?” Stop, stop! I never said that!

Listen and learn! Here is a ship which cannot get into the haven. The pilot comes on board. The captain says, “Pilot, can you get her into harbor?” “Yes, Captain, I will guarantee it. I will guarantee that I will get the ship into harbor if you leave her with me.” The captain goes to the helm, or gives orders as to steering the vessel, and at once the pilot objects that they are not trusting to him. “Yes, I am,” says the captain, “and I expect you to get me into harbor, for you promised to do so.” “Of course I promised,” replies the pilot, “but then it was understood that I should take charge of the ship for the time being.” He orders the helm to be changed and the captain declares that it shall not be done. Then cries the pilot, “I cannot get you into the harbor and I will not pretend to do so! Unless you trust me, I can do nothing, and the proof that you trust me is that you obey my orders.”

Now, then, trust Jesus, so as to be *obedient* to Him and He will pilot you safely. Yield yourself up to follow His example, to imitate His spirit and obey His commands and you are a saved man! Your ship shall not be driven out to sea while Jesus steers it. But do not go away under the de-

lusion that you have only to say, "I trust Christ," and that you are saved. Nothing of the kind! You must *really* trust Him—*practically* trust Him, or there is no hope for you. Give yourself up to Jesus; renounce your old sins; forsake your old habits; live as Christ will enable you to live and immediately you shall find peace for your soul! You cannot enjoy rest and yet riot in sin! Shall the drunk have rest and yet drown his soul in his cups?

Shall an adulterer have rest and wallow in his filthiness? Shall a man blaspheme and have rest? Shall a man be a rogue and a liar and have rest? Impossible! These things must be given up by coming to Jesus Christ, who will help you to give them up and make a new man of you—and then you shall receive rest in your soul. Come to Him, then, in spirit and in truth. Oh, that you would come to Him while I am speaking—and find instantaneous rest for your souls!

V. I must not keep you longer and so I want, upon the last point, to briefly call your attention to THE UNSELFISHNESS OF THE LORD, JESUS CHRIST, "Come unto Me," He says, "and I will give you." That is the Gospel. "I will give you." You say, "Lord, I cannot give You anything." He does not need anything! Come to Jesus and *He* says, "I will give *you*." Not what you give to God, but what He gives to you, will be your salvation! "I will give you"—that is the Gospel in four words. Will you come and have it? It lies open before you. Jesus needs nothing from you. Suppose you were to become Christ's disciple and serve Him with all your might throughout your life—in what way would that enrich Him? He has died for you! How can you ever pay Him for that?

He lives in Heaven to plead for you and He loves you—how can you ever reward Him for that? Our hope is not in what we can give to Him, but in what He gives to us! Weak-minded men have taken pleasure in flagellating themselves, starving themselves, shutting themselves up in monasteries, lacerating their bodies and torturing their minds—to what purpose were these pains? Did the loving Jesus require this of them? Could such miseries afford His tender heart the least pleasure? Not at all! He has no pleasure in human misery, but He desires that His joy may be fulfilled in us that our joy may be full.

I see before me a springhead from which the clearest crystal water is always leaping with a gladsome sound. A little stream, which this spring creates, runs down the meadow—you can track it by the long grass, reeds, rushes and tangled wildflowers which drink their life from it. In summer and in winter the crystal fountain never ceases to pour forth its treasures. Come here when you may, you shall see the silver jet spurting forth and splashing up, again, from the stones upon which it falls. How musical the sound! Listen! The spring is pleading, quietly but plaintively. It would become a greater blessing if it could but gain the means, and so it sighs and whispers, Buckets! Pitchers! Goblets! Cups! It longs to fill them all! Look, here are a couple of pails, but they are empty. Yes, they are all the better for the purpose—full buckets would not help the spring to dispense its water.

Here is a cup, but it is a very little one. Never mind, fill it and bring many like it. This girl has brought a jug, but it is spotted with dirt. We bid

her take it away, lest she pollute these sparkling waters. Not so, the spring pleads, and this is its pleading—"Bring it here, I will cleanse it and then fill it to the brim." Need I expound the parable? I hope not! Come and act it out, you little ones or great ones, you empty ones or unclean ones! Thus shall you know more surely and more sweetly than words can tell you how free and full is the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! The emptier you are, the better can you receive from our overflowing Savior! He longs to bless you for your own sake. His yearnings are all unselfish—they are yearnings to give, longings to bestow favor.

He cries, even now, to laboring and laden souls, "Come unto Me, and I will give you not only rest, but all you require." Friends, have you learned well the lesson that there is nothing good in yourselves with which to attract Jesus, but all the good is in Him to attract you? Is it not clear enough that physicians do not come to heal healthy persons? I saw a carriage dashing down the street with a doctor in it and I felt morally certain that he was not coming to my house, for I am in perfect health. I dare say he was hastening to see a poor creature who was on the brink of the grave. When I see the chariots of mercy flashing with winged steeds through the air, I know that they are not speeding to you who are good and righteous and think you do not need a Savior—they are hastening to such as are sinful and crave forgiveness, to such as are guilty and require a change of heart—for these are they that Jesus comes to bless!

See, then, how the unselfishness of His Character comes out in His inviting to come to Himself those who cannot benefit Him, but must be pensioners on His bounty! "I will give you rest." Men, brothers, women, sisters—all of you—this is the final word. The day is coming when we shall all sigh for rest. We need it badly, now, and if we have it not, we are leading a pitiful life. Those poor rich people in the west end that have no Christ, how can they bear their irksome idleness, the satiety and disgust of unenjoyed abundance? Those poor people in the east end that have no Christ—what they do without Him, I cannot tell. Alas, for their poverty and suffering, but what are these to their wretchedness in being Christless?

Those of us who have all that heart can wish, still feel that we could never be happy if we were not resting in our dear Savior! How, then, do the starving exist without Him? But we shall soon die and what then? A young man said to his father some little while ago, "Father, I am prospering in business wonderfully! If I get on at this rate, what will it come to?" "Come to a grave," said his father. And so it will. All things of earth end there. Oh that we were always ready to die, for then we should be ready to live! He that is ready to live tomorrow is ready to die tomorrow. There is no need that death should be a hitch in our existence. Life ought to run on as a river pursues its way and widens into the sea. Our existence, here, should glide into our existence there, but that cannot be unless we get on the right track while we are here. If we are on the right track, now, which is believing, loving, fearing, serving and honoring God, we shall go on loving, fearing and honoring God forever and ever!

"Come," says Christ, "Come to Me." What will Jesus say at the Judgment Day to those who so come? Why, He will say, "Come"—"Come, you

blessed of My Father. Keep on coming. Come and inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world." Ah, my Hearers, you will prize this coming when death and eternity are near you! I am glad to see this great company gathered here, but before I came into this house, I felt much heaviness of heart and it has not gone from me even now. To stand here and look into familiar faces from Sunday to Sunday is infinitely more pleasant than to look upon so many, the most of whom I have never seen before, for you cause me new anxieties that I may do good to you, also.

This was my thought—"I shall see them all, again, at the Judgment Day, and I shall be accountable as to whether I preached the Gospel to them with all my heart." I shall not have to answer for the blood of you all, because there are more Sabbaths than this one and more opportunities of hearing the Gospel than this. And on other Sundays, others preach to you, and these share the burden, or else you ignore the holy day—and in that case your blood will be on your own heads! Still, for this one service I must answer to God for you all. If I have not preached Jesus Christ simply and plainly—and from my heart—if I have been cold, and dull, and dreary when speaking upon a theme that might arouse any man to burn and glow with seraphic flame, then I shall be censurable by Him that shall judge the quick and dead!

If you think there is nothing in what I have said, reject it! I have no authority to preach it of my own head, for I am no great philosopher. I speak in the name of God and if you think I do, and believe that God has sent me, then I beseech you to lay hold of the Truth of God which has been held up before you! The most important thing a man can do is to attend to that which is most important—your soul is of more importance than your body and, therefore, your eternal life ought to secure more attention than your mere temporal existence. A man said the other day that he would die like a dog. Let him, if he likes, but I have no ambition in that direction. I want to live like an angel! If any man is content to be a dog, well, I know not what I can do for *him* but give him a bone—I did not know that he would care to come here, or I might have sent to the butcher's for fit food.

But he that wishes to live forever should, at least, consider where he would live, with whom he would live and how he can secure happiness in such a life. If there is a God—and that there *is* a God is written in the very skies—I devoutly desire to have Him for my Friend. I think, as I look up to the stars, "I love the God that made those shining worlds. I worship Him, I desire to serve Him, I wish to be at peace with Him." And what has made me desire to serve Him and obey Him? Can it be a lie which has done this? Does a *lie* make a man love God and desire to serve Him? No. It is the Truth of God, then, that has made me be of obedient heart! The Gospel must be true, or it could not thus put men right with their Creator.

O, my Beloved, trust your Savior! Lay hold on Jesus! Oh, may Christ lay hold on you at this good hour and cause you to enter into His rest! Amen and amen.

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THE CHRIST-GIVEN REST

NO. 2298

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

“I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28.

I AM afraid that we have not always noticed the fullness of this promise. Usually the text is preached from as an invitation to the unconverted to come to Christ and, very properly so—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is an invitation to all of you who are laboring after salvation, or are heavy laden with a load of sin, or the burden of your daily cares. You may come—you are bid to come to the Lord Jesus—and He has promised that He will give you rest. But I must leave you, tonight, so far as my sermon is concerned, for my main business will be with those who *have* come to Christ. After having given the invitation to those who are outside the Church of Christ, I pass inside, and I want those who are within to come into sweet communion with their Lord, tonight, while I dwell upon this very gracious promise, “I will give you rest.”

I do not find, in this world, if I promise anything, that anybody ever forgets it. You try any of the societies connected with the Tabernacle—promise them a guinea and see if they do not wait upon you for it! But the curious thing, the wretched thing is that many of our Lord's promises are neglected by us. We do not wait upon Him to have them fulfilled. After having read the promise, it passes out of our thoughts. Do not so, tonight, I pray you. Here is the promise, “I will give you rest.” Let no man here who has come to Christ be content, tonight, unless he gets the rest which the Lord Jesus promises to give. Jesus does not play at promising. Do not play with His promises—be as ready in receiving as He is willing to be in giving. “I will give you rest.” This ought to be a very precious word to all Believers. You have come to Christ. He promises to give you rest—be sure that you get it. Do not rest content until you have that perfect peace which He alone can give you, that peace which is here called, “rest.”

This evening I shall not have much time, but I shall, first, *exhibit this pearl, this pearl of rest.* Secondly, I shall *point you to the hands which give this pearl*—“I will give you rest.” And, thirdly, I shall, for a few minutes, *dwell upon the promise which Jesus makes*—“I will give you rest.” It is a

positive declaration of our Lord to those who come to Him—"I will give you rest."

I. First, then, let me EXHIBIT THIS PEARL. Mild and soft is its radiance. I call it a pearl because it is so precious, so blessed a thing. "I will give you rest."

Jesus does not say in what part of the mind He will give rest, for He will give it in every part of the mind. He does not say in reference to what He will give us rest because He will give us rest in reference to *everything*. When a promise is general, you may take it in its widest possible meaning. Particulars restrain and restrict, but where there are no particulars, then you have unlimited range. "I will give you rest"—rest about everything, rest at all times, rest in every part of your nature!

This promise includes *rest of the mind, or fixedness of belief*. Just now there is great restlessness concerning what we are to believe and many persons are much tossed about by the contrary winds that blow. They believe black, today, and white, tomorrow. Some have fallen into such a condition that they believe nothing, unless, indeed, it should *not* happen to be in the Bible—and then they will believe it! But if it is in God's Word, then, of course, they feel it necessary to doubt it. I suppose there is nobody that is not affected, to some extent, by the tornado of doubt which is sweeping over this island and over the whole world!

Now, is there any child of God here who is perturbed in mind? You say to yourself, "I used to be a simple-minded Believer, but I have been worried, tried and troubled. I think that I shall have to buy some books upon Christian evidences, so as to look into the subject and find out the strongest arguments. Or I shall go and talk to some old Christian and hear what he can say to strengthen me." Listen, my Brothers and Sisters. Your Lord and Master says, "Come unto ME and I will give you rest." There is a surer intellectual rest to be found in personal communion with Christ than anywhere else! If I get my head on His bosom, none of the philosophers can make it ache. When I once put my finger into the print of the nails, I am no more faithless, but believing! I believe that living in communion with God is the only sure cure for doubt. Trusting wholly to Christ Crucified, resting in His precious blood and daily seeking to have it applied to the conscience—and then walking in the Light as God is in the light, is the surest way to end all those undermining processes which seek to destroy the very foundations of our hope!

Come to Jesus tonight! Come to Jesus at the Communion Table and enter anew into fellowship with Him, and you will be able to say, "My heart is fixed! O God, my heart is fixed! I will sing and give praise." After being with Jesus, half the questions that trouble you will be answered and the other half will not seem worth the asking. After having been with Him, most of your doubts will vanish and the rest will not concern you one jot or tittle! You are His beloved, and your heart rests in that blessed fact.

Our Lord next gives *rest of the conscience, or a sense of pardon*. Conscience is a great source of unrest even to the best of men. Conscience makes cowards of us all, even those who are most daring in sin. With the child of God, there is no death of conscience. On the contrary, he who lives to the Lord has a more tender conscience than he ever had before he was saved. A tender conscience is a great blessing—never try to get rid of it. A morbid conscience may be a torment, but a *tender* conscience is a benediction—cherish it. Many blind persons read with their fingers, but if the fingers grow hard and callous, and the poor folks cannot feel the raised letters, it is a sad trial for them. We can often read the mind of God by the tender finger of conscience. Take care that your conscience never gets seared, I mean you Christian people. You need to keep your conscience more tender than that of anybody else.

But suppose the conscience becomes restless, what are we to do with it? Brothers and Sisters, there is no purging the conscience from dead works except by drawing near to Christ, again! Have any of you Christian people slipped with your feet? Have you dishonored the sacred name you bear? Be ashamed and be confused. Who among us has not much to make him ashamed? But remember that the Christ who invites the erring *sinner* before conversion, invites the erring Believer *after* conversion. Come, all you that labor within your spirits and are heavy laden under a sense of your imperfections—come to Christ, again, tonight! Where you once found rest in the atoning Sacrifice, you shall find it again! Do not let me go a step further till you have done this. Let us practice what I preach as we go along! You with your intellectual brilliance, come to my Lord, tonight, and see Him on the tree, and *look* your doubts away! You with the troubled conscience because of your unworthy walk, come to the Fountain and be washed anew—and let your conscience find rest.

Supposing those two rests to be enjoyed, there is still a struggle going on and, therefore, Christ *gives rest of the soul, or confidence of victory*. The soul, even when it knows its pardon is sure, even when it has settled its doctrinal difficulties, is, nevertheless, engaged in a struggle against the old nature. Do you find that you have completely gained the victory yet? Do you never feel a struggle within your spirit? I must confess that I have a daily fighting of my better self against the old self, the newborn nature against the old nature which will, if it can, still keep its hold upon me. “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” is my cry as I begin the battle. Yet before I end it, I can say, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” If any of you are asking, “How shall I ever get the victory? See how I am tempted. See how weak I am in certain directions, constitutionally weak, and apt to slide! O Sir, shall I ever be perfect? Shall I ever master inbred sin?”

Listen, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Jesus will give you rest in the sweet confidence that you will get the victory! He will bruise Satan under your feet. Surely, Beloved, there will come a day when there will be no sin left in us. When we shall see the face of our Savior in Glory, we shall be like He—all our doubts will be dead, all our sins will be forgiven—and all our sinful tendencies will be forever destroyed!—

**“Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wished below,”**

and then shall I be rid of all that plagues me and that grieves my God. Come to Jesus, tonight, wrestling Believer, and have fellowship with Him—and you will have rest, even, in the midst of the conflict, for you will be sure that you shall ultimately overcome through the blood of the Lamb!

Besides this, Jesus gives *rest of the heart, or satisfaction in love*. Some people appear to have no heart or, rather, their heart is a kind of valve made of leather. I have sometimes looked at certain people with great wonder when I have seen how little they have ever been affected. They never have much joy. They never have much sorrow. They seem to have been placed between two millstones and to have had all the juice pressed out of them—they appear to have no heart! But commend me to a man or woman with a big heart. Some seem to have a most affectionate nature—they *must* love! These are the people who have the *most* sorrow, though, mark you, they also have the most wonderful joy! Well, now, it may be that you have loved and you have been deceived, or you have loved and the fond object of your affection has been removed by death. You are here, tonight, with a sad countenance. You are saying, “What shall I do with this heart of mine? Where shall I love wisely, truly, without the hazard of another broken heart?”

Jesus stands, tonight, invisibly in our midst and He says, “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.” If you will love Him, (and oh, how well He deserves your love!), if you will take Him to be your Companion, your Friend, your Husband. If you will let Him enter into your heart and dwell there—if you will love Him beyond all else, He will give you rest and that kind of love which it is allowable to give to the creature! You shall be able to give without fear when you have once given the heart, itself, to Him who never fails, never disappoints and never is untrue. All you who wander with your great loving hearts aching for lack of love, come to my Lord and He will give you rest!

I see you, tonight, like the vine with its tendrils, seeking that by which you may climb higher. Come and let your tendrils entwine themselves about my Lord and His sweet Words of Grace, and you shall get a good hold, and grow and climb even to the skies!—

**“Are you weary? Are you languid?
Are you sorely distressed?
‘Come to Me,’ says One, ‘and coming,**

Be at rest.”

I will not enlarge upon this point further than to say, as I have already told you, that Christ gives *rest to the entire being, or peace about everything*. Are you troubled, dear child of God, tonight? You ought not to be troubled about anything. “Ah, Sir! You do not know my position.” No matter, Friend, that I do not know it—HE who bids you come to Him knows it! “But, dear Sir, my affliction is peculiar.” Listen—“In all their affliction He was afflicted.” Yours cannot be peculiar, therefore—Jesus must know all about it—and if He knows, it is better than *my* knowing. “But I have such a heavy cross to carry.” Is it heavier than His? “Ah, Sir, but I have so many trials!” Are there more than He can enable you to endure? Come to Him, I pray you!

Now then, if you can, at least for a few minutes, divest yourselves of your cares, your anxieties, your doubts, your fears—there He stands, He of the pierced feet and the nailed hands, and the crimson side! There He stands in Glory and He bids you come to Him and trust Him! Lay your burdens down at His feet. Why should you carry what He will readily carry for you? Tell Him all your griefs. Why do you hide them from Him? Should He not know your heart if you are married to Him? Should there be a secret kept away from Him? I am persuaded that I am preaching to you what will be more healing than the balm of Gilead, and sweeter than the sweetest music to lull you into a delightful peace if you will but listen to this Gospel invitation and come to Jesus, by a simple act of faith, and by a great resolve of fellowship, for He says, “I will give you rest.”

So much, then, about this pearl, rest.

II. Now I want you to look, for a minute or two, at THE HANDS WHICH GIVE THIS PEARL—“I will give you rest.” If Jesus Christ will give me *anything*, I will be glad to have it. The least possible gift from Him has a special sanctity about it because it comes from His dear hands. Your friend gave you a broken sixpence and you have kept it. Your mother gave you, (alas! you have no mother now), a little book with her name in it—and you would not sell it for its weight in silver. Now, whatever Jesus gives is a keepsake to His people. They lay it by and they love it. Listen, then—He says, “I will give you rest.”

If He will give me rest, then I know that His giving it *guarantees its genuineness*. I shall have no false peace if Jesus gives it to me. He will never give counterfeit coin to His people. If He gives me peace, it is peace! “When He gives quietness, who, then, can make trouble?” Beloved, do you not see that the fact that Jesus gives it will make your peace to be to you, beyond all question, the true peace of God which passes all understanding?

Christ’s gift of this rest also proves the *value of the gift*. Jesus does not give us pebbles and straws. If He gives us rest, it is rest worth having. Oh, Beloved, did you ever enjoy the rest that Jesus gives? Were you ever

tossed about with a great trial? Did you ever have a heavy load of care? If you have never had such burdens, I have—I have lain awake at night wondering whatever I should do in certain cases. And at last I have come to the conclusion that I could not do anything and that I must leave all with the Lord. Did you ever wake up, after a little sleep, when you had cast all your care on Christ and left your troubles with Him and found yourself perfectly at rest? I have, sometimes, in the midst of great pain, sat up in the night and been afraid to go to sleep for fear I should lose the heavenly calm that I was enjoying. When I have left everything—and God knows that I have more cares to carry than most men—when I have left *everything* with Him and submitted myself absolutely to His sweet will, and had full fellowship with Christ, I have wondered what I could fret about if I tried! I have said to myself, “There is peace for me in Heaven. There is peace for me on earth. There is peace for me in the grave. There is peace for me everywhere.”

It was with my heart, as it was with the stormy sea when Jesus said, “Peace, be still.” “And there was a great calm.” This is the kind of rest that the Lord Jesus Christ gives—rest of the deepest, truest kind—rest which the world cannot give and which the world cannot possibly take away. If He gives rest, it is no second-first rest—it is first-class—it is beyond measure precious if it comes from His hands.

Note again, Jesus says, “I will *give* you rest.” If His hands give it, this *ensures your getting it*. Jesus does not say, “I will *send* you rest.” It might be lost in the post. He does not say, “I will commission an angel to *bring* you rest.” He might miss his way. It is, “I will *give* you rest.” Come to Jesus and you shall have rest out of His own hands put into your hands—no, put into your *heart*. You shall certainly get it. There will be no missing it—between the cup and the lips there shall be no slip!

Jesus says, “I will give you rest.” This ensures your right to it. When a Believer is at peace and rest, if the devil were to meet him, he would ask, “Why are you so quiet?” If you did not answer him, he would say, “What right have you to be at rest? You are a long way off being perfect. Look at the imperfections of yesterday! Why, even in your prayers you sinned!” “Ah,” says the child of God, “I am not going to dispute with you, Satan. But I have a right to rest, for Jesus gave it to me. I am sure that He did not steal it and I am certain that He gave it to me. My title deeds are clear enough. A free gift through Jesus Christ—who can ever dispute that?” Oh, child of God, enjoy what Jesus gives, and be not afraid that anyone will take it from you!

Do you not think that when Jesus says, “I will give you rest,” this should encourage you to enjoy it? I believe that some Christians are afraid of being too happy. Do I not recollect when I first knew the Lord? I was as merry as a lark. I felt so glad that my sins were forgiven, I said within myself—

“I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”

Some good old Christian man shook his head. “Ah,” he said, “the black ox has not trodden on your toes yet.” Well, I had not seen the animal, so I went on rejoicing! Then another said to me, “Some Christians are many years before they come to anything like assurance.” That did stagger me a little, and they told me about the dragons and the giants that there were on the Pilgrim’s Road. I have not seen any of them, yet, but those good people tried to frighten me with them. Now look, here, Beloved—there is none too much joy in the world! Do not you go about killing any whenever you see it! Rather try to encourage it, and if you see a young Christian happy in believing, and you do not happen to be as cheerful as he is, do not try and take his joy from him. Leave the black ox alone! The ugly beast will come in due time.

Warn the young Believer of all the sin against which he should be on his guard, but do not hold up before him a gloomy view of the Christian life. You, Christian, have a right to perfect peace and if, between here and Heaven, you never have a doubt—if between here and the Eternal City you never have an anxious care—you have a perfect right to that complete serenity! It is, I say, provided for you in the Word of God. If you do not have it and enjoy it, that is your own fault, but there is ample provision made that we should have Heaven below as well as Heaven above! Oh, Christian people, if we lived up to our privileges, if we realized the Truth of God of the text, “I will give you rest,” we would commend the Gospel! We would win converts! We would glorify God! We would be vastly more useful ourselves! “I will give you rest,” is an encouragement to the enjoyment of the rest that Jesus gives to those who come unto Him.

And, once more, if Christ says, “I will give you rest,” how *it endears Him to us!* If all my rest is what He gives me, shall I not love Him? Oh, if my weary spirit is like Noah’s dove, finding no rest for the sole of its feet till it comes back to Noah, to Christ, and to the ark, shall I not love Him who is my rest? Shall I not prove that love by consecrating to Him the life which He has made so happy? Shall not every step I take seem to ring out music of praise to His name? Shall I not open the gates of the morning with a song and draw the curtains of the night with a new note of thanksgiving? Truly, God has given us this rest!

The Romans said of a certain peace that they enjoyed, “a god has given it to us.” Behold, the Son of God has given us that deep repose which, as Believers, we have a right to enjoy and which, I trust, we enjoy tonight! If you do not enjoy it, do not let me go any further until you get it! Come, child of God, I am not simply going to talk about this matter—I want you to *practice* it! There is the hand, the pierced hand which gives you rest—take the rest from it and enjoy it now—and then kiss that hand with a fervor of deepest reverence because of this priceless gift which it has bestowed upon you!

III. I close by noticing, in the third place, very briefly, THE PROMISE WHICH JESUS MAKES—"I will give you rest." It is a great blessing, sometimes, not to be able to read well. You remember how Mrs. Beecher Stowe, when she wrote, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," pictured Uncle Tom as having to spell all the words over? Now, it is a great blessing if a person is obliged to read the Bible like that. "I—will—give—you—rest." Every Word of God seems to be emphatic if you will just let it speak! All these bells ring out music, but I have no time to ring them tonight. Will you please listen to their melodious chimes all the week?

"I—will—give—you—rest." *To this promise there is but one condition.* That we have already fulfilled if we have come to Christ and, therefore, there is no condition at all attached to the promise, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." We have come to Him unless we are hypocrites. We who are coming to the Communion Table have first come to Christ. We have really, truly, sincerely, looked unto Him, trusted Him, come to Him and hidden ourselves in Him. Very well, then, you have fulfilled the one and only condition attached to this promise of the Lord Jesus—and there stands the unconditional promise which applies to you tonight! Let me go over it again, "I—will—give—you—rest."

This promise is made only to one character—and that character we can easily feel to be our own—"All you that labor and are heavy laden." You are the children of God, but you still have to labor. The most of you have to work hard every day and you have, also, much spiritual labor to serve your Lord, and to keep off the adversary. You labor both for the meat that perishes, and for that which endures unto eternal life. I am afraid that there are none of us who do not, at times, get heavy laden, especially when we get away from our Lord. Oh, what a load comes on us unless we keep close to Him! Very well, then, if tonight you labor and are laden, come along with you, and Christ will give you rest! I mean my fidgety Sister over yonder, who is always fretting—you love the Lord—and yet you keep fretting! Come, have done with it, for He says to you, "I will give you rest." I mean, also, my timid Brother over there who is always afraid of something that never happens! Give up that nonsense! Come along with you, you weary and heavy laden one—Jesus says to you, "I will give you rest."

I mean that dear Brother, there, who has a darkness over his mind that he cannot shake off. Come to Jesus and He will give you rest. I mean *myself*, caring about the Church of God and almost broken-hearted, at times, as I see how ill it fares in these evil days. I will come to my Lord, tonight, and He will give me rest about that, for, after all, I have not to manage His Church and guide His affairs. No, all responsibilities and all dreads about the future I lay down at Your feet, You great Head of the Church, You great Master of assemblies!

Next, notice that this promise is *most positive and unreserved*—"I will give you rest." Jesus does not say, "I will give you rest in every respect but one." No, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." And the mercy of it is that this promise is as sure as ever! A hundred years ago a man went to the Lord Jesus with this promise, "I will give you rest," and the Lord Jesus gave him rest. Fifty years ago another man went with this promise and he said "Lord, there it is! You said, 'I will give you rest,'" and the Lord gave him rest. Now, tonight, take that promise for yourselves! It is just as good as if it had never been fulfilled! I give my neighbor a check—he goes with it to the bank and gets the cash for it. Now suppose the banker returns that check to me—and I go with it to the bank and try to cash it again? "No," they say, "we have cashed that check once, and that is done with." But you may take God's check and go to the Bank of Heaven every day! And every hour in the day! And the check is just as good as if it had never been cashed before. "I will give you rest." You tried that when you were 21—try it now that you are seventy! When you were 40, in the day of your trouble, you said, "Lord, give me rest." Now that you are 80, the promise still stands just as good as ever! God's promises are not like a bundle of old checks that are done with and sent back to the drawer—they are always fresh and always new!

Many of you are coming to the Communion Table. *This rest is set forth to you in the ordinance.* That Table seems to say to you, "I will give you rest." I shall not ask you to come up to the platform and to kneel down and take the bread from my hands. I shall ask you to sit as much at your ease as ever you can, because, at the Lord's Supper, that is the right posture. When Christ broke the bread, the disciples did not even sit, but reclined around the table! You miss the very spirit of the Supper if you come and kneel. It is a festival of *rest*—and when you come to it, you have nothing to do but to eat and to drink. That is the form in which Christ puts fellowship with Himself, "You shall eat with Me, and you shall drink with Me"—so that, in the ordinance He does, by the outward symbol, say, "I will give you rest."

This promise will be completely fulfilled at the last. By-and-by, by-and-by, Christ will give us *eternal rest*! There is a Brother to whom I have been accustomed to take off my hat every Sabbath as I passed along. He was one of a goodly number of regular old friends, all along the road, that I could not speak to, but we just bowed and wished each other well as we passed. Last Lord's-Day I missed my friend from the place where I generally passed him, and I asked about him, and they told me that he had gone Home. There have been many who have gone Home since I was with you before. Well, then, we, also, may expect to go Home, by-and-by, and here is the Master's promise about that matter, "I will give you rest." "I will give you rest when the last hour comes. When the time of weakness, old age and sickness come, I will give you rest." Be not afraid—

**“Death is no more the king of dread,
Since our Immanuel rose”**

and all the Lord’s people may go up to their beds and rejoice to think that there is an end to this life of conflict, and a beginning to the life of victory, for Jesus says, “I will give you rest.”

Oh, the perfect repose, the unutterable bliss that will be yours and mine before long! I say, “before long,” for in this great congregation I do not doubt that there are several Brothers and Sisters who will see the King in His beauty before many weeks are gone. I could wish that it were my lot to go first among you, but if it may not be, well, you shall go on a little ahead, my Brothers and my Sisters, and we will follow in our turn. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”

I have done—at least, I mean, I have only begun! I have begun to enjoy the text, myself, and I hope you have done the same. I must, however, just remind you that, when Jesus says, “I will give you rest,” He does not mean that He will make you lazy. Lazy people cannot rest—they never know what rest means. There must be *labor* to give us *rest*. When Caesar Malan had 17 days’ rest, in which he was charged by the physician not to exercise his mind, or do *anything*, he wrote 53 of the best hymns he had ever written and some of the best in the French tongue! He said that he could not help it—he wrote the hymns because he was resting, and they were a part of his rest.

God sometimes makes His servants to be like those birds that rest on the wing. Stretching their broad pinions and taking a mighty flap, they seem to pass mile after mile at every stroke of their wings, resting while flying. Thus you may stretch your pinions of progress, and of holy aspiration, and rise higher and higher, and yet be still at rest! Like the stars that have a deep and profound rest, both by day and night, and yet keep their courses and know no fatigue, so you and I, blessed of God, shall keep our places and serve our God, and shine on, and yet shall rest till we enter into the Rest that remains for the people of God!

I wish that it were possible for me to make every child of God, here, quite restful tonight. I know that I shall fail, but there is a blessed Spirit who can do it! When you are all quite restful, go home and rest. Go home, dear wife, with a restful heart. Perhaps your husband will meet you with an angry word. Be so restful that you will not mind it! Go home, dear young people, who have to work for your living. Perhaps you will sleep, tonight, in a room where there are many who will mock you if you kneel down to pray. Get such perfect rest that it will not matter to you whether they laugh or not! Take no more notice than you do of the grinding of the cab wheels outside this Tabernacle. The Lord can give His people such ab-

solite peace that it would not matter to them if Heaven and earth should pass away!

God grant to us that perfect peace! If any of you do not know anything about it, I wish that you did—but there it stands in the text, just as Christ said it, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” God help you to come and take the rest that Jesus gives! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
COLOSSIANS 2:6-17.**

Verse 6. *As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk you in Him* Do not go away from Him. You have received Him—stay with Him. Whatever He was to you at first, let Him be that to you to the very last. Do not begin with Christ and then go back to self—let it be all Christ from first to last.

7. *Rooted and built up in Him.* Growing in Him. Have your very life, like a tree, rooted in Christ and, like a temple, built up in Christ.

7. *And established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding therein, with thanksgiving.* Do not forget what you have been taught! Do not reject it—keep to it. He who should learn one system of philosophy, and then unlearn it, and begin another, and then unlearn that, and begin another, would be more likely to turn out a fool than a philosopher! And he who begins to learn the faith in one way, and then tries to learn it in another way, and then attempts to learn it in yet another way is more likely to be a skeptic than to be a saint.

8. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* Plenty of people would spoil you in this way, by teaching you their profound thoughts, their grand inventions, their bright ideas. Beware of all of them!

9. *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.* Everything, then, must be in Christ if all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him! Why do you need to go anywhere else for wisdom? What can you find by going elsewhere? “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

10. *And you are complete in Him.* You are like vessels filled up to the brim. You are like warriors thoroughly furnished, fully armed for the fight—“You are complete in Him.”

10, 11. *Who is the Head of all principality and power: in whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.* All that the Jew ever had, you have in Christ, only you have the *real purification* of which His rite was but a *symbol*.

12. *Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also you are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised Him from the dead.* It is only as you are one with Christ that Baptism will be to you what He intended, but, “buried with Him in Baptism,” you are dead to all besides and all your life lies in Him.

13. *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision, of your flesh, has He quickened together with Him.* All your life is in Christ. You are “quickened together with Him.”

13. *Having forgiven you all trespasses.* Your pardon is given to you in Christ. Oh, how full and how free is that forgiveness that comes to you through Christ Jesus!

14, 15. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* His Cross was His triumph! Then He led captivity captive. What more do you need? Your enemy is vanquished, your sins blotted out, your death changed to life, your necessities all supplied! Will you not stay at home with Christ? “Why do you gad about so much to change your way?” Can you have a better lover than your Lord, a dearer husband than the heavenly Bridegroom? Oh, love the Lord, you His saints! Cling to Him and make much of Him! Let Him be All in All to you!

16. *Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath.* Do not let anybody come in and tell you that it is necessary for your salvation that you should abstain from this meat or that drink, that there is a merit in fasting for 40 days in Lent, or that you cannot be saved without observing such and such a holy day. Your salvation is in Christ! Keep to that and add *nothing* to this one Foundation which is once and for all laid in Him!

17. *Which are a shadow of things to come.* That is all that they are—“a shadow of things to come.”

17. *But the body is of Christ.* Christ is the real one thing necessary.

Mind that you have the Substance, for then you can let the shadows go! May God bless to us all this brief reading of His Word!

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

THE OLD GOSPEL FOR THE NEW CENTURY NO. 2708

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 6, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 5, 1880.

*“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28.*

You have doubtless already heard several sermons from this text. I have discoursed upon it, I know not how many times—not so many times, however, as I intend yet to do if God shall spare my life! This verse is one of those great wells of salvation from which we may always be drawing, for we can never exhaust it. Our proverb says, “Drawn wells are the sweetest.” And the more we draw from such a text as this, the sweeter and the fuller does its meaning appear to us.

I am going, on this occasion, to use this passage in a special way, so as to bring out just one single point of its teaching. I might speak, if I wished to do so, of the *rest* which Jesus Christ gives to the heart, the mind and the conscience of those who believe in Him. This is the rest, this is the refreshment which those who come unto Him find, for we might read it, “I will *refresh* you,” or “I will *relieve* you,” and I should have a very sweet topic if I were to discourse upon the wonderful relief, the Divine refreshment, the blessed rest which comes to the heart through believing in Jesus Christ. May you all experience that blessing, dear Friends! May your rest, your peace, be very deep! May it not be a pretended restfulness, but a rest which will endure searching and testing! May your rest be a lasting one! May your peace be like a river that never ceases to flow! May your peace be always a safe one—not a false peace which will end in destruction—but a true, solid, justifiable peace which will endure throughout your whole lives and ultimately melt away into the rest of God at His right hand forever! Happy are the people who thus rest in Christ—may we be among that number—and if we are so, already, may we penetrate still more deeply into this glorious rest!

I might also speak, dear Friends, upon the various ways in which the Lord gives rest to Believers. And I might speak especially to some of you who are Believers, but who do not seem to enter into rest as you ought to do. There are some of us who get worried with the things of this world, or troubled by our own feelings. We are perplexed and tossed here and there by doubts and fears. We ought to be resting, for, “we who have believed do enter into rest.” Rest is our rightful portion—“Being justified by

faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” But, somehow or other, some who are thus justified do not seem to realize this peace, or to enjoy this rest as they should and, perhaps, even while I am talking, they may discover the reason why they do not have all the rest and peace which they might have. Certainly, our Lord Jesus Christ did not speak only to one particular class when He uttered the words of our text. To all who labor and are heavy laden—whether they are advanced Christians, or unconverted people—He says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” I shall indeed rejoice if, as the outcome of what I shall have to say, it shall happen that some who came in here distressed in spirit, and bowed down in heart—perhaps even fretful and complaining—shall come to Jesus Christ over again, drawing near to Him once more, and getting into touch with Him again, and so shall find rest unto their souls. It will then be doubly sweet to come and sit around the Communion Table, all the while resting—resting and feasting—not standing with loins girt and with staff in hand, as they did who partook of the Passover in Egypt—but resting, even as they did who gathered at the Last Supper when the Master reclined in the midst of His Apostles. So, spiritually, may your heads be resting on His breast and may your hearts find refuge in His wounds as you hear Him say to you again, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Yet it is not quite that Truth of God about which I am going to speak to you. I want to pick out just this one thought—the *Glory* of Christ, that He should be able to say such a thing as this—the *splendor* of Christ, that it should be possible for Him to say, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” These words, from the mouth of any other man, would be ridiculous and even blasphemous. Take the greatest poet, the greatest teacher of philosophy, or the greatest king and who is he, with most capacious soul, who would dare to say to all the laboring and heavy laden ones in the whole human race. “Come to me, and I will give you rest”? Where are there wings broad enough to brood over every sorrowing soul, except the wings of Christ? Where is there a harbor capacious enough to hold all the navies of the world, to give refuge to every tempest-tossed boat that ever crossed the sea? Where, but in the haven of the soul of Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead! And, therefore, in whom there is room enough and to spare for all the troubled children of men!

That, then, is to be the drift of my discourse. May the Spirit of God graciously help me in following it!

I. And, first, I call your attention to THE PERSONALITY OF THIS CALL. “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

If you look at the text carefully, you will notice that there is a double personality in the call. It is, “Come you—come you—to Me, and I will give rest to you.” It is two persons coming near to each other—the one bestowing and the other receiving rest. But it is not, in either case, a fiction, a figment, a phantom, a myth. It is you, you, YOU—YOU who really

labor and are heavy laden and who, therefore, are real beings, painfully conscious of your existence—it is you who are to come to another Being who is as real as you are—One who is as truly a living Person as you are living persons. It is He who says to you, “Come you to Me, and I will give rest to you.”

I want you, dear Friends, to have a *very clear conviction of your own personality*, for, sometimes, people appear to forget that they are individuals, distinct from everybody else. When there is a guinea to be given away and the jingle of it is heard in the distance, most men are conscious of their own personality—and each one looks out for himself and tries to secure the prize. But I find that, often, in the matter of *eternal* things, men seem to lose themselves in a crowd and they think of the blessings of Grace as a sort of general shower that may fall on the fields of all alike—they do not especially look for the rain upon their own plot, or wish to obtain a blessing for themselves. Now, then, you, you, YOU—you who are heavy laden, wake up! Where are you? The call of the text is not to your sister, mother, husband, brother, friend, but to you—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give *you* rest.”

Well, now, you have shaken yourself up and you feel that you are a distinct personality from everybody else in the world. So next comes the most important thing of all, *you are to come to another Personality*. “Come unto Me,” says Christ, “and I will give you rest.” Here I ask you to admire the wonderful Grace and mercy of this arrangement. According to Christ’s words, you are to obtain rest of heart, not by coming to a ceremony, or to an ordinance, but to Christ, Himself! “Come unto Me.” He does not even say, “Come to My teaching, to My example, to My Sacrifice,” but, “Come unto Me.” It is to a Person you are to come—to that very Person who, being God, and equal with the Father, laid aside His glories and took upon Himself our human flesh—

**“First, in our mortal flesh, to serve.
Then, in that flesh, to die.”**

And you are to *come* to that Person. There is to be a certain action on your part, the movement of yourself to Him who says to you, “Come unto Me”—a movement away from every other confidence, to Him—a movement away from every other ground of reliance, or door of hope, to Him, as the Person whom God has appointed and anointed to be the one and only Savior, the great reservoir of everlasting Grace, in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell! O glorious Man, O glorious God, who can thus speak with authority and say, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” I entreat you to lay aside all thought of anything except the Christ, living, dying, risen again and gone into Glory—for He points you, not to the House of Prayer, nor to the Throne of Grace, nor to the baptistery, nor to the Communion Table, nor even to the holiest and most sacred things which He has ordained for other purposes—not even to the Father, Himself, nor to the Holy Spirit—but He says, “Come unto Me.” Here must your spiritual life begin—at His feet. And here must your spiritual life be perfected—in His bosom—for He is both the Author and the Finisher of faith! Let us adore the Christ in whose mouth such words

as these are fitting and full of meaning! He cannot be less than Divine who can thus speak to us, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

II. Now, secondly, I want you to notice THE LARGENESS OF CHRIST’S HEART, as illustrated by this text, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Notice, first, the largeness of His heart *in singling out such needy ones to be the objects of His loving call*. Did you ever notice the picture that our Lord has drawn in these words? “All you that labor.” That is the picture of a beast that has the yoke upon its shoulder. Men think to find pleasure in the service of Satan and they permit him to lay his yoke upon their neck. Then they have to toil, and slave, and labor, and sweat in what they call pleasure—but they find no rest and no contentment in it! And the more they do in the service of Satan, the more they may do, for he uses the goad and the whip, and always urges them on to fresh exertions. Now Christ says to these people who are like beasts of burden, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

But they are in a worse plight even than I have described, for they not only labor like the ox at the plow, but they are also heavily laden. Now, it seldom happens that men make a horse or an ox to be both a beast of draught and the carrier of a load at the same time, but that is how the devil treats the man who becomes his servant. He puts him in the shafts of his chariot and makes him drag it along, and then leaps upon his back and rides as a postillion. So the man labors and is heavy laden, for he has both to draw the vehicle and to carry the driver! Such a man labors after what he calls pleasure and, as he does so, sin leaps on his back, and then another sin follows, and yet another till sins upon sins crush him to the ground—and yet he has to be pulling and tugging with all his might at the same time! This double toil is enough to kill him. But Jesus looks in pity upon him—laboring under a sense of sin, and yet toiling to get pleasure in sin—and He says to him, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

Does Christ want the devil’s hacks, then, when they are used up in Satan’s service? Does He want to persuade them to leave their old master and come to Him? What? These sinners that are only tired of sin because they cannot find strength enough to go on sinning—or who are getting uneasy because they do not enjoy the pleasure they once did in wickedness—does Christ call them to come to Him? Yes! And it shows the largeness of His heart that He should be willing to give rest to such laboring and heavily burdened ones.

But the largeness of His heart is seen in the fact that *He bids all such sinners to come to Him*—all such sinners, I repeat! What a great deal that little word, “all,” includes! I believe that, generally, when a man uses big words, he says little things, and that, when he uses little words, he says great things. And, certainly, the smallest words in our language are usually those that mean the most. What does this little word, “all,” mean? Or, rather, what does it *not* mean? And Jesus, without limiting its application, says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden.”

Oh, the magnificence of the love and Grace of Christ, that He should have invited them all to come to Him! Yes, and He invites them all to come at once. "Come along with you," He says, "all you that labor and are heavy laden. Come in a crowd, come in great masses! Fly to me as a cloud and like doves to their windows." There are never too many coming to please Him. He seems to say, "The more, the merrier." Christ's heart will rejoice over all the multitudes that will come to Him, for He has made a great feast and He has bid many, and He still sends forth His servants to say, "Yet there is room. Therefore, come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden."

Remember, also, that Christ's *promise is personally addressed to every one of these sinners*. If each one of them will come unto Him, He will give rest to each one. To everyone that labors and is heavy laden, Jesus says, "If you will come unto Me, I—I Myself will give you rest—I will not hand you over even to the care of My servant, the minister, that he may look after you, but I will undertake the work Myself. I will give you rest." Christ does not even say, "I will take you to My Word and there you shall find comfort for yourself." No. He says, "*I, a Person, will give rest to you, a person, by a distinct act of My own, if you will but come unto Me.*"

That personal dealing of Christ with individuals is indeed blessed. There is a poem of Tennyson's, which is, to my mind, the sweetest he has ever written. It is concerning a little child in a hospital who heard that she was about to undergo an operation, through which it was not likely that she would live. So she asked her young companion in the next bed what she had better do. She bade her tell Jesus all about it and ask Him to take care of her. And then the child enquired, "But how will Jesus know *me*?" The little ones were rather puzzled because there were such long rows of beds in the children's hospital and they thought that Jesus had so much to do, that perhaps He would not know which little girl it was that wanted Him to take such special care of her. So it was agreed that she should put her hands out of the bed, and when Jesus saw her hands, He would know that she was the little girl who needed Him. The scene, as the poet describes it, is most touching. I do but mar it in the telling, for, in the morning, when the doctors and nurses passed through the ward, they knew that Jesus had been there, and that the little one had gone to Him without any operation. He had taken care of her in the best possible way—and there lay the little hands out of the bed.

Well, now, we need not do even as much as that, for the Lord Jesus knows each one of us and He will come personally to each one of us and give us rest. Though it is quite true that He has a great deal to do, yet He can still say, "My Father works, and I work," for the whole universe is kept in working order by His almighty power and He will not forget anyone who comes to Him. Just as a person who knew that he had abundant provision, might say to a great crowd of hungry people, "Come along with you, and I will feed you all," so Christ knows within Himself that He has the power to give rest to every weary soul that comes to Him. He is quite certain of it, so He does not say, "Come to Me, and I will do the best I can with you." Or, "possibly, if I exert Myself, I may be able to give you

rest.” Oh, no! He says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” It is quite a matter of course with Him, for, let me tell you that He has tried His hand upon millions and He has never failed once! So He speaks with an air of unwavering confidence. I am certain, as my Master was certain, that if there is any soul among you that will come to Him, He can and He will give rest unto that soul. He speaks with the consciousness of possessing all the power that is needed and with the absolute certainty that He can do the deed which is required.

For, mark you, *Jesus gives this promise knowing all about the cases that He describes.* He knows that men are laboring and that they are heavily laden. There is not a grief in the heart of anyone in this house which Jesus Christ does not know, for He knows all things. Your thoughts may be twisted in all manner of ways, and all your methods of judging may be like a labyrinth, a maze of which you think no one has the clue. You may be sitting here and saying to yourself, “Nobody understands me, and I do not even understand myself. I have become entangled in the meshes of sin and I cannot see any way of escape. I am perplexed beyond all possibility of deliverance.” I tell you, Friend, that Christ does not speak without meaning when He says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” He can trace the thread through the tangled skein and He can draw it out in one straight line! He can follow all the winding of the labyrinth till He reaches its very center! He can take away the cause of your trouble, though you, yourself, do not know what it is! And what to you is shrouded in mystery—an impalpable grief that you cannot get at or grapple with—my Lord and Master can chase right away! He speaks of what He knows He can do when He gives this promise, for His wisdom is such that He can perceive the needs of each individual soul, and His power is vast enough to meet all those needs! And so He says to every laboring and burdened spirit within this house, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

Be it also remembered that when Christ gave this promise, *He knew the number of those who were comprehended in that word, “all.”* Though, to us, that, “all,” includes a multitude that no man can number, yet “the Lord knows them that are His.” And when He said, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” He did not speak without knowing that there are tens of thousands, and millions, and hundreds of millions that labor and are heavy laden—and He meant to speak to all that vast throng when He said, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

Am I making you think, dear Friends, of the vastness of my Master’s power and Grace? Am I causing you to adore Him? I hope I am. My own soul desires to lie prostrate at His feet, lost in a sweet sense of the greatness of that Grace which can speak thus, and yet which speaks not beyond the truth when it says to the whole race of ruined men, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will”—to an absolute certainty—“give you rest.”

It must not be forgotten, also, that what *Christ promised was intended for all time.* Here is an individual speaking who was “despised and re-

jected of men.” Let Him stand out clearly before your eyes—the carpenter’s Son, the Son of Mary, “a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief”—yet He said to those who gathered around Him, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” But He looked right over the intervening centuries and He spoke to *us* who are assembled here, and then He looked on all the multitudes of this great city, and of this country, and of all the nations of the earth, and He said, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” In effect, He said, “Till I shall come again to the earth, to sit upon the Throne of Judgment, I promise that every heavily laden soul that comes to Me shall find rest in Me.” The sorrows of men are as many as the stars of Heaven for multitude—and the men, themselves, are innumerable. Count, if you can, the drops of morning dew, or the grains of sand upon the seashore—and then hope to number the children of Adam from the beginning of time! Yet our Lord Jesus Christ, speaking to the vast mass of the laboring and heavy laden children of men, says to them, “Come unto Me; come unto Me; for he who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. And whoever comes to Me shall find rest unto his soul.”

It shows, also, the vastness of Christ’s power and Grace when we remember *the many to whom this promise has been proved to be true*. You know that throughout all these ages up till now, not a single laboring and heavy laden soul has come to Christ in vain. Even in the utmost ends of the earth there has not been found a criminal so base, or a soul so closely shut up in the dungeon of old Giant Despair, but, on his coming to Christ, the promised rest has been bestowed upon him and, thereby, Christ has been magnified!

III. Now follow me while I dwell, for a few minutes, upon THE SIMPLICITY OF THIS GOSPEL.

Jesus Christ says to all who labor and are heavy laden, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” *This invitation implies a movement—a movement from something to something*. You are bid to come away from whatever else you have been trusting in and to move towards Christ and trust to Him. And when you do so, He will give you rest. How different this simplicity is from all the complex systems that men set up! Why, according to some people’s teaching, in order to be a Christian—and to carry out all the regulations of public worship—you would need to have a little library to consult so as to know at what hour you ought to light your candles, and how to mix incense, and the proper way to put on your millinery, and in which direction you should turn when you say a certain prayer, and in what other direction you should turn when you say something else—and whether your intoning, or your chanting, or your mumbling will be most acceptable to God! Oh, dear, dear, dear! All this complex machinery of man’s inventing—the so-called “baptism” in your infancy—the confirmation in your youth—“taking the sacrament,” as many call it—all this is a wonderful hocus-pocus, full of mystery, lies and delusion! But, according to Christ’s teaching, the way of salvation is just this, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” And if you, dear Friend, have come to Christ, and trusted Him, you have received that rest and peace which He delights to give—you have found the kernel of the nut, you

have reached the essence and the root of the whole matter! If your heart has abandoned all other confidences and is depending upon Jesus Christ, you have found eternal life! And that eternal life will never be taken away from you. Therefore, rejoice in it!

And, further, *this invitation is in the present tense*—“Come, *now*.” Do not wait till you get home, but let your soul move towards Christ now. You will never be in a better state for coming to Him than you are now. Nor will you be in a worse state for coming to Him, unless it is that by postponing your coming, you will be more hardened and less inclined to come. You are now, at this moment, in need of Christ, so come to Him! You are hungry—surely that is the very best reason for eating! You are thirsty—that is the best reason for drinking! Or it may be that you are so sick that you do not hunger—then come to Christ and eat of the provisions of the Gospel till you get an appetite for them. I like, sometimes, when a sinner says to me, “I do not thirst for Christ,” to say to him, “Then come and drink till you do thirst,” for, just as it is with a pump that will not work, you must first pour water down it, so is it with some men. When they get some Truth of God into their souls—though it may seem, at first, to be but a very imperfect reception of the Gospel—it will help them, afterwards, to a deeper longing for Christ and a more intense enjoyment of the blessings of salvation.

At any rate, Christ says, “Come now,” by which is implied that He means, “*Come just as you are*. Just as you are, come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. You labor, so, before you have washed those grimy hands of yours, come unto Me, and I will give you rest. You are faint, feeble and ready to die, but it needs no strength to come to Me! Faint into My arms. Die on My bosom, for so you have already come to Me.” We do not come to Christ by the exertion of our own power to come, but by the cessation of the will to stay away! When your heart just yields itself up, drops everything that it is holding, and falls into the hands of Christ, it is *then* that the act of faith is performed and it is to that act that Christ invites you when He says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

“Well,” says one, “I never did understand the Gospel. It has always puzzled and perplexed me.” Well, then, I will try to set it before you very plainly. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived and died for sinners—and you are bid to come and trust Him. Rely upon Him! Depend upon Him! Hang your whole weight upon Him! Come unto Him and He will give you rest! Oh, that He may, of His infinite mercy, reveal this simple Truth of God to your heart and that you may be ready to accept it right now! I want to glorify my blessed Master who brought into the world such a simple plan of salvation as this. There are some men who seem to be Parson Puzzle-Texts, for they like to lose themselves amid difficulties and mysteries, and to display before their hearers the fruits of their great culture and their wonderful learning. If their Gospel is true, it is a message only to the *elite* and the many would have to go to Hell if they were the only preachers! But our Lord Jesus Christ gloried in preaching the Gospel to the poor—and it is to His honor it can be said that, even to this

day, “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence.”

It is so blessed to think that there is a Gospel that will suit the man who cannot read—and that will suit the man who cannot put two consecutive thoughts together—and that will suit the man whose brain has almost failed him in the hour of death—a Gospel that suited the thief dying upon the cross—a Gospel so simple that if there is but Grace to receive it, there needs no great mental power to understand it! Blessed be my Master for giving us a Gospel so simple and so plain as this!

IV. I want you to notice one more thing and then I will close my discourse. It is this—THE UNSELFISHNESS OF CHRIST’S AIM.

Come, you dear ones who love your Lord, listen while I repeat to you these sweet words of His, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “*I will give you.*” He does not say, “Come to me, and bring me something,” but, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” It is not, “Come and do something for Me,” but, “I will do everything for you.” This has, perhaps, been your trouble, dear Brothers and Sisters, that you wanted, today, to bring Christ an acceptable offering, and in the Sunday school, or in some other form of service, you have been trying to honor Him. I am glad of it and hope you will keep on trying to do so. But take care lest you fall into Martha’s mistake and get “cumbered about much serving.” For a while, forget the idea of coming to Christ to bring Him anything—and come now, you laboring and burdened one—and receive a blessing from Him, for He has said, “I will give you rest.” Christ may be honored by what you give Him, but He *must* be honored by what He gives you! There cannot be a question about the goodness of what you shall receive from Him if you come to Him, so, just now do not think about bringing anything to Him, but come to Him that you may receive from Him!

“I want to love Christ,” says one. Well, never mind about that just now—try to feel how much He loves you. “Oh, but I want to consecrate myself to Him!” Quite right, my dear Friend, but, just now, think of how He consecrated Himself for you! “Oh, but I desire never to sin any more!” Quite right, dear Friend, but, just now, think of how He bore your sins in His own body on the tree. “Oh,” says one, “I wish that I had an alabaster box of very precious ointment, that I might anoint His head or His feet, and that the whole house might be filled with the sweet perfume.” Yes, that is all very well, but listen. His *name* is as ointment poured forth—if you have not any ointment, He has! If you have none to bring to Him, there is plenty that He will give to you!

When my dear Master calls any to come to Him, it is not for His own gain that He bids them come. When He presses His favors upon them. When He comes with great promises of rest, it is not a bribe with which

to buy their services. He is too rich to need the best and strongest among us! He only asks of us that, of our great charity, we will be kind enough to *take everything* from Him! This is the greatest thing we can do for God—to be emptied, so that His fullness may flow into us. That is what I want to do when I go down to the Communion Table—I want to just sit there and not try to think of anything that I can offer to my Master—but to open my soul and to take in all that He is willing to give me! There are times with you shopkeepers when you are dealing out your goods, but there must also be times for bringing in, you know. So, now, open the great warehouse door and let the goods come in wholesale! Let the whole Christ come into your soul.

“I do not feel,” says one, “as if I could enjoy my Lord’s Presence.” But why not? “Because I have been so hard at work for Him all day, and now I have so much care, and I am so heavy laden.” You are the very one whom He especially calls to come to Him! Do not try to do anything except just open your mouth wide, and He will fill it. Come now, and just receive from Him, and glorify Him by receiving! O sun, you give light, but not till God makes you shine! O moon, you are gladdening the evening, yet not with your own brilliance, but only with borrowed light! O fields, you yield your harvests, but the great Husbandman creates your grain! O earth, you are full, but only full of the goodness of the Lord! *Everything* receives from God and praises Him because it does receive. So let my weary heart lie still beneath the showers of love. Let my heavy laden soul rest in Christ and gladden Him by being glad in Him.

God bless you all, and may Christ be glorified in your salvation and your sanctification, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 11.

Verses 1-3. *And it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Are you He that should come, or do we look for another?* Had John’s faith begun to waver? It is possible that it had. Elijah had his times of trembling and depression. Then, why might not the second Elijah have the same sort of experience? Possibly John wished to strengthen the faith of his followers and, therefore, he sent two of his leading disciples to Jesus, that they might make the enquiry for themselves as to whether He was the Christ or not.

4. *Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which you do hear and see.* For the works of Christ are the proofs of His Messiahship. His teaching and His action must always be the seals of His mission.

5. *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.* This is the last, but not the least, of the signs of His Messiahship, that Jesus Christ preached so that the poor

understood Him and delighted to follow Him wherever He went. Many despised His preaching for this reason, but the Savior mentioned this among the signs of His being sent of God—"The poor have the Gospel preached to them."

6-11. *And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went you out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went you out to see? A Prophet? Yes, I say unto you, and more than a Prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.* His position was a very high one. He was the evening star of the old dispensation, and the morning star of the new—but the light which shines after the sun has risen is brighter than any that the morning star can bring. He who has the Gospel to preach has a greater thing to do than John the Baptist, who did but herald the coming of the Savior.

12-15. *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you will receive it, this is Elijah, which was to come. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.* Let him listen to what the Heaven-sent messenger has to say! Let him especially pay attention to his words when he says, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

16, 17. *But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not lamented.* "You would not join in our games. Whichever we chose to do, to imitate a festival or a funeral, you would not take part with us."

18, 19. *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, He has a devil. The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified by her children.* There was no pleasing them—they were prepared to find fault with any sort of man, whether he lived an ascetic life, or mixed with others as a man among men. "But wisdom is justified by her children." She sends the right sort of men to do her work, and God will take care that those who reject them shall not be without guilt—"wisdom is justified by her children."

20. *Then He began to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not.* That was the point that Christ aimed—their repentance. He did not seek to dazzle them with wonders and marvels, but to break their hearts away from their sins. This is what His mighty works ought to have done, for they proved Him to be the Messiah—and those mighty works also warned those who wit-

nessed them that God had come near to them—and that, therefore, it was time for them to turn from their evil ways.

21-24. *Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you.* There is a great depth of mystery, here, which we cannot hope to fathom. The Gospel was not preached to those who would have repented if they had heard it, and it was preached to those who did not repent when they listened to it even from the lips of Christ Himself! Upon this latter class, the sole effect of the Gospel preached to them was to plunge them into yet deeper depths of guilt because of their refusal of it. It is not for us to solve the mystery—it will be our wisdom to see that being ourselves favored with the plain declaration of the Gospel, we do not put it from us, lest we perish even more miserably than those who never heard it!

25. *At that time Jesus answered and said.* So he had been talking with His Father—“Jesus answered.” Very often, no doubt, the Savior spoke with God when it is not recorded in the Gospels that He did. But here a plain hint is given that Christ was in intimate communion and fellowship with God. At such times great doctrines which, to the shallow minds of those who live at a distance from God, seem dreadful, become delightful, and are lit up with unusual splendor! At that time the Doctrine of Election was specially upon the heart of Christ because He was dwelling near to God, Himself. “Jesus answered and said.”—

25-30. *I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things are delivered unto Me by My Father: and no man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whom the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—886, 495.

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INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 1, 1902.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 14, 1878.**

***“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28.***

I HAVE often preached from this text. [Sermon #265, Volume 5, THE MEEK AND LOWLY ONE; #969, Volume 17, REST, REST; #1322, Volume 22, REST FOR THE LABORING; #1691, Volume 28, CHRIST'S WORD WITH YOU; #2298, Volume 39, THE CHRIST-GIVEN REST and #2708, Volume 47, THE OLD GOSPEL FOR THE NEW CENTURY—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] I hope, if I am spared, to often preach from it in the future. It is one of those great constellation texts which, like certain stars which shine so brightly in the sky, have served as a guide to mariners—they have helped to direct many a poor tempest-tossed seaman into the harbor he wanted to reach—and these texts have guided many into the haven of everlasting peace. Among the many stars up yonder in the heavens, there are some that are so conspicuously set and so peculiarly brilliant, that they are sure to be observed. And amidst the many precious promises in God's Word, this is one of the very brightest—it has gladdened thousands of weary eyes and cheered untold myriads of burdened souls.

This morning we were meditating upon the thirst of Christ while hanging on the Cross [Sermon #1409, Volume 24, THE SHORTEST OF THE SEVEN CRIES—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>] and I tried to show you the mystic meaning hidden within the letter meaning of His short but suggestive cry, “I thirst.” Our Lord Jesus Christ still thirsts for the souls of men. He thirsts for our salvation and here is one of His thirst-cries—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

I am not going to look at our text, as we usually do, and as we most properly do, from man's point of view, but, rather, from Christ's. I shall speak at this time of the longing desire which was deep down in His soul and which made Him give sinners these frequent and urgent invitation to come unto Him. What was it that made Him so anxious those men should come to Him? They were, many of them, most unwilling to accept His invitations. No, worse than that, they often derided Him—but still He cried, not merely once or twice, but His whole life-cry was—“Come unto Me.” And as long as Mercy's gate stands open, Christ's continuous cry, until He comes again, will be, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This sacred passion of our Savior's

soul moved Him to entreat sinners to come to Him almost as if they could, thereby, confer some favor upon Him by coming—whereas it was only that they might receive of His mercy, “and Grace for Grace.”

I. To help in bringing out of the text the thought of our Savior’s longing for the souls of men, I want, first, to answer the question—WHO IS HE? Who is He that thus says, “Come unto Me”? Who is this who so anxiously desires that those who labor and are heavy laden should come to Him, that He may give them rest?

If you look at the connection of our text, you will see that the answer to this question is that *it is One who has often been rejected*. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” When He mingled freely with the sons of men, in all the gentle manliness, cordiality and sympathy which were so characteristic of Him, when He sat with them at their tables and ate and drank with them, instead of saying, “How condescending He is!” they murmured at Him and said that He was “a gluttonous Man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” When He walked through their streets and worked His wondrous miracles of Grace and mercy, they attributed them to Satanic agency! Yet, after all that, He still stood and cried, again and again, “Come unto Me! Come unto Me!” Their rejection of Him could not chill the warmth of His affection—He would not take their cruel negative, but He kept on crying, even as He did on that last great day of the feast, “If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink.” They turned their backs upon Him, but He cried so much the more, “Come unto Me.” They called Him all that was evil, yet His only answer was, “Come unto Me.” That same rejected Savior, whom, perhaps, dear Friend, you have also rejected, lo, these many years, still stands as if He were rooted to the spot and cries to you, “Come, come, come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

This is He, too, who, but a little while before, *had warned them that to reject Him involved the most fearful guilt*. “Tyre and Sidon,” He said, “suffer not such a heavy penalty as guilty Capernaum does. Sodom and Gomorrah were swept away, but not with so dire a doom as awaits Chorazin and Bethsaida, which have rejected My message of mercy.” Jesus looks, with deep pity upon His face, on the many who spurn Him and warns them of their terrible fate if they continue to refuse His invitations. But having done so, He again says to them, “Come unto Me.” He tells them that they will surely die unless they come to Him and then He cries to them, “Why will you die? Turn you, turn you, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” No lips of mortal man ever spoke so honestly and so terribly concerning the wrath to come, as did the lips of Jesus—but that was because they were the lips of Infinite Love! He courted not popular applause by endeavoring to make out that the punishment of the guilty will be slight. It was He who spoke of Hell, “where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.” It was He who said, concerning the ungodly, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” Yet He turns around—no, I must correct myself, and not say, “yet”—but *because* of that honest affection which makes Him speak the truth even when it is most unpalatable, He turns around again and again, and repeats the cry,

“Come unto Me! Come unto Me! This is your sole hope—come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

Do you ask again who He is that utters these words? I answer—*it is He who knows His Father’s eternal purpose and yet fears not to give this invitation.* Just before He uttered our text, He said, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes.” Yes, He knows all about the everlasting decrees of God! He is the Lamb that can take the sealed book from His Father’s right hand and He can open every one of its seals, for He alone knows the things of God. Yet that great and glorious Doctrine of Divine Predestination had never steeled His heart, nor made Him grow callous and indifferent to the needs of the souls of men—but all the knowledge that He had of the decrees of God did but cause Him to cry the more earnestly, “Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” There is nothing, then, written in God’s blessed Book that can render it unlawful for you to come to Jesus, for He who knows all that is there still bids all of you who labor and are heavy laden, to come unto Him—and more than that, it is *He who knows all things who invites you to come!*

Who is He that speaks thus? Why, *it is He who has all power.* Just before He uttered this invitation He had said, “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father.” So, in one sense, He does not need you to help Him. He is not beating up recruits because His army is short of soldiers—nor is He seeking your support to buttress His falling throne. All things have been delivered into His hands by His Father! All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth—and it is He who says to you, “Come unto Me.” He does not invite you in order that you may bring power to Him, but that you may receive power *from* Him! If you come unto Him, He will help you to overcome your sins and to bear your daily burdens. Or He will lift them up from your galled shoulders and bear them all Himself! It is “The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace,” who says, in the words of our text, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Once more, it is *He who is the Son of God, and infinitely blessed,* who says to sinners, “Come unto Me.” It is, to me, a very wonderful fact that He should stand there, in the streets of Jerusalem, or Capernaum, or Jericho, or walk along the highways of Palestine crying to unwilling hearers, “Come, come, come unto Me,” as if He needed them. Yet He needed them not and He needs us not in that sense. Myriads of angels are waiting to fly at His command! He has but to will it and He can create as many more legions as He pleases! What is our whole race to Him? If we had all passed away, like the gnats of a summers evening, our Lord Jesus Christ would have been just as glorious as He is now! And yet—oh, wondrous condescension!—He cries out for the souls of men! He begs, He pleads, He entreats them with tears that well up from His very soul, to come to Him! And when they will not come—oh, wonder, you angels!—He still stands and gazes on them, with the tears streaming from His eyes, as when He wept over guilty Jerusalem, and still He says, “How often

would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!”

It is a strange sight—the Son of God entreating sinners to have mercy on themselves, yet the guilty ones unwilling to receive the mercy! One would have thought that we had but to proclaim a full and free salvation and all would have accepted it. One would have dreamed that the Christ of God had but to come to earth and men would at once flock around Him and beseech Him to exercise His Divine and saving power! But it was not so and, still, it is He who pleads with men—not men who plead with Him. They have not to cry to Him, “Come unto us, and give us rest,” but He has to stand and plead pathetically with them, “Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me,” for they will not come and they still turn their backs upon Him. Alas that it should be so!

II. But now, secondly, let us ask—WHOM DOES HE CALL, AND WHY?

Whom does He call? I could almost have understood it if He had said, “Come unto Me, you kings and princes.” He is King of kings and He might well invite them to come to Him, but He does not invite them any more than others. I might have understood it if He had chosen to gather about Him the wisest men in the world, and the choicest spirits in each generation, and had said to them, “Come to Me, you Solomons, you philosophers, you great thinkers.” But He did not talk so.

It seems strange that He should choose such company as He did, and be so anxious to bring to Himself, first, *those who labor*—you hard-working men, you sons of toil and especially you who are laboring hard to obtain salvation, but who will never gain it in that way—He invites you to come to Him! You who are heavy laden, too—you who, in your laboring for salvation, have been burdened with ceremonies—burdened by the work-mongers who tell you to do this and to do that in order that you may be saved. You whose poor, heavy hearts have been made heavier than they were before because you have had a false gospel preached to you—it is you whom Jesus calls to come to Him! You who are sad, and sick, and sorry—you who would gladly be delivered from sin and all its consequences—you are poor company for anyone. Your friends think you melancholy and they shun your society as much as possible. Your serious conversation has no attractions for them. You get away, alone, and keep silent, and the tears oftentimes steal unbidden down your cheeks—yet Jesus calls you and He says to you—“Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden.”

He is Himself pure yet He is anxious to call to Himself the impure! He never sinned, yet He spent most of His time on earth with publicans and sinners and He still seeks the sinful! Even harlots were never spurned by Him, but they drew near to Him and were delighted to hear Him speak of piety and mercy and Grace for the very chief of sinners. “That was a strange taste,” you say. But as the magnet seeks the steel, so does my Master, in His magnetic and magnificent mercy, search out those who most need Him. Not you whole ones does the Great Physician seek—it is the sick whom He invites to come to Him! Not you good people who hope to enter Heaven by your own works, does He call, but you sinful ones! “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” It is sinners whom He calls to

come to Him! Yes, and those sinners who fail in all their attempts at improvement—those who labor to get better, yet who are not better, but are burdened more and more with the despairing fear that they must ultimately be lost—it is such as these whom Jesus invites to come to Him! Oh, hear this, you laboring ones and you who are heavy laden! The Lord of Glory cries to sinful worms of the dust and beseeches them to come to Him that He may give them rest!

It is the ignorant whom He invites to come to Him, that He may teach them. It is those who have need of a Lord and Master whom He bids to come to Him—the rebellious and the self-willed—that He may put His easy yoke upon their shoulders. It is the weary and the restless whom He calls to come to Him that He may give them rest! Are any of you troubled? Then come to Jesus and so end your trouble! Are you sick or sad? Come to Christ and so lose your sadness! It is for this very purpose that my Master bids me stand here and, in His name, as though He spoke the words Himself, cry to you, “Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

III. Now, thirdly, let us enquire—WHAT CAUSES THIS DESIRE OF CHRIST AFTER SUCH PERSONS?

I hope I am speaking very personally to a great many people who are here. I would like to feel as if I had a firm yet tender grip of the hand of every unconverted person present, or that I were able to “buttonhole” everyone here who has not yet, by faith, laid hold on Christ. Well, dear Friend, possibly you think that you do not want Christ, but He wants you. Now, why can He want *you*? It cannot be because He will get anything out of you. What are you worth to Him at your best? What necessity can He have for you? If He were hungry, He would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are His! All things are His—the whole earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.

He wants you, for your own sake, to do you good—not to get anything good out of you! He does not want you because He sees some excellence in you. If you really know yourself, you know that you have none. All that is naturally good about you is marred in many ways and you know that it is so. Jesus does not love you because He sees anything lovable in you, but out of pure pity. Nor does He want you because of anything you ever will be or do, for if your zeal could know no respite, if you could labor on for Him throughout a life as long as that of Methuselah, yet would you still be to Him an unprofitable servant, doing no more than you ought to have done! I confess, concerning myself, that my blessed Master took me into His service of His own free Sovereign Grace, and He has helped me to do my best for Him. But I make this frank confession to Him and to you—that I was never worth my keep to Him. I have cost Him infinitely more than I have ever been able to bring to Him. Even when I have done my best, I have often been to Him such a servant as a man might be glad to see the back of because he was no profit to his master whatever. So it is not with any view of getting anything out of us that Jesus is so hungry after the souls of men!

Why, then, does He want us? He wants us, first, because *He loves our race*. He has a special affection for men, for, verily, He took not up angels when they fell. He left the fallen spirits in their ruined state—and it is eternal—but He took up the seed of Abraham. He was found in fashion as a Man, and He came to seek and to save lost men. I know not if there are any other fallen beings in yonder rolling worlds that we call stars, but this I know, that Christ's "delights were with the sons of men." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Another reason why He cries to men to come unto Him is, (wonder of wonders, and mystery of mysteries) *because He is Himself a Man*, the Son of Mary as truly as He was the Son of God. He is the great model Man, the pattern of what mankind ought to be and, therefore, standing in the midst of those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren, He looks out of His Church and He cries to other men outside as yet, and He says to them, also, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! I am also a Man and I know your struggles, and infirmities, and griefs—yes, I have even tasted of the gall and wormwood that you deserved to drink as a punishment for your sins. Come unto Me! Come unto Me, for I will lead you upward to perfection and to everlasting life and Glory." It is a man's voice that speaks, albeit that it is also Divine.

Why, further, does Jesus say, "Come unto Me"? It is *because He has done so much for men that He loves them for what He has done for them*. I heard a story, only this last week, of a captain on board a vessel who had a cabin boy whom he treated very roughly and to whom he scarcely spoke without an oath. But one day the boy fell overboard and the captain, who had a kind heart beneath a rough exterior, sprang into the sea and rescued him from drowning. The next time a gentleman who had noticed his ill conduct to the lad, was on board the vessel, he observed him speak to the boy very gently and almost affectionately—and he could not help saying to him, "Captain, you seem to speak to that boy very differently from what you used to do." "Look here, Sir," he replied, "that boy fell overboard and I saved his life. And afterwards I took to him wonderfully, and I have loved him almost as if he were my own son ever since," Oh, yes, if you do a good turn to a person, you are sure to love him afterwards! Now, one reason why our Lord Jesus Christ loves sinners so much is because He died to save them and, therefore, He still stands and cries, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me. Have I not loved you? Have I not proved My love upon the accursed tree?" Do you wonder, therefore, that He still says, "Come unto Me"?

He who thus stands and pleads with men, *delights to do yet more and more for them*. It is Christ's Nature to scatter blessings wherever He goes. When a man can act according to his nature, he is sure to be pleased. A large-hearted man is never so happy as when he is doing good to others. When a man of a tender spirit is looking after the poor, the needy, the sorrowing and the suffering, he cannot help being happy because he is doing good to them. So is it with my Master and His blessed service on your account. You are nothing in yourselves and you cannot do Him any good—He is too great to need anything from you—yet He cries after you

because He wants to do you good. He is a Physician, so He wants to heal you. He is the Friend that sticks closer than a brother, so He wants to befriend you. He is the one and only Savior, so He delights to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. Heaven itself could not continue to hold Him when men were lost and needed Him to come to earth to save them! It would not have been Heaven to Him had He been always shut up there. No, He must seek and save the lost! His great heart could not be happy until that glorious work was accomplished.

We know some generous men, of whom it is said that they are never so happy as when they are giving their money away. If you know where they live, I advise you to go and take it—everybody thinks that it is common sense to do so. And when Jesus is so happy in distributing the riches of His mercy and His love, I pray you to go and take from Him all that He is willing to give! You will be happy in receiving, but He will be happier still in giving, for even to Him “it is more blessed to give than to receive” and He still rejoices more over those who come to Him than the coming ones themselves rejoice!

I will tell you, sorrowfully and solemnly, one reason why Jesus wants you to come to Him. It is because *He knows what must become of you if you do not come*. No man in this world knows what the wrath of God is, nor how terrible are the flames of Hell. But Jesus knows all about them, for He was the Creator even of the dreadful place of torment. He also knew something of the agony of the lost when He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And though He is now reigning in His Gory, He remembers well when His soul drank the wormwood and the gall—and suffered on behalf of guilty sinners—the fierceness of the wrath of God! He would not have you feel that unquenchable fire, or that undying worm, or cry in vain for a drop of water to cool your burning tongue, for He is full of pity and, therefore, He warns you to flee from the wrath to come!

Have you not, sometimes, when a wreck was just outside the harbor and the waves were washing over it, known men ready to give all they had to anyone who could save the poor sailors who could be seen clinging to the masts? “Go, my brave fellows,” someone has cried, “take my purse—all that is in it is yours if you will but risk your lives to save those perishing men out yonder!” Why, I have known a crowd gather on the beach when a wreck has been driven ashore, and the seamen were in imminent peril, and all the onlookers seemed frantic together. Men and women would all have given all they had if it could be the means of saving the lives of their fellow creatures. And our Lord Jesus, as He sees some of you drifting away on the wreckage that will so soon all go down and be engulfed in the fiery sea, cries to you—for He knows there is no other hope for you—“Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me!” You may think that it is a trifling thing for your soul to be damned, but Jesus knows better. You may scoff over the very brink of the Pit, but Jesus knows what an awful doom that pit contains! Oh, how I wish that every unrepentant one here would listen to those tender tones, so oft repeated, “Come unto Me! Come unto Me!” I wish my face could shine like the face of Jesus did. I wish I could have as sweet and silvery a voice as He had,

that my tones could be as persuasive as were His when He said, “Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

I think, too, I may give you one other reason why Jesus invites sinners to come to Him and that is, *He knows what our bliss will be if we do come to Him*. Our Lord Jesus Christ has always before His eyes the sight of Heaven, His Throne of Glory, the gates of pearl, the streets of gold and the walls and foundations of all manner of precious stones. His ears are constantly hearing the songs of angels and of the redeemed from among men and, as He looks on those blessed spirits round about Him, He thinks of those who will *not* come to Him and He says, “If they live and die as they now are, they cannot enter here.” There is but one door of salvation and Christ said, “I am the door.” And He also said, “Come unto Me. I am the gate of paradise, I am the way to Heaven. Come unto Me.”

There will come a day when all the sheep will pass under the hand of Him that counts them! Shall I then miss any of you into whose faces I have gazed, perhaps for a score of years? Will your name not be read out? You have heard the Gospel very attentively and you have even been an admiring hearer, but you are not yet a doer of the Word of God and if you remain only a *hearer*, you will not be among the redeemed in Glory! If you are not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, your names will be left out when He reads the muster roll of His blood-washed people! It will be all in vain for you to lament, then—“My name not there? Did I hear rightly? Christ has reached the last name, but He has not called mine! Yet I was a hearer of the Word! I was at many revival services! I was often prayed for, yet my name has not been called. Oh, that I could cease to be! Would God I had never been born!” All such regrets shall be useless, then. Then shall a man seek death and shall not find it, as the Book of Revelation tells us—and he shall wring his hands in everlasting despair, to think that the glorious gift of immortality, which was meant to make him a peer with the angels, has been so misused by him that now he must be a comrade of the devils who are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the Great Day!

God grant, dear Hearers, that you may hear Christ say to you individually, “Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me” and that you may accept His gracious invitation—or else to His Heaven and His Glory you can never go.

You see, then, that the motives which led Christ to call men to come to Him were those of pity and affection. He could not bear to think of their perishing! Neither can those of His servants who are in the least degree like He. And why should you perish, Sirs? Why should you perish? I spoke to one, the other day, to whom I said, “Your brother is very anxious about your soul.” He said, “I know he is.” And then I said to him, “And so am I. I wish you were a believer in Jesus.” And he answered me, “My time is not yet come.” “No,” I replied, “but God’s time has, for He says, *Today*, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. *Now* is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.” I wish that if any here have such a notion as that in their minds, they would put it away from them, for the text does not say, “Wait.” There is no text, except in

the devils bible, that bids you delay! There is no command for you to lie at the pool. No, Christ's invitation is still, "Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me now! Come unto Me now!" That is Christ's one cry and, therefore, I reiterate it again and again—"Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me! Come unto Me now! Come unto Me now!" Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and He means, "Come now."

IV. I will close when I have answered one other question, or, rather, when I have asked you to answer it. If Jesus bids us come to Him in this fashion, and for these reasons, WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE INVITATION?

I would say, first, *He is in such awful earnest that we ought to be in earnest in listening to Him.* Sirs, there are many of you who do not seem to believe that you must live forever, in raptures or in woes and, therefore, you sit, from day to day, taking your ease and caring nothing about your immortal souls. It seems as if it were a trifling thing to you whether you are with God or with His enemy—whether you would be lost or saved forever if you were now to die. Is it not strange that Christ should be in such earnest about you and yet that you should not be in earnest about yourselves? I could look at some of you till the hot tears forced themselves from my eyes, fearing lest you should be lost—yet no tears of penitence run down your cheeks, nor do you seem to care about your souls in the least!

I recollect, years ago, having several times befriended one of the basest men I ever knew. I had helped him till, at last, I said that I would do no more for him, so extraordinary had been his wickedness. One day, wet through and through from a drenching shower, he stood at my gate and I had to break my promise and help him yet again. After a little while, he came again, but I refused to help him, for nothing could be done with him. My wife saw him standing in rags of the most wretched kind and she surprised me greatly when she said, bursting into tears and almost screaming, "O you poor lost soul! You poor lost soul, how can you act as you have done? We have clothed you and you have gone away and sold the garments we gave you, and the very shoes from your feet. We have picked you up from the gutter and taken you, when you have come out of prison, and helped you again and again. You poor lost soul," she said, "you had a mother, and she was a gracious woman. You had a father, and he is in Heaven, and we will help you once more, though I fear it will be no good, you poor lost soul." Yet all the while, he never shed a tear—there seemed to be no impression made upon him at all. I felt, after that, there was no hope for him, if that did not touch him when she, who was no relation of his, stood there and wept as if she would faint—and when I was moved with pity, too.

But he was not moved. Reason, thought, manliness—all appeared to have left him and he was little, if anything, better than a brute beast. In many respects, he was worse than the beasts that perish. Oh, shall it be so, my Hearers, that other people shall care about you and yet you will not care about yourselves? Remember that it is your own souls that are in peril! Whether you get to Heaven, or not, will not affect the eternal

happiness of any one of us who have believed in Jesus! Yet I can truly say, with the Apostle, "I could wish myself accursed in your stead, if I could but save you." This thought has often crossed my mind—if any dire affliction could but save your souls, I would gladly endure it! And will you never think about your own souls? Must Jesus continue to cry, "Come! Come! Come! Come," and yet you will not come? Choked with His tears, must He break down in saying, "Come! Come! Come" and yet will you never think about your own souls? Oh, by the solemn earnestness of the Christ of God—and I might add, by the earnestness of His poor servant, who is speaking to you now—be at least a little concerned about this all-important matter and begin to think it over now!

Now, as Christ says to us, "Come unto Me," *let us come unto Him*. We are great sinners, so let us come unto Him, for He will freely forgive us if we come to Him. We have often treated Him ill, but let us come to Him, for He will not upbraid us, but will welcome us! We feel so heavy, but let us come to Him. We do not feel as heavy as we should, but let us come to Him with all our load of sin and sorrow and just leave our case in His hands, for that is what He wants us to do. Let us, each one, say to Him, "Jesus, Master, I trust You to save Me. I will follow You. I will be Your disciple. I will take Your yoke upon me and wear it for Your sake if you will only save me." You *are* saved when you have reached that point—that is, when you come to Him and trust Him. That is the point, trust Him. Rely upon Him, lean upon Him, depend upon Him. Trust His blood to cleanse you, His righteousness to clothe you, Himself to keep you. Have done with yourself and begin with Him—that is all.

Listen! He is still gently whispering "Come! Come! Come!" Linger no longer. Come away, my Brother, my Sister. Hesitate not, poor doubter. Come along—it is the voice of Jesus that calls you! Come just as you are! Tarry not to amend or cleanse yourself, but come to Him to do it all! He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." God help you to come even now, for His dear Sons sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 11:25-30.**

Verses 25, 26. *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight.* "Jesus answered"—Sovereign Grace is the answer to abounding guilt. With rejoicing spirit Jesus sees how Sovereign Grace meets the unreasonableness of human sin and chooses out its own according to the good pleasure of the Father's will. Here is the spirit in which to regard the electing Grace of God—"I thank You." It is cause for deepest gratitude. Here is the Author of election—"O Father." It is the Father who makes the choice and reveals the blessings. Here is His right to act as He does—He is "Lord of Heaven and earth." Who shall question the good pleasure of His will? Here we see the objects of election, under both aspects—the chosen and the passed-over. Babes see because sacred Truths of God are revealed to them, and not other-

wise. They are weak and inexperienced. They are simple and unsophisticated. They can cling, trust, cry and love—and to such the Lord opens up the treasures of Wisdom! The objects of Divine Choice are such as these. Lord, let me be one among them! The Truths of the heavenly Kingdom are hid by a judicial act of God from men who, in their own esteem, are “the wise and prudent.” They cannot see because they trust their own dim light and will not accept the Light of God. Here we see, also, the reason of election, the Divine Will—“So it seemed good in Your sight.” We can go no further than this. The choice seemed good to Him who never errs and, therefore, it is good. This stands to the children of God as the reason which is above all reason. *Deus vult* is enough for us! If God wills it, so it must be, and so it *ought* to be.

27. *All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son will reveal Him.* Here we have the channel through which electing love works towards men—“All things are delivered unto Me of My Father.” All things are put into the Mediator’s hands—fit hands both towards God and towards man—for He alone knows both to perfection. Jesus reveals the Father to the babes whom He has chosen. Only the Father can fill the Son with benediction and only through the Son can that benediction flow to any of the race of men. Know Christ and you know the Father—and know that the Father Himself loves you. There is no other way of knowing the Father but through the Son. In this our Lord rejoiced, for His office of Mediator is dear to Him and He loves to be the way of communication between the Father whom He loves, and the people whom He loves for the Father’s sake. Observe the intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son and how they know each Other as none else ever can. Oh, to see all things in Jesus by the Father’s appointment and so to find the Father’s love and Grace in finding Christ! My Soul, there are great mysteries here! Enjoy what you cannot explain.

28. *Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Here is the gracious invitation of the Gospel in which the Savior’s tears and smiles were blended, as in a Covenant rainbow of promise. “Come,” He drives none away. He calls them to Himself. His favorite word is, “Come.” Not—*go* to Moses, but, “Come to Me.” To Jesus Himself we must come by a personal trust. Not to doctrine, ordinance, or ministry are we to first come, but to the personal Savior. All laboring and laden ones may come—He does not limit the call to the spiritually laboring, but every working and wearied one is called! It is well to give the largest sense to all that Mercy speaks. Jesus calls Me. Jesus promises “rest” as His gift. His immediate, personal, effectual rest He freely gives to all who come to Him by faith. To come to Him is the first step and He entreats us to take it. In Himself, as the great Sacrifice for sin, the conscience, the heart, the understanding obtain complete rest. When we have obtained the rest He gives, we shall be ready to hear of a further rest which we *find*.

29, 30. *Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.* “Take My yoke and learn.” This is the

second instruction. It brings with it a further rest which we “find.” The first rest He gives through His death. The second we find in copying His life. This is no correction of the former statement, but an addition. First, we rest by faith in Jesus and next we rest through obedience to Him. Rest from fear is followed by rest from the turbulence of inward passion and the drudgery of self. We are not only to bear a yoke, but His yoke—and we are not only to submit to it when it is laid upon us—but we are to take it upon us. We are to be workers and take His yoke and, at the same time, we are to be scholars and learn from Him as our Teacher.

We are to learn of Christ and also to learn Christ. He is both Teacher and Lesson. His gentleness of heart fits Him to teach, to be the Illustration of His own teaching and to work in us His great design. If we can become as He is, we shall rest as He does. We shall not only rest from the guilt of sin—this He gives us—but we shall rest in the peace of holiness which we find through obedience to Him. It is the heart which makes or mars the rest of the man. Lord, make us “lowly in heart,” and we shall be restful of heart. “Take My yoke.” The yoke in which we draw with Christ must be a happy one and the burden which we carry for Him is a blessed one. We rest in the fullest sense when we serve, if Jesus is the Master. We are unloaded by bearing His burden. We are rested by running on His errands. “Come unto Me,” is thus a Divine prescription, curing our ills by the pardon of sin through our Lord’s Sacrifice and causing us the greatest peace by sanctifying us to His service.

Oh, for Grace to be always coming to Jesus and to be constantly inviting others to do the same! Always free, yet always bearing His yoke! Always having the rest once given, yet always finding more—this is the experience of those who come to Jesus always and for everything. Blessed heritage—and it is ours if we are really His!

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*“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are
heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”
Matthew 11:28.*

PERHAPS no verse in the whole of Scripture has been handled in the pulpit more frequently than this, and yet it has not been exhausted and never can be! It is a great soul-saving text. There are some words of Scripture which seem to be like special stars in the sky. As the polestar is conspicuous to the astronomer, so are these salvation Truths of God to the Evangelist—he is never weary of gazing at them and pointing to them. The promises that are fitted to give present and immediate relief to the conscience are stars of the first magnitude and many sinners have had their attention attracted by them and by them been directed to the Port of Peace! Upon such a passage as I have propounded for our sermon tonight, [see exposition at end of sermon] I shall have nothing new to say. No novelty is required. We only need to hear the same old Truths—yes, to hear them till they work their way into our souls, and then to hear them yet again, that our pure minds may be stirred up by way of remembrance, and that we, feeling their value, may proclaim them out for the guidance and comfort of others! Observe first—

I. TO WHOM THE SAVIOR ADDRESSED HIMSELF—all them that “labor and are heavy laden.”

It is not once out of a dozen times that I have ever had the good fortune to hear this text quoted correctly. It is, “All you that are weary and heavy laden,” according to the modern rendering. But as Jesus Christ said it, it is, “All you that labor and are heavy laden.” I suppose the alteration has been made in the interests of those who will not venture upon an invitation to men to come to Christ until they have got Him—I mean will not tell men to look to Jesus till they virtually have already experienced all that a look to Jesus is ever likely to give them! They will insist so much upon the spirituality of the terms used here that, seeing the words are a little difficult to get over, they must change them altogether! When our Lord said, “All you that labor,” who is to tell me that I am to trace in the word all them that *spiritually* labor? I should be afraid to add to the words of Scripture and must leave the responsibility with those who do so. Men labor, and if they labor with their heads, or their brains, or their hearts, in any form of labor, Christ bids them come to Him for rest. Men bear great burdens, some of them burdens of care, some burdens of grief, some burdens of foolish hope—but if they come to Him, be-

ing heavy laden or heavily loaded, He will take their load from them and give them rest.

From the day of the Fall man has been a laborer and he has been heavily laden. Into whatever condition man may climb, he cannot altogether escape that first curse, "In the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread." If he does not work with his hands, he must, at least, toil mentally. But if he is idle because he says he has a competency, there is something about such a life as that from which a man cannot escape! Instead of the world getting better in the way of toil and burden carrying, it is every day getting worse. Why, our forefathers of the Puritan times were quite easy souls compared with us! When I read the diaries of some of their lives, I quite envy them. A Puritan minister, when he dedicated himself to the work of the ministry with all his heart, was not run upon by the public, hunted up by the postman and embarrassed with ten thousand of the difficulties which arise out of our unnatural civilization! Good souls, they sometimes had rest and walked with God with some degree of ease! But now the world goes by steam. We have laid down steel rails and all business must run on them. It is all driving and turmoil from morning till night. You wake up, some of you, with the sound of the steam whistle in your ears, and you scarcely can sleep in your beds because of the rumbling of the trains at your very doors! It is a world of toil, and I believe that it will go on so—and instead of getting better, the world will in some respects get worse. It will be a harder struggle to live and a sterner struggle to live a spiritual life as the world grows gray. Hence, the words of the Master seem to me to come more fresh tonight than even when they fell from His lips, "Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden," for we labor more, now, than men did in His day, and are even more heavily laden than they were then! Jesus Christ addresses you tonight whose toils are many and your burdens heavy. Some of you are laboring after wealth, and if you got it you would find no rest in it. But the probabilities are that you may never get it and so be disappointed. But you need rest. Well, come to Him and you shall have it! Some of you, perhaps, are toiling after learning and the honor which it will bring you—may you get it! If it is good for you, you may, perhaps, obtain it. But in all learning there is sorrow—oftentimes the greater the domain of knowledge, the broader expanse is there in the soul for the floods of grief to cover. But if your mind needs rest, Jesus bids you come to Him! Oh you with enlarged ambitions, with grasping desires! Oh you that are panting and puffing in the race of life, you that are faint and weary with tugging at the oar of the world's great ship, come to Him, for He can release you! He can take off the chain from the galley slave and set you free!

Still, while the text is not exclusively directed to those who spiritually labor and are spiritually heavy laden, it includes them. Do I not address some tonight who are laboring hard to establish a righteousness of their own? Oh, sinful attempt, since God has forbidden it and declares the effort to be futile! Oh, vain folly, thus to fly in the face of Eternal Wisdom which declares that "by the works of the Law there shall no flesh living be justified"! If you are ever to get rest, you must cease from your own

doings and you must come to Christ! Oh, you that are heavily laden with your sins and feel them like a burden pressing your heart, bowing you to the ground and crushing you, as it were, down to the lowest Hell—that burden can never be lifted off your weary backs except by one hand—and that hand, the pierced hand which has felt the weight of the burden before! To you that toil, to you that are bowed down and crushed with the load, Jesus speaks tonight as He did of old! And He says, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” Now notice—

II. THE COMMAND OR THE INVITATION—which you will—**THAT JESUS GIVES.**

It is, “Come unto Me.” There never seems to have been any difficulty in Christ’s day in understanding the expression, “Come unto Me.” It exactly struck the Oriental mind—they understood it at once. But now-a-days thousands ask the question, “What is faith? What is believing in Jesus? What is coming to Him?” Many convinced souls say, “If I could walk to Christ, it does not matter how perilous or fatiguing the journey—I would certainly go! And if He were here, literally, and I could fall down and kiss His feet, I would certainly do it.”

Understand, then, that the coming here mentioned is not to be taken literally, but *spiritually*. It is not a physical coming. We cannot now come to Christ by the motion of our bodies, nor shall we be able until He calls us by the sound of the last trumpet. If men had come to Christ physically when He was on earth, it would not have been of any use to them, unless by faith they had spiritual contact with Him, for some drew near to Him with idle curiosity and others with malignant opposition—yes, there were those who came to Him to crucify Him! They looked to Him physically as He hung upon the tree, but they were not saved by such a coming as that! The coming here meant is coming by the mind, approaching with the *heart*—a thing of the inner nature, a spiritual thing! To come to Christ, then, is just this—in one word it is to accept Him as your Savior—but to spell out that one counsel, let me trace out the action of the mind in coming. First, you must *listen to His Doctrine*. Seek to know, oh, weary ones, what it is that Jesus teaches! Turn to the record and see who He was, what He was, what was His commission, what was His message and what were the terms in which He delivered it, and what was the spirit in which He came to bring it. In the next place, *believe whatever He teaches*. Accept as being true what Christ declares. If He claims to be God, believe Him—accept Him as such. If He puts Himself down as Prophet, Priest and King, let your mind jump at it and say, “He shall be my Prophet, my Priest, my King.” Coming to Christ begins in divers ways in the soul. With many it begins first by hearing of Christ, then by believing with the mind the testimony that is borne concerning Jesus. But this is not enough. After having heard and accepted that the witness of Christ is true, the genuine coming is then to cast your soul, with all its awful interests, into His hands and trust Him—in fact, to say, “I have no dependence for life, for death, for eternity, but on the Person and merits of that Son of God who was born of Mary, who lived a life of holiness, who died

upon the tree, who rose again and whoever lives to make intercession for us." The simple act of *trust*—albeit by some it is so much despised—is the act which saves the soul! The moment a sinner casts himself flat upon what Christ has done, with no reserve, no holding to any other hope even with his little finger. The moment he makes himself to be a bankrupt, gives up all and lives upon the charity of Christ. The moment he completely takes off his own rags and puts on no garment but the righteousness of Christ. The moment that he acknowledges himself to be a black, filthy, condemned—yes, and without Christ—a condemned sinner! The moment he feels that and then takes Christ to be his fullness, his trust, his All-in-All—he has come to Christ! He is saved, he shall have rest!

But to come to Christ implies a little more than even this, if we would get the perfection of it and the completeness of the rest which is promised. When I come to Christ and trust in Him to be my Savior, I am then to continue to come to Him *by following in His footsteps, obeying His precepts, drinking in His spirit, and serving His cause*. Brothers and Sisters, we are all, as His people, constantly coming to Him! "To whom coming," says the Apostle, "as unto a living stone"—not, "to whom we have come, and there is an end of it," but to whom we are always coming! We are like the country people who do not live by experience of having gone to the well seven years ago, but they go every day and dip the pitcher in afresh. We are like in our souls what we are in our bodies—we do not grow fat and flourishing on the experience of having eaten a good meal 20 years ago, but it is by daily coming to the table and continually receiving fresh food for the sustenance of our bodies! And, Brothers and Sisters, to get perfect peace through Jesus Christ, there must be a daily, an *hourly* coming to Him in constant trust, in faithful obedience and in holy fellowship, striving to be conformed to His image. "Come unto Me," then, says the Savior, "all you that labor and are heavy laden." He picks out you working men and He says, "Come and hear what I have got to say. Believe it, accept it, trust it and I will give you rest." He finds out you merchants who toil so much that the brain sometimes gives way, and He says, "Now, come. Come to Me and I will give you rest. You expect to get it when you retire from business and go to your country house—but even now, if you come to Me, you shall have a rest that no suburban retreat, no accumulation of wealth, no immunity from the strain of business can ever give you! I can make that heart beat at an easier rate. I can cool that hot blood that is now coursing through your veins at such speed. I can bathe your spirit in a sleep that shall be like an infant's slumber, soft and light—and I can do this for you while you are striving to be rich, or while you are poor, while your losses are great, while your friends are falling like autumn leaves and while your fears are howling in your ears like winter's winds! I can give you rest, perfect rest, if you come to Me." If you come to Him, believe what He says, trust Him entirely, rest and repose in Him and you shall get for your souls that Paradise which they so much need, of perfect peace! Having noticed the persons addressed and the invitation given, let us observe—

III. OUR LORD'S DESCRIPTION OF THE BLESSING WHICH IS TO BE GIVEN TO SUCH WHEN THEY COME. "I will give you *rest*."

The best word in all human language, next to, "*God*," and "*Jesus*," is that word, "*rest*." Different views of Heaven charm different people. No doubt Heaven is described under various metaphors so that every Christian may find some delight appropriate to himself. As for me, whether it is that I am constitutionally lazy or not, I do not know—there is no idea of Heaven which charms me like that of being at perfect rest in Christ Jesus, where—

***"Not a wave of trouble rolls
Across the peaceful breast."***

This text seems to ring like a marriage bell in one's ears. "Come unto Me and I will give you rest." Oh, you will not care about it, you who do not labor, you who are never heavy laden and have got no more burden than you can carry—you will not care about it—but those who are stuck in the struggles of life, or that are oppressed with spiritual grief—they will be the persons who will find the sweetness of it! Yes, rest for the weary, rest for the toiler, rest for the heavy laden—this is, indeed, a blessing!

And what is the rest which Jesus gives? Well, it is a *spiritual* rest which He bestows upon His people—a rest which rests them throughout, for when the mind gets rested, the very bodily frame seems to be sustained. While an agitated mind often brings the body into disease and lowers it into its grave—Jesus can give such a tonic to the entire system by the peace which He imparts—that the very lame shall be made to leap like a hart!

Oh, what a peace this is—the peace which Jesus gives! *He gives peace as to all the guilty memories of the past.* These will haunt us. When the conscience is awakened, our dead sins seem to start up, wearing, each one, its ceremony, and each sin stands before us like a grim ghost claiming retribution. And the awakened conscience, knowing right well that the wages of sin is death, becomes alarmed and the man says, "What must I do to be saved?" As if in your walk tonight there should suddenly open before you a pit in the very pathway which you were about to tread—how you would stand amazed and aghast! And then if another opened behind you, and then on either hand the earth began to rock and reel, how would you be astounded and dismayed!

Such is the position of a man when conscience is suddenly quickened. He thought himself to be standing on the solid ground of his own good works—but suddenly all is gone. No good works appear. Sin is on either side. Hell is beneath him and the sword of Divine Justice, all un-sheathed, is gleaming above his head! Ah, but Jesus Christ can show you how sin is forgiven! If you believe Him, He will tell you that He came into the world to suffer for the sins of all who trust Him—that He actually did bear all the punishment which was due from the hand of God to all the sinners who will trust in Him—and that God is so rigidly just, severely righteous, yet infinitely gracious in the pardon of those who will trust in Christ!

Nor is it only the fear of the past, but *the power of the present*, from which this kindly rest exempts us! A man awakened, longs to escape from sin. As an iron net, his habits of sin surround him. He tugs and toils to escape from there, but the more he strives, the more thoroughly is he enveloped therein. His attempts at reformation from some sin are often successful, but any attempts to reform our nature and to overcome our inbred sin made by us in our own strength, must inevitably be a failure! Sin, indeed, will only become more exceedingly sinful the more we strive to bridle it unless we cry unto the Strong for strength! How often has a man said, "I cannot lead a better life. It is no use—you may exhort me if you please, but see what I have been, how I am tempted and how my passions drag me this way and that? There is no hope for me!" But Jesus steps in and says, "Come to Me and I will give you rest. I can change your nature. I can take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I can give you tendencies and passions of quite another kind which shall combat with your old proclivities and ultimately overcome them. I can inspire in you a new hope. I can breathe into you a new and better life, for I am the Resurrection and the Life, and he that believes in Me, though he were dead, as you are, yet shall he live. And as to returning to your old sins, that shall not be, for he that lives and believes in Me shall never die. I will keep you and deliver you from the power of sin and Satan, and you shall be Mine even till life's end." Thus peace is given to us, both as to the guilt and as to the power of sin!

But this is not all! Jesus can give peace and does give peace to all who come to Him as to *the cares of this world*. The righteous have their troubles. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." But there is a sacred art which Jesus teaches, which enables the Christian to rejoice in tribulation and to triumph in the midst of distress! Some of the happiest moments that God's people have ever had have been when neither sun nor moon appeared and when in the darkness they crept into the bosom of Jesus and nestled there! We are not dependent upon outward circumstances when faith is in exercise. Jesus shows us that His love is faithful, eternal, immutable love—and immediately we kiss the smiting hand and love it as well as the giving hand. Oh, you that are now the poor slaves of your daily cares, how happy would you be if you came to Jesus and trusted in Him! The cage would grow no larger. The income might become no richer. You might still be among the poor and the laboring ones, but you would have a rest in your condition, a satisfaction in your state which would make it better, though it changed it not! For it is all one to a man to have his estate brought up to his mind, or to have his mind brought down to his estate. It matters not, as long as he is content! It all comes to the same end and Christ, by a Divine baptism of His love, bathing us, covering us completely in the floods of His Divine Grace can give us, as to the cares of this world, a perfect rest!

And, my Brothers and Sisters, if we come to Christ, we shall *likewise get rest as to our desires*. Thoughtful men find it difficult to rest. They go from one theory to another. When they think they have nestled for a while, a new difficulty comes and scares them from it. But he that be-

lieves in the Son of God has something upon which his mind may stand most stably, for as well is the teaching of Christ the most reasonable as it is also the most spiritual of doctrines! He that gets to know Christ, gets a fixed leverage for his soul on which to stand fast—let the world whirl as it may!

He that gets Christ gets rest for his *affections* as well as for his understanding. The affections need something to love. We are always idolizing something or other, but those things either get broken in pieces, or else turn out to be our enemies. But he that gets the love of Jesus Christ supremely rests in his heart and he can sing—

***“Now rest, my long-divided heart!
Fixed on this blissful center, rest.”***

As I have already shown you, the conscience rests, so the understanding rests, the judgment rests, the affections rest and the whole powers of the man come to rest, even his desires—those insatiable things—those horse-leeches—those greedy, all-devouring things—these, too, are full when the man gets Christ, for he can then say—

***“All my capacious powers can wish,
In You most richly meet—
Nor to my eyes is light so dear,
Nor friendship half so sweet.”***

Yes, it is a perfect rest to every faculty of our nature that Jesus Christ gives us when we come to Him!

And what, after all, is that portion of the rest which we see and experience here when *compared with the fullness of which we shall enjoy hereafter*? “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. When the world passes away and all the fashion, thereof. When the pulse grows faint and few. When the eyes are glazing. When the eternal world begins to dawn upon the disembodied spirit, I will give you rest—rest when the elements dissolve with fervent heat, rest when the trumpet grows exceedingly loud and long and the dead arise from their graves—rest when the Great White Throne is set and the books are opened—when the dividing Voice separates the sheep from the goats! I will give you rest when Hell opens and the guilty descend to their doom. Rest while their smoke goes up forever and ever, and the vengeance of Almighty God is seen in the overthrow of all His enemies! I will give you rest—rest in the Father’s bosom—rest at the right hand of God, rest in eternal union with Jesus, rest with the palm branch and the harp—rest in the everlasting vision of the blessed Son of God who is your trust and your all.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, what a rest is that—

***“To which our laboring soul aspires,
With ardent pangs and strong desires!”***

It will be a rest from all sin! A rest from all temptation to sin! A rest from all painful memories about sin! A rest from all watchfulness against sin, from all liabilities of ever being led into it! A rest from secret sins, a rest from inbred sins, a total rest from every form of evil! It will be a rest from all the molestations of doubt and fear. A rest from every questioning as to our state before God! A rest from all the uprisings of natural depravity from an evil heart of unbelief. A rest from the attacks of Satan, the as-

saults of men without and of fiends from beneath—a rest, too, from daily toils—no more those hands to be rough with labor and that brow to be wet with sweat—no more the head to ache with thought and the heart to throb with dismay! A perfect rest from every species of toil that can bring distress, though we shall serve Him day and night in His Temple. It will be a rest from all care—no thoughts of those children and their little waywardnesses, no thoughts about the house and how to provide things honest in the sight of all men! A rest altogether from the engagements of the city and from the labors of the field! A rest completely from the toils which are allotted to the sons of men in this vale of tears. Oh, blessed rest! A rest from pain. A rest from death. A rest from fear. A rest with God. A rest, an eternal rest, which remains for the people of God!

And this is for you, laboring and heavy laden one! This is for you, son of poverty! For you, daughter of sorrow! This is for the inmate of the poorhouse, the dweller in the alms room. This is for the crossing sweeper, this is for the toiling artisan. This is for the burdened merchant. This is for the care-worn statesman. This is for the minister who serves his Master till he is weary in his work! This is for us all if we have, by the Holy Spirit, through Divine Grace, been led to come to Jesus! That is the point. Do you believe on the Son of God? Dear Hearer, do you believe Jesus to have been God's Son, and to have died as the Substitute for sinners? And will you trust in Him as such, wholly and only? Will you venture on Him, and venture on Him now? If so, here is His promise, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." If you believe Him, you shall have salvation now! Obey Him! Be baptized as He commands you, and you shall thus have the blessing which God gives to all who trust in the slain Lamb of God!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 6:1-41.**

Verses 1-5. *After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him. They had been hearing Him all day and He had withdrawn a little from them, but they pursued Him up the hill—and I doubt not that as they toiled up the hill, they showed their faintness and their weariness which led the Savior to see how much they needed refreshment.*

5-7. *He said unto Philip, Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him: for He, Himself, knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. Men's calculations concerning Divine things generally terminate in a deficit. Two hundred pennyworth is not sufficient. But Christ's calculations always terminate in a credit balance, as we shall see. "Gather up the fragments that re-*

main, that nothing may be lost.” We, at our best, fall short of the mark. Our blessed Master not only does enough, but in His House there is bread enough and to spare!

8-10. *One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said unto Him, There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves: and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down—Or lie down, as it is, for they were accustomed to do that at feasts, and Christ would have them take their ease as well as enjoy their refreshment. “Make the men recline.”*

10. *Now there was much grass in the place.* So it was a splendid dining room! It was luxuriously carpeted! We learn from this that it was the Eastern spring time, for there is not much grass otherwise. And there was, therefore, in Christ’s banqueting hall, a blue ceiling and a floor of green grass! What more could they need except the food?

10-11. *So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves—Common, coarse loaves of barley, not much esteemed, even then, as food.*

11. *And when He had given thanks.* Though out of doors and “in the rough,” as we say, He did not forget that! I know some that fall to their meals like so many swine—and have not as much grace as chickens, that are sure to lift their heads whenever they take a drink, as if to bless God for every drop they receive! This gracious habit is going out of fashion among them.

11. *He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down—Or reclining.*

11. *And likewise of the fishes as much as they would.* That is always one of the rules of Christ’s feasting—as much as they would. According to your appetite, according to your will, according to your faith, so be it unto you!

12. *When they were filled—Had all they could desire.*

12. *He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.* Economy in the midst of bounty! However much we have, we are never warranted in wasting a single crumb! They had as much as they would, but they were not allowed to throw away the fragments.

13-14. *Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.* Men are often convinced by the argument of selfishness. They had been fed and now they believed. But faith that depends upon a full stomach will despair when they get hungry again! Always beware of that religion which is in dependence upon loaves and fishes. You know how it was with the children of Israel—

**“Now they believed the Word,
While rocks with rivers flow,
Then with their sins they grieved the Lord,
And He did bring them low.”**

Oh, but we must not have a faith that depends upon what it can see, and upon what it can eat, and what it can drink! Oh, for the confidence in the blessed Person of the Lord, and in the spiritual riches which He can communicate!

15. *When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain, Himself, alone.* What? Could He not have used His kingship for the best of purposes? Might He not easily have routed the Romans, restored Israel to all her glory, conquered the Gentiles, subdued the world and set up a glorious Church and state with Himself for the King, and Himself as the Head of the Church? Ah, that has been the idol of a great many and, like a will-o'-the-wisp, it has led many of the true people of God into bogs and sloughs where they were likely to be lost. But our Master knew better than this and was not to be tempted away from the true method by which His Church is to be set up in the world. Therefore, "He departed again into a mountain, Himself, alone."

16-17. *And when evening was now come, His disciples went down unto the sea and entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was dark, and Jesus was not come to them.* That is a sentence that I should think some very gloomy people might hang upon—and about which they might groan in unison, "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them." Have you never been in that condition? Dark, dark, dark, as to circumstances and as to feelings, and Jesus was not come to them. Now, something comes beside that.

18. *And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew.* Misfortunes never come alone. An absent Savior, a roaring sea and a bellowing wind! What will they do now?

19. *So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they saw Jesus.* Here He is! Here is the first of their blessings. The first mischief is removed and the rest will soon go. They see Jesus!

19. *Walking on the sea.* Oh, what a sight! A grander sight than to see Him on the land! And it is a more glorious sight to see Christ in the time of trouble than it is in the time of prosperity. He is always sweet, but He is more marvelous when they see Jesus walking on the sea.

19. *And drawing near unto the ship: and they were afraid.* Afraid of their best Friend—trembling at their Deliverer!

20. *But He said to them, It is I. Do not be afraid.*

21. *Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land where they went.* The sea and the winds knew how not only to spare the vessel, but to carry it instantaneously to the place where they wished to be! But how often have you and I been rowing about, 25 or 30 furlongs, and we did not seem to be getting out of the storm at all? But the moment Christ has come, we have been where we wished to be! Oh, glory be to His name—there is no difficulty that you can be in, dear Friends, but Christ can get you out of it in a moment and bring you where you should be!

22-24. *The following day, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save that one*

where into His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone (Howbeit there came other boats from Tiberias near unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks). When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. Was not that a pleasant sight? So it seemed, but it was not. "Seeking for Jesus." That is a good description of a man—seeking for Jesus. Yes, but they were only seeking for more bread! They looked at Him as a bread giver—and they were after Him for that.

25. *And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You come here?* They could not understand how He could have got there. Jesus answered them and did not answer them. Some of Christ's answers are evidently no answers at all. That is very often the best answer you can give.

26. *Jesus answered them and said—*What? Did He explain to them how 'He got there? No, He would not gratify their curiosity. He came not for that end. He therefore gave them a home stroke and said—

26. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* You are loafers—loaf-hunters. You seek not Me, but Mine. It is not for the good that I can give your souls, but it is that you may have another meal, that you are here. Yours is cupboard love. You come after what you can get.

27. *Labor not for the meat which perished, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him has God the Father sealed.* Now, do you understand what Jesus meant? Seek after that which will feed your souls. Do not hunt so much after bread for the body. Yet the Savior puts it very curiously. This is a double-shotted perplexity—a singular, curious kind of word. You are not to labor for that which you cannot get without labor and you are to labor for that which you cannot get by labor! The Savior liked to put things in that sententious way, so that they might remember what He said. If they misunderstood Him, it was their own fault, for it is plain enough. God grant us Grace to practice the meaning of these words! Why are you so eager to get a bit of barley bread and a fish? Oh, that you were half as eager to come and get the Bread which comes from Heaven which will make a man live forever and which will be food to him as long as he lives!

28, 29. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God—*The chief work, the greatest work which you can do!

29. *That you believe on Him whom He has sent.* This is the point. You would like Me to work miracles. You would be glad to have a very wonderful, mysterious experience, but this is the thing you ought to seek after—the grandest, greatest thing that you can have—"that you believe on Him whom He has sent."

30. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign show You, then, that we may see and believe You? What do You work?* Are you not wonderfully

struck with the patience of Jesus? These people had seen His miracles and they had eaten loaves and fishes, and yet they say to Him, "What sign show You, then, that we may see and believe You?" Oh, the matchless patience of the Lord and the marvelous provocations of men!

31. *Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.* They plainly hinted that they wanted more food.

32-34. *Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from Heaven, and gives life unto the world. Then they said unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.* Not understanding Him and praying still for bread, but not for Grace.

35-37. *And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger. And he that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I say unto you, That you also have seen Me, but believe not. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me and him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.* What a striking Truth of God that was, with which to reply to them! You only come after Me for bread, but you do not come after spiritual things. You do not believe in Me. But, even if you do not, I shall not be disappointed, and My work will not fail. God has an election of Grace and that election shall be carried out. "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." And then, as if to cheer them up again, He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

38-41. *For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* The Jews then murmured at Him, because He said, *I am the bread which came down from Heaven.* And there you see Christ has got no farther with them but to leave them murmuring! And I believe that often the true minister of God must expect to see no other result come of faithful testimony than for the people to murmur at him. But what if it is so? Will his Master blame him? No. No more than He blamed the Only-Begotten. It must be so that there may be a separation between the precious and the vile—that God's chosen may be drawn out! While such as believe not shall be judged and, in their own consciences, shall be condemned.

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

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

REST FOR THE LABORING

NO. 1322

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 22, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*[The Tabernacle was on this night thrown open to strangers,
all the regular congregation kindly vacating their seats.]*

***“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will
give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me;
for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall
find rest unto your souls. For My yoke
is easy, and My burden is light.”
Matthew 11:28-30.***

Our Lord had just been declaring the Doctrine of Election, thanking the heavenly Father that He had chosen babes, though He had passed by the wise and prudent. It is very instructive that, close upon the heels of that mysterious doctrine, should come the gracious invitation of my text—as much as if the Lord Jesus would say to His disciples, “Let no views of predestination ever keep you back from proclaiming fully My Gospel to every creature.” And as if He would say to the unconverted, “Do not be discouraged by the Doctrine of Election. Never let it be a stumbling block in your way, for when My lips have said, ‘I thank You, O Father, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes,’ I also proceed to speak to you in the deepest sincerity of heart and say, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

I shall notice at the outset who it is that makes so large a promise and gives so free an invitation. There are many quack doctors in the world and each one of these cries up his own medicine. Who is this Man who calls us so earnestly and promises rest so confidently? Is He an impostor, too? Will He play us false? Does He boast beyond His ability? Ah, it cannot be thought so, for this Man, this marvelous Man who promises rest to those who come to Him, is also God! He is the Son of the Highest as well as the son of Mary! He is Son of the Eternal as well as Son of Man and He has power, because of His Divine Nature, to accomplish whatever He promises to perform!

As a Man, the Lord Jesus was noted for His truthfulness. From His lips there never fell an equivocation. He never boasted beyond His ability or led men to expect from Him what He could not render. Why should He deceive? He had no selfish end to serve or ambition to gratify. Did He not come to tell men the Truths of God? It was His errand and He did it thoroughly. Believe Him, then! As you are persuaded of the truthfulness of His Character, accept His teaching. And as you believe in His Deity—if you do believe, and I trust you do—believe in His ability to save and at once trust your soul in His hands! If He is a mere pretender, do not come to Him.

But if, indeed, you believe my Lord and Master to be faithful and true, I beseech you attend, at once, to His call!

Where is He now? He is not here, for He is risen. But since He spoke these words, He has lost no power to save, but in a certain sense has gained in ability—for since He uttered those words He has died the death of the Cross by which He obtained power to put away the sins of men! He has also risen from the grave, no more to die, and He has gone up into Glory with all power given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. He is King of kings and Lord of lords! And it is in His name and by His authority that we proclaim to you the Gospel of Christ, according to His Words, recorded by the evangelist Mark—“All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth: go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

It is an enthroned Redeemer who tonight invites you! See that you refuse not Him that speaks. He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them. Therefore doubt not His power to save you, but come to Him at once and find rest unto your souls. Jesus being the speaker, and His authority and ability being both clear, we shall now come to dissect the words and may God grant that as we do so, the Spirit of God may use every syllable and press His Truth home upon our hearts!

And, first, I notice here a character which, dear Friends, I think *describes you as the laboring and the heavy laden*. Secondly, I notice *a blessing which invites you*—“I will give you rest.” Thirdly, I notice *a direction which will guide you*—“Come unto Me: take My yoke upon you: learn of Me.” And, fourthly, I notice *an argument which I trust may persuade you*—“I am meek and lowly in heart. My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”

I. First, then, here is a character which, no doubt, describes a considerable number of those here assembled—“ALL YOU THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN.” The words look as if there were a great many such persons—“*all you*,” and, indeed, so there are, for laboring and burden-bearing are the common lot of the sons of Adam. Laborers and loaded ones constitute the great mass of mankind—and the Lord Jesus invites them all without exception—high or low, learned or illiterate, moral or depraved, old or young—“all that labor and are heavy laden” are comprehended in His call.

Some have ventured to say that this describes a certain *spiritual* character, but I fail to see any words to mark the spirituality of the persons. Certainly I see not a syllable to limit the text to that sense. Brothers and Sisters, it is not our right either to add to or to take from the Word of God knowingly, and as there is no indication, here, that these words are to be limited in their meaning, we shall not dare to invent a limit! Where God puts no bolt or bar, woe unto those who shall set up barriers of their own. We shall read our text in the broadest conceivable sense, for it is most like the spirit of the Gospel to do so. It says—“*all you that labor*,” and if you labor, it includes you! It says—“*all you that are heavy laden*,” and if you are heavy laden it includes you, and God forbid that we should shut you out!

No, God be thanked that no man can shut you out if you are willing and obedient, and come to Christ accepting His invitation and obeying His command. To you, then, do we speak, “all you that labor.” You who work so hard to earn a crust that your limbs are weary with your daily toil—come to Jesus! And if He gives you no rest for your bodies, yet to your souls He will! Yes, even for your physical toil, He is your best hope, for His righteous and loving teaching will yet alter the constitution of the body politic, till the day shall come when no man shall need to toil excessively to earn his share of the common food which the great Father gives for all His creatures!

If ever rest from oppression and from excessive labor shall become the joyful lot of mankind, it will be found when the Son of David shall reign from pole to pole and from the river even to the ends of the earth! And come, you that labor with mental labor—you that are straining your minds and exhausting your spirits—you who pine and pant after repose for your souls, but find it not! Perhaps you are laboring to enter into rest by formal religion—trying to save yourselves by rites and ceremonies—by attendance on this service and on that, making your life a pious slavery that you may find salvation by the outward ordinances of worship. There is no salvation there! You weary yourselves with searching for a shadow! You seek for the living among the dead!

Why do you spend your labor for that which satisfies not? Turn your thoughts another way! If you come to Christ you shall cease from the bondage of an external and formal religion! You shall find a finished righteousness and a complete salvation ready to your hand! O you that are trying, by your good works, to save yourselves and doing no good works all the while—for how can that be good which you do with the sole view of benefiting *yourselves*? That *selfish* virtue which only seeks its own—is that virtue? Can that commend itself to God? I know how you wear your fingers to the bone to spin a garment of your own righteousness, which, if it were spun, would be no more substantial than a spider’s web and no more lasting than the fading autumn leaves!

Why do you not cease from this fruitless toil? O you that hope for salvation by the works of the Law, it is to *you* that Jesus speaks! And He says, “Come to Me, and I will give you rest.” And He can do it, too! He can, at once, give you a spotless righteousness! He can array you from head to foot with the garments of salvation! On the spot He can give you both of these, and so give you rest, you laboring ones! Some of you are laboring after *happiness*. You think to find it in gain—hoarding up your pence and your pounds and seeking for rest in the abundance of your beloved wealth. Ah, you will never have enough till you get Christ! And when you have Him, you will be full to the brim!

Contentment is the peculiar jewel of the beloved of the Lord Jesus. All the Indies could not fill a human heart—the soul is insatiable till it finds the Savior—and then it leans on His bosom and enters into perfect peace. Perhaps, young man, you are laboring after *fame*. You despise gold, but you pant to obtain a great name! Alas, ambition’s ways are very weary and he who climbs the loftiest peak of honor finds that it is a slippery place where rest is quite unknown. Young brother, take a friend’s advice and

care no longer for man's praise, for it is mere wind. If you would rise to a great name, become a Christian, for the name of Christ is the name above every name and it is bliss to be hidden beneath it, and overshadowed by it!

Christ will not make you great among men, but He will make you so little in your own esteem that the lowest place at His table will more than satisfy you! He will give you rest from that delirious dream of ambition and yet fire you with a higher ambition than ever! What is it you are laboring for? Is it after *knowledge*? I commend you. It is a good possession and a choice treasure. Search for it as for silver. But all the knowledge that is to be had from the zenith to the center of the earth will never satisfy your understanding till you know Christ and are found in Him! He can give rest to your soul in that respect by giving you the knowledge of God and a sense of His love. Whatever it is you labor after, come to Jesus, and He will give you rest.

But the text speaks of some as, "*heavy laden*." They are not merely struggling and striving, but they are burdened. They have a load to carry and it is to these that Jesus says, "I will give you rest." Some carry a load of sin. I mean not all of you. Some of you think, perhaps, that you have *no* sin. But there are others who know that they have sinned. In the memory of the past they are full of fear and looking, in the present, to their own condition and position. They feel uneasy and unhappy. Their grief has nothing to do with the house or with the barn—it is with their own selves that their burden begins and ends. "I have sinned," they say, "and how can I be forgiven?" This is the load they carry.

Some carry a load of *sorrow* on the back of this load of sin—a daily fretting, worrying sorrow from which they cannot escape—to such Jesus beckons and He says, "I will take your sins from you, forgive you, and make you whiter than snow. I will take your sorrows from you, too, or, if the sorrow abides with you, I will make you so content to bear it that you shall thank God for the cross that you carry and glory in your infirmity because the power of Christ does rest upon you." Loaded, then, with sin or sorrow, come to Jesus and He will give you rest!

Or, possibly, the load may be that of *daily care*. You are continually crying, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink? With what shall I be clothed?" Oh what heavy hearts tread our streets! How many are scantily fed and scarcely clothed! What myriads go down Cheapside unhappy because they can see no provision for their most common needs! Even to these, Jesus says, "Come to Me, and I will give you rest." He teaches the sweet art of casting our cares on Him who cares for us. He shows us that, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." He has a way of making us content with little, till a dinner of herbs, with His Grace to season them, becomes a greater dainty than the stalled ox of the rich man! Come to Him, you poverty-stricken, and He will teach you the science of joying and rejoicing under all circumstances! Even in a cottage with scanty comfort, He will give you rest and true riches.

Or, the burden may happen to be one of *doubt*. You, perhaps, feel as if you can believe nothing and are uncertain about everything. This, also, is

a crushing load to a thoughtful spirit. I, too, know what that means, for I have seen the firm mountains of my youth moved from their foundations and cast into a sea of questioning. I, too, have been loaded down with difficulties and skepticisms. From that burden I am delivered, for in that day in which I believed on Jesus—the Man, the God—and cast myself at His dear feet to be His servant and believe His Words and trust in Him, then did the reeling earth stand still and Heaven no longer fled away! I saw Jesus and in Him I found the pole of faith, the basis of belief! Believe in Jesus and you will meet with a blessed rest of mind and thought such as earth cannot afford elsewhere—a rest that shall be the prelude to the everlasting rest in Heaven where they know even as they are known!

So Jesus cries aloud tonight, to you who labor and to you who are loaded down with mighty burdens! He cries, and I beseech you have regard to the cry! Are you weary of life, young man? Christ will give you a *new* life and teach you how to rejoice in Him always! Are you disappointed? Has the world given you a slap in the face where you looked for a kiss? Come to my Lord! He will give new hopes that shall never be disappointed, for he that believes in Him shall not be ashamed, world without end! Are you vexed with everybody and most of all with yourself? Jesus can teach you love and put you at your ease again. Does someone fret and tease you from day to day? Come to my Master and the vexations of the world shall gall you no longer. You shall reckon that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in you!

Do you despair? Are you ready to fling yourself away? Do you wish that there was no hereafter? And if you were sure there is none, would you speedily make your own quietus? Would you afford short shrift to your soul and end this mortal life at once? Ah, do not do it! There are brighter days before you, since Jesus has met you and new life will begin if you will come to my Master and sit at His feet! I will give you a hymn to sing, which shall grow sweeter every day you live—

***“Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away!
He taught me how to watch and pray,
And live rejoicing every day,
Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away!”***

I have spoken enough upon the character, which, I think, comprehends many here—“All you that labor and are heavy laden.” I know how well it suited me once upon a time and how glad I was to answer to the call of the text.

II. Now, secondly, the text speaks of A BLESSING WHICH INVITES YOU. “Come unto Me,” says Jesus, “and I will give you rest.” “Rest! Rest! Rest!” I could keep on ringing that silver bell all the evening—“Rest! Rest! REST!” “You gentlemen of England who live at home at ease,” you scarcely know the music of that word! The sons of toil, the mariners tossed upon the sea, the warriors in the battle, the men who labor deep in the mines—these know, as you do not, how sweet this music sounds!

Rest! Rest! Rest! Rest for the weary body is the outward emblem of that inward blessing which Jesus Christ holds up, tonight, before the eyes of

all laboring and heavy-laden souls. Rest—rest which He will give, which He will give at once—rest to the *conscience*. The conscience, tossed to and fro under a sense of sin, has no peace. But when Jesus is revealed as bleeding and suffering in the sinner's place, and making full atonement for human guilt, then the conscience grows quiet. As Noah's dove lighted upon the ark, so conscience lights on Christ and rests there forever! No sin of yours shall trouble you when you have seen how it troubled Christ—how He took it on His shoulders and bore it up to the Cross—and then flung it into the depths of the sea, never to be mentioned against you anymore forever!

Jesus gives rest to the *mind* as well as to the conscience. As I have said, the mind wanders to and fro, lost in endless mazes. It must believe *something*, but it knows not what. He who is the greatest unbeliever, generally believes the most—only he believes a lie. Incredulity and credulity are strangely near of kin, for he that believes not in God generally believes in himself, or believes in whatever his own dreams may shape. But he that takes Christ and rests upon Him, finds his mind no more disturbed—his thoughts rest, his judgment becomes satisfied, his brain is quiet. Rest to the *heart*, too, is given by Jesus. Oh, there are choice and tender spirits in this world that need, above all things, something to love! These too often choose an earthly object and lean on that reed till it breaks or turns into a piercing spear.

O hearts that pine for love, here is a Beloved for you whom you may love as much as you will or can—and yet never be guilty of idolatry, nor ever meet with treachery! O broken heart, He will heal you! O tender heart, He will delight you! The love of Jesus is the wine of Heaven and he that drinks it is filled with bliss! Jesus can give rest to the palpitating heart. You sons of desolation, hasten here! Daughters of despondency, gather to this call! He can give rest, too, to *your energies*. O you whose unabated strength seeks a worthy field of labor, do you enquire, "What shall we pursue?" You want to be up and *doing*, but you have not found an object worthy of you. Oh, but if you follow after Jesus and, in the love of God and in the love of man, cast aside selfishness, desiring only to be obedient to the great Father's will and to bring your fellow men into a gracious state, then shall you find a noble and restful life! If you are willing to give up life, itself, for God's Glory as Jesus did—for you cannot well be His disciple if you do not—then shall you find perfect rest unto your souls.

As for your *fears and forecasts* which now are troubled—He will turn them into hopes of endless glory! Dark forebodings of a future, you know not what—the sound of an awful sea whose surf beats upon an invisible shore, and whose billows resound with sound of storm and everlasting tempest—from all this you shall be delivered! Jesus will give you rest from every fear. If you will come to Jesus you shall obtain rest in all ways—the rest of your entire manhood, rest such as shall unload you of your burdens and ease you of your labors—this is the rest which Jesus promises you!

"Alas," cries one, "I wish I could attain rest. That is the one thing necessary to me. I should then become strong and happy. My mind would become clear and I should be able to fight the battle of life if I could but ob-

tain rest.” Yes, but you cannot have it unless you come to Christ. Not Heaven, itself, could give you peace apart from Christ, nor can the grave’s deep slumbers rest you unless you sleep in Him! Rest! Neither Heaven nor earth, nor sea and Hades—none of them can afford you any trace of it until you come to the Incarnate God, Christ Jesus, and bow at His feet. Then you shall find rest to your souls, but not till then!

III. This brings me, next, to say that the text presents A DIRECTION TO GUIDE EVERY LABORING AND HEAVY-LADEN SOUL IN THE PURSUIT OF REST. I shall be sure to have your very deep attention to the directions which Jesus gives, for you all need to find rest. Oh, may the Divine Spirit now lead you into the way of peace! If you follow our Lord’s directions and do not find rest, then His Word is not true. But His Word *is* true! I invite you to try it and urge you, at once, to accept His guidance and leadership.

The first direction is, “*Come unto Me.*” “Come unto Me,” He said, “and I will give you rest.” Mark, it is not coming to a *sacrament*. It is not coming to a Church, or coming to a doctrine. It is coming to a *Person* which is set before you—“*Come unto Me.*” You are to come to God in human flesh, the Deity, Himself, dwelling among us, and taking our nature upon Himself. You are to come to *Him*. He does not bid you *do* anything or *bring* anything! He does not command you to *prepare* yourself, or advise you to wait. He bids you come—come as you are—come now—come alone—come to Him and to Him, only!

Nobody here needs me to say that we cannot go to Christ, as to *bodily* going, for in His own actual Person He is in Heaven and we are here below. The coming to Him is *mental* and *spiritual*. Just as we may come in spirit to some great poet whom we never saw, or approach some renowned teacher whose voice we have never heard, so may we come in thought, in meditation, to Jesus, whom our eyes have never beheld! We are to come to Him in some such fashion as the following words describe—I believe what God has revealed concerning You, O You wondrous Person. I believe that You are God and Man. I believe that You have died for human sin. I believe that You are able to save, and I think of You and meditate upon You daily. “I believe You to be the Savior, and I trust You to save me. I am troubled and You say, ‘I will give you rest.’ I trust You to give me peace and I mean to follow Your directions till I find it. I ask You to give me Your Spirit that I may enter into Your rest. As much as lies in me I come to You! Oh, draw me while I come! Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief!”

Now, mark, it is not merely to His teaching, or to His Commandments, or to His Church that you are to approach—it is to HIM that you are to come! Not merely to reading the Scriptures or to offering prayer, for if you put your trust in reading the Bible, or in a prayer, you have stopped short of the true basis of salvation. It is to HIM—a real Person—a Man and yet God—One who died and yet ever lives that you must draw near. You are to trust Him! The more you know of Him by the reading of His Word, the better you will be able to come. But, still, it is neither Bible reading, nor praying, nor Chapel attendance, nor Church attendance, nor anything else that you can do that will save you, unless you come to HIM! This you can do if you are on the sea where the Sabbath bell never sounds. This you can do in a desert where there are no meetings of God’s people. This

you can do on the sick bed when you cannot stir a limb. You can go to Jesus by the help of His blessed Spirit and you can say, "Lord, I believe in You." That is the first thing, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

The next command is, "*Take My yoke upon you.*" "Come," and then, "take." That is to say, no man is saved by merely trusting himself with Christ, unless that trusting is of a living and practical kind. I sometimes explain this to my people as I will explain it to you. A celebrated doctor visits you, when you are very ill, and he says to you, "Do you trust me?" You reply, "Yes, Sir, wholly." "Well," he says, "if you trust me completely and give your case over into my hands, I believe that I shall see you through this sickness." You assure him of your implicit faith in him and then he begins to question you. "What do you eat?" He lifts up his hands in horror and he exclaims, "Why, my good man, you eat the very thing which feeds your sickness—you must not touch that anymore, however much you like it—you must have simpler food and a more harmless diet." "Then," he says, "I will send you a little medicine which you will take every three hours, according to the prescription. You are sure you trust me?" "Yes." "Then all will be well."

He comes back in a few days and he says. "You seem worse, my Friend. I fear that your disease has taken a stronger hold upon you than before. I do not understand how matters have taken this turn. Are you trusting me?" "Yes, doctor, trusting you entirely." "Well, what have you been eating?" And then you tell him that you have been eating just what you used to eat and you have broken all his rules as to food. "Now," he says, "I see why you are worse. You are not trusting me. Have you regularly taken my medicine?" He looks at the bottle upon the table. "Why, you have not taken a single dose!" "No, Sir, I tasted it and I did not like it, and so I left it alone." "How is this?" says the doctor, very much grieved. "My Friend, you said that you trusted me implicitly." "Yes, Sir, so I do." "But I say you do not," he says, "and I will leave you. I insist upon it that I will not be responsible for your health if you mock me with such a pretended faith! If you believed me, you would have done as I told you."

Now, Jesus Christ never sent me or any other minister to preach to you and say, "Only believe, and you may live as you like, and yet be saved." Such preaching would be a lie! It is true that we say, "Only believe," but that, "Only believe" must be such a believing that you do what Jesus bids you! Jesus has not promised to save you *in* your sins, but *from* your sins, just as a physician does not pretend to heal a man while he feeds his disease and refuses the remedy—he only promises that he will benefit him if the faith which he expects him to exercise shows itself to be a practical and real faith. Beware of a liar's faith! And that is a liar's faith which you pretend to get at revival meetings if you then go and live just as you did before—

***"Faith must obey her Maker's will
As well as trust His Grace.
A gracious God is jealous still,
For His own holiness."***

So Christ says, "Take My yoke." That is, "If you will be saved by Me I must be your Master and you must be My servant. You cannot have Me for a Savior if you do not accept Me for a Lawgiver and Commander. If you

will not do as I bid you, neither shall you find rest for your souls.” Then there is a third direction and I pray you notice each one of these words, for failure about any one of them may cause you to miss peace. I remember when I was seeking the Lord, that before I came to peace, *I was made willing to be or to do anything the Lord Jesus chose to bid me do or be.* Are you in such a state? Then listen, for Jesus says, “*Learn of Me.*” That is to say, at first you do not know all His will and, perhaps, you will do wrong—but then that will be in ignorance—and He will graciously wink at your fault.

But He says, “Be My disciple. Be My scholar. Come and learn at My feet.” Christ will not be your Savior if He is not to be your Teacher. He will teach you very much, at first, and a great deal more as you go on. And it is essential to your salvation that you have a teachable spirit even as a little child. You must be willing to drink in what Christ pours out for you. The promise is to those who are willing to become *learners*. This is the Gospel, but it is not often preached as it should be—“Go you into all the world, and *disciple* all nations,” or, “make disciples of all nations.” Now, what are disciples but *learners*? You must be willing to be a learner and say, “As I learn I will do, and as I am taught I will practice, trusting You, O Jesus, to save me all the while. Not trusting to my doing or my learning, but trusting alone to You. Yes, both doing and learning because I trust You. Because You are all my hope, therefore will I do as You bid me, if you, O Lord, will help me.”

Come, young men, I am glad to see so many of you present here, this evening. It is a good thing that you bear Christ’s yoke in your youth. You must have some master, you know, and you will either be your own master—and you cannot have a worse—or you will get the devil for your master, or you will get the world for a master, and either of these will make dreadful drudges of you! But if you take Christ for your Master, oh, then it is that you will find Him to be your Savior, and you shall enter at once into rest! And that rest will grow, for, if you notice, my text first says, “I will give you rest,” and then it says, “you shall *find* rest.” That is to say, you shall find for yourselves a deeper and more profound enjoyment of life as you understand more fully the Divine will and obtain more Grace to put it into practice. This is the sum and substance of the Gospel.

Yield, Sinner! Yield! Yield to Jesus! O you proud Sinners, come and bow before my Lord! Down with your weapons of rebellion! Lower the crest of your pride! Unbuckle the harness of your self-glorying and say, “Jesus, Master, only save me from the guilt and power of sin and I will bless You forever and ever, and rejoice to obey You as long as I live.” Now, what I have said is no fiction of mine! I have not altered my Master’s conditions, or imported anything into the text that is not there. There it stands. “Come unto Me: take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.”

IV. Now the last thing—and I will not detain you much longer, is THE ARGUMENT TO PERSUADE YOU TO DO SO. And that argument is this—First, *the Master you are to serve is “meek and lowly in heart.”* I confess there are some men whom I could not serve. They are proud, austere, domineering. One might sooner eat his flesh from the bone than serve such tyrants. There have been despots in the world whom to serve was

degradation. But when you look at Jesus Christ, whose whole Being is love, gentleness, meekness, lowliness—oh, there are some of us who feel that His shoe laces we are not worthy to unloose!

We would count it Heaven to be permitted to kiss His feet, or wash them with our tears, for He is such a glorious One that His beauty attracts us to Him. He holds us spellbound by His wondrous Character and we count it not slavery, but perfect liberty, to wear His yoke and carry His Cross! Have you never heard how He has been served by His disciples? Why, they have gladly given up their lives for Him! Let Bonner's Coalhole and the Lollards' Tower and the stakes that stood at Smithfield tell how men have loved Him! They so loved Him that they sang in the dark dungeon and made it light with their joys! They clapped their hands in the fires, glad to be consumed that they might bear testimony for Him!

Have you never heard of old Polycarp, when they bid him deny his Master, saying, "Eighty and six years have I served Him and He never did me a displeasure! How can I, now, blaspheme my King that saved me?" Oh, He has bred such enthusiasm in His followers that neither the gridiron of St. Lawrence nor the wild bulls of Blandina have been able to prevent the saints from glorying in His name! They would have gone through Hell, itself, to serve Him, if it had been possible! His love has had such power over them—whatever we have to suffer for Him, He suffers with us! Alexander was a great master of men and one of the reasons why all his soldiers loved him so enthusiastically was that, if they were upon a long march, Alexander did not ride, but marched along in the heat and dust with the common soldiers. And when the day was hot and they brought His Majesty water, he put it aside, and said, "The sick soldiers need it more than I. I will not drink till every soldier has a draught."

So is it with Christ! In all our afflictions, He is afflicted and He will not have joy until He gives joy to His people! Yes, He has done more than Alexander, for He emptied Himself of all His glories and gave Himself to die upon the Cross and consummated the redemption of His people by His own agonies. Who would not follow One whose footprints show that He was crucified for His followers? Who would not rally to His banner, when you see that His hand which upholds it was pierced with nails that He might redeem us from Hell? On which of His disciples has He ever looked unkindly? Which of His redeemed has He ever cast away? To which of those that love Him has He ever been unjust or ungenerous? Therefore I charge you all—and all His saints speak in me while I speak—take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart.

In the last place, *that which Jesus Christ asks you to do is no hard thing*. As He is not severe, Himself, so His commands are not hard, for He says, "My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." True, there are some things which you now delight in of which Christ will say, "Have no more to do with them," but He will only forbid you those things which injure you, and He will put something better in their place. He may call you to duties which will try you, but, then, He will give you such consolations that they will cease to be trials. In fact, the difficulties of following Christ are delightful to His hearty followers! They love difficulties that they may show the sincerity of their confidence in their Leader.

Oh, my beloved Friends, the service of the Lord Jesus Christ is no bondage! There are no chains to wear! There are no prisons to lie in, or, if there are any, they are not of His making but are the devices of His enemies. Christ's ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace. He calls you to that which is right, true, honest, loving, tender, heavenly. Who would not be willing to be called to this? He asks you only to give up that which is evil and displeasing in His sight, degrading to your own mind, and which stops the channels of peace and happiness to your soul. Above all, it is no hard thing, surely, to believe in Him.

"Oh," says one, "that is just the point. Sometimes I cannot feel that Christ could forgive me." No, and do you know why? It is because you do not think enough of *HIM* and think too much of *yourself*. If you sit down and think of your sin, you will soon feel as if pardon were impossible but, when you turn and think of *Him*, you will see, at once, how readily He is able to forgive! There is an homely illustration which I often use, and I cannot think of a better, I must use it now. If you were to go, tomorrow, up and down London, right along from end to end, there would be quite a journey for you. Twelve, 14, 15, perhaps 20 miles you could go and scarcely see a break in the houses. I would have you traverse the main roads and then go down the cross streets, lanes, alleys, and courts.

After you had had a day of it you would say, "Dear, dear me, what a mass of people! How do they live?" And if you were nervous, you might very soon come to feel, "I am afraid, one of these days, London will be starved. Here are nearly four millions of people! Lebanon would not be sufficient to find them cattle, nor Carmel and Sharon to supply them with sheep for a single week! They will certainly be starved." I can imagine your becoming seriously apprehensive of a famine. Well, then, next Monday morning we will have a fast horse and we will go up to Copenhagen Fields and see the live cattle. And then we will drive to Smithfield, and see the carcasses. And next we will go round to the markets and see where the fish and the vegetables are sold.

And when we have finished our tour of observation—which will take us at least two or three hours early in the morning—as you get out of the Hansom Cab, I know what you will say to me. You will change your tone and say, "I am no longer afraid of the people's starving, but I am more afraid of the meat being wasted! I cannot think where all the people come from to eat all this! I am astonished to see such a mass of food! I should not wonder if tons of it should be spoiled. There cannot be people enough to eat it all." Your mind has suffered that sudden change because you have changed your point of consideration!

So now, if you think of sin, sin will seem a monstrous thing that never can be put away. And when you have reached that point, it is time to think of the blood which cleanses us from it. Think of sin till it bows you down, but do not think of it so as to despair! Turn your eyes to Calvary's bloody tree and see, there, the Son of God in agonies of body and soul, pouring out His life for sinners! May the Holy Spirit give you a quick eye for the sufferings of Jesus. Oh, I have sometimes looked at Christ in that way till I have said, "The sin of a *world* might readily be put away! Yes, Master, and if every star that decks the heavens were a world, and every

world were as full of sinners as this earth is, yet, surely, no grander redemption for them all would be needed than your august Sacrifice, O mighty Son of God!"

John Hyatt, when he lay dying, was asked by one of his friends, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust Jesus with your soul now?" And the good man answered, "Trust Him with *one* soul? I could trust Him with a million souls, if I had them!" That is how I feel when I think of the death of my Lord Jesus, and it is what I want *you* who are troubled in spirit to feel. As you see Him wounded, bleeding, dying on the cursed tree, Sinners, may you find your hearts believing that He suffered thus for *you*. And, as you do believe it, you will find rest unto your souls. May God give that rest to every one of you tonight, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 11:15-30.

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THE MEEK AND LOWLY ONE

NO. 265

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JULY 31, 1859,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart. And you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
Matthew 11:28-30.***

THE single sentence which I have selected for my text consists of these words—“I am meek and lowly in heart.” These words might be taken to have three distinct bearings upon the context. They may be regarded as being *the lesson to be taught*—“Learn of Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart.” One great lesson of the Gospel is to teach us to be meek—to put away our high and angry spirits and to make us lowly in heart. Perhaps, this is the meaning of the passage—that if we will but come to Christ’s school, he will teach us the hardest of all lessons—how to be meek and lowly in heart.

Again—other expositors might consider this sentence to signify *the only Spirit in which a man can learn of Jesus*—the spirit which is necessary if we would become Christ’s scholars. We can learn nothing, even of Christ Himself, while we hold our heads up with pride, or exalt ourselves with self-confidence. We must be meek and lowly in heart—otherwise we are totally unfit to be taught by Christ. Empty vessels may be filled. But vessels that are full already can receive no more. The man who knows his own emptiness can receive abundance of knowledge and wisdom and grace from Christ. But he who glories in himself is not in a fit condition to receive anything from God.

I have no doubt that both of these interpretations are true and might be borne out by the connection. It is the *lesson of Christ’s school*—it is the *spirit of Christ’s disciples*. But I choose, rather, this morning, to regard these words as being *a commendation of the Teacher Himself*. “Come unto Me and learn. For I am meek and lowly in heart.” As much as to say, “I can teach and you will not find it hard to learn of me.” In fact, the subject of this morning’s discourse is briefly this—the gentle, lovely character of Christ should be a high and powerful inducement to sinners to come to Christ. I intend so to use it—first of all, noticing *the two qualities* which Christ here claims for Himself. He is “*meek*.” And then he is “*lowly in heart*.” And after we have observed these two things, I shall come to *push the conclusion home*. Come unto him, all you that are laboring and are

heavy laden—come unto Him and take His yoke upon you. For he is meek and lowly in heart.

I. First, then, I am to consider THE FIRST QUALITY WHICH JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS. He declares that He is “MEEK.”

Christ is no egotist. He takes no praise for Himself. If ever He utters a word in self-commendation, it is not with that object. It is with another design, namely that He may entice souls to come to Him. Here, in order to exhibit this meekness, I shall have to speak of him in several ways.

1. First, Christ is meek, as opposed to the *ferocity* of spirit manifested by zealots and bigots. Take, for a prominent example of the opposite of meekness, the false prophet Mahomet. The strength of his cause lies in the fact, that he is *not* meek. He presents himself before those whom he claims as disciples and says, “Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am neither meek, nor lowly in heart. I will have no patience with you. There is my creed, or there is the scimitar—death or conversion, whichever you please.” The moment the Muslim religion withdrew that very forcible argument of decapitation or impalement, it stayed in its work of conversion and never progressed. The very strength of the false prophet lays in the absence of any meekness.

How opposite this is to Christ! Although He has a right to *demand* man’s love and man’s faith, yet He comes not into the world to demand it with fire and sword. His might is under persuasion. His strength is quiet forbearance and patient endurance—His mightiest force is the sweet attraction of compassion and love. He knows nothing of the ferocious hosts of Mahomet. He bids none of us draw our sword to propagate the faith, but said, “Put up your sword into its scabbard. They that take the sword shall perish by the sword.” “My kingdom is not of this world, else might my servants fight.” No, Mahomet is not the only instance we can bring. But even good men are subject to the same mistakes. They imagine that religion is to be spread by terror and thunder.

Look at John himself, the most lovely of all the disciples—he would call fire from Heaven on a village of Samaritans, because they rejected Christ. Hark to his hot enquiry—“Will You that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them?” Christ’s disciples were to Him something like the sons of Zeruiah to David. When Shimei mocked David, the sons of Zeruiah said, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over, I pray you and take off his head.” But David meekly said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah?”—and put them aside. He had something of the spirit of his Master. He knew that *his* honor was not then to be defended by sword or spear.

O blessed Jesus! You have no fury in Your spirit. When men rejected You, You did not draw the sword to smite, but, on the contrary, You did yield Your eyes to weeping. Behold your Savior, Disciples, and see whether He was not meek. He had long preached in Jerusalem without effect and at last He knew that they were ready to put Him to death. But what said He, as, standing on the top of the hill, He beheld the city that had rejected His Gospel? Did He invoke a curse upon it? Did He suffer one

word of anger to leap from His burning heart? Ah, no. There were flames, but they were those of love. There were scalding drops, but they were those of grief. He beheld the city and wept over it and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings and you would not."

And for a further proof of the absence of all uncharitableness, observe that, even when they drove the nails into His blessed hands, yet He had no curse to breathe upon them, but His dying exclamation was, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." O Sinners! See what a Christ it is that we bid you serve. No angry bigot, no fierce warrior claiming your unwilling faith—He is a tender Jesus. Your rejection of Him has made His heart yearn over you. And though you abhor His Gospel, He has pleaded for you, saying, "Let him alone yet another year, till I dig about him. Perhaps he may yet bring forth fruit." What a patient Master is He! Oh, will you not serve Him!?

2. But the idea is not brought out fully, unless we take another sense. There *is* a sternness which cannot be condemned. A Christian man will often feel himself called to bear most solemn and stern witness against the error of his times. But Christ's mission, although it certainly did testify against the sin of His times, yet had a far greater reference to the salvation of the souls of men. To show the idea that I have in my own mind, which I have not yet brought out, I must picture Elijah. What a man he was! His mission was to be the bold, unflinching advocate of the right, and to bear a constant testimony against the wickedness of his age. And how boldly did he speak!

Look at him—how grand the picture! Can you not conceive him on that memorable day, when he met Ahab and Ahab said, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" Do you mark that mighty answer which Elijah gave him, while the king trembles at his words. Or, better still, can you picture the scene when Elijah said, "Take you two bullocks, you priests and build an altar and see this day, whether God is God or Baal is God." Do you see him as he mocks the worshippers of Baal and with a biting irony says to them, "Cry aloud, for he is a god." And do you see him in the last grand scene, when the fire has come down from Heaven and consumed the sacrifice and licked up the water and burned the altar?

Do you hear him cry, "Take the Prophets of Baal. Let not one escape"? Can you see him in his might hewing them in pieces by the brook and making their flesh a feast for the fowls of Heaven? Now, you cannot picture Christ in the same position. He had the stern qualities of Elijah, but He kept them, as it were, behind, like sleeping thunder, that must not as yet waken and lift up its voice. There were some rumblings of tempest, it is true, when He spoke so sternly to the Sadducees and Scribes and Pharisees—those woes were like murmurings of a distant storm, but it *was a distant* storm. Whereas Elijah lived in the midst of the whirlwind itself and was no still small voice, but was as the very fire of God and like the chariot in which he mounted to Heaven—fit chariot for such a fiery man!

Christ here stands in marked contrast. Picture Him in somewhat a like position to Elijah with Ahab. There is Jesus left alone with an adulterous woman. She has been taken in the very act. Her accusers are present, ready to bear witness against her. By a simple sentence He emptied the room of every witness. Convicted by their conscience they all retire. And now what does Christ say? The woman might have lifted her eyes and have looked at Him and said, "Have you found me, O my enemy?"—for she might have regarded Christ as the enemy of so base a sin as that which she had committed against her marriage bed. But instead thereof Jesus said, "Does no man condemn you? Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

Oh, how different from the sternness of Elijah, Sinners! If I had to preach Elijah as your Savior I should feel that I had a hard task, for you might throw it in my teeth—"Shall we come to Elijah? He will call fire from Heaven on us, as he did upon the captains and their fifties. Shall we come to Elijah? Surely he will slay us, for we have been like the prophets of Baal?" No, Sinners. I bid you come to Christ. Come to Him, who, although He hated sin more than Elijah could do, yet nevertheless, loved the sinner—who, though He would not share iniquity, yet spares the transgressors and has no words but those of love and mercy and peace and comfort, for those of you who will now come and put your trust in Him.

I must put in a word here by way of warning. I am very far from imputing, for a single moment, any blame to Elijah. He was quite right. None but Elijah could have fulfilled the mission which his Master gave him. He needed to be all he was and certainly not less stern. But Elijah was not sent to be a Savior. He was quite unfit for that. He was sent to administer a stern rebuke. He was God's iron tongue of threat, not God's silver tongue of mercy. Now, Jesus is the silver tongue of Grace. Sinners! Hear the sweet bells ringing as Jesus now invites you to come unto Him. "Come unto Me, all you that are weary and heavy laden, for I am not stern, I am not harsh, I am no fire-killing Elijah. I am the meek, tender, lowly-hearted Jesus."

3. Christ is meek in heart. To exhibit this quality in another light, call to your minds Moses. Moses was the meekest of men. And yet Christ far excels Moses in his meekness. Around Moses there seems to be a hedge, a ring of fire. The character of Moses is like Mount Sinai. It has bounds set about it, so that one cannot draw near unto him. Moses was not an approachable person—he was quiet and meek and tender—but there was a sacred majesty about the King in Jeshurun that hedged his path, so that we cannot imagine the people making themselves familiar with him. Whoever read of Moses sitting down upon a well and talking to a harlot like the woman of Samaria? Whoever heard a story of a Magdalene washing the feet of Moses? Can you conceive Moses eating bread with a sinner, or passing under a sycamore tree and calling Zaccheus, the thievish publican and bidding him come down?

There is a kind of stately majesty in Moses, no mere affectation of standing alone, but a loneliness of superior worth. Men looked up to him

as to some cloud-capped mountain and despaired of being able to enter into the lofty circle within which they might have communed with him. Moses always had in spirit what he once had in visible token. He had a glory about his brow and before he could converse with men he must wear a veil, for they could not bear to look upon the face of Moses. But how different is Jesus! He is a man among men—wherever He goes no one is afraid to speak to him. You scarcely meet with anyone who dares not approach Him. There is a poor woman, it is true, who has the flux and she fears to come near Him, because she is ceremonially unclean. But even she can come behind Him in the press and touch the hem of His garment and virtue goes out of Him.

Nobody was afraid of Jesus. The mothers brought their little babes to Him—whoever heard of their doing that to Moses? Did ever babe get a blessing of Moses? But Jesus was all meekness—the approachable man, feasting with the wedding guests, sitting down with sinners, conversing with the unholy and the unclean, touching the leper and making Himself at home with all men. Sinners! This is the one we invite you to—this homely man, Christ. Not to Moses, for you might say, “He has horns of light and how shall I draw near to his majesty! He is bright perfection—the very lightning of Sinai rests upon his brow.” But sinners, you cannot say that of Christ. He is as holy as Moses—as great and far greater, but He is still so homely that you may come to Him. Little children, you may put your trust in Him. You may say your little prayer—

***“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild
Look on me, a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee.”***

He will not cast you away, or think you have intruded on Him. You harlots, you drunkards, you feasters, you wedding guests—you may all come—“This man receives sinners and eats with them.” He is “meek and lowly in heart.” That gives, I think, a still fuller and broader sense to the term, “meek.”

4. But yet, to push the term a little further. Christ on earth was a king, but there was nothing about him of the exclusive pomp of kings, which excludes the common people from their society. Look at the Eastern king Ahasuerus, sitting on his throne. He is considered by his people as a superior being. None may come in unto the king, unless he is called for. Should he venture to pass the circle, the guards will slay him, unless the king stretches out the golden scepter. Even Esther, his beloved wife, is afraid to draw near and must put her life in her hand, if she comes into the presence of the king uncalled. Christ is a king. But where is His pomp? Where is the janitor that keeps His door and thrusts away the poor? Where are the soldiers that ride on either side of His chariot to screen the monarch from the gaze of poverty? See your King, O Sion! He comes, He comes in royal pomp! Behold, Judah, behold your King comes! But how comes He?

“Meek and lowly, riding upon an ass and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.” And who are His attendants? See, the young children, boys and girls! They cry, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!” And who are they that wait upon Him? His poor disciples. They pull the branches from the trees. They cast their garments in the street and there He rides on—Judah’s royal King. His courtiers are the poor. His pomp is that tribute which grateful hearts delight to offer. O Sinners, will you not come to Christ? There is nothing in Him to keep you back. You need not say, like Esther did of old, “I will go in unto the king, if I perish, I perish.” Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Christ is more ready to receive you than you are to come to Him. Come to the King! “What is your petition and what is your request? It shall be done unto you.” If you stay away, it is not because He shuts the door, it is because you will not come. Come, filthy, naked, ragged, poor, lost, ruined—come, just as you are. Here He stands, like a fountain freely opened for all comers. “Whosoever will, let him come and take of the waters of life freely.”

5. I will give you but one more picture to set forth the meekness of Christ and I think I shall not have completed the story without it. The absence of all selfishness from the character of Christ makes one ingredient of this precious quality of His meekness. You remember the history of Jonah. Jonah is sent to prophecy against Nineveh. But he is selfish. He will not, go for he shall get no honor by it. He does not want to go so long a journey for so small a price. He will not go. He will take a ship and go to Tarshish. He is thrown out into the sea, swallowed by a fish and vomited by it upon dry land. He goes away to Nineveh and not wanting courage, he goes through its streets, crying, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” That one man’s earnest cry moves the city from one end to the other. The king proclaims a fast. The people mourn in sackcloth and confess their sins. God sends them tidings of mercy and they are spared.

But what will Jonah do? Oh, tell it not, you heavens. Let none hear it—that ever a Prophet of God could do the like! He sits himself down and he is angry with God. And why his anger? Because, says he, “God has not destroyed that city.” If God had destroyed the city he would have shouted over the ruins, because his reputation would have been safe. But now that the city is saved and his own reputation for a Prophet tarnished, he must needs sit down in anger. But Christ is the very reverse of this. Sinners! Christ does thunder at you sometimes, but it is always that He may bring you to repentance. He does take Jonah’s cry and utter it far more mightily than Jonah could. He does warn you that there is a fire that never can be quenched and a worm that dies not. But if you turn to Him, will He sit down and be angry?

Oh, no. Methinks I see Him. There you come, poor prodigals. Your father falls upon your neck and kisses you and you are accepted and a feast is made. Here comes the elder brother, Jesus. What does He say? Is He angry because you are saved? Ah, no! “My Father,” says He, “my younger brothers have all come home and I love them. They shall share My honors. They shall sit upon My throne. They shall share My Heaven.” “Where I am,

there they shall be also." I will take them into union with Myself and as they *have wasted their inheritance, all that I have shall be theirs forever.* Oh, come home, Prodigal, there is no angry Brother and no angry Father! Come back, come back, my brother, my wandering brother, I invite you. For Jesus is rejoiced to receive you. Do you not see, then, that the meekness of Christ is a sweet and blessed reason why we should come to Him?

II. The second virtue which Christ claims for himself, is LOWLINESS OF HEART.

When I looked this passage up in the original, I half wondered how it was that Christ found such a sweet word for the expression of His meaning—for the Greeks do not know much about humility and they have not a very good word to set forth this idea of lowliness of heart. I find that if this passage stood in another connection, the word might even be interpreted, "degraded, debased," for the Greeks thought that if a man were humble, he degraded himself—that if he stooped, he debased himself right out. "Well," says Christ, "if you think so, so be it," and He takes the word. The word means, "near the ground." So is Christ's heart. We cannot be so low that He will not stoop to reach us. I would just set out the lowliness of Christ's heart in this way. Christ is "lowly in heart." That is, he is willing to receive *the poorest sinner* in the world.

The Pharisee thought that the keeper of the gate of Heaven would admit only the rich and not the poor. Mark Christ's teaching. There were two came to the gate once upon a time. One was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. He knocked and thought that full sure he must enter. But "in Hell he lifts up his eyes being in torments." There came another, borne on angel's wings. It was a beggar, whose many sores the dogs had licked and he had not so much as to knock at the gate, for the angel's carried him straight away into the very center of Paradise and laid him in Abraham's bosom. Jesus Christ is willing to receive beggars into His bosom.

Kings, you know, condescend, when they permit even the rich to be presented to them and the kissing of a monarch's hand is something very wonderful, indeed. But to have the kisses of *His* lips who is the King of kings, is no uncommon thing for men that are shivering in rags, or that are sick upon miserable beds, in dingy attics. Christ is "lowly in heart." He goes with what men call the vulgar herd. He has nothing of affected royalty about Him—he has a nobler royalty than that, the royalty that is too proud to think anything of a stoop—that can only measure itself by its own intrinsic excellence—and not by its official standing. He receives the lowest, the meanest, the vilest, for He is "lowly in heart."

If I have among my congregation some of the poorest of the poor, let them come away to Christ and let them not imagine that their poverty need keep them back. I am always delighted when I see a number of women here from the neighboring workhouse. I bless God that there are some in the workhouse that are willing to come. And though they have sometimes been put to a little inconvenience by so doing, yet I have known them sooner give up their dinner than give up coming to hear the

Word. God bless the workhouse women and may they be led to Christ, for He is meek and lowly in heart and will not reject them. I must confess also, I like to see a smock frock here and there in the midst of the congregation. Oh, what a mercy, that in the palace of the Great King there shall be found these workmen, these blouses. They shall be made partakers of the kingdom of God. He makes no difference between prince and pauper. He takes men to Heaven just as readily from the workhouse, as from the palace.

Further, this lowliness of heart in Christ leads Him to receive the most *ignorant* as well as the learned to Himself. I know that sometimes poor ignorant people get a notion in their heads that they cannot be saved, because they cannot read and do not know much. I have sometimes, especially in country villages, received this answer, when I have been asking anything about personal religion. "Well, you know, Sir, I never had any learning." Oh, but you unlearned, is this a reason why you should stay away from Him who is lowly in heart? It was said of an old Greek philosopher, that he wrote over his door, "None but the learned may enter here." But Christ, on the contrary, writes over His door, "He that is simple, let him turn in here."

There are many great men with long handles to their names who know little of the Gospel, while some of the poor unlettered ones spell out the whole secret and become perfect masters in Divinity. If they had degrees who deserve them, diplomas should often be transferred and given to those who hold the plow handle or work at the carpenter's bench. For there is often more Divinity in the little finger of a plowman than there is in the whole body of some of our modern divines. "Don't they understand Divinity?" you say. Yes, in the letter of it. But as to the spirit and life of it, D.D. often means DOUBLY DESTITUTE.

The lowliness of Christ may be clearly seen in yet another point of view. He is not only willing to receive the poor and to receive the ignorant, but He is also ever ready to receive men, despite the vileness of their characters. Some teachers can stoop, and freely, too, to both poor and ignorant. But they cannot stoop to the wicked. I think we have all felt a difficulty here. "However poor a man may be, or however little he knows," you say, "I don't mind talking with him and trying to do him good. But I cannot talk with a man who is a rogue or a vagabond, or with a woman who has lost her character."

I know you cannot. There are a great many things Christ did which we cannot do. We, who are the servants of Christ, have attempted to draw a line where duty has its bound. Like the domestic servant in some lordly mansion who stoops not to menial employment. We are above our work. We are so fastidious that we cannot go after the chief of sinners and the vilest of the vile. Not so, Christ. "He receives sinners and *eats with* them." He, in the days of His flesh, became familiar with the outcasts. He sought them out that He might save them. He entered their homes. He found His way into the slums. Like some diligent officer of the police, he was willing to lodge where they lodged, eat at their table and associate with their class

to find them out. His *mission was to seek* as well as to save. Oh, see Him stand, with arms wide open! Will that thief, who is justly executed for his crimes, be recognized by Him? Yes, he will. There, with his arms outstretched, He hangs.

The thief flies, as it were, to His bosom and Jesus gives him a most blessed embrace. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Christ has received the thief with open heart and open arms, too. And there is Mary. Do you see her? She is washing the feet of Jesus. Why, she is a bad character, one of the worst women of the town. What will Christ say? Say? Why, hear how He speaks to Simon, the pious, reputable Pharisee. Says He, after putting the parable concerning the two debtors, "which of them shall love him most?"—and then he explains that this woman has had much forgiven and therefore she loves Him much. "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven," said He, and she goes her way in peace.

There are many men you and I would not demean ourselves to notice, that Christ will take to Heaven at last. For He is "lowly in heart." He takes the base, the vilest, the scum, the offscouring, the filth, the garbage of the world and out of such stuff and matter as that, He builds up a holy temple and gathers to Himself trophies for His honor and praise. And further, while I speak of the lowliness of Christ's heart, I must remark another thing. Perhaps one is saying here, "Oh, Sir, it is not what I have *been*, as to my conduct, that keeps me back from Christ. But I feel that what I *am* as to my nature restrains me. I am such a dolt, I shall never learn in His school. I am such a hard-hearted one, He will never melt me and if He does save me, I shall never be worth His having."

Yes, but Christ is "lowly in heart." There are some great goldsmiths that of course can only think of preparing and polishing the choicest diamonds. But Jesus Christ polishes a common pebble and makes a jewel of it. Goldsmiths make their precious treasures out of precious materials—Christ makes His precious things out of dross. He begins always with bad material. The palace of our king is not made of cedar wood, as Solomon's, or if it is made of wood, certainly He has chosen the knottiest trees and the knottiest planks wherewith to build His habitation. He has taken those to be his scholars who were the greatest dunces—so amazing is the lowliness of Christ's heart.

He sits down on the form with us to teach us the A, B, C, of repentance and if we are slow to learn it He begins again and takes us through our alphabet again. And if we forget it again, He will often teach us our letters over again. For though He is able to teach the angels, yet He condescends to instruct babes and as we go step by step in heavenly literature, Christ is not above teaching the elements. He teaches not only in the University and the grammar school, where high attainments are valued, but He teaches in the day-school, where the elements and first principles are to be instilled. It is He who teaches the sinner, what *sinner* means in deep conviction and what faith means in holy assurance. It is not only He who takes us to Pisgah and bids us view the promised land, but it is He also

who takes us to Calvary and makes us learn that simplest of all things—the sacred writing of the Cross.

He, if I may use such a phrase, will not only teach us how to write the highly ornamental writing of the Eden Paradise, the richly gilded, illuminated letters of communion and fellowship, but He teaches us how to make the pot-hooks amid hangers of repentance and faith. He begins at the beginning. For He is “meek and lowly in heart.” Come, then, you dolts, you fools. Come *you sinners*, you vile ones. Come, you dullest of all scholars, you poor, you illiterate, you who are rejected and despised of men. Come to Him who was rejected and despised as well as you. Come and welcome! Christ bids you come!—

**“Let not conscience make you linger
Nor of fitness fondly dream.
All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him.
This He gives you—
‘Tis His Spirit’s rising beam.**

Come, poor sinners! Come to a gentle Savior! And you shall never regret that you came to Him.

III. Having thus spoken on the two marks of our Lord’s character, I propose to conclude, if God shall help me, by knocking home the nail, by driving in the wedge and pressing upon you a conclusion from these arguments. The conclusion of the whole matter is this—since Christ is “meek and lowly in heart”—sinners come to Him.

Come to Him, then, first, whoever you may be, for He is “meek and lowly in heart.” When a man has done anything wrong and wants help through his difficulty, if about to employ some counsel to plead for him in a court of law, he might say, “Oh, don’t engage Mr. So-and-So for me. I hear he is a very hard-hearted man. I should not like to tell him what I have done and entrust my case in his hands. Send for Mr. So-and-So. I have heard that he is very kind and gentle. Let him come and hear my case and let him conduct the pleadings for me.” Sinner! You are sinful, but Christ is very tender-hearted. Speed your way to Christ’s private chamber—your own closet of prayer. Tell Him all you have done. He will not upbraid you. Confess all your sins. He will not chide you. Tell Him all your follies. He will not be angry with you. Commit your case to Him and with a sweet smile He will say, “I have cast your sins behind My back. You have come to reason with Me. I will show you a matter of faith which excels all reason—though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow.” Come to Christ, then, sinful ones, because He is “meek and lowly in heart,” and He can bear with the narrative of your offenses.

“But, Sir, I am very timid and I dare not go.” Ah, but however timid you may be, you need not be afraid of Him. He knows your timidity and He will meet you with a smile and say, “Fear not. Be of good cheer. Tell Me your sin, put your trust in Me and you shall even yet rejoice to know My power to save. Come *now*,” says He, “come to Me at once. Linger no

longer. *I do not strive nor cry, nor cause My voice to be heard in the streets. A bruised reed I will not break, the smoking flax I will not quench. But I will bring forth judgment unto victory.*” Come then, you timid ones, to Christ, for He is meek and lowly in heart.

“Oh,” says one, “but I am despairing. I have been so long under a sense of sin, I cannot go to Christ.” Poor Soul! He is so meek and lowly, that, despairing though you may be, take courage now. Though it is like a forlorn hope to you, yet go to Him. Say, in the words of the hymn—

***“I’ll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives.
Perhaps He may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.
I can but perish if I go—
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.”***

And you may add this comfortable reflection—

***“But if I die with mercy sought
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died.”***

Come to Him, then, timid and despairing, for He is “meek and lowly in heart.” First, He bids you confess. What a sweet confessor! Put your lip to His ear and tell Him all. He is “meek and lowly in heart.” Fear not. None of your sins can move Him to anger. If you do but confess them—if you keep them in your heart, they shall be like a slumbering volcano—and a furnace of destruction you shall find even to the uttermost by-and-by. But confess your sins—tell them all. He is “meek and lowly in heart.” Happy confession! When we have such a Confessor.

Again—He bids you trust Him. And can you not trust Him? He is “meek and lowly *in heart*.” Sinner! Put confidence in Christ. There never was such a tender heart as His, never such a compassionate face. Look Him in the face, poor soul, as you see Him dying on the tree and say, is not that a face that any man might trust! Look at Him! Can you doubt Him? Will you withhold your cause from such a Redeemer as this? No, Jesus! You are so generous, so good, so kind. Take my cause in hand. Just as I am, I come to You. Save me, I beseech You, for I put my trust in You.

And then Jesus not only bids you confess and believe, but He bids you afterwards serve Him. And surely, Sinners, this should be a reason why you should do it—that He is so “meek and lowly in heart.” It is said, “Good masters make good servants.” What good servants you and I ought to be, for what a good Master we have! Never an ill word does He say to us. If sometimes He points out anything we have done amiss, it is only for our good. Not for His profit does He chasten, but for ours. Sinner! I ask you not to serve the god of this world—that foul Fiend who shall destroy you after all your service. The devil is your master now and you have heard the wages he bestows. But come and serve Christ, the meek and lowly

one, who will give you good cheer while you are serving Him and give you a blessed reward when your work is done.

And now, best of all, Sinners! Come to Christ! Come to Him in all His offices, for he is “meek and lowly in heart.” Sinner! You are sick—Christ is a physician. If men have broken a bone and they is about to have a surgeon fetched, they say, “Oh, is he a feeling and tender-hearted man?” For there are many an army surgeon that takes off a leg and never thinks of the pain he is giving. “Is he a kind man?” says the poor sufferer, when he is about to be strapped down upon the table. Ah, poor Sufferer, Christ will heal your broken bones and He will do it with downy fingers. Never was there so light a touch as this heavenly surgeon has. “Tis pleasure even to be wounded by Him, much more to be healed, Oh, what balm is that He gives to the poor bleeding heart! Fear not. There was never such a physician as this. If He gives you now and then a bitter pill and a sour draught, yet He will give you such honeyed words and such sweet promises therewith, that you shall swallow it all up without murmuring. No, if He is with you, you can even swallow up death in victory—and never know that you have died because victory has taken the bitter taste away.

Sinner! You are not only sick and therefore bid to come to Him, but you are moreover in debt and He offers now to pay your debts and to discharge them in full. Come, come to Him, for He is not harsh. Some men, when they do mean to let a debtor off, first have him in their office and give him as much as they can of the most severe rebukes—“You rogue, you! How dare you get in my debt, when you knew you could not pay? You have brought a deal of trouble on yourself, you have ruined your family,” and so forth. And the good man gives him some very sound admonition and very rightly, too—till at length he says—“I’ll let you off this time—come, now, I forgive you and I hope you will never do so again.” But Christ is even better than this. “There is all your debt,” He says, “I have nailed it to the Cross. Sinner, I forgive you all,” and not one accusing word comes from His lips. Come, then, to Him.

I fear I have spoilt My master in the painting. Something like the artist who had to depict some fair damsel and he so misrepresented her features that she lost her reputation for beauty. I have sometimes feared lest I should do the same and so distort the face of Christ and so fail of giving the true likeness of His character that you would not love Him. Oh, could you see Him! If He could stand here for one moment and tell you that He was meek and lowly in heart, oh, methinks you would run to Him and say, “Jesus, we come! You meek and lowly Messiah, be You our All!”

No, you would not come. I am mistaken. If Sovereign Grace draws you not under the sound of the Gospel, neither would you be converted though Christ should appear before you. But hear now the message of that Gospel—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. For he that believes on Him and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not, must be damned.”

REST, REST NO. 969

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 8, 1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”
Matthew 11:28-30.***

We have often repeated these memorable words, and they have brought us much comfort. But it is possible that we may never have looked deeply into them—so as to have seen the fullness of their meaning. The works of man will seldom bear close inspection. You shall take a needle which is highly polished, which appears to be without the slightest inequality upon its surface, and you shall put it under a microscope and it will look like a rough bar of iron. But you shall select what you will from nature—the bark or the leaf of a tree, or the wing or the foot of an insect—and you shall discover no flaw, magnify it as much as you will, and gaze upon it as long as you please.

So take the words of man. The first time you hear them they will strike you. You may hear them again and still admire their sentiment, but you shall soon weary of their repetition and call them hackneyed and over-estimated. The Words of Jesus are not so. They never lose their dew, they never become threadbare. You may ring the changes upon His Words and never exhaust their music—you may consider them by day and by night, but familiarity shall not breed contempt. You shall beat them in the mortar of contemplation, with the pestle of criticism, and their perfume shall but become the more apparent.

Dissect, investigate, and weigh the Master's teaching word by word, and each syllable will repay you. When loitering upon the Island of Liddo, off Venice, and listening to the sound of the city's bells, I thought the music charming as it floated across the meadow. But when I returned to the city, and sat down in the center of the music, in the very midst of all the bells, the sweetness changed to a horrible clash. The charming sounds were transformed into a maddening din. Not the slightest melody could I detect in any one bell, while harmony in the whole company of noisemakers was out of the question.

Distance had lent enchantment to the sound. The words of poets and eloquent writers may, as a whole, and heard from afar, sound charmingly enough. But how few of them bear a near and minute investigation? Their belfry rings passably, but one would soon weary of each separate bell. It is never so with the Divine Words of Jesus. You hear them ringing from afar, and they are sweetness itself. When as a sinner you roamed at midnight like a traveler lost on the wilds, how sweetly did they call you home!

But now you have reached the House of Mercy. You sit and listen to each distinct note of Love's perfect peal, and wonderingly feel that even angelic harps cannot excel it. We will, this morning, if we can, conduct you into the inner chambers of our text. We will place its words under the microscope and peer into the recesses of each sentence. We only wish our microscope were of a greater magnifying power, and our ability to expound the text more complete—for there are mines of instruction here.

Superficially read, this royal promise has cheered and encouraged tens of thousands! But there is a wealth in it which the diligent digger and miner shall alone discover. Its shallows are cool and refreshing for the lambs, but in its depths are pearls, for which we hope to dive. Our first head, this morning, is *rest*—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The second head is *rest*—"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls."

I. Let us begin at the beginning with the first rest, and here we will make divisions only for the sake of bringing out the sense more clearly.

1. Observe *the person invited* to receive this first rest—"Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden." The word "*all*" first demands attention—"All you that labor." There was need for the insertion of that wide word. Had not the Savior said a little before, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes"? Some who had been listening to the Savior might have said, "The Father, then, has determined to whom He will reveal the Christ. There is a number chosen, according to the Father's good pleasure, to whom the Gospel is revealed—while from another company it is hidden!"

2. The too hasty inference, which seems natural for man to draw from the doctrine is, "Then there is no invitation for me. There is no hope for me. I need not listen to the Gospel's warnings and invitations." So the Savior, as if to answer that discouraging notion, words His invitation thus, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden." Let it not be supposed that election excludes any of you from the invitation of mercy. All of you who labor are bid to come. Whatever the great doctrine of predestination may involve, rest assured that it by no means narrows or diminishes the extent of Gospel invitations.

The good news is to be preached to "every creature" under Heaven, and in this particular passage it is addressed to *all* the laboring and heavy laden. The description of the person invited is very full. It describes him both actively and passively. "*All you that labor*"—there is the activity of men bearing the yoke, and ready to labor after salvation. "Heavy laden"—there is the passive form of their religious condition—they sustain a burden and are pressed down, and sorely wearied by the load they bear.

There are to be found many who are actively engaged in seeking salvation. They believe that if they obey the precepts of the Law they will be saved, and they are endeavoring to the utmost to do them. They have been told that the performance of certain rites and ceremonies will also save them—they are performing those with great care. The yoke is on their

shoulders, and they are laboring diligently. Some are laboring in prayer, some are laboring in sacraments, others in self-denials and mortifications. But as a class they are awakened to feel the *need* of salvation, and they are intensely laborious to save themselves.

It is to these the Savior addresses His loving admonition—in effect He tells them, “This is *not* the way to rest. Your self-imposed labors will end in disappointment. Cease your wearisome exertions, and believe in Me, for I will at once give you rest—the rest which My labors have earned for Believers.” Very speedily those who are active in self-righteously working for salvation fall into the passive state, and become burdened. Their labor of itself becomes a burden to them. Besides the burden of their self-righteous labor, there comes upon them the awful, tremendous, crushing burden of past sin, and a sense of the wrath of God which is due to that sin.

A soul which has to bear the load of its own sin, and the load of Divine wrath, is, indeed, heavily laden! Atlas with the world upon his back had a light load compared with a sinner upon whom mountains of sin and wrath are piled. Such persons frequently are burdened, in addition, by fears and apprehensions. Some of them correct, others of them baseless, but the burden daily grows. Their active labors do not diminish their passive sufferings. The acute anguish of their souls will often be increased in proportion as their endeavors are increased.

And while they hope, at first, that if they labor industriously they will gradually diminish the mass of their sin, it happens that their labor adds to their weariness beneath its pressure. They feel a weight of disappointment because their labor has not brought them rest, and a burden of despair, because they fear that deliverance will never come. Now these are the persons whom the Savior calls to Himself—those who are actively seeking salvation—those who are passively bearing the weight of sin and of Divine wrath.

It is implied, too, that these are *undeserving* of rest, for it is said, “Come unto Me, and I will *give* you rest.” A gift is not of merit but of Grace. Wages and reward are for those who earn—but a gift is a matter of charity. O you who feel your unworthiness this morning, who have been seeking salvation earnestly, and suffering the weight of sin—Jesus will freely give to you what you cannot earn or purchase! He will give it as an act of His own free, rich, sovereign mercy. And He is prepared, if you come to Him, to give it to you *now*, for so has He promised, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

2. Notice next, *the precept here laid down*—“Come.” It is not, “Learn.” It is not “Take My yoke”—that is in the next verse, and is intended for the next stage of experience. But in the beginning the word of the Lord is, “Come unto Me.” “Come.” “Come.” A simple word, but very full of meaning. To come is to leave one thing and to advance to another. Come, then, you laboring and heavy laden! Leave your legal labors. Leave your self-reliant efforts. Leave your sins. Leave your presumptions. Leave all in which you up to now have trusted, and come to Jesus! That is, think of, advance towards, rely upon the Savior.

Let your contemplations think of Him who bore the load of human sin upon the Cross of Calvary, where He was made sin for us. Let your minds consider Him who from His Cross hurled the enormous mass of His people's transgressions into a bottomless sepulcher where it was buried forever. Think of Jesus, the Divinely appointed Substitute and Sacrifice for guilty man.

Then, seeing that He is God's own Son, let faith follow your contemplation. Rely upon Him. Trust in Him as having suffered in your place. Look to Him for the payment of the debt which is due from you to the wrath of God. This is to come to Jesus. Repentance and faith make up this, "Come"—the repentance which leaves the place where you now stand, the faith which comes into reliance upon Jesus.

Observe that the command to "Come" is put in the *present* tense, and in the Greek it is intensely present. It might be rendered something like this—"Here to Me all you that labor and are heavy laden!" It is a, "Come," which means not "Come tomorrow or next year," but, "Now, at once." Advance, you slaves, flee from your taskmaster now! Weary ones, recline on the promise now, and take your rest! Come now! By an act of instantaneous faith which will bring instantaneous peace, come and rely upon Jesus, and He will now give you rest. Rest shall at once follow the exercise of your faith. Perform that act of faith now. O may the eternal Spirit lead some laboring, heavy-laden soul to come to Jesus, and to come at this precise moment!

It is "Come unto *Me*." Notice that. The Christ in His Personality is to be trusted in. Not, "Come to John, and hear him say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand,' " for no rest is there. John commands a *preparation* for the rest, but he has no rest to give to the soul. Come not to the Pharisees, who will instruct you in tradition, and in the jots and tittles of the Law. But go past these to Jesus, the Man, the God, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Propitiation for human guilt. If you want rest, come to Christ in Gethsemane, to Christ on Calvary, to Christ risen, to Christ ascended.

If you want rest, O weary Souls, you can find it nowhere until you come and lay your burdens down at His dear pierced feet, and find life in looking alone to Him. There is the precept, then. Observe, it is nothing but that one word, "Come." It is not "Do." It is not even "Learn." It is not, "Take up My yoke"—that will follow after, but must never be forced out of its proper place. To obtain the first rest, the rest which is a matter of gift—all that is asked of you is that you come to have it.

Now, the least thing that charity itself can ask when it gives away its alms, is that men come for it. Come, you needy, come and welcome! Come and take the rest you need. Jesus says to you, "Come and take what I freely give." Without money come, without merit come, without preparation come. It is just come, come now. Come as you are, come with your burden, come with your yoke, though the yoke is the yoke of the devil, and the burden is the burden of sin. Come as you are, and the promise shall be fulfilled to you, "I will give you rest."

3. Notice next *the promise spoken*. “I will give you rest.” “I will *give*.” It is a rest that is a gift. Not a rest found in our experience by degrees, but given at once. As I shall have to show you, the next verse speaks of the rest that is found, worked out, and discovered. But *this* is a rest *given*. We come to Jesus. We put out the empty hand of faith, and rest is given us at once most freely. We possess it at once, and it is ours forever. It is a present rest, rest now. Not rest after death. Not rest after a time of probation and growth and advancement. But it is rest given when we come to Jesus, given then and there.

And it is *perfect* rest, too. For it is not said, nor is it implied, that the rest is incomplete. We do not read, “I will give you partial rest,” but, “rest.” As much as if there were no other form of it. It is perfect and complete in itself. In the blood and righteousness of Jesus our peace is perfect. I shall not stay except to ask you now, Brothers and Sisters, whether you know the meaning of this given rest. Have you come to Jesus and has He given you perfect and present rest? If so, I know your eye will catch joyously those two little words, “*And I*,” and I would bid you lovingly remember *the Promiser* who speaks.

Jesus promises and Jesus performs. Did not all your rest, when first your sin was forgiven, come from Him? The load was gone, but who took it? The yoke was removed, but who lifted it from off the shoulder? Do you not give to Jesus, this day, the glory of all your rest from the burden of guilt? Do you not praise His name with all your souls? Yes, I know you do. And you know how that rest came to you. It was by His Substitution and your faith in that Substitution. Your sin was not pardoned by a violation of Divine Justice. Justice was satisfied in Jesus. He gave you rest.

The fact that He has made full Atonement is the rest of your spirit this morning. I know that deep down in your consciences, the calm which blesses you springs from a belief in your Lord’s vicarious Sacrifice. He bore the unrest that you might have the rest—and you receive rest this day as a free gift from Him. You have done now with servile toils and hopeless burdens! You have entered into rest through believing.

All the rest and deliverance still comes to you as a gift from His dear hands, who purchased with a price this blessing for your souls. I earnestly wish that many who have never felt that rest would come and have it. It is all they have to do to obtain it—to *come* for it—just where they now are. If God enables them to exercise a simple act of faith in Jesus, He will give them rest from all their past sins, from all their efforts to save themselves—a rest which shall be to His glory and to their joy.

II. We must now advance to our second head—rest. It looks rather strange that after having received rest, the next verse should begin—“Take my *yoke* upon you.” “Ah, I had been set free from laboring, am I to be a laborer again?” Yes, yes, take My yoke and begin. “And My *burden* is light.” “Burden? Why, I was heavy laden just now, am I to carry another burden?” Yes. A yoke—actively, and a burden—passively. You are to bear both of these. “But I found rest by getting rid of my yoke and my burden!” And you are to find a further rest by wearing a new yoke, and bearing a new burden.

Your yoke galled, but Christ's yoke is easy. Your burden was heavy, but Christ's burden is light. Before we enter into this matter more fully, let us illustrate it. How certain it is that a yoke is essential to produce rest, and without it rest is unknown! Spain found rest by getting rid of that wretched monarch Isabella. An iron yoke was her dominion upon the nation's neck, crushing every aspiration after progress by an intolerable tyranny. Up rose the nation, shook off its yoke, and threw aside its burden, and it had rest in a certain sense—rest *from* an evil.

But Spain has not fully rested yet, and it seems that she will never find permanent rest till she has voluntarily taken up another yoke, and found for herself another burden. In a word, she must have a strong, settled, recognized government—and only then will her distractions cease. This is just a picture of the human soul. It is under the dominion of Satan, it wears his awful yoke, and works for him. It bears his accursed burden, and groans under it—Jesus sets it free—but has it, therefore, a perfect rest?

Yes, a rest *from*, but not a rest *in*. What is wanted now is a new government—the soul must have a sovereign, a ruling principle, a master-motive. And when Jesus has taken that position, rest is come. This further rest is what is spoken of in the second verse. Let me give you another symbol. A little stream flowed through a manufacturing town. An unhappy little stream it was, for it was forced to turn huge wheels and heavy machinery, and it wound its miserable way through factories, where it was dyed black and blue, until it became a foul and filthy ditch and loathed itself. It felt the tyranny which polluted its very existence.

Now, there came a deliverer who looked upon the stream and said, "I will set you free and give you rest." So he stopped up the water-course, and said, "Abide in your place, you shall no more flow where you are enslaved and defiled." In a very few days the brook found that it had but exchanged one evil for another. Its waters were stagnating, they were gathering into a great pool, and desiring to find a channel. It was in its very nature to flow on, and it foamed and swelled, and pressed against the dam which stayed it. Every hour it grew more inwardly restless, it threatened to break the barrier, and it made all who saw its angry looks tremble for the mischief it would do before long.

It never found rest until it was permitted to pursue an active course along a channel which had been prepared for it among the meadows and the corn fields. Then, when it watered the plains and made glad the villages, it was a happy stream, perfectly at rest. So our souls are made for *activity*—and when we are set free from the activities of our self-righteousness and the slavery of our sin—we must do something. And we shall never rest until we find that something to do.

Therefore, in the text you will be pleased to see that there is something said about a yoke, which is the ensign of working, and something about a burden, which is the emblem of enduring. It is in man's mortal nature that he must do or endure, or else his spirit will stagnate and be far from rest.

1. We will consider this second rest, and notice that it is *rest after rest*. “I will give you rest” comes before, “You shall find rest.” It is the rest of a man who is already at rest. The repose of a man who has received a *given* rest, and now discovers the found rest. It is the rest of a learner—“Learn of Me, and you shall find rest.” It is not so much the rest of one who was before laboring and heavy laden—as of one who is today learning at the Savior’s feet. It is the rest of a seeker, evidently, for finding usually implies a search.

Having been pardoned and saved, the saved man in the course of his experience discovers more and more reason for peace. He is learning, and seeking, and he finds. The rest is evidently lighted upon, however, as a thing unknown, which becomes the subject of discovery. The man had a rest *from* his burden. Now he finds a rest *in* Christ, which exceeds what he asked or even thought.

I have looked at this rest after rest as being a treasure concealed in a precious box. The Lord Jesus gives to His people a priceless case, called the gift of rest. It is set with brilliant stones and inlaid with gems—and the substance is of worked gold. Whosoever possesses it feels and knows that his warfare is accomplished and his sin is pardoned. After awhile the happy owner begins to examine his treasure. It is all his own, but he has not yet seen it all, for one day he detects a secret drawer. He touches a hidden spring, and lo, before him lies a priceless jewel surpassing all the rest! It had been given to him, it is certain, but he had not seen it at first, and therefore he finds it.

Jesus Christ gives us, in the gift of Himself, all the rest we can ever enjoy—even Heaven’s rest lies in Him. But after we have received Him we have to learn His value, and find out by the teaching of His Spirit the fullness of the rest which He bestows. Now, I say to you who are saved, you who have looked to Jesus Christ—whether you looked this morning or twenty years ago—have you found out all that there is in the gift which Christ has given you? Have you found out the secret drawer yet?

He has given you rest, but have you found the innermost rest which He works in your hearts? It is yours, for it is included in the one gift. But it is not yours enjoyed, understood, and triumphed in as yet unless you have *found* it. For the rest here meant is a rest *after* rest, a spiritual, experienced rest which comes only to those who find it by experience.

2. Further observe that the rest in this second part of our text is a *rest in service*. It is coupled with a *yoke*, for activity—“Take My yoke.” It is connected with a *burden*, for endurance—“My burden is light.” He who is a Christian will not find rest in being idle. There is no unrest greater than that of the sluggard. If you would rest, take Christ’s yoke, be actively engaged in His service. As the bullock has the yoke put upon its neck and then begins to draw, so have the yoke of Christ put on your neck and commence to obey Him. The rest of Heaven is not the rest of sleep—they serve Him day and night in His temple. They are always resting, and yet, in another sense, they rest not day nor night. Holy activity in Heaven is perfect rest.

True rest to the mind of the child of God is rest on the wing, rest in motion, rest in service—not rest with the yoke off, but, with the yoke on. We are to enter upon this service voluntarily. We are to *take His yoke* upon us voluntarily. You observe, it does not say, “Bear my yoke when it is laid upon you, but *take it.*” Do not need to be told by the minister, “My dear Brother, such-and-such a work you are bound to do,” but take up the yoke of your own accord. Do not merely submit to be the Lord’s servant, but seek His service. Ask, “What can I do?”

Be desirous to do it—voluntarily, cheerfully—do all that lies in you for the extension of His kingdom who has given you rest, and you shall find that the rest of your soul shall lie in your doing all you can for Jesus. Every active Christian will tell you he is never happier than when he has much to do. And, on the whole, if he communes with Jesus, never more at rest than when he has least leisure. Look not for your rest in the mere enjoyments and excitements of religion, but find your rest in wearing a yoke which you love, and which, for that reason, is easy to your neck.

But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you must also be willing to bear Christ’s burden. Now the burden of Christ is His Cross, which every Christian must take up. Expect to be reproached. Expect to meet with some degree of the scandal of the Cross, for the offense of it never ceases. Persecution and reproach are a blessed burden. When your soul loves Jesus it is a light thing to suffer for Him, and, therefore, never by any cowardly retirement or refusal to profess your faith, evade your share of this honorable load.

Woe unto those who say, “I will never be a martyr.” No rest is sweeter than the martyr’s rest. Woe unto those who say, “We will go to Heaven by night along a secret road, and so avoid the shame of the Cross.” The rest of the Christian is found not in cowardice, but in courage! It lies not in providing for ease but in the brave endurance of suffering for the Truth of God. The restful spirit counts the reproach of Christ to be greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. He falls in love with the Cross and counts the burden light. And so he finds rest in *service*, and rest in *suffering*. Note that well.

3. The rest before us is *rest through learning*. Does a friend say, “I do not see how I am ever to get rest in working, and rest in suffering”? My dear Brother, you never will unless you go to school, and you must go to the school of Christ. “Learn of Me,” He says, “for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Now, in order to learn of Christ it is implied that we lay aside all prejudices of the past. Those things much prevent our finding peace. Have you any preconceived notions of what religion should be? Have you fashioned on your own anvil ideas of what the doctrines of the Gospel ought to be? Throw them all away! Learn of Jesus, and unlearn your own thoughts.

Then, when you are willing to learn, please note what is to be learned. In order to get perfect rest of mind you have to learn of Jesus. Not only the doctrines which He teaches, but a great deal more than that. To go to school to be orthodox is a good enough thing, but the orthodoxy which brings rest is an orthodoxy of the *Spirit*. Observe the text, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.” What for? For I am wise and learned, and can

teach you? No. You are to learn from His example to be “meek and lowly in heart.” And in learning that, you will “find rest unto your souls.” To catch the spirit of Jesus is the road to rest.

To believe what He teaches me is something. To acknowledge Him as my religious leader and as my Lord is much. But to strive to be conformed to His Character, not merely in its external developments, but in its interior spirit—this is the grammar of rest. Learn to be like the meek and lowly-hearted One, and you shall find rest.

He tells us the two points in which we are to learn of Him. First, He is *meek*, then He says He is *lowly in heart*. Take the word “meek” first. I think that refers to the yoke-bearing, the active labor. If I actively labor for Christ I can only find rest in the labor by possessing the meek spirit of my Lord. If I go forth to labor for Christ without a meek spirit, I shall very soon find that there is no rest in it, for the yoke will gall my shoulders.

Somebody will begin objecting that I do not perform my work according to his liking. If I am not meek I shall find my proud spirit rising at once, and shall be for defending myself. I shall be irritated, or I shall be discouraged and inclined to do no more because I am not appreciated as I should be. A meek spirit is not apt to be angry, and does not soon take offense—therefore, if others find fault, the meek spirit goes on working, and is not offended. It will not hear the sharp word—nor reply to the severe criticism.

If the meek spirit is grieved by some cutting censure and suffers for a moment, it is always ready to forgive and blot out the past and go on again. The meek spirit, in working, only seeks to do good to others. It denies itself. It never expected to be well treated—it did not aim at being honored. It never sought itself, but purposed only to do good to others. The meek spirit bowed its shoulder to the yoke and expected to have to continue bowing in order to keep the yoke in the right place for labor. It did not look to be exalted by yoke-bearing. It is fully contented if it can exalt Christ and do good to His chosen ones.

Remember how meek and lowly Jesus was in all His service, and how calmly, therefore, He bore with those who opposed Him? The Samaritans would not receive Him, and therefore John, who felt the yoke a little galling to his unaccustomed shoulder, cried, “Master, call fire from Heaven.” Poor John! But Christ bore the yoke of service so well because of His meek spirit that He would do nothing of the kind. If one village would not receive Him, He passed on to another, and so labored on.

Your labor will become very easy if your spirits are very meek. It is the proud spirit that gets tired of doing good if it finds its labors not appreciated. But the brave, meek spirit, finds the yoke to be easy. “Consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your minds.” If you learn His meekness, His yoke will be pleasant to your shoulder, and you will never wish to have it removed.

Then, as to the passive part of our rest-lesson, note the text, “I am *lowly in heart*.” We shall all have to bear something for the Truth’s sake so long as we are here. The reproach is a part of the Gospel. The rod is a blessing of the Covenant. The lowly heart finds the burden very light be-

cause it acquiesces in the Divine will. The lowly heart says, "Not my will, but Yours be done. Let God be glorified in me, it shall be all I ask—rich, poor, sick, or in health, it is all the same to me. If God the great One has the glory, what matters where such a little one as I am may be placed?"

The lowly spirit does not seek after great things for itself. It learns in whatever state it is to be content. If it is poor, "Never mind," says the lowly one, "I never aspired to be rich. Among the great ones of this earth I never desired to shine." If it is denied honor, the humble spirit says, "I never asked for earthly glory, I seek not my own honor but His that sent me. Why should I be honored, a poor worm like I? If nobody speaks a good word of me, if I get Christ to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," that is enough.

And if the lowly-hearted has little worldly pleasure, he says, "This is not my place for pleasure. I *deserve* eternal pain, and if I do not have pleasures here I shall have them hereafter. I am well content to bide my time." Our blessed Lord was always of that lowly spirit. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. The baubles of empire had no charm for Him.

Had fame offered to sound her trumpet for none but Him, He would have cared not one whit for the offer. The kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof were offered Him, and He repelled the tempter. He was gentle, unobtrusive, self-denying. He treated His burden of poverty and shame as a light thing, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." If we once learn Christ's spirit we shall find rest unto our souls.

4. But we must pass on to notice that it is very evident that the rest which we are to find is *a rest which grows entirely out of our spirits being conformed to the Spirit of Christ*. "Learn of Me, and you shall find rest." It is, then, a *spiritual* rest, altogether independent of circumstances. It is a vain idea of ours to suppose that if our circumstances were altered we should be more at rest. My Brothers and Sisters, if you cannot rest in poverty, neither would you in riches. If you cannot rest in the midst of persecution, neither would you in the midst of honor.

It is the spirit *within* that gives the rest—that rest has little to do with anything *without*. Men have sat on thrones and have found them uneasy places, while others on the rack have declared that they were at rest. The spirit is the spring of rest, as for the outward surroundings they are of small account. Let but your mind be like the mind of Christ, and you shall find rest unto your souls—a deep rest, a growing rest, a rest found out more and more, an abiding rest, not only which you have found, but which you shall go on to find. Justification gave you rest from the burden of sin, sanctification will give you rest from molesting cares—and in proportion as it becomes perfect—and you are like your Savior, your rest shall become more like that of Heaven.

I desire one other thing to be called to your mind before I turn to the practical use of the text, and that is, that here, as in the former rest, we are led to adore and admire the blessed Person of our Lord. Observe the words, "*For I.*" Oh, it all comes from Him still—the second rest as much as

the first—the case and the treasure in the secret drawer. It all hinges here, “For I am.”

In describing the second rest there is more said concerning Him than in the first. In the first part of our text it only says, “I will give you rest.” But in the second part His Character is more fully explained—“For I am meek and lowly in heart.” As if to show that as Believers grow in Grace, and enjoy more rest, they see more of Jesus and know more of Him. All they know when sin is pardoned is that He gives it, perhaps they hardly know how. But afterwards, when they come to rest in Him in sweet fellowship, they know more of His Personal attributes, and their rest, for that very reason, becomes more deep and perfect.

We now come to the practical use of all this. Read the chapter before us and find the clue. First, my dear Brethren, if you find rest to your souls you will not be moved by the judgment of men. The children in the marketplace were the type of our Lord’s generation—who railed both at John the Baptist and at our Lord. The generation which now is, follows the same course—men are sure to cavil at our service. Never mind! Take Christ’s yoke on you, live to serve Him. Take Christ’s burden, make it a point to bear all things for His sake, and you will not be affected either by praise or censure, for you will find rest to your souls in surrendering yourself to the Father’s will.

If you learn of Jesus, you will have rest from the fear of men. I remember, before I came to London, being at a Prayer Meeting where a very quaint Brother prayed for me that I might be delivered from the “bleating of the sheep.” I understood it after awhile. He meant that I might live above the fear of man, that when such a person said, “How much we have been edified today,” I might not be puffed up. Or if another said, “How dull the discourse was today,” I might not be depressed. You will be delivered from “the bleating of the sheep” when you have the spirit of the Good Shepherd.

Next you will be delivered from fretfulness at want of success. “Then began He to upbraid the cities where most of His mighty works were done, because they repented not.” He had worked His mighty works, and preached the Gospel, and they did not repent. Was Jesus discouraged? Was He, as we sometimes are, ready to quit the work? No. His heart rested even then. If we come to Jesus, and take His yoke and burden, we, too, shall find rest, though Israel be not gathered.

Then, too, our Lord denounced judgments upon those who repented not. He told them that those who had heard the Gospel and rejected it would find it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for they. There are some who quarrel with the judgments of God and declare that they cannot bear to think of the condemnation of the impenitent. Is not this because they do not bear the burden of the Lord, but are self-willed? The saints are described in the book of Revelation as singing, “Hallelujah,” while the smoke of Babylon goes up forever and ever.

We shall never receive with humble faith the judgment of God in its terror until we take Christ’s yoke, and are lowly in heart. When we are like

Jesus we shall not feel that the punishment is too much for the sin, but we shall sympathize with the justice of God, and say, "Amen," to it. When the mind is lowly it never ventures to sit in judgment upon God, but rests in the conviction that the Judge of All must do right. It is not even anxious to make apologies and smooth down the fact, for it feels, "it is not mine to justify Him, He can justify Himself."

So, again, with regard to the Divine Sovereignty. Notice the rest of the Savior's mind upon that matter—"I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent." Learning of Jesus, we, too, shall rest in reference to Divine decrees. We shall rejoice in whatever the Lord determines. Predestination will not cast a gloom over us, but we shall thank God for all He ordains. What a blessed rest! As we open it up, does not its compass and depth surprise you? How sweet to lie passive in His hands, reconciled to every mystery, content with every dispensation, honored by every service satisfied in God!

Now, I do not know whether I am right, but it struck me, when considering this text from various points, that probably our Savior meant to convey an idea of deeper fellowship than we have yet considered. Did He not mean this—that He carried a yoke on His shoulder, which He calls, "My yoke"? When bullocks are yoked, there are generally *two*. I have watched them in Northern Italy, and noticed that when two are yoked together, and they are perfectly agreed, the yoke is always easy to both of them.

If one were determined to lie down and the other to stand up, the yoke would be very uncomfortable. But when they are both of one mind, you will see them look at each other with those large, lustrous, brown eyes of theirs so lovingly, and with a look they read each other's minds, so that when one wants to lie down, down they go, or when one wishes to go forward, forward they both go, keeping step. In this way the yoke is easy. Now I think the Savior says to us, "I am bearing one end of the yoke on My shoulder. Come, My Disciple, place your neck under the other side of it, and then learn of Me.

"Keep step with Me, be as I am, do as I do. I am meek and lowly in heart. Your heart must be like Mine, and then we will work together in blessed fellowship and you will find that working with Me is a happy thing. For My yoke is easy to Me, and will be to you. Come then, true yoke-fellow, come and be yoked with Me. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." If that is the meaning of the text, and perhaps it is, it invites us to a fellowship most near and honorable. If it is not the meaning of the text, it is, at any rate, a position to be sought after—to be laborers *together* with Christ—bearing the same yoke. Such be our lot. Amen.

Portion of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Matthew 11

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THE HEART OF JESUS

NO. 1105

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 6, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*"I am meek and lowly in heart."
Matthew 11:29.*

WE have preached upon the whole of this passage several times before, therefore we do not intend to speak upon it in its full teaching, or enter upon its general run and connection. But we select for our meditation this one expression, which has greater depth in it than we shall be able to fully explore—"I am meek and lowly in heart." I have felt very grateful to God for the mercy of the past week during which the ministers educated in our College have been gathered together as a devout convocation and have enjoyed a flood-tide of the Divine blessing. Unusually great and special joy has filled my soul and, therefore, I have asked myself, "What can I do to glorify the Lord my God who has been so gracious to me and has so prospered the work committed to me and my Brethren?"

The answer which my heart gave was this—"Endeavor to bring sinners to Jesus. Nothing is sweeter to Him than that, for He loves the sons of men." Then I said to myself, "But how can I bring sinners to Christ? What means will the Holy Spirit be likely to use for that purpose?" And the answer came, "If you would preach sinners to Christ you must preach Christ to sinners, for nothing so attracts the hearts of men as Jesus Himself." The best argument to bring sinners to believe in Jesus is Jesus. Has He not, Himself said, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me?" Then I said, "But what shall I preach concerning Jesus?" And my soul replied, "Preach the loving heart of Jesus. Go to the center of the subject and set forth His very Soul, His inmost Self, and then it may be that the heart of Jesus will draw the hearts of men."

Now it is very remarkable that the only passage in the whole New Testament in which the heart of Jesus is distinctly mentioned is the one before us. Of course there are passages in which His heart is *intended*, as for instance when the soldier, with a spear, pierced His side, but this passage is unique as to the actual mentioning of the kardia or heart of Jesus by a distinct word. There are several passages in the Old Testament which refer to our Divine Lord, such as—"Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness." And that notable one, in the 22nd Psalm, "My heart is like wax, it has melted within Me." But in the New Testament this is the only passage which speaks of the heart of Jesus Christ and therefore we will weigh it with all the more care.

Without further preface we shall have two things carefully to do. First, to consider the description here given of the heart of Jesus. And then,

secondly, we will labor to obey the exhortations which are connected with this description. For both these matters we shall need the rich assistance of the Holy Spirit and I pray that it may be vouchsafed, since it is the Spirit's office to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. We may confidently expect that He will shine upon so choice a subject as the sacred heart of our loving Lord!

I. LET US MEDITATE UPON THE DESCRIPTION OF THE HEART OF THE LORD JESUS, which is presented to us in the text. It consists of two adjectives—"I am meek and lowly in heart." There is no pomp or display in either of the qualities mentioned. They both belong to the gentle order of virtues and are but little esteemed among the princes of this world and their warriors. The first is the word, "meek." It is used in the New Testament in the third Beatitude—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." And by Peter, when speaking of "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." Of our Lord it is also said—"Behold your King comes to you, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."

The original word has the significations of "mild, gentle, soft, meek." Such is the heart of Christ. And you will observe that Jesus Christ says this concerning Himself—"I am meek in heart." There are points of character which a man could not fitly declare concerning himself, or it might savor of self-praise. But the virtue of meekness was of old so little esteemed that a man might claim it without being suspected of seeking approbation. It is remarkable that Moses, also, has recorded in the 12th chapter of the Book of Numbers the fact that he was remarkable for meekness—"Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men that were upon the face of the earth."

It has been thought by some that the verse must be an interpolated one and could not have been written by Moses, but I strongly object to the supposition of interpolations, although that method of removing difficulties is now so very fashionable in certain quarters. But I think we ought never to fall back upon that suggestion unless we are absolutely forced to do so. I believe that Moses, guided by Infallible Inspiration, wrote that description of himself for our example, and was utterly free from any vain-glory in so doing, just as our blessed Lord, in all lowliness, here spoke concerning Himself, and said, "I am meek and lowly in heart."

Meekness seeks not its own, and when it asserts itself, it is always with an eye to the benefit of others. Therefore none can bid it be silent. For a man to boast before his adversaries, "I am wise," or, "I am strong," would be vainglory, but to say to them, "I am meek," would be not boasting, but a sacred argument for peace—a plea for gentleness and quiet. Our Savior, who never sought the praise of man, says of Himself, "I am meek," because He desired to remove the fears of those who trembled to approach Him and would win the allegiance of those who feared to become His followers, lest His service should prove too severe. He, in effect, cried, "Come to Me, you offending men, you who feel your unworthiness, you who think that your transgressions may provoke My anger. Come to Me, for I am meek."

It would be no pride for a man to say, "I am strong," if he would thereby induce a drowning person to trust him for the saving of his life. Neither would it be wrong for a person to say, as a physician practically says, "I am wise in medicine," in order to lead a dying person to take the medicine which he felt sure would heal him. We may and must assert ourselves and avow those qualities which are truly ours, if, by doing so, a great benefit can be bestowed upon others. And Jesus, therefore says, "I am meek," because this gentle attribute would silence fear and lead the timid to approach Him and learn of Him.

The other adjective is, "lowly." "I am meek and lowly in heart." This is the word which is translated in the memorable song of the Virgin Mary, "low degree." "He has put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted them of low degree." It is also used in Romans, where Paul says, "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." So again in Second Corinthians, seventh chapter and sixth verse, where it is rendered differently—"God that Comforts those that are cast down." While in the Epistle of James it is translated, "humble." "He resists the proud, but gives Grace to the humble," and it is so rendered in the First Epistle of Peter.

If you turn to any Greek lexicon you will find that the word does not signify merely what the Scriptures translate it by, but since the Greeks were a war-like people, a proud people, an intimidating people and thought it foul scorn to patiently endure an insult, the word which we translate by, "lowliness," they would understand to mean, "baseness, or meanness." And in this sense Xenophon uses it. The word to the heathen Greeks meant, "keeping near the ground, vile, contemptible"—and our Savior has deigned to describe His own heart by a word which unregenerate men would thus misinterpret.

Even now a man who will not fight, but has learned to suffer wrong without resenting it, is thought by certain people to be destitute of spirit and worthy of contempt. That lowly Grace which the world calls base and mean-spirited, Jesus claims as being His own peculiar quality! He is not lofty, ambitious, proud, and haughty. He dwelt with the humble and contrite. He associated with men of low estate, such as the ungodly would look down upon as utterly beneath regard. He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant. When He was reviled, He reviled not again. He did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets—a bruised reed He did not break, and the smoking flax He did not quench. Thus have we weighed the words themselves.

Now, this description of the heart of Christ may be understood as opposed, first, to quickness or anger. Meek men bear many provocations. Some men take fire at a single spark—if you do but even *seem* to pay them disrespect they are indignant in a moment. But Christ says, "I am meek—I can pardon your ingratitude and disrespect, yes, and forgive your profanity, your blasphemy, your insult, your scorn, your enmity, your malice—for I am meek." Even when put to a cruel death He muttered no curse and threatened no revenge. "Slow to anger and plenteous in mercy," like His Father, is the Son of the Highest.

Meekness and lowliness are also opposed to haughtiness of spirit. Jesus did not seek the empty glories of pomp and State. Neither did He desire honor from men. He did not speak proudly to those around Him and domineer over them, or exercise lordship over them as the princes of the gentiles do. He was affable, easily to be reached and ready to be entreated. The poor and the sick could readily move His heart to pity and His hands to help. He was called the Friend of publicans and sinners, and of Him it was said, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." As a teacher Jesus was meek and lowly in heart and therein was the very opposite of the scribes.

If you saw a Pharisee in Christ's day you would have seen the incarnation of pride—he professed, by his very name, to be a *select* being—and in dress, manner and conversation, he set himself up to be some great one. He would not come to the windward of a sinner if he could help it—he passed him in the street as though he were a dog. But Christ was gentle and willing to associate with the vilest of the vile and the lowest of the low, for He was "lowly in heart." The expression of the text is also opposed to that pretended meekness and mock lowliness which has at times imposed upon the world. It is true our Savior was meek and lowly in appearance, for even in His greatest pomp He rode upon a colt, the foal of an ass, and not upon a horse which indicated state.

He was ever lowly in manner and deportment and though He could flame and flash with sacred boldness and speak words that burn in His holy indignation against hypocrisy, yet when He uttered the glad message of the Gospel He was very gentle, even as a nurse with her child. Yet the meekness and lowliness of Christ were not things of manner and of word alone—He was so in His heart. He was not of those who fake humility to secure power—of whom an almost forgotten poet said—

***"There are some that use
Humility to serve their pride, and seem
Humble upon their way, to be prouder
At their wish'd journey's end."***

It is said of Thomas A'Becket that he affected the greatest lowliness and humility and for this reason he washed the feet of 13 beggars every morning—but yet he was arrogance itself—and lorded it over his king. He was the proudest of the proud, though he pretended to be the humblest of the humble.

Many men have concealed inordinate pride beneath a crouching manner, mimicking humility while harboring arrogance. While their spirit has been full of imperial despotism they have pretended to be the friends of the people and have talked like the most truthful demagogue. Not so our truthful Master. He was "meek and lowly in heart." To Him association with the poor and sinful was no affectation of condescension—He was already on their level in intense sympathy with their sorrows. His heart was with the common people. He did not force Himself down from a natural haughtiness to a constrained contact with the lowly, but He became a real Friend of sinners and a willing Companion of the needy.

He rejoiced in spirit when He said, "Father, I thank You, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes." His heart was meek and lowly—it was His very Nature to be clear of anger and pride, passion and enmity. Thus from its opposites we see more clearly the meaning of our text. It will further help us if we consider that the words employed here include, first, a readiness on the part of Christ to pardon all past offenses. "Come unto Me," He says, "you sinners, for however much you may have offended in the past, I am meek and easily to be entreated. I am ready to forgive, to forget and cast behind My back all your provocations. I do not say this to cajole you. My very heart says it, for My heart is full of tenderness and compassion for you.

"I have borne much from you and can bear still more. I will be mindful of your infirmities and forgetful of your transgressions. And I will not be so grieved by your rebellions as to cast you out if you come to Me." Jesus is longsuffering, compassionate and ready to forgive. Like His Father He passes by transgression, iniquity and sin because He delights in mercy. But the words include also a willingness to endure yet further offenses. "I am meek" means, "not only do I forget the past but I am ready to bear with you, still, though you should still offend Me. Though you should still be ungrateful. Though you should treat Me as I ought not to be treated and give unkindness for My love, I will endure it all.

"Come to Me although you cannot hope that your future character will be perfect. I will help you to struggle into holiness and be patient with your failures. If you come to Me I am prepared to forgive you unto 70 times seven, yes, as often as you shall err so often will I restore you. And as frequently as you shall grieve Me, as frequently will I forgive you. If you take My yoke I will not be angry if sometimes it appears heavy to you. If you learn of Me I will not be vexed if you prove but dull scholars. I am meek in heart, ready to forgive the past and willing to bear with you in the present and in the future." Beloved Brothers and Sisters, what a heart Jesus has to receive sinners in this Divine manner!

And then as to the second word, "I am lowly in heart." That means, "I am willing to receive the lowest and the poorest among you—the most obscure, despised, and ignorant, I welcome to My salvation. O you laboring and heavy-laden ones, I shall not feel, in your coming to Me, that you are presuming and that your company is a dishonor to Me. I shall not say to you, 'Get you gone, I have chosen the company of kings and princes, of philosophers and divines, of the wealthy and the witty.'" No, Jesus covets not the so-called aristocracy but seeks after men of all ranks. The poor have the Gospel preached unto them. Some of His professed ministers have looked down upon the toiling masses, but their Master said, "Come unto Me all you that labor."

Stand not back, you people, because you are of low estate, for Jesus is of a lowly heart! Come to Him, you who are like the Soodras, of whom the Brahmins say that they came from God's foot, while the Brahmins came from the head of deity—Jesus thinks not so! Come to Him, you who are the pariahs of society, outcasts and men of no caste at all, for Jesus, also,

was rejected by His brethren. You whom men despise, come to Him who was despised of men. You homeless, come to Him who had not where to lay His head. You needy, come to Him who hungered and thirsted. Yes, you lost, draw near to the Son of Man, who is come to seek and to save that which was lost, for, "He is lowly in heart."

His lowliness means this, also, that as He is willing to receive the lowest so He is willing to *do* the very lowest and most menial service for those who come to Him—willing to bear their burdens, willing to wash their feet—willing to purge them from their sins in His own blood. Jesus waits to be gracious and delights to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. For sinners He has performed feats of lowly love, for He has borne their sin and their shame, their iniquities and their sicknesses. He willingly stooped to the lowest position to save the lowest of men. You see I am talking very calmly and in a quiet manner, but my heart glows within me while I am telling you these things about my own dear Lord and Master, whose shoe lace I am not worthy to unloose.

He has, in these two words, as with two masterly strokes of the pencil, given us a perfect picture of His dear, gentle, face. No, not of His *face*, but of His inmost *heart*. How I wonder that we are not all in love with Him! "Meek and lowly in heart!" These are two beauties, which to sinners' eyes, when sinners know themselves, are the most lovely and fascinating attributes such as charm their fears and chain their hearts. He that has eyes to see let him look here and looking, let him love—

***"Jesus who gave Himself to us,
Upon the Cross to die,
Unfolds to us His sacred heart.
O, to that heart draw near!
You hear how kindly He invites,
You hear His words so blest—
All you who labor come to Me,
And I will give you rest."***

To set forth these words a little more, I beg you to remember that they are enhanced in value if we reflect who it is that speaks them of Himself. Remember it is the Lord God, the Son of the Highest, who says, "I am meek and lowly in heart." As I listened to this text, at first it spoke to me with a still small voice and made me very glad. Then, like Moses at the bush, I drew near unto it. But, lest I should be too bold and grow irreverent, it changed its tone and I heard peal upon peal of thunder issuing from it, as I listened to the words, "I am." Hear you not in those words the incommunicable name, JAH, Jehovah, the Self-Existent One?

Yet, as I listened awe-struck to that thunder's crash and feared lest it might forbade a tempest and precede destruction, I felt the soft drops of eternal mercy fall upon my brow and heard, again, the gentle voice of the Mediator saying, "Meek and lowly in heart." Jehovah Jesus is gentle, tender and condescending! What a Divine blending of Glory and Grace! Oh, it is marvelous! Words cannot set it forth! Omnipotent, yet lowly! Eternal God, yet a patient Sufferer! King of kings, and Lord of lords, yet "meek and lowly in heart!" Remember, well, that He who spoke these words is He

who said in the 27th verse, “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father.” Yes, He is possessor of *all* things and yet says, “I am meek and lowly in heart.”

You know, Brothers and Sisters, it is difficult to be a man of power and yet to be meek—to be a king and to order things after your own will and yet to be lowly—to be master of all and to suffer with patience the scoffs and reproaches of those who are not worthy to be put among the dogs of your flock. But our Master had all things delivered to Him by God and yet He was so meek as to endure all manner of contradiction of sinners against Himself. He allowed sinners to spit in His face, to pluck His hair and scourge Him cruelly—this is matchless and unparalleled meekness and lowliness of heart! Yet such was Jesus Christ—as God, Almighty and as Man most lowly. Having an infinite mediatorial power, with all things delivered to Him, yet our Redeemer was “meek and lowly in heart.”

And remember one thing else. He has told us elsewhere that, “the Father has delivered all judgment unto the Son.” If it were your business and mine, as it is not, to exercise judgment and to be the universal censors, I guarantee you it would be a superlative difficulty to be able to retain a meek and lowly heart! But Jesus Christ is universal Judge! His eyes, like flames of fire, discern between the precious and the vile, burning up the stubble and purifying the gold! And yet, though Ruler of all mankind and soon to come upon His Throne to judge both angels and men, He could say in the days of His flesh, “I am meek and lowly in heart.”

These are very wonderful words! I do not know whether you catch the contrast. If you do not, it is my fault in not being able to put it, for it is surpassingly striking. A Divine Being, superlative in power and commissioned to judge mankind, and yet, for all that, “meek and lowly in heart.” It is most possible that the very reason of His meekness and lowliness may lie somewhere in His glorious greatness, though it may seem a paradox, for who are the meekest in the world but those who are truly strong? You shall pass down the street and a yelping dog will bark at you, but yonder powerful mastiff takes no note of you. A cackling goose will follow you upon the village green, while the powerful ox feeds on in peace.

Real strength is the backbone of meekness. The angry are weak, the patient are strong. The Infinite heart of Jesus is a meek heart partly because it is Infinite. And I have noticed too, that really great men are lowly men. At any rate, they are only great as far as they are lowly. When a man is fond of dignity, pomp and show, he is a second-rate man and an essentially little man. Those who stick out for minute points of honor and respect are the very small men. The man who must have all his titles written after his name shows that he feels he needs them. The more eminent a man becomes, the more plain his name becomes in men’s mouths. The greatest men among us in the State are seldom or never called even by their full names and honors, but are known by the shortest designations.

The greater a man is the less state he cares for. Look into the army. Every petty officer is bedizened to the fullest, but the commander-in-chief

is plainly dressed and scarcely wears an ornament at all simply because he is great. All the world over the man who needs to be thought great is essentially little, and he, who for the good of others is ready for any service, has the elements of greatness in his character. The Lord Jesus Christ is so infinitely great that none can add to His Glory and therefore He is surpassingly lowly, too. We are too proud to seek the conversion of a harlot but He was not. He went to Samaria to find her and talk to her. We are too great to speak to the babes, but He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." It is a delightful thought that He should be so great and yet so lowly—and there is an intimate connection between the two great facts.

Now to close this exposition, let me notice that our blessed Lord proved throughout His life the truth of what He asserted, for when He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart," He stated what His biography, if it is studied rightly, most fully bears out. When He came to earth His first advent was to a stable and to a humble woman's breast. His youth was spent in a carpenter's shop and when some gleaming of His superlative wisdom were seen in the Temple, yet He went back with His mother and His reputed father, and was subject unto them. Throughout His life His associations were with the poor. He never put on soft raiment, or affected the courts of princes.

Herod might be anxious to see something of Him, but Christ never went to the palace to flatter Herod or to amuse his curiosity—He was quite content to be with Peter and James and John—humble fishermen as they were. His tenderness towards children was always remarkable. His gentleness towards all that approached Him was most memorable. Whom did He ever spurn? To whom did He ever speak in tones of pride? When was He ever irritated? Did He not bear insults in silence? Did He not answer craftiness with wisdom? Was not mercy His only reply to malice?

Even in His death His silence before His enemies was His lowliness. And His prayer for His murderers was His meekness. While "despised and rejected of men," He was evermore their friend and lover, returning good for all their ill. He was, indeed, "meek and lowly in heart." Thus I have led you to consider the description given of the heart of Christ.

II. Now, I want your earnest attention while I EXHORT YOU TO CARRY OUT WHAT IS COMMANDED IN THE CONTEXT. There are three commands—"Come unto Me." "Take My yoke upon you." "Learn of Me." First, I have great pleasure in declaring that all of you who are heavy-laden and are laboring, are invited to come to Christ and you are persuaded to do so because He is meek. I know what you will say. "How can I come to Jesus? I have neglected Him so long. I am now getting on to 70 years of age—can I expect that He will receive me after so long a despising of Him?"

"Come unto Me," He says, "for I am meek of heart; ready to forgive your 70 years' neglect. However great your transgressions, My love to you shall be greater, still." Perhaps you add, "But I have most obstinately rejected Christ. Sermons have impressed me, but I have shaken off impression. I have been almost persuaded but I have said, 'Go Your way for this time.

When I have a more convenient season I will send for You.’ After I have let the Lord Jesus knock at my door so long without opening to Him, will He still enter? I have refused him a thousand times, will He still come to me?” Yes, He will, for He says—“I am meek in heart, bearing all your misbehavior, kind and loving to the end.”

But I think I hear one say—“I have spoken evil against You, O Lord. I have been a doubter of Your Divinity. I have had an ill word to say against Your Substitution.” All this, also, He will forgive, for He is meek and He invites all guilty sinners to look into His face—no, to look into His *heart* and see if they can discover anything like vengeance, anything like implacable wrath. He does not repel even blasphemers! Even to them the Savior does not say, “Depart,” but He invites them to come and says to them, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

It is true that many of you have sought another savior. You have tried to save yourselves. You have set up your own righteousness in opposition to His righteousness, which is a dire insult to His blessed Person. Nevertheless, forsake your pride, poor Sinner, and come, for Jesus is ready to forgive you even this. Do you say, “But, ah, even while I think of coming to Him I feel so unworthy. My very prayers must be offensive to Him. I do not feel my sin as I ought. I have not that tenderness of conscience I ought to have”? Nevertheless, Jesus says, “Come unto Me, for I am meek. I will not judge you with a spirit of censure, nor be harsh towards you. I give liberally and upbraid not. Come as you are. You are unfit and unworthy, yet still come, for I am meek and lowly in heart.”

Oh, dear Hearers, why do you hesitate? What hardness of heart is this that makes you linger? And if you add, “But I am afraid if I did come to Christ I might sin again in the future. I might again go back and prove unfaithful to Him.” Yet, says Jesus, “I am meek and lowly in heart. I know what you are. I have considered you. I know that your frame is dust and that your very nature is sinful, yet still I say, come, for I am able to keep you from falling.” “Alas,” you say, “I have a foul leprosy upon me and my forehead is white with it.” “Come,” says Jesus. Notwithstanding your pollution, “Come, even as you are.” Sinner, delay no longer! Trust Jesus now!

Do I hear you objecting still? “But I have a great gangrened wound which means death and at this moment it is offensive to myself. How much more loathsome will it be to Him?” Nevertheless, come, for Jesus invites most lovingly. He loves all who come and loathes none. If you yet cry out, “O, but I am black and foul, and vile! None can tell how disgusting I seem to be to my own self!” Nevertheless, “Come,” says He, “for I am meek in heart.” And then to meet another set of objections which do not so much arise from sinfulness as from a sense of insignificance, Jesus declares, “I am lowly in heart.” “I am,” says one, “very poor.” What does Christ care about riches? What are they to Him? He loves the poorest!

The woman of Samaria was quite as welcome to Christ as were those honorable women who ministered unto Him of their substance. “But I am so ignorant.” Did you ever hear of Christ rejecting a disciple because he was ignorant? Did not that prove how necessary it was that he should be-

come a learner? Does not Jesus receive just such scholars and teach them wisdom? “Ah, but I am insignificant. Nobody will care for me. I am unknown and unobserved!” What does that matter? Christ knows you and it has pleased Him to choose the things that are not before the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His Presence.

I know it is a common temptation of Satan to make men and women think, “Well, but there is something about my birth and rank which disqualifies me.” Perhaps the individual was a child of shame, yet the meek and lowly Jesus will not be ashamed of him. It may be there are circumstances about the man’s past life which are too disgraceful to be mentioned—but Jesus can blot it all out! Jesus cures not the whole, but the sick. And He calls to Himself not the righteous, but sinners. You may think yourself to be, in constitutional tendencies, one of the very worst of mortals and you may even think it better not to have existed than to be such a wretched thing as you are, but I pray you fear not to come to Jesus—for He is “meek and lowly in heart,” and He rejects no seeking soul.

None are beneath Him—His love can descend lower than you have ever fallen—

**“Buried in sorrow and in sin
At Hell’s dark door we lay.
But He descends in love Divine,
And lifts us into day.”**

If you lie between the jaws of Hell, Jesus can pluck you out! It is delightful to my soul to tell these glad tidings to you! The only sorrow I have is the thought that many of you do not take an interest in them. Even now I do not see about you the solemn attention I desire to see and a trifling noise makes you turn your heads. O Sirs, do you despise the heart of Jesus? Has His tender love no beauty in your eyes? Alas, if you knew how near the grave some of you are and how precious His salvation is to those who possess it, I should have all eyes and ears and hearts engrossed with such a subject as this. O Sinners, Sinners! There is never a sweeter word in all Scripture than this, “I am meek and lowly in heart.”

Nothing should charm you and encourage you more! Jesus, by these lips, speaks to you this morning and says—“Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy-laden.” Oh, may His Spirit lead you! Come and trust the Savior! Come and bow at His dear pierced feet! Come and take from His wounded hands the boundless mercies which He delights to give! Come, and look into His face, for it beams with love! Accept Him as your Savior now! “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.” If you accept Him and bow at His feet, He will save you now, and save you in the day of His coming. This is the first exhortation—an exhortation to sinners to *come*.

The second is an exhortation to *obey*—“Take My yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Oh, Christian people, this is for you! Obey Christ, for He is no tyrannical Master. It is very easy to serve a man who is lowly and meek. It is very difficult, I should think, to be continually employed by a person who is too haughty to speak to you—whose commands

are intolerant—and who, if you do not fulfill them to the letter, will upbraid you in furious language. It must be hard to be a servant to a hard master.

But, O, to serve Jesus is to serve One whose service is perfect *freedom*, who is ever lenient towards our faults, who forgives as soon as we offend and if grieved by us is only grieved because we injure ourselves. “Take My yoke upon you,” He says, “for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Who would not obey Jesus? Who would not wait upon so kind a Prince? But I cannot dwell upon that, for time fails me. I want, however, a minute or two upon the third exhortation.

“*Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.*” I feel this is a lesson which I want to learn and a lesson which most here present need to learn, also, to be “MEEK AND LOWLY IN HEART.” To be meek! We are not all meek and some of us who may appear to be meek, perhaps owe it rather to a softness of nature than to a sweetness of Grace—the true meekness is that which Grace gives. Matthew Henry says that there are only three men in the Bible whose faces are said to have shone—Moses, Jesus and Stephen—and all these were meek men.

God will not make angry men’s faces shine—rather do they gather blackness. If anything can put a Divine glow on a Christian’s face, it is a readiness to forgive. If you are ready to forgive, you possess one of the sweetest beauties of the Redeemer’s character. It is wonderful, the power of meekness, if we would but believe it. There is, after all, no power in anger. “The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God.” Stoop to conquer, submit to overcome. Holy Mr. Dodd, when reproofing a profligate, was assailed by him in his anger and two of the good man’s teeth were dashed out. When simply wiping the blood from his mouth, the man of God said, “And I will cheerfully allow you to knock out all the rest if you will but mind what I have said and seek the salvation of your soul.”

His opponent felt that there was something in the good man which he did not possess and he was won to a better mind. A woman who had before been a terrible shrew was converted. Her husband persecuted her cruelly for her religion and one day, in his passion, he struck her on her face so as to knock her to the ground. When she simply rose and said, “But, my Husband, if it would do you any good and bring you to Christ, I would be willing to be struck again.” “Woman,” he said, “these religious people have made a wonderful change in you, or you would not have spoken so gently. Go where you will from now on.”

Nothing conquers like meekness—not the meekness which is feigned—but real gentleness. Of all things in the world, I think the most foul and sickening is the pretense of forgiving a person when you, yourself, are the individual who committed the offense. The sanctimonious presence of meekness when you are justly upbraided is detestable! May God grant us Grace to find peace by getting rid of anger, for only by meekness shall you find peace unto your souls. You cannot be at peace while you are harsh and severe—and ready to resent every trifling injury.

The other word is, “lowly in heart.” Now this is one of the things every Christian ought to learn of Christ. Augustine was once asked what was the most essential thing in religion. I do not quite agree with his answer, but there was much truth in it. He said, “The first essential thing is humility, the second is humility and the third is humility.” There is more essential than that, but at the same time, in a perfect Christian character one of the rarest but at the same time one of the most precious pearls is humility. Quaint old Secker says, “The lowliest Christian is the loveliest Christian.”

A vessel that is empty lifts itself aloft! Go down to the Thames and see how it displays itself. The empty boat rides high and exposes itself completely to view. It stands out of the water seeming to say to everybody, “Look at me! What a size I am!” But as soon as that vessel is filled and has its cargo on board, its bulk sinks out of sight under the stream—it hides a great part of its hull in the water. A full man is a humble man—a proud man is an empty man. Conceit means weakness—lowliness of heart is strength.

Jesus Christ, as I have shown, was strong and yet meek. He was great and yet lowly. Oh, that we might learn the lesson from Him and be, “meek and lowly in heart!” I have thus preached the Gospel to the sinner and bid him come and find rest. I have also preached Christ to the saint and bid him find a yet further rest in imitating the Character of his Lord. May God bless these words according to His own infinite love by His mighty Spirit! And His shall be the praise evermore. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 11.

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CHRIST'S YOKE AND BURDEN

NO. 2832

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 24, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1886.

*"My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
Matthew 11:30.*

OBSERVE dear Friends, that our Lord Jesus Christ does lay a yoke and a burden upon His followers. He uses those words that none may presume to enter His service without due consideration. Religion is not a matter for trifling. The service of the meek and lowly Christ is no child's play. There is a yoke that is to be borne by all His disciples and the neck of self-will must be bent low to receive it. There is a burden to be carried for Christ—and all the strength that God gives us must be used for His honor and Glory.

But, lest those words, "yoke," and, "burden," should sound harsh to our ears and any of us should start back because we have had our shoulders galled by another yoke and our backs bent beneath a very different burden, the Master very graciously and sweetly says, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." It appears to me that He spoke thus so that none may despair—that despair may not even come near us and that we may not despond as to the possibility of our salvation. Christ has a yoke for us to wear, so let us seriously wear it. But it is an easy yoke, so let us wear it hopefully. He has a burden for us to carry for Him, so let us be in earnest in bearing it—but it is a light burden, so let us be full of joy at the very prospect of carrying it. Our Savior's adjectives are always emphatic and they are especially so here. His "yoke is *easy*"—easy in the fullest sense, and His "burden is *light*"—light in the most joyous meaning of the term! You may always be sure that in Christ's words there is never less than He seems to say and, more than that, you can scarcely ever be wrong in believing that every statement made by Him contains far more than appears on the surface of it.

I want you to feel, at this time, that whatever yoke and burden there may be connected with Christ, that yoke is easy and that burden is light. I hope you will not pervert this text as some people do. They misquote it by saying that "the yoke of *Christianity* is easy and the burden of *Christianity* is light." I am not greatly concerned about the yoke or burden of Christianity—to me, the charm of our text is that, here, we have Christ Himself saying to us, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light." I want you to have before you not some impalpable, visionary, imaginary thing,

but the very Lord that bought us with His precious blood speaking with those lips which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh and, pointing with His pierced hand to the yoke and to the burden which He calls especially His own and saying, as He said when He was here upon the earth, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Coming, then, to our text, I ask you to notice, first, that *the context explains it*. Secondly, *a little word of distinction in the text clears it*. And, thirdly, *the experience of all who know the Lord proves it to be true*.

I. First, then, THE CONNECTION OF OUR TEXT EXPLAINS IT.

Our Savior did not speak these two sentences by themselves and, therefore, we may not take this verse by itself. It is true, but you may make it untrue to yourself unless you take it in its proper connection. How often shall we have to tell people that the Bible is not a mere collection of separate sentences which they may tear from their context just as they please? We are not to treat the verses of the Bible as pigeons might treat a bushel of peas—picking out one here and another there, without any thought of the surroundings of that particular passage! No, this blessed Book was written for men to read right through—and if they are to understand the meaning of it, they must read each sentence in the connection in which it is found.

So, keeping this Truth in view, I begin by saying that *some of you would not find Christ's yoke easy or His burden light*. That is the very last thing you would find them to be to you in your present condition—you would find His yoke heavy, and His burden impossible for you to bear! Some of you are mere worldlings—"lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." It may be that some of you are self-righteous and proud of that which should be your shame. Anyhow, if you are unregenerate, our text would not be true to you in your unconverted state. There is something else which must come before this. If any unsaved man thinks that he can, just as he is, shoulder Christ's Cross and yield himself up to be Christ's servant, he has made a great mistake. Before him, these burning sentences must flash like Sinai's lightning—"You must be born-again." "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." God will not be served by men whose sins have not been washed away by the precious blood of His dear Son! He will have none to bear His burdens but those who have, first of all, received of His Grace through faith in the great "Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus." So you see where you have to begin. "Come unto Me," said Christ, "all you that labor and are heavy laden." By that He means, "Do not suppose that because you are already laborers in another master's service, you can wear My yoke. Do not imagine that because you are already heavily laden, you can bear My burden. You must first get rid of that which now makes you labor. You must first be rid of that which is a burden to you, for 'no man can serve two masters.' Your old, toilsome labor must be done with, for no man can carry the double burden of his own guilt and of the service of God. That cannot be."

So, dearly-beloved, if you wish to be servants of God. If in your heart there burns a holy desire to serve the Most High, begin at the right place! Christ directs you to the door of entrance into His service and into everything else that is worth having when He says, "*Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" I will give it to you—you are not to buy it, you are not to earn it, or deserve it—I will give it to you freely, for nothing is freer than a gift! I will give it to you—nobody else can do so, but I, in My own Personality, will give to you who are the most weary with your laboring, and the most heavy laden with your sin—I will give to you rest and I will give it to you immediately, on the spot! Come to Me now, by believing on Me, by trusting wholly to Me, by getting away from yourself and forgetting, for a while, any hope you ever had in yourself—just coming to Me to find your all in Me—and so coming, I will give you rest."

You cannot take Christ's yoke upon you, or bear His burdens—and therefore you cannot prove them to be easy and light—till first of all you have entered into this rest which He so freely gives! If you are first perfectly rested, then you can work. I have told you before how the change which our Lord has made in the Sabbath is indicative of the change which He has made in our life. The Law of God says, "Work six days, and then observe the seventh as the Sabbath," but, under the Gospel, the arrangement is, "Rest on the first day before you have done a stroke of work. Just as the week begins, take your rest and, after that, in the strength derived from it, and from the grateful motives which arise out of that one blessed day of rest, give to the Lord the six days of the week." There is a change from Law to Gospel indicated in that very change—so let it be with you. "Come unto Me," said Christ, "all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." When you have done that, the text will be true to you, "My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

There is something more than that, however. We began with the Master's gracious invitation, "Come unto Me." Then follows the command, "*Take My yoke upon you.*" You will prove that His yoke is easy when you take it upon you. But, instead of doing so, I know what a man often does. He draws his chair up, sits down and says, "I will consider what Christ requires of me. I will think of what it is to lead a Christian life—all the self-denials, the struggles and the conflicts that will be involved in wearing His yoke which seems to me a very hard one." Get up, Sir, from that chair and, instead of being a critic of Christ's yoke, put it on! "*Take My yoke upon you,*" says the Lord Jesus. Take it upon your shoulder by a humble yet confident faith. First be rid of your old burden and so get rest—and then take upon you this yoke of Mine."

Let me put it practically to you and then see whether Christ's yoke is not easy, and His burden is not light. Suppose a number of persons say to me, "That mass of white substance yonder is salt." I say, "No, it is not salt. It is sugar." "But from this distance it looks like salt." I tell them that it is sweet, the very essence of sweetness, but they do not believe me. We may have a long talk over the matter, but we shall never get to the end of the controversy till they come to the sugar and taste it. Then

the controversy will be ended at once. So is it with men who have not proved the sweetness of Christ. They say, "There is nothing in religion except that which is burdensome and sad." It may seem to be to you who do not know anything about it, but we who trust and love the Lord say to you, "Taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in Him." That is the test—come and prove it for yourselves, for there has never yet been a case in which a man has really taken Christ's yoke upon him, in which he has not, by that very fact, proved that Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light!

There is still more to follow, for the Savior says, "Take My yoke upon you, *and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.*" There are two rests for a Christian to enjoy. The first is the rest that Christ gives him when he believes. The next is the rest that he finds when he takes Christ's yoke upon him. These two rests will be distinctly enjoyed by anyone who truly comes to Christ and learns of Him—and no one will find Christ's yoke easy in any other way. To put it in humble phraseology, when we are bound to Christ, as apprentices are bound to their master, to learn of Him, we shall find a new and yet deeper and fuller rest to our soul than we have ever known before. And this will prove to us that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. There is a use and habit in the service of Christ that brings much sweetness with it. To the beginner, the yoke may seem strange and, perhaps, galling, but, after a while, when we have learned of Christ—even as He, Himself, learned obedience when He made Himself a Servant for our sakes—then we shall discover that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

There are some, even among real Christians, who do not yet know the joy of service for the Savior because they have not been long enough bound apprentice to the Master. See, that work is very hard to that young lad. He has been only two or three months in that workshop and, though he is trying his best, he does not succeed at it yet. But if he remains long enough by his master's side and learns of him, you will then see how deftly he will do it. Just as the master now does it and makes little of it because he is accustomed to it, so will this lad, by-and-by, find it quite easy—and he will then wonder that he ever thought it to be difficult! And he will agree with his master that, after all, the yoke is easy and the burden is light because he has learned the knack of carrying it.

When I am at Mentone, I frequently see women with bare feet, tripping down from the hills, carrying a basket, perhaps full of lemons and, very likely, with a child on the top of it. They never put up a hand to steady it, but they swing along, knitting their stockings as they come down the hill, using all their fingers for their work and cheerily saying, "Good morning," as they come by us! It is amazing how they carry such a load! I could not even lift the basket which they carry on their heads. How is it that they can do it? I do not suppose they could tell you, but they have done it since they were girls, and they have kept doing it! And feeble as you would suppose them to be, their strength has seemed to grow with the burden and they are able to carry their load easily and cheerfully. So,

when you come to Christ and get rid of your old burden, He puts upon you His burden—and you stay with Him and learn of Him till, at last, you, also, prove that His yoke is easy and His burden is light!

I must ask you to go one step further with me. *He who would enter to the fullest into the sweetness of this text must know Christ Himself*, for, observe, the Master puts Himself into it—"I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls." I do most firmly believe that there is nothing that makes such men of us as knowing the Son of Man! After all, the most sublime science in the world is to know Christ and, especially, to know the meaning of the wounds of Christ. The man who has most studied the agony in the Garden and on the Cross, and who has most studied his Master in all conditions, will be the best fitted to be a burden-bearer—either to serve or to suffer, according as God would have it. The very sight of Christ makes cowards brave! One glance at that blessed Countenance of His, all smeared with bloody sweat, makes us ashamed that we ever murmured—disgusted with ourselves that we counted anything a self-denial for His dear sake!

When we see Him so gentle under all reproaches, bearing even to be spit upon without an angry look or word. When we really begin to know His very heart—that heart which was entirely subject to the will of God for our sakes—yes, even for the sake of those who were His enemies and who crucified Him—knowing Him thus, His yoke becomes indeed easy, and His burden becomes light! When the Cross of Christ was fresh in the memory of His Church, she bore martyrdom for Him with joy. His yoke then became so desirable that men even pressed into the court of justice to avow themselves Christians with the hope that they would be martyred! Men, did I say? Yes, and women and children, also, flocked in and seemed as though they courted torture for Christ's yoke had grown so light and so easy, on account of their having known Him, and His death being so fresh a thing! Oh it was marvelous! They have handed down to us, by their traditions, enough to make us blush if ever we dream of shrinking from any service or suffering for the sake of the Master who loved us so much that He even died for us!

II. But now, secondly, and may God the Holy Spirit help me to speak with power upon this important point!—THERE IS A LITTLE WORD OF DISTINCTION IN THE TEXT WHICH VERY MUCH HELPS TO CLEAR IT.

Perhaps somebody says, "I do not find the yoke of life easy, or the burden of life light." Christ does not say that they are. What He does say is, *My* yoke is easy and *My* burden is light." What was Christ's light burden and what was Christ's easy yoke? I believe that I might illustrate the text by saying that He thought thus of that yoke and that burden which He bore—the yoke which rested upon the shoulders of "the Prince of the kings of the earth"—the burden which lay on that blessed back which once wore the robe of universal empire. Never before was there such a yoke, or such a burden, but, for love of us and for delight in what He would accomplish thereby, His yoke to Him was easy, and His burden was light. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. So, whenever you have to bear a yoke or a burden,

count it easy for the same reason as Christ did—but it must be *Christ's* yoke that we carry, for that alone will be easy to us.

For, first, *the yoke of Christ is easy and light as compared with the yoke of others*. The yoke of Moses was heavy. The yoke of the Law of God was burdensome to the Jews, so that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear it. But the yoke of Christ's law is easy and the burden of Christ's command to His Church is light. The yoke of the world is heavy. If any man will wear it, he will find that he may serve this cruel taskmaster till he is gray and then he will be discarded. Cardinal Wolsey lamented, all too late, that had he but served his God with half the zeal he served his king, he would not, in his age, have been left naked to his enemies. The yoke of sin—the yoke of selfishness, the yoke of greediness, the yoke of drunkenness, the yoke of unbelief—is the heaviest yoke of all! The crux of infidelity is heavier than the Cross of Christ. You may depend upon it, that Christ's yoke, compared with any other, or with all others, is truly easy and light!

But then, *it is not easy if we are rebellious against it*. "I find it hard," says one, "to do the Master's will." Do you? I expect the difficulty is the result of *not doing the Master's will*. If you really did it willingly, it would be easy. "Oh, but I find such-and-such a thing, which Christ requires of me, to be hard." No, you do not find that to be hard—it is your own heart that is hard. The hardness is in the sin that rebels against Christ. There would be no hardness in the tenderness that would yield to Him, or that would come to you as the result of yielding. I struggle, and then the cords that bind me cut my flesh. I quietly yield, and then I do not injure myself. A man will float if he will lie still upon the top of the water, but he will drown if he begins to struggle. It is the complete yielding to Christ that makes the yoke to be easy—but the difficulty comes when it is not His yoke that we take, but one made by our self-will. We must have everything according to our own will. We must do everything in our own way and so, Lord Will-Be-Will comes prancing down the street on his high horse and then everything goes amiss! But Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

"Still, the burden of life is very heavy," says one. Yes, but how far is it Christ's yoke and His burden? *It is not His yoke if we are burdened with forbidden cares*, for His yoke is that we should be free from care because we have cast all our care upon Him who cares for us. Has He not pointed us to ravens and to lilies and bid us learn from them the lesson of living without care? Your cares, poor anxious one, are not Christ's yoke! They are a heavy yoke that is all of your own making. But if you took another kind of care—the care of not caring—then you would find Christ's yoke to be easy, His burden to be light and your life would be joyous and happy!

Nor is it Christ's yoke when we add other burdens to the one He lays upon us. "Oh, but I want"—yes, I know. You want to get on, to be rich, to be famous and all of that! But is that Christ's yoke? He says, "I am meek and lowly in heart." Ambition is your own yoke, not His! And the lust of wealth, the desire for power, the craving for human love—all that is a yoke of your own making—and if you will wear it, it will gall you. There is

more joy in being unknown than in being known and there is less care in having no wealth than in having much of it. We often go the wrong way to work in seeking true restfulness and happiness. We set our minds on getting this and that, and then blame our Master because we have a heavy burden on our backs. He meant that we *should* have a heavy burden if we would make one of our own! But if our only care was to seek His Glory, to imitate Him, to put our feet down into His footprints—if, like He, we were submissive even in our greatest agony and closed our most intense petitions with His own words, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will,” then we should find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light! God grant us Grace to prove the difference between His yoke and that which we make for ourselves—between His burden and that which we pile up by our own willfulness!

The yoke of Christ is His word, His precepts, His commands, the following of His example, the bearing of suffering which He appoints, the persecution which comes to us for His sake. This is His yoke, and His burden, quite as much as we need desire to carry. So, let us be content that we are not our own masters, but that we are our Lord's servants and that we have not even a pennyworth of our own to carry, but only mean to be carriers for Him. We have hired ourselves out to carry the vessels of the sanctuary—and we will carry no other burden than that. You remember that Nehemiah gave orders to his servants, “that there should be no burden brought in on the Sabbath day,” and the Lord has graciously brought us to a Divine “Sabbatismos” already. If we bear no burdens but His burdens, and do no service but His service, then we shall find that His yoke is easy and His burden is light! May God the Holy Spirit lead us into this kind of life and then, indeed, shall we be truly happy!

III. Our third point is to be that OUR EXPERIENCE PROVES THE TEXT TO BE TRUE. Many of us have proved that Christ's yoke is easy and that His burden is light. In speaking upon this point, I must go over part of the ground I traversed just now.

Experience—that is to say, use and habit again—*proves Christ's burden to be light*. Those of you who have known the Lord these 25 or 30 or 40 years, what do you say about this matter? Do you not find things somewhat different from what they were when you first came to Christ? Then, He gave you rest, did He not?—and you have never lost it, but, since then, you have gone on bearing His Cross and learning of Him—and you have found a more complete rest, have you not? I think that I shall describe your experience, as well as my own, when I say that we now have a calmness and serenity of spirit which we did not know at first. We have learned to do, almost spontaneously, some things which used to cost us a great effort. We now, almost instantaneously, think and say what before would have caused us deliberation to think and say—and many a burden that almost broke our backs, then, is no burden at all to us now!

See how it is with those who have been long sick. At first they dread the thought of being a week without coming downstairs—but after being bed-ridden for 20 years, they get accustomed to it and even smile when

we pity them. Well, that is a strong illustration of what I mean. To those who are not sufferers, I might give other illustrations, but it is true that there is a sacred use and habit that comes to us through the Grace of God. We say that "use is second nature" and, being accustomed to bear this burden, we are like the bullock which at first is restive and will not plow, but when, year after year, he has plowed with his true yokefellow, he gets almost to love the yoke. And when he is brought out in the morning, he looks round for his yokefellow and adjusts his neck so that he may bear his part of the yoke without distressing his companion that is to be yoked with him. And almost before the farmer bids them move, the two bullocks begin steadily to go their usual round. There is less need of the ox-goad, now, because they have become accustomed to the yoke. They seem to know when to turn at the end of the furrow and how to do it all—and blessed is that Christian who, by experience, has acquired the blessed habit of serving or suffering as his Master wills. He finds that Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

But, dear Friends, we also, by experience, prove Christ's yoke to be easy and His burden to be light *because of the motive that leads us to bear them*. What is the motive that leads a Christian to bear Christ's yoke and burden? Why, the master motive is love! And what will we not do for love? Things which no money could induce us to do are freely done out of love. Well does our poet sing—

***"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."***

In our ordinary domestic life, nothing is too heavy. Nothing is too de-meaning if it is done for love. And so is it with the yoke of Christ. When we really come to love Him, we are willing to do or to suffer anything for His dear sake! His love makes the burden light and the yoke easy.

Further, experience shows us that these things are light *because there is a new nature given us with which we bear the burden and the yoke*. Our old carnal nature cannot endure it—you might as soon try to yoke the sea or to harness the wind as seek to put the yoke of Christ upon a carnal man's shoulder, or make him open his mouth to receive the bit of the Divine Law. But God creates in us a new heart and a right spirit—and that new nature as naturally takes to obedience as the old nature took to rebellion! And so the yoke becomes easy and the burden light. Is not that the true answer to the riddle? Is not that the great reason why that which otherwise would crush us becomes so light?

Then, Christ's yoke is easy and His burden is light *because the Divine Trinity comes to our help*. When the Trinity comes in, all thought of difficulty vanishes. If our Heavenly Father is with us, we can do or bear anything. The feeblest among us could stand, like Atlas with a world upon his shoulders and never feel the strain if God the Father were with him! Then, how uplifting is the sympathy of Christ! We can bear *anything* when He says to us—

***"I feel in My heart all your sighs and your groans,
For you are most near Me, My flesh and My bones!
In all your distresses your Head feels the pain,
Yet all are most necessary, not one is in vain."***

Dr. Watts wrote truly—

***“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows.”***

Then there is the blessed co-operation of the Holy Spirit. When He comes to us as Comforter, Quickener, Guide, Strengthener and Friend—then the yoke is easy and the burden is light—especially when He comes with manifestations of God to the soul and when faith, and hope, and joy, are all shedding their benign influence over the heart. Well might the Apostle say that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him! And when the Holy Spirit comes and reveals Christ in us, then nothing is difficult, but everything is light and easy. Experience cracks this nut which otherwise might break our teeth. Have you ever tried it, Brothers and Sisters? If so, I know that you have proved Christ's word true to you, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Another thing that helps to make Christ's yoke easy to some of us is *the consciousness of the benefits which we have derived from it*. I can bear my personal testimony that the best piece of furniture that I ever had in the house was a cross. I do not mean a material cross—I mean the cross of affliction and trouble. I am sure that I have run more swiftly with a lame leg than I ever did with a sound one. I am certain that I have seen more in the dark than ever I saw in the light—more stars, most certainly—more things in Heaven if fewer things on earth! The anvil, the fire and the hammer are the making of us—we do not get fashioned much by anything else. That heavy hammer falling on us helps to shape us! Therefore let affliction and trouble and trial come. Rutherford said that he thought Christ might almost be jealous of His Cross, for he loved affliction so much! It had brought him so much benefit that he began even to love the cross—it had drawn him so close to his Lord that they ran each other pretty evenly.

Well, I do not think that there is much fear of that, but, really, Christ and His Cross do so sweetly go together that I have sometimes felt like the man who had such blessed times in his sickness and who became so dull when he recovered, that he said, “Take me back to bed, again, and let me have all my pains, again, for then I proved the preciousness of Christ.” Many an old Covenanter, when he met in the kirk in Edinburgh and sat there in peace and quietness, had not half the fellowship with Christ which he had experienced when the cruel Claverhouse was after him! And he said, “Let me go back to the moors and worship God as I did when the text was read by the light of the lightning flash, for God was very near His people beside the moss and among the hills.” It is certainly so, still, Brothers and Sisters. Not only is Christ's yoke easy and His burden light, but I have often felt as if His yoke were wings and His burden feathers—as if, by their help, I could mount and soar above all ordinary experiences! You know what weights are and how they hold you down—but any engineer will tell you that there is a way of managing weights so as to make them lift you up—and our great Engineer lifts us by that which seems as if it would drag us down! Blessed be His name for this!

And, lastly, His yoke becomes easy and His burden light *as we think of what will come of them at last*. The deeper our sorrows, the louder we shall sing. Heaven will be all the brighter because of the darkness through which we have passed on the way to it. Oh, what a Heaven it will be to the sick, the poor, the despised and the afflicted, to burst their bonds and soar away to everlasting bliss! It will not be long before you and I will be where Jesus is—therefore, till then, let us patiently bear all that He lays upon us.

But this is not true of you all. Some of you have heavy burdens to carry, but you have nobody to help you. How do you manage to live without a God? O poor creatures! Perhaps you, Sir, came here in a carriage and pair, but you are, indeed, a poor creature if you have not a God. You draw large dividends from the bank, but you are poor, indeed, if you have not Christ as your Savior. As for me, I will take Christ and His Cross, and count them greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt! The Lord bring you all to think and say the same—and if you ever do, then you can begin with, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” and you can go on to the text and claim Christ's words as applying to you—“My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” The way of holiness is an easy way! May God the Holy Spirit graciously guide you to walk in it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—775, 493, 495.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ISAIAH 49:24-26; 50.

Isaiah 49:24. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered?* Yes, this shall happen when God makes bare His arm and stretches it forth to rescue His captive people.

25, 26. *But thus said the LORD, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contends with you, and I will save your children. And I will feed them that oppress you with their own flesh; and they shall be drunk with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.* This is the promise of Christ to His Church, both the Jewish and the gentile Church. He will deliver her from all her afflictions and distresses. And her enemies shall feed upon their own flesh, or they shall be overthrown by mutual enemies. As it was of old when those that were confederate against Israel suddenly fell to quarreling and slew each other, so is it, sooner or later, in the battle between the Truth of God and error. By-and-by there is a split in the adversaries' camp and they devour one another! Let any wrong thing alone and it will break in pieces of itself. All real and abiding cohesion is gone when men seek to be united against the Lord and against His Anointed. They shall confute one another, or they shall eat their own words and so they shall, as it were, feed upon their own flesh.

Isaiah 50:1. *Thus says the LORD, Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away?* Sometimes, the headings to the chapters in our Bible give us the meaning of the passage. They are, of course, not Inspired, and are merely put there by the translators, but, sometimes, they are little comments upon the text. It is so in the heading of this chapter—"Christ shows that the dereliction of the Jews is not to be imputed to Him, by His ability to save, by His obedience in that work, and by His confidence in that assistance," so that the Lord Jesus, here, speaks to the Jewish Church. The great Redeemer, "the Mighty One of Jacob," thus speaks to His chosen people Israel, "Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, whom I have put away?"

1. *Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have you sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.* It was sin that caused the alienation between Israel and her God, and it is sin that is the cause of all the estrangement from God in the world. A sinful man, so long as he continues to live in sin, cannot love a holy God!

2, 3. *Why, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there no one to answer? Is My hand shortened at all, that it can't redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stink because there is no water, and die for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering.* What a glorious God this is who says that He has not divorced His people! How mighty He is—yes, Almighty! All power is in His hands. Notice who He is, for He goes on to describe Himself—

4. *The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary: He wakens Me morning by morning, He wakens My ears to hear as the learned.* Just as scholars learn from their teacher. It was a wondrous stoop for the Omnipotent to become a Learner, but He descended lower than that.

5. *The Lord GOD has opened My ears and I was not rebellious, neither turned back.* This was another step in the ladder of Christ's humiliation, but He went lower still! Read the 3rd verse, again, and then read the 6th. "I clothe the heavens with blackness and I make sackcloth their covering."

6, 7. *I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help Me, therefore shall I not be confounded, therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.* Even though He had to stoop so low as to endure shame and spitting, He knew that the ultimate result would be Glory to God and to Himself. He had no thought of despairing. It had been already written of Him, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." He shall surely accomplish the work which His Father gave Him to do. The next verse is probably the one from which Paul took that grand challenge of his, "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died," and so on. He takes out of the mouth of Christ his words of confidence and puts them into the mouth of all Christ's people.

8. *He is near that justifies Me; who will contend with Me?* Our Lord Jesus Christ was justified in His Resurrection. He took His people's sin upon Him and, therefore, He had to die in their place—but His work was so complete that He was Himself justified as well as all His people—and He challenges anyone to lay anything to His charge!

8-10. *Let us stand together: who is My adversary? Let him come near to Me. Behold, the Lord God will help Me, who is he that shall condemn Me? Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up. Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light?* It is the Savior still speaking, for He knew what it was to walk in darkness and to have no light. And what terrible darkness it was, my Brothers and Sisters! What an awful thing it was to Him to have so suffer the withdrawal of the light of His Father's Countenance from Him! He knows, therefore, what this trial means, and being full of compassion, He offers to us the kindest counsel if we are in a similar condition. What does He tell us to do? Listen, you who love the Lord, yet who are in the dark.

10. *Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and rely upon his God.* In darkness or in the light, take heed that you do this! When everything about you seems contrary to the Divine promises and your spirits are ready to sink, take heed to this good counsel of your Savior—"Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and rely upon his God."

11. *Behold, all you that kindle a fire.* You who would gladly save yourselves.

11. *That compass yourselves about with sparks.* Or firebrands.

11. *Walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks.* Or flambeaux.

11. *That you have kindled.* That will be the end of it. This grand illumination of yours—all your good works, all your glorious intellect and I know not what—what will come of it?

11. *This shall you have of My hand; you shall lie down in sorrow.* God save us all from such a lying down as that at the last, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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NO. 1503

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

***“Have you not read?...Have you not read?...If you had known what this means.”
Matthew 12:3-7.***

THE scribes and Pharisees were great readers of the Law of God. They studied the sacred books continually, poring over each word and letter. They made notes of very little importance, but still very curious notes as to which was the middle verse of the entire Old Testament, which verse was half-way to the middle and how many times such a word occurred—and even how many times a *letter* occurred and the size of the letter and its peculiar position. They have left us a mass of wonderful notes upon the mere words of Holy Scripture. They might have done the same thing upon another book, for that matter, and the information would have been about as important as the facts which they have so industriously collected concerning the letter of the Old Testament.

They were, however, intense readers of the Law. They picked a quarrel with the Savior upon a matter touching this Law, for they carried it at their fingertips and were ready to use it as a bird of prey does its talons to tear and rend. Our Lord's disciples had plucked some ears of corn and rubbed them between their hands. According to Pharisaic interpretation, to rub an ear of corn is a kind of *threshing* and, as it is very wrong to thresh on the Sabbath, therefore it must be very wrong to rub out an ear or two of corn when you are hungry on the Sabbath! That was their argument and they came to the Savior with it and with their version of the Sabbath Law.

The Savior generally carried the war into the enemy's camp and He did so on this occasion. He met them on their own ground and He said *to them*, “Have you not read?” a cutting question to the scribes and Pharisees, though there is nothing apparently sharp about it! It was a very fair and proper question to put to them, but only think of putting it to *them*—“Have you not *read*?” “Read!” They could have said, “Why, we have read the Book through many times! We are *always* reading it! No passage escapes our critical eyes.” Yet our Lord proceeds to put the question a second time, “Have you not read?” as if they had not read, after all, though they were the greatest readers of the Law then living! He insinuates that they have not read at all and then He gives them, incidentally, the reason why He had asked them whether they had read.

He says, “If you had known what this means,” as much as to say, “You have not read because you have not understood.” Your eyes have gone over the words and you have counted the letters. You have even marked the position of each verse and word and you have said learned things about all the books and yet you are not really readers of the sacred Volume, for you have not acquired the true art of *reading*—you do not *under-*

stand and, therefore, you do not truly read it! You are mere skimmers and glancers at the Word of God—you have not read it, for you do not understand it.

I. That is the subject of our present discourse, or, at least, the first point of it, that IN ORDER TO THE TRUE READING OF THE SCRIPTURES, THERE MUST BE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THEM. I scarcely need to preface these remarks by saying that we *must read* the Scriptures. You know how necessary it is that we should be fed upon the Truth of Holy Scripture. Need I suggest the question as to whether you read your Bibles or not? I am afraid that this is a magazine-reading age—a newspaper-reading age, a periodical-reading age—but not so much a Bible-reading age as it ought to be.

In the old Puritan times men used to have a scant supply of other literature, but they found a library enough in the one book, the Bible! And how they read the Bible! How little of Scripture there is in modern sermons compared with the sermons of those masters of theology, the Puritan Divines! Almost every sentence of theirs seems to cast side lights upon a text of Scripture—not only the one they are preaching about—but many others, as well, are set in a new light as the discourse proceeds. They introduce blended lights from other passages which are parallel or semi-parallel and thus they educate their readers to compare spiritual things with spiritual.

I would to God that we ministers kept more closely to the grand old Book. We would be instructive preachers if we did, even if we were ignorant of “modern thought” and were not “abreast of the times.” I guarantee you we should be leagues ahead of our times if we kept closely to the Word of God! As for you, my Brothers and Sisters, who have not to preach, the best food for you is the Word of God itself. Sermons and books are well enough, but streams that run for a long distance above ground gradually gather for themselves some of the soil through which they flow and they lose the cool freshness with which they started from the spring head.

The Truth of God is sweetest where it breaks from the smitten Rock, for at its first gush, it has lost none of its heavenliness and vitality. It is always best to drink at the well and not from the tank. You shall find that reading the Word of God for *yourselves*, reading *it* rather than notes upon it, is the surest way of growing in Divine Grace. Drink of the unadulterated milk of the Word of God and not of the skim milk, or the milk and water of *man's* word. But, now, Beloved, our point is that much *apparent* Bible reading is not Bible reading at all—the verses pass under the eyes and the sentences glide over the mind—but there is no true *reading*.

An old preacher used to say the Word has mighty free course among many, nowadays, for it goes in one of their ears and out the other—and so it seems to be with some readers—they can read a very great deal because they do not read anything. The eyes glance but the mind never rests. The soul does not light upon the Truth of God and stay there. It flits over the landscape as a bird might do, but it builds no nest and finds no rest for the sole of its feet. Such reading is not reading! Understanding the *mean-*

ing is the essence of true reading. Reading has a kernel to it and the mere shell is of little worth.

In prayer there is such a thing as praying in prayer a praying that is the heart of the prayer. So in praise there is a praising in song, an inward fire of intense devotion which is the life of the hallelujah. It is so in fasting—there is a fasting which is not fasting—and there is an inward fasting, a fasting of the soul, which is the soul of fasting. It is even so with the reading of the Scriptures. There is an interior reading, a *kernel* reading, a true and living reading of the Word. This is the soul of reading and, if it is not there, the reading is a mechanical exercise and profits nothing. Now, Beloved, unless we understand what we read, we have not read it—the heart of the reading is absent.

We commonly condemn the Romanists for keeping the daily service in the Latin tongue. Yet it might as well be in the Latin language as in any other tongue if it is not understood by the people! Some comfort themselves with the idea that they have done a good thing when they have read a chapter of Scripture into the meaning of which they have not entered at all! But does not Nature, herself, reject this as a mere superstition? If you had turned the Bible upside down and spent the same time in looking at the characters in *that* direction, you would have gained as much good from it as you will in reading it in the regular way without understanding it.

If you had a New Testament in Greek, it would be very Greek to some of you, but it would do you as much good to look at that as it does to look at the English New Testament unless you read with an understanding heart. It is not the letter which saves the soul—the letter kills, in many senses, and it never can give life. If you harp on only the letter, you may be tempted to use it as a weapon against the Truth of God as the Pharisees did of old. And your knowledge of the letter may breed pride in you to your destruction. It is the *spirit*, the real inner meaning that is sucked into the soul by which we are blessed and sanctified.

We become saturated with the Word of God, like Gideon's fleece, which was wet with the dew of Heaven—and this can only come to pass by our receiving it into our minds and hearts, accepting it as God's Truth and, so far understanding it as to delight in it. We must understand it, then, or else we have not read it aright. Certainly, the benefit of reading must come to the soul by the way of the understanding. When the High Priest went into the Holy Place, he always lit the golden candlestick before he kindled the incense upon the bronze altar, as if to show that the mind must have illumination before the affections can properly rise towards their Divine object. There must be knowledge of God before there can be love of God—there must be a knowledge of Divine things, as they are revealed, before there can be an enjoyment of them.

We must try to make out, as far as our finite mind can grasp, what God means by this and what He means by that. Otherwise we may kiss the book and have no love to its contents. We may reverence the letter and yet really have no devotion towards the Lord who speaks to us in these words. Beloved, you will never get comfort to your soul out of what you do not

understand, nor find guidance for your life out of what you do not comprehend! Nor can any practical bearing upon your character come out of that which is not understood by you. Now, if we are thus to understand what we read or otherwise we read in vain, this shows us that when we come to the study of Holy Scripture we should try to have our mind well awake to it.

We are not always fit, it seems to me, to read the Bible. At times it were well for us to stop before we open the volume. "Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground." You have just come in from careful thought and anxiety about your worldly business—you cannot immediately take the Bible and enter into its heavenly mysteries. As you ask a blessing over your meat before you eat, so it would be a good rule for you to ask a blessing on the Word of God before you partake of its heavenly food. Pray the Lord to strengthen your eyes before you dare to look into the eternal light of Scripture!

As the priests washed their feet at the laver before they went to their holy work, so it were well to wash the soul's eyes with which you look upon God's Word—to wash even the fingers, if I may so speak of the *mental* fingers with which you will turn from page to page—that with a holy book you may deal after a holy fashion. Say to your soul, "Come, Soul, wake up! You are not, now, about to read the newspaper. You are not, now, perusing the pages of a human poet to be dazzled by his flashing poetry. You are coming very near to *God* who sits in the Word like a crowned monarch in his halls! Wake up, my glory! Wake up, all that is within me! Though just now I may not be praising and glorifying God, I am about to consider that which should lead me to do so and, therefore, it is an act of devotion. So be on the stir, my Soul! Be on the stir and bow not sleepily before the awful Throne of the Eternal."

Scripture reading is our spiritual mealtime. Sound the gong and call in every faculty to the Lord's own table to feast upon the precious meat which is now to be partaken of, or, rather, ring the Church bells as for worship, for the studying of the Holy Scripture ought to be as solemn a deed as when we lift the Psalm upon the Sabbath in the courts of the Lord's house. If these things are so, you will see at once, dear Friends, that if you are to understand what you read, *you will need to meditate upon it*. Some passages of Scripture lie clear before us—blessed shallows in which the lambs may wade—but there are deeps in which our mind might rather drown herself than swim with pleasure if she came there without caution.

There are texts of Scripture which are made and constructed on purpose to make us think. By this means, among others, our heavenly Father would educate us for Heaven by making us think our way into Divine mysteries. Hence He puts the Word in a somewhat involved form to compel us to meditate upon it before we reach the sweetness of it. He might, you know, have explained it to us so that we might catch the thought in a minute, but He does not please to do so in every case. Many of the veils which are cast over Scripture are not meant to hide the meaning from the *diligent*, but to compel the mind to be active, for oftentimes the diligence

of the heart in seeking to know the Divine mind does the heart more good than the knowledge itself.

Meditation and careful thought exercise us and strengthen the soul for the reception of the yet more lofty Truths of God. I have heard that the mothers who, in the Balearic isles in the old times, wanted to bring their boys up to be good slingers would put their dinners up above them where they could not get at them until they threw a stone and fetched them down. Our Lord wishes us to be good slingers and He puts up some precious Truth in a lofty place where we cannot get it down except by slinging at it and, at last, we hit the mark and find food for our souls! Then have we the double benefit of learning the art of meditation and partaking of the sweet Truth which it has brought within our reach.

We must *meditate*, Brothers and Sisters! These grapes will yield no wine till we tread upon them. These olives must be put under the wheel and pressed, again and again, that the oil may flow. In a dish of nuts, you may know which nut has been eaten because there is a little hole which the insect has punctured through the shell. Just a little hole and then inside there is the living thing eating up the kernel! Well, it is a grand thing to bore through the shell of the letter and then to live inside feeding upon the kernel! I would wish to be such a little worm as that, living within and upon the Word of God, having bored my way through the shell and having reached the innermost mystery of the blessed Gospel. The Word of God is always most precious to the man who most lives upon it!

As I sat, last year, under a wide-spreading beech, I was pleased to mark with prying curiosity the singular habits of that most wonderful of trees which seems to have intelligence about it, while other trees have not. I wondered and admired the beech, but I thought to myself I do not think half as much of this beech tree as yonder squirrel does! I see him leap from branch to branch and I feel sure that he dearly values the old beech tree because he has his home somewhere inside it in a hollow place. These branches are his shelter and those bechnuts are his food. He lives upon the tree! It is his world, his playground, his granary, his home—indeed, it is everything to him—but it is not so to me, for I find my rest and food elsewhere!

With God's Word it is well for us to be like squirrels, living in it and living on it! Let us exercise our minds by leaping from branch to branch in it; find our rest and food in it and make it our all in all! We shall be the people that get the most profit out of it if we make it to be our food, our medicine, our treasury, our armory, our rest, our delight! May the Holy Spirit lead us to do this and make the Word thus precious to our souls. Beloved, I would next remind you that for this end *we shall be compelled to pray*. It is a grand thing to be driven to think, but it is a grander thing to be driven to pray through having been made to think! Am I not addressing some of you who do not read the Word of God? And am I not speaking to many more who do read it, but do not read it with the strong resolve that they will understand it?

I know it must be so. Do you wish to begin to be true readers? Will you, from now on, labor to understand? Then you must get to your knees! You

must cry to God for direction! Who understands a book best? The *author* of it. If I want to ascertain the real meaning of a rather twisted sentence and the author lives near me and I can call upon him, I shall ring at his door and say, "Would you kindly tell me what you mean by that sentence? I have no doubt, whatever, that it is very clear, but I am such a simpleton that I cannot make it out. I have not the knowledge and grasp of the subject which you possess and, therefore, your allusions and descriptions are beyond my range of knowledge. It is quite within your range and commonplace, but it is very difficult to me. Would you kindly explain your meaning to me?"

A good man would be glad to be thus treated and would think it no trouble to unravel his meaning to a candid enquirer. Thus I should be sure to get the correct meaning, for I should be going to the fountainhead when I consulted the author. So, Beloved, the Holy Spirit is with us and when we take His Book and begin to read and want to know what it means, we must ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the meaning. He will not work a miracle, but He will elevate our minds and He will suggest to us thoughts which will lead us on, by their natural relation, the one to the other, till at last we come to the pith and marrow of His Divine Instruction. Seek, then, very earnestly the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for if the very soul of reading is the understanding of what we read, then we must, in prayer, call upon the Holy Spirit to unlock the secret mysteries of the Inspired Word.

If we thus ask the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, it will follow, dear Friends, that *we shall be ready to use all means and helps towards the understanding of the Scriptures*. When Philip asked the Ethiopian eunuch whether he understood the prophecy of Isaiah, he replied, "How can I, unless some man should guide me?" Then Philip went up and opened to him the Word of the Lord. Some, under the pretense of being taught of the Spirit of God, refuse to be instructed by books or by living men. This is not honoring the Spirit of God—it is a disrespect to Him—for if He gives to some of His servants more light than to others and it is clear He does, then they are bound to give that light to others and to use it for the good of the Church.

But if the other part of the Church refuse to receive that light, to what end did the Spirit of God give it? This would imply that there is a mistake somewhere in the economy of gifts and Graces which is managed by the Holy Spirit. It cannot be so! The Lord Jesus Christ pleases to give more knowledge of His Word and more insight into it to some of His servants than to others and it is ours to joyfully accept the knowledge which He gives in such ways as He chooses to give it. It would be most wicked of us to say, "We will not have the heavenly treasure which exists in earthen vessels. If God will give us the heavenly treasure out of His own hands, but not through the earthen vessel, we will have it. We think we are too wise, too heavenly minded, too spiritual altogether to care for jewels when they are placed in earthen pots. We will not hear anybody and we will not read anything except the Bible itself. Neither will we accept any light ex-

cept that which comes in through a crack in our own roof. We will not see by another man's candle—we would sooner remain in the dark.”

Brothers and Sisters, do not let us fall into such folly! Let the light come from God and though a child shall bring it, we will joyfully accept it! If any of His servants, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, shall have received light from Him, behold, “all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's” and, therefore, accept the light which God has kindled and ask for Grace that you may turn that light upon the Word of God so that when you read it you may understand it. I do not wish to say much more about this, but I should like to push it home upon some of you. You have Bibles at home, I know. You would not like to be without Bibles. You would think you were heathens if you had no Bibles!

You have them very neatly bound and they are very fine looking volumes—not much thumbed, not much worn and not likely to be so—for they only come out on Sundays for an airing and they lie in lavender with the clean handkerchiefs all the rest of the week. You do not read the Word; you do not search it. So how can you expect to get the Divine blessing? If the heavenly gold is not worth digging for, you are not likely to discover it! Over and over I have told you that the searching of the Scriptures is *not* the way of salvation. The Lord has said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But, still, the reading of the Word of God often leads, like the hearing of it, to *faith*, and faith brings salvation, for faith comes by hearing and reading is a sort of hearing. While you are seeking to know what the Gospel is, it may please God to bless your souls.

But what poor reading some of you give to your Bibles! I do not want to say anything which is too severe because it may not be strictly true—let your own consciences speak! Still, I make bold to enquire—Do not many of you read the Bible in a very hurried way just a little bit and off you go? Do you not soon forget what you have read and lose what little effect it seemed to have? How few of you are resolved to get at its soul, its juice, its life, its essence and to drink in its meaning! Well, if you do not do that, I tell you, again, your reading is miserable reading, dead reading, unprofitable reading—it is not reading at all! The name would be misapplied! May the blessed Spirit give you repentance touching this thing.

II. But now, secondly and very briefly, let us notice that IN READING WE OUGHT TO SEEK OUT THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE WORD. I think that is in my text because our Lord says, “Have you not read?” Then, again, “Have you not read?” And then He says, “If you had known what this means” and the meaning is something very spiritual. The text He quoted was, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” a text out of the Prophet Hosea. Now, the scribes and Pharisees were all for the letter of the sacrifice—the killing of the bullock and so on. They overlooked the *spiritual* meaning of the passage, “I will have *mercy* and not sacrifice,” namely that God prefers that we should care for our fellow creatures rather than that we should observe any ceremonies of His Law so as to cause hunger or thirst and, thereby, death, to any of the creatures that His hands have made. They ought to have passed beyond the outward into the spiritual and all our readings ought to do the same.

Notice that this should be the case when we read *the historical passages*. “Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God and did eat the show bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?” This was a piece of *history* and they ought to have read it so as to have found spiritual instruction in it. I have heard very stupid people say, “Well, I do not care to read the historical parts of Scripture.” Beloved Friends, you do not know what you are talking about when you say that! I say to you by experience that I have sometimes found even a greater depth of spirituality in the histories than I have in the Psalms.

You will say, “How is that?” I assert that when you reach the inner and spiritual meaning of a history you are often surprised at the wondrous clearness and the realistic force with which the teaching comes home to your soul. Some of the most marvelous mysteries of Revelation are better understood by being set before our eyes in the histories than they are by the verbal declaration of them. When we have the statement to explain the illustration, the illustration expands and clarifies the statement! For instance, when our Lord Himself would explain to us what faith was, He sent us to the history of the bronze serpent—and who is there that has ever read the story of the bronze serpent and has not felt that he has a better idea of faith through the picture of the dying, snake-bitten persons, looking at the serpent of brass and living, than from any description which even Paul has given us, wondrously as he defines and describes?

Never, I pray you, depreciate the historical portions of God’s Word, but when you cannot get good out of them, say, “That is my foolish head and my slow heart. O Lord, be pleased to clear my brain and cleanse my soul.” When He answers that prayer, you will feel that every portion of God’s Word is given by Inspiration and is and must be profitable to you. Cry, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law!” Just the same thing is true with regard to all the ceremonial precepts because the Savior goes on to say, “Have you not read in the Law, how that on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless?”

There is not a single precept in the old Law but has an inner sense and meaning—therefore do not turn away from Leviticus, or say, “I cannot read these chapters in the Books of Exodus and Numbers. They are all about the tribes and their standards; the stations in the wilderness and the marches; the tabernacle and furniture; about golden utensils and bowls and boards and sockets and precious stones and blue and scarlet and fine linen.” No, but look for the *inner* meaning. Make a thorough search, for as in a king’s treasure, that which is the most closely locked up and the hardest to come by is the choicest jewel of the treasure, so is it with the Holy Scriptures!

Did you ever go to the British Museum library? There are many books of reference there which the reader is allowed to take down when he pleases. There are other books for which he must write a ticket and he cannot get them without the ticket. But they have certain choice books

which you will not see without a special order and then there is an unlocking of doors, an opening of cases—and there is a watcher with you while you make your inspection. You are scarcely allowed to put your eyes on the manuscript for fear you should blot a letter out by glancing at it! It is as such a precious treasure—there is not another copy of it in all the world—and so you cannot get at it easily.

Just so, there are choice and precious doctrines of God's Word which are locked up in such cases as Leviticus or Solomon's Song and you cannot get at them without a deal of unlocking of doors—and the Holy Spirit Himself must be with you, or else you will never come at the priceless treasure! The higher Truths of God are as choicely hidden away as the precious regalia of princes! Therefore search as well as read. Do not be satisfied with a ceremonial precept till you reach its spiritual meaning, for that is true reading. You have not read till you understand the spirit of the matter. It is the same with the *doctrinal* statements of God's Word. I have sorrowfully observed some persons who are very orthodox and who can repeat their creed very glibly and yet the principal use that they make of their orthodoxy is to sit and watch the preacher with the view of framing a charge against him.

He has uttered a single sentence which is judged to be half a hair's breadth below the standard! "That man is not sound! He said some good things, but he is rotten at the core, I am certain of it! He used an expression which was not 18 ounces to the pound." Sixteen ounces to the pound are not enough for these dear Brothers and Sisters of whom I speak—they must have something more and over and above the shekel of the sanctuary! Their knowledge is used as a microscope to magnify trifling differences. I hesitate not to say that I have come across persons who—

"Could a hair divide

Between the west and north-west side,"

in matters of divinity, but who know nothing about the things of God in their real meaning! They have never drank them into their souls but only sucked them up into their mouths to spit them out on others!

The doctrine of election is one thing, but to know that God has predestinated you and to have the fruit of it in the good works to which you are ordained is quite another thing. To talk about the love of Christ; to talk about the Heaven that is provided for His people and such things—all this is very well—but this may be done without any personal acquaintance with them. Therefore, Beloved, never be satisfied with a sound creed, but desire to have it engraved on the tablets of your heart. The doctrines of Grace are good, but the Grace of the doctrines is still better! See that you have it and be not content with the idea that you are instructed until you so understand the doctrine that you have felt its *spiritual* power.

This makes us feel that, in order to come to this, we shall need to feel Jesus present with us whenever we read the Word. Mark that fifth verse, which I would now bring before you as part of my text which I have, up to now, left out. "Have you not read in the Law, how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is One greater than the temple." Yes, they

thought much about the letter of the word, but they did not know that He was there who is the Sabbath's Master—man's Lord and the Sabbath's Lord—and Lord of everything! Oh, when you have gotten hold of a creed, or of an ordinance, or anything that is outward in the letter, pray the Lord to make you feel that there is something greater than the printed book and something better than the mere shell of the creed!

There is one Person greater than all of that and to Him we should cry that He may be always with us! O living Christ, make this a living Word to me! Your Word is life, but not without the Holy Spirit. I may know this Book of yours from beginning to end and have it all memorized, from Genesis to Revelation—and yet it may be a dead book to me—and I may be a dead soul! But, Lord, be present! Then will I look up from the Book to the Lord—from the precept to Him who fulfilled it—from the Law to Him who honored it! Then I will look up from the threats to Him who has borne them for me—and from the promise to Him in whom it is, “Yes and amen.” Ah, then we shall read the Book very differently!

He is here with me in this chamber of mine—I must not trifle. He leans over me. He puts His finger along the lines. I can see His pierced hands! I will read it as in His Presence. I will read it knowing that He is the Substance of it; that He is the Proof of this Book as well as the Writer of it—the sum of this Scripture as well as the Author of it. *That* is the way for true students to become wise! You will get at the soul of Scripture when you can keep Jesus with you while you are reading. Did you ever hear a sermon which you felt that if Jesus had come into that pulpit while the man was making his oration, He would have said, “Get down, get down! What business have you here? I sent you to preach about Me and you preach about a dozen other things! Go home and learn of Me and then come and speak”?

That sermon which does not lead to Christ, or of which Jesus Christ is not the top and the bottom, is a sort of sermon that will make the devils in Hell laugh, but might make the angels of God weep if they were capable of such emotion! You remember the story I told you of the Welshman who heard a young man preach a very fine sermon—a grand sermon, a high faluting, spread-eagle sermon—and when he had done, he asked the Welshman what he thought of it. The man replied that he did not think anything of it. “And why not?” “Because there was no Jesus Christ in it.” “Well,” he said, “but my text did not seem to run that way.” “Never mind,” said the Welshman, “your sermon *ought* to run that way.” “I do not see that, however,” said the young man.

“No,” said the other, “you do not see how to preach, either. This is the way to preach. From every little village in England, it does not matter where it is, there is sure to be a road to London. Though there may not be a road to certain other places, there is certain to be a road to London. Now, from every text in the Bible there is a road to Jesus Christ and the way to preach is just to say, ‘How can I get from this text to Jesus Christ?’ and then go preaching all the way along it.” “Well, but,” said the young man, “suppose I find a text that has not got a road to Jesus Christ.” “I have preached for 40 years,” said the old man, “and I have never found

such a Scripture. But if I ever do find one, I will go over hedge and ditch and I will get to Him, for I will never finish without bringing in my Master.”

Perhaps you will think that I have gone a little over hedge and ditch tonight, but I am persuaded that I have not, for the sixth verse comes in here and brings our Lord in most sweetly, setting Him in the very forefront of you Bible readers so that you must not think of reading without feeling that He is there, who is Lord and Master of everything that you are reading—and who shall make these things precious to you if you realize Him in them! If you do not find Jesus in the Scriptures, they will be of small service to you, for what did our Lord, Himself, say? “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, but you will not come unto Me that you might have life”—and therefore your searching comes to nothing! You find no life and remain dead in your sins. May it not be so with us!

III. Lastly, SUCH A READING OF SCRIPTURE as implies the understanding of, the entrance into its spiritual meaning and the discovery of the Divine Person who *is* the spiritual meaning, IS PROFITABLE, for here our Lord says, “If you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.” It will save us from making a great many mistakes if we get to understand the Word of God. And among other good things we shall not condemn the guiltless. I have no time to enlarge upon these benefits, but I will just say, putting all together, that the diligent reading of the Word of God with the strong resolve to get at its meaning often begets spiritual life.

We are begotten by the Word of God—it is the instrumental means of regeneration. Therefore love your Bibles. Keep close to your Bibles. You seeking sinners—you who are seeking the Lord—your first business is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but while you are yet in darkness and in gloom, oh, love your Bibles and search them! Take them to bed with you and when you wake up in the morning, if it is too early to go downstairs and disturb the house, get half-an-hour of reading upstairs. Say, “Lord, guide me to that text which shall bless me! Help me to understand how I, a poor sinner, can be reconciled to You.”

I remember how, when I was seeking the Lord, I went to my Bible and to Baxter’s “Call to the Unconverted,” and to Allen’s, “Alarm,” and Doddridge’s, “Rise and Progress,” for I said to myself, “I am afraid that I shall be lost, but I will know the reason why. I am afraid I never shall find Christ, but it shall not be for lack of looking for Him.” That fear used to haunt me, but I said, “I will find Him if He is to be found. I will read. I will think.” There was never a soul that did sincerely seek for Jesus in the Word of God but, by-and-by, has stumbled on the precious Truth of God that Christ was near at hand and did not need any looking for—that He was *really there*—only they, poor blind creatures, were in such a maze that they could not, just then, see Him!

Oh, cling to Scripture! Scripture is not Christ, but it is the silken clue which will lead you to Him! Follow its leadings faithfully. When you have received regeneration and a new life, keep on reading because it will comfort you. You will see more of what the Lord has done for you. You will

learn that you are redeemed, adopted, saved, sanctified. Half the errors in the world spring from people not reading their Bibles! Would anybody think that the Lord would leave any of His dear children to perish if he read such a text as this, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand"? When I read that, I am sure of the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints!

Read, then, the Word of God, and it will be much for your comfort. It will be for your nourishment, too. It is your food as well as your life. Search it and you will grow strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. It will be for your guidance, also. I am sure those go most right who keep closest to the Book. Oftentimes when you do not know what to do, you will see a text leaping up out of the Bible and saying, "Follow me!" I have seen a promise, sometimes, blaze out before my eyes just like when an illuminated device flames forth upon a public building! One touch of the Holy Spirit and a sentence flashes out in flames!

I have seen a text of Scripture flame forth in that way to my soul—I have known that it was God's Word to me—and I have gone on my way rejoicing. And, oh, you will get a thousand helps out of that wondrous Book if you do but read it! For, understanding the words more, you will prize it more and, as you get older, the Book will grow with your growth and turn out to be a gray-beard's manual of devotion just as it was, before, a child's sweet story book! Yes, it will always be a new Book just as new a Bible as if it were printed yesterday and nobody had ever seen a word of it till now! And yet it will be a deal more precious for all the memories which cluster round it.

As we turn over its pages, how sweetly do we remember passages in our history which will never be forgotten to all eternity, but will stand forever intertwined with gracious promises. Beloved, may the Lord teach us to read His Book of Life which He has opened before us here below, so that we may read our titles clear in that other Book of Love which we have not seen yet, but which will be opened at the Last Great Day. The Lord be with you and bless you. Amen.

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ONE GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE

NO. 1275

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 23, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But I say unto you, that in this place is One greater than the temple.”
Matthew 12:6.***

OUR Lord intended, of course, to assert that He, Himself was greater than the temple, but He used the most modest form of putting it. When in the interests of truth He is obliged to speak of Himself, His meekness and lowliness are always apparent in the mode in which He makes the personal allusion. Everyone can see that He does not seek His own glory, or desire the praise of man. In the instance before us He says, “In this place is One,” or, as some read it, “is *something* greater than the temple.” He who is truly meek and lowly is not afraid to speak honestly about himself, for he has no jealousy about his reputation for humility and is quite willing to be thought proud by the ungenerous, for he knows that he only speaks of himself in order to glorify God.

There is a native peculiarity in true lowliness which shows itself in the very form of its utterances and wards off the imputation of boasting. We do not find the passage now before us in any other Gospel but that of Matthew. It is so important, so energetic and in addition must have been so startling to those who heard it, that we should not have been astonished if we had found it in all the four Evangelists. Only Matthew records it and he, most fittingly, since he is, in some respects, the Evangelist of the Hebrews, for, as you know, he began his book by saying, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”—he evidently adapted his Gospel to the Jews.

As the Jews would be the last to receive teaching which in any way lowered the temple, it is all the more remarkable that Matthew inserted our Lord's Words in the Gospel which he designed to be read by them. But, though the words occur but once, we must not, therefore, regard them as being any the less weighty, for the sentence comes with a preface which shows the force our Lord intends to throw into it. The declaration is prefaced by, “I say unto you.” Here is the authority before which we all bow—Jesus says it!

He does not merely proclaim the Truth of God, but He sets His personal stamp and royal seal upon it. “I say unto you”—I, who cannot lie, who speak the things which I have received of My Father, upon whom the Spirit of God rests without measure,—I say unto you. He speaks as one having authority and not as the scribes. With a verily, verily of certainty, He teaches and, therefore, let us unquestionably accept His declaration, “I say unto you, that in this place is One greater than the temple.”

Let us now meditate upon this Truth, first observing the fact that our Lord is greater than the temple. Secondly, remarking *that He ought to be*

so regarded. And thirdly, *suggesting and urging home some few reflections which arise out of the subject.*

I. First, then, OUR LORD JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE. *He is so manifestly because He is God*, “God over all, blessed forever.” He who dwells in the house is greater than the house in which he dwells, so that as God, our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple. It needs no arguing that it must be so—the Divine must be infinitely greater than anything which is of human workmanship—the Self-Existent must infinitely excel the noblest of created things. The temple was many years in building. Its huge stones were quarried with enormous labor and its cedar beams were shaped and carved with matchless skill. And though no hammer or tool of iron was used upon the spot, yet by the strength of men were the huge stones laid each one in its place. It stood upon Zion a thing of beauty and a joy forever, but still a work of men’s hands, a creation of human strength and human wisdom.

Not thus is it with the Christ of God. Of Him we may truly say, “From everlasting to everlasting You are God.” “And You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the works of Your hands.” The temple being created and having a beginning was a thing of *time* and, therefore, had an end. The things which are seen, whether they are temples or taverns, are temporal and must pass away. In due time the firebrand in the hand of the Roman soldier reduces to ashes a building which seemed as lasting as the rock upon which it stood. Go now to the place where Zion once stood and mark well how the glory is departed, even as it departed from Shiloh of old.

Deep down in the earth, the base of the mighty arch which formed the ascent to the house of the Lord has been uncovered from the mountain of ruins, but scarcely will you find one stone left upon another which has not been thrown down. These masses of marble were so huge, it is an ordinary circumstance to find a stone 24 feet in length and nine feet in breadth! And sometimes they are even found 40 feet in length, weighing as much as one hundred tons, yet have they been flung from the seats as stones are cast upon the king’s highway. Thus has the temple disappeared and thus shall all creation pass away, but You O Lord abide!

“They shall perish; but You remain; and they all shall wax old as does a garment; and as a gesture shall You fold them up, and they shall be changed: but You are the same, and Your years shall not fail.” The temple was no rival of Jehovah, but derived all its glory from His deigning to reveal Himself therein. Exceedingly magnificent as it was, it was far below the Divine greatness and only worthy to be called His footstool. If we were to dwell on any one of the attributes of His Godhead, it would be more and more clear that Christ is greater than the temple. But the point is one which none of us doubt. After all, the temple was but a *symbol* and Jesus is the *Substance*. It was but the *shadow* of which He is the Reality.

Although every Hebrew heart leaped for joy when it thought of the tabernacle of the Lord of Hosts, and even this day every Jewish spirit laments the departed glories of Zion, yet was the holy and beautiful house a figure of good things to come and not the very image of the Covenant blessings.

It was not essential to the world's well being, for lo, its disappearance has brought light and life to the Gentiles! It is not necessary to true religion now, for the time is come when they that worship Jehovah adore Him in no consecrated shrines, but worship Him in spirit and in truth. But our Lord Jesus is Truth and Substance. He is essential to our light and life and could He be taken from us, earth's hope would be quenched forever.

Emmanuel, God With Us, You are greater than the temple! This fact it was necessary for our Lord to mention in order to justify His disciples in having rubbed ears of corn together to eat on the Sabbath. He said, "the priests in the sanctuary profane the Sabbath, and are blameless." They were engaged in the labors of sacrifice and service all through the Sabbath, yet nobody accused them of breaking the Law of the Sabbath. Why? Because the authority of the temple exempted its servants from the letter of the Law. "But," said our Lord, "I am greater than the temple, therefore, surely I have power to allow My servants who are about My business to refresh themselves with food, now that they are hungry. And since I have given them My sanction to exercise the little labor involved in rubbing out a few grains of wheat, they are beyond all censure."

If the sanction of the temple allows the greater labor, much more shall the sanction of One who is greater than the temple allow the less! As the Son of God, Christ is under no Law. As man He has kept the Law and honored it for our sakes, because He stood as our Surety and our Substitute. But He, Himself, in the essence of His Nature is the Law Maker and above all Law. Who shall arraign the eternal Son and call the Judge of all the earth to account? "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth."

But now we must pass on to other meanings and view our Lord in His blessed Personality as the Son of Man as well as the Son of God. He is greater than the temple, for *He is a more glorious enshrinement of Deity*. The temple was great above all buildings because it was the House of God, but it was only so in a measure, for the Eternal is not to be contained within walls and curtains. "However," says Stephen, "the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as said the Prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will you build Me? said the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Have not My hands made all these things?" How remarkably Stephen does, as it were, pass over the temple with a mere word. He merely mentions it in a sentence, "But Solomon built Him a house," as if no stress needed to be laid upon the circumstance.

It is remarkable that from the moment the temple was built, true religion in Israel began to decline and the abominable shrines of heathen idols were set up in the holy land! The glory of even an allowed ritualism is fatal to spiritual religion. From a pompous worship of the true, to the worship of the false, the step is very easy. When God dwelt in the tent, in the days of David, religion nourished far better than in the days when the ark abode in a great house garnished with precious stones for beauty and overlaid with pure gold. Still, within the Holy of Holies the Lord peculiarly

revealed Himself—and at the one temple upon Zion sacrifices and offerings were presented—for God was there.

The Presence of God, as you know, in the temple and the tabernacle, was called the Shekinah, the bright light shining between the wings of the cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant. We often forget that the Presence of God in the Most Holy Place was a matter of faith to all but the high priest. Once a year the high priest went within the awful veil, but we do not know if he ever dared to look upon the blaze of splendor. God dwells in light that no man may approach. The smoke of the incense from the priest's censer was needed, partly to veil the exceeding Glory of the Divine Presence, lest even those chosen eyes should suffer blindness.

No one else went into the hallowed shrine and only he once a year. That symbolical pavilion of Jehovah is not for a moment to be compared with our Lord Jesus who is the true dwelling place of the Godhead, for "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." What a masterly sentence that is! None but the Holy Spirit could surely have compacted words into such a sentence—"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." The manifestation of the Godhead in Christ is not unapproachable, for we may freely come to Jesus—a voice out of the excellent Glory bids us come boldly unto the Throne of the heavenly Grace. We cannot come too often, nor be too long in our approaches unto Jesus, the true Mercy Seat!

The Atonement has been offered and the veil of the temple, that is to say, the flesh of Christ, has been torn, and now we may approach the Godhead in Christ Jesus without trembling. Verily, as I think of God, Incarnate God in Jesus Christ, dwelling among the sons of men, I feel how true it is, "In this place is One greater than the temple." Another sense of the words is this—Our Lord is a fuller revelation of the Truth of God than the temple ever was. The temple taught a thousand truths of which we cannot now particularly speak. To the instructed Israelite there was a wealth of meaning about each court of the temple and every one of its golden vessels.

Not a ceremony was without its measure of instruction. If the Spirit of God opened up the types of the holy and beautiful house to him, the Israelite must have had a very clear idea of the good things to come. Still, there was nothing in the temple but the type—the *substance* was not there. The blood of bulls and goats was there, but not the Atonement that takes away sin. The smoke of the holy incense from the golden censor was there, but not the sweet merits of the great Law-Fulfiller. The seven-branched candlestick was there, but the Spirit of God was not yet given. The showbread stood on the holy table, but food for souls could not be found in the finest of the wheat.

The temple had but the *types* and Christ is greater than the temple because in Him we have the realities, or, as Paul calls them, "the very image of the things." "The figure for the time then present" had its uses, but it is by no means comparable to the actual Covenant blessing. The Law was given by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. There were some Truths, however, and these among the most precious, which the

temple did not teach at all. I do not know, for instance, where we can read *adoption* in the symbols of the temple, or the great Truth of our *union* with Jesus, and other priceless doctrines which cluster around the Cross and the Resurrection. But in the Person of Jesus we have the exceeding riches of Divine Grace and see, by faith, the inexhaustible treasures of the Covenant.

In Jesus we see at once, “our Kinsman and our God.” In the Person of Christ we read the infinite eternal love of God towards His own redeemed ones and the intimate union which this love has established between God and man. Glimpses of this, the temple, may, perhaps, have given, for it did intimate that the Lord would dwell among His people, but only to eyes anointed seven times with the oil of the Spirit would these high mysterious doctrines have been visible. The fundamental Truths of the everlasting Gospel are all to be seen in Jesus Christ by the wayfaring man—and the more He is studied the more plainly do these matchless Truths of God shine forth.

God has fully revealed Himself in His Son. There is, in fact, no wisdom necessary to our soul’s welfare but that which shines forth in Him. And nothing is worth learning but that which the Spirit of God teaches us concerning Him, for He is to the full, “the wisdom of God.” Know Christ and you know the Father! Does He not, Himself, say, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father”? Again, the Redeemer is greater than the temple because He is a more abiding evidence of Divine favor. God forever dwells in Christ Jesus and this is the eternal sign of His favor to His people. There were some things in the first temple which were rich tokens of good to Israel, but none of these were in the temple to which our Lord pointed when He uttered these words.

Remember, He looked at Herod’s temple, the temple which you may call the second, but which, in some respects, was more truly a *third* temple. In Solomon’s temple there were four precious things which were absent in Christ’s day. First there was the Ark of the Covenant, which precious chest was, above all other things, the token of Israel’s high relationship to God and the assurance of the Lord’s Grace to His covenanted people. The Ark was lost at the Babylonian destruction of the city and thus the Holy of Holies lost its most sacred piece of furniture—the throne of the great king was gone. There were no wings of cherubim above the mercy seat of pure gold, no tables of stone engraved by the Divine hand were within the golden coffer and Aaron’s rod that budded and the pot of manna were both gone.

Now, in our blessed Lord, you find the Covenant, itself, and all that it contains, for thus said the Lord, “Behold, I have given Him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.” His blood is “the blood of the Everlasting Covenant” and He, Himself, is given for “a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6). Jesus Christ is the Covenant between God and His redeemed! He is its Substance, its Seal, its Surety, its Messenger, its All. In our Lord we see the fullness of covenanted blessing. His are the covering wings beneath which we dwell in safety and His is the propitiatory, or Mercy Seat, whereby we draw near to

God. In Him we see the tables of the Law honored and fulfilled, priestly authority exercised with a living and fruit-bearing scepter and heavenly food laid up for the chosen people.

It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell and all the promises are yes and amen in Him. Thus in Jesus we find what the temple had lost. The second temple also lacked the *Shekinah*. The throne being gone, the symbol of the royal presence departed, too. The supernatural light did not shine forth within the holy place in Herod's temple. The glory had departed, or at least that particular form of it, and though the second temple became more glorious than the first because the Messiah Himself appeared within it, it missed that symbolic splendor of which the Israelite was known to say, "You that dwells between the cherubim shine forth."

But in our Lord Jesus we may always see the brightness of the Father's Glory, the light of Jehovah's smile. Around His brow abides the light of everlasting love. Have you not seen the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? They had lost, also, from the second temple the Urim and the Thummim. Precisely what the Urim and the Thummim may have been, we do not know, but this peculiar mystery of blessing had a connection with the breastplate and with the high priest who wore it, so that when men went up to the temple to inquire, they received answers as from the sacred oracle. And whatever cases were spread before the Lord, an answer was given by the high priest, through the lights and perfections, or the Urim and Thummim with which the priest was girded. That was lost, also, after the Babylonian captivity.

But in Jesus Christ the lights and perfection always abide and if any man would know anything, let him learn of Him, for He, by the Eternal Spirit, still guides His children into all Truth, solves their difficulties, removes their doubts and comforts their hearts, giving to them light and perfection, each one according to their measure as he is able to bear it now, and preparing for each one the unclouded light and the spotless perfection of eternal Glory. The second temple had also lost the sacred fire. You remember when the temple was opened, the fire came down and consumed the sacrifice—a fire from Heaven which was carefully watched both night and day, and always fed with the prescribed fuel, if, indeed, it needed to be fed at all. This the Jews had no longer and they were compelled to use other fire to burn upon the altar of God, fire which they had probably consecrated by rites and ceremonies, but which was not the same flame which had actually descended from Heaven.

Behold, Beloved, how far our Lord Jesus is greater than the temple, for this day is that Word fulfilled in your ears—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." He has given to His Church, now, to be immersed in the fiery element of His Spirit. She dwells in the everlasting burnings of the Divine power, the Lord Himself has exalted her to this. Now are her lamps kindled by flames from Heaven and her sacrifices are consumed by consecrated flames, while, around, that same Spirit is a wall of fire to preserve the chosen from their enemies. In the perpetual Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the saints find power and life. So everything which of old was regarded as a special token of God's love to Israel, though missing

from the second temple, is, in reality, to be found in Jesus Christ our Lord—and so He is greater than the temple.

Furthermore, He is greater than the temple because *He is a more sure place of consolation*. Brothers and Sisters, when a guilty conscience wished for relief, the man, in the olden times, went up to the temple and presented his sin offering. But you and I find a more effectual Sin Offering in our crucified Lord whenever our soul is burdened, for by it we are, in very deed, cleansed from sin. The Jew was not really cleansed, but only typically. Ours is an *actual* and abiding deliverance from sin, its guilt and its defilement. We have no more consciousness of it when the blood of Jesus Christ is applied to our souls. Oh, come evermore, you burdened ones, to Christ's Body as to a temple, and see your sins put away by His finished Atonement and go your way comforted!

The Israelites were known to go to the temple in time of trouble to make supplication. It is very pleasant to think of heart-broken Hannah standing in the tabernacle before the Lord, pouring out her silent complaint. Come, Beloved, you, too, may speak in your heart to the Lord whenever you will, and you will be heard! No Eli is near to judge you harshly and rebuke you sharply, but a better Priest is at hand to sympathize with you, for He, Himself, is touched with a feeling of your infirmity. Fear not, you shall obtain an answer of peace and the blessing given shall bear the sweet name of Samuel because you asked it of the Lord. To Jesus you may come as to the temple, when, like Hezekiah, you are made to smart by a blasphemous letter, or any other oppression—here you may spread the matter before the Lord with a certainty that the Lord, who is greater than the temple, will give you an answer of peace in reference to the trial which you leave in His hands.

No doubt some went to the temple without faith in the spiritual part of the matter, and so came away with no comfort. But you, coming to Jesus Christ, with your spirit taught of God, shall find sure consolation in Him. Only once more, our Lord is greater than the temple because *He is a more glorious center of worship*. Towards the temple all the Israelites prayed. Daniel prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem and the scattered in every land turned towards that point of the compass where Jerusalem was situated, and so they made supplication. Today not Jews, alone, but Gentiles, men of every race, speaking every language under Heaven, turn towards Jesus, "You great Redeemer," the true Temple of the living God! Myriads redeemed by blood in Heaven and multitudes redeemed by blood on earth—all make the Christ of God the center of their perpetual adoration!

The day shall come when all kings shall bow before Him and all nations shall call Him blessed. To Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is God to the glory of God the Father. Brothers and Sisters, is not it sweet to think of Jesus as being, at this very moment, the central point to which all devout Believers turn their eyes? Let the Muslim have his Mosque and the Jew his temple, as for us, we turn our eyes to the risen Savior and with all the saints we offer prayer to God through

Him! Through Him both Jews and Gentiles have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

II. Now, secondly, and briefly, JESUS OUGHT TO BE REGARDED AS GREATER THAN THE TEMPLE. We ought to think of Him, then, with greater joy than even the Jew did of the holy and beautiful house. The 84th Psalm shows us how the king of Israel loved the house of the Lord. He cries, "How amiable are Your tabernacles O Lord of Hosts." But oh, my Soul, how amiable is Christ! How altogether lovely is your Redeemer and your God! If the devout Israelite could say, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and if at the sight of the temple, he cried, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion," how ought our heart to exult at the very *thought* of Jesus, our Incarnate God!

What intense pleasure, what rapture it ought to cause us to think that God, in very deed, does dwell among men in the Person of His well-beloved Son! I wonder we are not carried away into extravagances of delight at this thought and that we do not become like them that dream! I marvel that we are so cold and chill when we have before us a fact which might make angelic hearts thrill with wonder! God Incarnate! God my kinsman! Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh! Surely, if we were to dance, as David did before the Ark, we might scarcely need to excuse ourselves to the heartless Michals who would ridicule our enthusiasm! Oh, the bliss of knowing that God is in Christ Jesus!

We ought, also, to consider our Lord with *greater wonder* than that with which men surveyed the temple. As I have already said, the temple was a great marvel and would be so, even now, if it were still standing. Those huge stones were so well prepared by art and were, themselves, so massive, that they did not need to be cemented together—and they fit so closely that the thinnest knife could not be inserted between them—so polished and so compact were they. The house, itself, abounded with gold, silver and precious stones! It was a treasury as well as a temple! For size it was remarkable, too, if we consider the entire range of the buildings attached to it.

The level space within which the actual temple stood is said to have been about one thousand square feet and it is asserted that it would have contained twice as many people as the huge Coliseum at Rome. The actual temple was but a small building comparatively, but its attachments and Solomon's porch, which surrounded the square on which it stood, made up a great mass of buildings. And the magnificent bridge which joined the lone hill to the rest of Jerusalem was a marvel of architecture. Solomon's Ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord was one of the sights which quite overcame the queen of Sheba. The brightness of the white marble and the abundance of gold must have made it a sight to gaze upon with tears in one's eyes to think that man could erect such a house and that it should be for the true God.

I do not wonder at all that men were bid to go round about her, view the towers, mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces. Neither are we astonished that invaders quailed before the strength of her defenses,

“They saw it, and so they marveled. They were troubled, and hasted away.” The likes of this temple was not to be seen on the face of the earth! Neither the pyramids of Egypt, nor the piles of Nineveh, nor the towers of Babylon could rival the temple of the living God at Jerusalem! But, my Brethren, think of Jesus and you will wonder more! What are the huge stones? What are the delicate carvings and the cedar? What are the sheets of gold and what the veil of fine twisted linen? And what are all the gorgeous pomp of the ceremonies compared with God, the everlasting God, veiled in human flesh?

Wonder, my Brothers and Sisters! Wonder, bow low and adore! “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh.” Being greater than the temple, our Lord is to be visited with greater frequency. The males of Israel were to go up to the temple three times each year. “Blessed are they that dwell in Your house,” says David, for they would be there always. Oh, my Brethren, you may enjoy the happiness of these blessed ones and dwell in Jesus always! You may come up to the Lord Jesus whenever you will! All days are appointed feasts with Him! You need not wait for the new moons or the Sabbaths—you may resort to Him at all times! We that have believed enter into a perpetual Sabbath in which we may continually worship the Most High in the Person of Christ!

Let us also *revere Him with still greater solemnity*. The devout Jews took off their shoes when they entered the temple enclosure. True, in our Lord’s day, much of this solemnity had been forgotten and they bought and sold the beasts and birds that were necessary for sacrifice within the great enclosure around the temple. But as a rule the Jews always treated the temple with profound respect. With what reverence shall we worship our Lord Jesus? Let us never speak lightly nor think lightly of Him, but may our inmost spirits worship Him as the eternal God. Let us honor Him, also, with *higher service*. The service of the temple was full of pomp and gorgeous ceremonies. Kings brought their treasures there. With what diligence did David store up his gold and silver to build the house! And with what skill did Solomon carry out the details of that mighty piece of architecture!

Come and worship Christ after that fashion! Bring Him your body, soul and spirit as a living sacrifice! Yes, bring Him your gold and silver and your substance, for He is greater than the temple and deserves larger gifts and higher consecration than the temple had from its most ardent lovers! Surely I need not argue the point, for you who love Him know that you can never do enough for Him. So, too, He ought to be sought after with *more vehement desire* if He is greater than the temple. David said he, “longed, yes, even panted for the courts of the Lord.” With what longings and panting ought we to long for Christ! In answer to her Lord’s promise to come again, the Church cries, “Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.”

We ought to long more for the Second Advent of our Lord—especially ought we, if we mourn His absence from our own souls—never to rest until He reveals Himself to us, again! Oh, you redeemed ones, love Him so that you can no more live without His smile than the wife can live without her husband’s love. And long for fellowship with Him as the bride for the

wedding day! Set your hearts upon Him and hunger and thirst after Him. The Jew pined to visit Mount Zion and with such pining I bid you long for Jesus and for the time when you shall see Him face to face!

III. Now, we have to spend a few minutes in urging home one or two PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS which arise out of this subject. And the first is this—*how carefully should the Laws of Jesus Christ be observed*. I believe that when you entered the temple by passing through the Beautiful Gate you saw a notice that worshippers should enter on the right side and afterwards they were to exit on the left. I am quite sure that if the temple now stood and any of us could make a journey to Jerusalem, we should be very careful to observe every order of the sanctuary. And if we found the porter at the gate said, “You must take off your shoes,” we would, with gladness, remove them. Or if he bade us wash, we would gladly enter the bath.

Knowing that God dwelt there, had we been Israelites, we would have been very attentive to every observance required of the Law. Now, Brothers and Sisters, let us be equally attentive to all the Laws of Christ, for He is greater than the temple. Never ignore His commands, nor tamper with them. Remember, if you break one of the least of His commandments, and teach men so, you will be least in the kingdom of God. He is very gracious and forgives, but still, disobedience brings injury to our own souls. I beseech all Christians to search the Scriptures and see what Christ’s mind is upon every moot point—whether it is Baptism or Church government—and when you know His will, carry it out.

Do not say of any precept, “That is nonessential,” for everything that Jesus bids you do is essential to the perfection of your *obedience*. If you say it is not essential to salvation, I am compelled to rebuke you. What? Are you so selfish that you only think about your own salvation? And because *you* are saved will you kick against your Savior and say, “I do not care to do this because I can be saved even if I neglect it”? This is not the spirit of a child of God! I pray you, dear Friends, do what I anxiously wish to do myself—follow the Lord fully and go step by step where He would have you go—for if you would obey temple rules, much more should you obey the rules of Christ.

The next reflection is how much more ought we to value Christ than any outward ordinance. It is not always that all Christians do this. There is a dear Brother who loves Christ and I can see Christ in him, I am sure I can. If I know anything about Christ at all, in my own soul, I see that he knows Him, too. Very well. But then he does not belong to my Church! It is a pity—he ought to be as right as I am—and I wish he knew better. But at the same time, his love to Christ is more to be esteemed than his correctness in outward things, for Christ is greater than the temple! I am not going to quarrel with any Brother in Christ because he is somewhat in error about external ordinances, for he has the spirit, if not the letter of the matter.

I wish he had been baptized with water, but I see he is baptized with the Holy Spirit and, therefore, he is my Brother in Christ. I wish that he would observe the water baptism because Christ bids him, but still, if he

does not, I am glad that his Master has given him the Holy Spirit and I rejoice to know that he has the vital matter. Perhaps he does not come to the Lord's Supper and does not believe in it. I am very sorry for him, for he loses a great privilege, but if I see that he has communion with Christ, I know that Christ is greater than the temple and that inward communion is greater than the external sign. Therefore, it happens that if we see Christ in persons with whose theology we do not agree, and whose forms of Church government we cannot commend, we must set the Christ *within* above the outward forms and receive the Brother, still.

The brother is wrong, but if we see the Lord in him, let us love him, for Christ is greater than the temple. We dare not exalt any outward ordinance above Christ as the test of a man's Christianity! We would die for the defense of those outward ordinances which Christ commands, but for all that, the Lord, Himself, is greater than the ordinance, and we love all the members of His mystical body. Another reflection is this—*how much more important it is for you that you should go to Christ than that you should go to any place which you suppose to be the house of God.* How many times from this pulpit have we disclaimed all idea that this particular building has any sanctity about it? We know that God dwells not in temples made with hands, yet there may be some of you who come here very regularly who have great respect for the place.

If you did not go to any place of worship, you would think yourselves very bad, and so you would be. If you never went on the Lord's Day to the worship of God at all, you would certainly be keeping yourselves out of the place where you may hope that God will bless you. But is it not a strange thing that you would not like to stay away from the temple, but you stay away from Christ? For while you go up to the outward sanctuary, you have never gone to the real Christ! I am sure you would feel ashamed if anybody were able to say of you, "There is a man here who has not been to a place of worship for 12 months." You would look down upon a man of whom that could be said.

Yes, but if there are any reasons for coming to what you think is the temple, how many more reasons are there for coming to Christ? And if you would think it wrong to stay away from the public place of worship for 12 months, how much more wrong must it be to stay away from Jesus all your life? But that is exactly what you have done! Will you please think of that? Now, had you gone to the temple, you would have felt towards it very great respect and reverence. And when you come to the outward place of worship, you are very attentive and respectful to the *place*—let me ask you, have you been respectful to *Christ*?

How is it that you live without faith in Him? No prayer is offered by you to Him. You do not accept the great salvation which He is prepared to give. Practically, you despise Him and turn your backs upon Him. You would not do so to the temple, why do you do so to Christ? Oh, that you unconverted ones knew the uses of Christ! Do you remember what Joab did when Solomon was provoked to slay him? Joab fled, and though he had no right to go into the temple, he felt it was a case of necessity. Hoping to save his life, he rushed up to the altar and held on the altar's horn.

Benaiah came to him with a sword, and said, "Come forth," and what did Joab say? "No," he said, "I will die here." and Benaiah had to go back and ask Solomon, "What is to be done?" and Solomon said, "Do as he has said," and so he slew him right against the altar.

Now, if you come to Christ, though the avenger of blood is after you, you will be safe. He may come to you and say, "Come forth," but you will reply, "I will die here." You cannot die there, for He shall hide you in the secret of His pavilion, in the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide you. And with your hand upon the blood-stained Jesus, no Benaiah, no devil and no destroying angel can touch you. Sinner, it is your only hope! You will be lost forever—the sword shall pierce through your soul to your everlasting destruction unless you fly now to Christ, the Temple, and lay hold upon the Altar's horn and let this be on your mind—

***"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try.
For if I stay away I know
I must forever die.
But if I die with mercy sought,
When I've this Altar tried,
This were to die, delightful thought,
As sinner never died."***

By faith, this morning, I put my hand upon the altar's horn. All my hope, dread Sovereign, lies in the blood of Your dear Son. Brethren in Christ, let us all lay our hands there once again. Poor Sinner, if you have never done this before, do it now, and say in your heart—

***"My faith does lay her hand
Upon that Altar's horn,
And see my bleeding
Lord at hand
Who all my sin has borne."***

Christ is greater than the temple! May His great benediction rest upon you. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 84 & 87.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—84 (SONG II), 820, 427.**

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THE WITHERED HAND

NO. 1485

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 22, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE NEWINGTON.**

***“And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. . . Then says He to the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.”
Matthew 12:10, 13.***

NOTE well the expression. Jesus “went into their synagogue and, *behold*, there was a man which had his hand withered.” A mark is set, as it were, in the margin, as if it were a notable fact. That word, “*behold*” is a sort of note of exclamation to draw attention to it. “Behold, there was a man which had his hand withered.” In many congregations, if there should step in one of the great and mighty of the land, people would say, “Behold, there was a duke, an earl, or a bishop there.” And although there were, occasionally, some great ones in our Savior’s congregation, I find no notes of admiration about their presence, no, “*beholds*,” inserted by the Evangelists as if to call attention to their appearance. No doubt if there were, in a congregation, some person of known intelligence and great learning who had earned a high degree, there are persons who would say, “Did you know that Professor Science or Doctor Classic was present at the service?” There would be a, “*behold*,” put to that in the memories of many!

There *were* persons well learned, according to the learning of the day, who came to listen to Christ, but there are no “*beholds*,” about their having been present. Yet in the synagogue there was a poor man whose hand had been withered and we are called upon to note the fact! It was his *right* hand which was withered, the worse of the two for him, for he could scarcely follow his handicraft or earn his bread. His best hand was useless! His breadwinner failed him. I have no doubt he was a very humble, obscure, insignificant individual. He was probably in great poverty because he could not work as his fellow craftsmen could. And he was probably not a man of any rank, or learning, or special intelligence. His being in the assembly was, in itself, nothing very remarkable.

I suppose he had been accustomed to go to the synagogue as others of his townsmen did. Yet the Holy Spirit takes care to mark that he was present and to have the word, “*behold*,” hung out like a sign that it might be regarded as a special subject for consideration that the crippled man was there! And tonight, dear Friends, it matters very little to the preacher or to the congregation that *you* are here, if you are some person of note or consequence, for we make no note of dignitaries here and attach no special consequence to anyone in this place where the rich and the poor meet together!

But if you happen to be here as a soul needing a Savior. If you happen to be here with a spiritually withered hand so that you cannot do the things that you would and you are needing to have that hand restored to

you, there *shall* be a “behold,” put to *that*—and especially shall it be doubly emphatic if, tonight, the Master says to you, “Stretch out your withered hand”—and if Divine power shall restore that hand and a deed of Grace shall be accomplished! What our Lord needed on that particular Sabbath morning was somebody to work upon, somebody whom He might heal and so defy the traditional legality of the Pharisees who said that it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath!

Christ did not want their health that morning—He looked for their sickness that He might illustrate His healing power. He did not want any greatness in anybody there—but He did want some poor needy one in whom He could display His power to heal. And that is just the case tonight. If you are rich and increased in goods and have need of *nothing*, my Master does not want you! He is a Physician and those who practice the healing art look out for sickness as their sphere of operation. If we were to tell a wise physician of a town where nobody was sick and everybody enjoyed perfect health, he would not settle there unless he wished to retire from his practice. My Master does not come into the assemblies where all feel themselves quite content with themselves—where there are no blind eyes, no deaf ears, no broken hearts, no withered hands—for what do such folks need with a Savior?

He looks around and His eyes fix themselves upon pain, upon necessity, upon incapacity, upon sinfulness, upon everything to which He can do good—for what He wants in us mortals is the opportunity to do us good—and not a pretense on our part that *we* can do *Him* good! I begin with this because my talk tonight will be very simple and it will only be meant for those of you who need my Lord and Master. Those of you who do not need Him can go. But you that need Him, it may be you shall find Him tonight and there shall be the record kept in Heaven, not of those who were here, who said, “We see,” nor of those who said, “Our hand is strong and deft for labor,” but there shall be a register of blind ones who shall say, “You Son of David, open our eyes,” and of withered ones who shall, tonight, stretch out their withered hands in obedience to His Divine command!

I do not know that our crippled friend, when he went to the synagogue that morning, expected to get his withered hand healed. Being, perhaps, a devout man, he went there to worship, but he got more than he went for! And it may be that some of you whom God means to bless tonight do not know why you have come here. You came, perhaps, because you somehow love the ordinances of God’s House and you feel happy in hearing the Gospel preached. You have never yet laid hold of the Gospel for yourselves. You have never enjoyed its privileges and blessings as your own, but still you have a hankering after the best things.

What if, tonight, the hour has come—the hour which Sovereign Grace has marked in red letters in the calendar of love—in which *your* withered hand shall be made strong and your sins shall be forgiven? What bliss if you shall go your way to glorify God because a notable miracle of Grace has been worked in you! God grant it may be so by the power of the Holy Spirit! I entreat those of you who love the Master to pray Him to work wonders at this time upon many—and His shall be the praise!

I. First, we will say a little about THE PERSON TO WHOM THE COMMAND IN OUR TEXT IS ADDRESSED. "Then said Jesus to the man, stretch forth your hand." This command was addressed, then, to *a man who was hopelessly incapable of obeying*. "Stretch forth your hand." I do not know whether his arm was paralyzed, or only his hand. As a general rule, when a thorough paralysis, not a partial one, takes place in the hand, it seizes the entire member and both hand and arm are paralyzed. We usually speak of this man as if the entire limb had been dried up and yet I do not see in either Matthew, Mark, or Luke, any express declaration that the whole arm was withered. It seems to me to have been a case in which the hand, only, was affected.

We used to have, not far from here, I remember, at Kennington Gate, a lad who would frequently get on the step of the omnibus and exhibit his hands, which hung down as if his wrists were broken, and he would cry, "Poor boy! Poor boy!" and appeal to our compassion. I fancy that his case was a picture of the one before us, in which, not the arm, perhaps, but the hand had become dried up. We cannot positively decide that the arm was still unwithered, but we may notice that our Lord did not say, "Stretch out your arm," but, "your hand," so that He points to the hand as the place where the paralysis lay. If He had said, "Stretch out your arm," as the text does not declare that the arm was dried up, we should have said that Christ bade him do exactly what he was capable of doing and there would have been no miracle in it.

But inasmuch as Jesus says, "Stretch forth your hand," it is clear that the mischief was in the hand and so it was telling him to do what he could not possibly do, for the man's hand was assuredly withered. It was not a sham disease. He had not made a pretense of being paralyzed, but he was really incapable. The hand had lost the moisture of life. The spirits which gave it strength had been dried out of it and there it was, a withered, wilted, useless thing with which he could do nothing. And yet it was to such a man that Jesus said, "Stretch forth your hand." This is very important for us to notice because some of you, under a burden of sin, think that Christ does not save *real* sinners—that those people whom He saves are, in some respects, not quite so bad as you—that there is not such an intensity of sin about them as about your case, or if an intensity of sin, yet not such an utter hopelessness and helplessness as there is about you. You feel quite dried up and utterly without strength.

Dear Hearer, it is exactly to such as *you* that the Lord Jesus Christ directs the commands of the Gospel! We are bid to preach to you, saying, "Believe," or at other times, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." These commands are not addressed, as some say they are, to *sensible* sinners, but to *insensible* sinners, to *stupid* sinners, to sinners who cannot, so far as moral ability is concerned, obey the command at all! Such are bid to do so by Him, who in this case bade the man do what he naturally, in and of himself, was quite incapable of doing—because, you see, if he *could* stretch out his hand, himself—there was no miracle needed, for the man's hand was not withered at all!

But it is clear that he could not move his hand and yet the Savior addressed him as if he could—in which I see a symbol of the Gospel way of speaking to the sinner—for the Gospel cries to him in all his misery and incapacity, “To you, even to you, is the word of this salvation sent.” This very incapacity and inability of yours is but the space in which the Divine power may be displayed and, because you are thus incapable and because you are thus unable, therefore to *you* does the Gospel come that the excellency of the power may be seen to dwell in the Gospel and in the Savior Himself and not at all in the person who is saved! The command, then, which brought healing with it, was addressed to one who was utterly incapable.

But, mark you, it came to one *who was perfectly willing*, for this man was quite prepared to do whatever Jesus bade him do. If you had questioned him, you would have found no desire to retain that withered hand and no wish that his fingers should remain lifeless and useless. If you had said to him, “Poor man, would you like to have your hand restored?” tears would have been in his eyes and he would have replied, “Yes, that I would! That I might earn bread for my dear children. That I might not have to go about begging and have to depend upon the help of others, or only earn a hard crust with this left hand of mine. I wish, above all things, that I could have my hand restored!”

But the worst of many unconverted people is that they do not want to be healed—do not want to be restored! As soon as a man truly longs for salvation, then salvation has already come to him! But the most of you do not wish to be saved. “Oh,” you say, “we *truly* wish to be saved.” I do not think so, for what do you mean by being saved? Do you mean being saved from going to Hell? Everybody, of course, wishes that! Did you ever meet a thief that would not like to be saved from going to prison or being locked up by a policeman? But when we talk about *salvation*, we mean being saved from the *habit* of wrong-doing—being saved from the *power* of evil, the *love* of sin, the *practice* of folly—and the power to find *pleasure* in transgression.

Do you wish to be saved from pleasurable and gainful sins? Find me the drunk who sincerely prays to be delivered from drunkenness! Bring me an unchaste man who pines to be pure! Find me one who is an habitual liar and yet longs to speak the truth! Bring me one who has been selfish and who in his very heart hates himself for it and longs to be full of love and to be made Christ-like! Why, half the battle is won in such cases. The initial step is taken. The parallel holds good in the spiritual world. The character I have in my mind’s eye is the case of a soul desiring to be what it *cannot* be and to do what it cannot do—and yet desiring it. I mean the man who cries in agony, “To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.” “I would, but cannot, repent. My heart feels like a stone. I would love Christ, but, alas, I feel that I am fettered to the world! I would be holy, but, alas, sin comes violently upon me and carries me away!”

It is to such people that Jesus Christ’s Gospel comes with the force of a command. Will you be made whole, my Friend? Then you may be! Do you desire to be saved from sin? You may be! Do you wish to be emancipated

from the bondage of corruption? You may be! And this is the *only* way in which you may be saved—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." His name is called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. He has come on purpose to do this to real sinners—not to mere pretenders—for it is clear that He cannot save men from sins if they have none! He cannot heal withered hands if there are no withered hands to be healed! He comes to you who need Him, to you that are guilty, to you whose hands are withered! Even to you is this glorious word of the good news proclaimed! God grant you Grace to hear it believingly and to feel its power!

II. Secondly, I want to speak a little upon THE PERSON WHO GAVE THE COMMAND. It was *Jesus* who gave it. *He* said, "Stretch forth your hand." Did our Lord speak this in ignorance, supposing that the man could do so? By no means, for in Him is abundant knowledge! He had just read the hearts of the Pharisees and you may be sure that He who could read those subtle spirits could certainly see the outward condition of this patient. He knew that the man's hand was withered and yet He said, "Stretch forth your hand." When I read in Scripture the command, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," I am sure that Jesus Christ knows what He is saying. "Go you," He said, "into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

Yes, to *every* creature. Suppose that some of His disciples had been very orthodox and had come back and said, "Lord, was there not a mistake about the persons? Why preach to *every* creature? Are not some of them dead in sin? We would rather preach to character." I have heard some of Christ's professed servants say that to bid dead sinners live is of no more use than to shake a handkerchief over the graves in which the dead are buried. And my reply to them has been, "You are quite right. Do not do it, for it is evident you are not called to do it. Go home and go to bed. The Lord never sent you to do anything of the kind, for you admit you have no faith in it." But if my Master sent *me* as the herald of resurrection and bade me shake a handkerchief over the graves of the dead, I would do it! And I should expect that this or that handkerchief, if *He* commanded it to be shaken, would raise the dead, for Jesus Christ knows what He is doing when He sends His servants.

If He does not send us, it is a fool's errand, indeed, to go and say, "You dead men, live." but His commission makes all the difference! We are to say to the *dead*, "Awake, and Christ shall give you life." What? Wake, *first*, and *then* get life? I shall not try to explain it, but that is the order of the Scripture—"Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life." If my Master puts it so, I am quite satisfied to quote His words. I cannot explain it, but I delight to take Him in His own way and blindly follow His every step and believe His every word! If He bids me say, "Arise from the dead," I will gladly do it right now! In the name of Jesus, you dead ones, live! Break, you hard hearts! Dissolve, you hearts of steel! Believe, you unbelievers! Lay hold on Christ, you ungodly ones!

If He speaks by His ministers, that word shall be with power—if He speaks not by us, it is little matter how we speak! Well may the judicious Brother say that there would be no use in *his* bidding the dead arise, for

he confesses that his Master is not with him. Let him, therefore, go home till his Master *is* with him! If his Master were with him, then would he speak his Master's words and he would not be afraid of being called foolish. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who says to this man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth your hand." To me it is a sweet thought that He is able to give power to do what He gives the command to do.

Dear Soul, when you are bid to believe and you stand with tears in your eyes and say, "Sir, I cannot understand and I cannot believe," do you not know that He who bids you believe can give you power to believe? When He speaks through His servants, or through His Word, or directly by His Spirit upon your conscience, He who bids you do this is no mere man, but the Son of God! And you must say to Him, "Good Lord, I beseech You give me, now, the faith which You ask of me. Give me the repentance You command." And He will hear your prayer and faith shall spring up within you! Did you never notice, dear Souls, Christ's way of doing His work? His way is generally this—first, to give the *command*, then to help the heart to turn the command into a *prayer*—and then to answer that prayer by a *promise*.

Take these specimens. The Lord says, "Make you a new heart." That is clearly a command. But by-and-by you find the Psalmist David, in the 51st Psalm, saying, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And then, if you turn to Ezekiel, you get the promise, "A new heart, also, will I give you." First, He commands you; next He sets you praying for the blessing and then He gives it to you! Take another. The command is, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" Then comes the prayer, "Turn me and I shall be turned, O Lord." And then follows the blessed turning of which the Apostle Paul speaks when he says that God has sent His Son to bless us by turning every one of us from his iniquity!

Take another case and let it refer to purging. We find the Lord commanding us to "purge out the old leaven" and straightway there comes the prayer, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean." And then on the heels of it comes the promise, "I will surely purge away your dross." Or, take another kind of precept, of a sweeter sort, belonging to the Christian. You are continually told to sing—"Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises." In another place we meet with the prayer, "Open my lips and my mouth shall show forth Your praise." And in a third Scripture we have the Divine promise, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." See, then, the Master's way of going to work—He commands you to believe, or repent. He then sets you a-praying that you may be enabled to do it and then He gives you Grace to do it so that the blessing may really come to your soul!

Everywhere that Gospel commands are uttered by Christ, Himself, to men's hearts, they, receiving them, find the *ability* coming *with* the command. "But He is not here," says one, "He is not here!" Verily I say unto you in His name, He *is* here! His words are, "Lo, I am with you *always*, even to the end of the world"—till this dispensation shall be ended Christ will be where the Gospel is preached! Where His message is honestly and truthfully delivered with the Spirit of God, there Jesus Christ, Himself, is virtually present speaking through the lips of His servants! Therefore, dear

Soul with the withered hand, Jesus Himself says to you tonight, "Stretch forth your hand." He is present to heal and His method is to command. He now commands! O gracious Spirit, be present that men may obey!

III. It is time for a few words upon another point and that is upon THE COMMAND ITSELF. The command itself was, "Stretch forth your hand." I notice about that command that it goes to the very essence of the matter. It is not, "Rub your right hand with your left." It is not, "Show your hand to the priest and let him perform a ceremony upon it." It is not, "Wash your hand." No, it is, "Stretch it forth." That was the very thing he could *not* do and thus the command went to the very root of the mischief. As soon as the hand was stretched out it was healed! And the command went directly to the desired mark.

Now, my Lord and Master does not say to any of you sinners tonight, "Go home and pray." I hope you *will* pray, but that is not the great Gospel command! The Gospel is, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Paul stood in the dead of night, with the trembling jailer who hardly understood his own question, when he cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And Paul, according to the practice of some, should have said, "We must have a little prayer," or, "You must go home and read the Bible and I must further instruct you until you are in a better state." He did nothing of the sort! But then and there Paul said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

There is no Gospel preached unless you come to this, for salvation comes by faith and by nothing short of it. That is just the difficult point, you tell me. Yes, and at the difficult point this command strikes and says, "Stretch forth your hand." Or in the case of the sinner, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." For, remember, all that any of you ever do in the matter of eternal life which has not *faith* in it, can be nothing, after all, but the effort of your carnal nature—and that is death! What can come of the movements of death but a still deeper death? Death can never produce life! Prayer without faith? What sort of prayer is it? It is the prayer of a man who does not believe God! Shall a man expect to receive anything of the Lord if he does not believe that God is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him?

"Oh, but I must repent before I believe," says one. What kind of repentance is that which does not trust God—does not believe in God? An unbelieving repentance—is it not a selfish expression of regret because of punishment incurred? Faith must be mixed with every prayer and every act of repentance or they cannot be acceptable! And, therefore, we must go right straight to this point and demand faith, saying, "Believe and live." "Stretch forth your hand." That stretching forth of the hand was entirely *an act of faith*. It was not an act of sense. As a matter of sense and nature, the man was, I say, weariless for it. He only did it because his *faith* brought the ability! It was a pure act of faith, that stretching out of the hand.

"I still do not understand," says one, "how a man can do what he cannot do?" But you will understand a great many other wonderful things when the Lord teaches you, for the Christian life is a series of paradoxes! And for my own part, I doubt an experience unless there is something

paradoxical about it. At any rate, I am sure that it is so that I, who can do nothing of myself, can do everything through Christ which strengthens me! The man who is seeking Christ can do nothing. But if he believes on Christ, he can do everything—and his withered hand is stretched out. But, in addition to its being an act of faith, it seems to me it was an *act of decision*. There sit the haughty, frowning Pharisees. Your imagination can easily picture those fine-looking gentlemen with fringes on their garments and phylacteries across their foreheads.

There, too, are the scribes all wrapped up in their formal array—very grave and knowing men. Persons were almost afraid to look at them, they were so holy and so contemptuous. Look, there they sit like judges at court to try the Savior! Now, Christ does, as it were, single out this poor man with a withered hand to be His witness. And by His command He practically asks him which he will do—will he obey the Pharisees or Him? It is wrong to heal on the Sabbath, say the Pharisees. What do you say, you with the withered hand? If you agree with the Pharisees, you, of course, will decline to be healed on the Sabbath—and you won't stretch out your hand! But if you agree with Jesus, you will be glad to be healed, Sabbath or no Sabbath!

Ah, I see. You will stretch out your hand and break away from the tyrants who would keep you withered! The man did as good as vote for Christ when he stretched forth his hand! Many a soul has found peace when, at last, he has held up his hand and said, "Sink or swim, lost or saved! Christ for me! Christ for me! If I perish I will cling to His Cross and to Him, alone, will I look, for I am on His side, whether He will have compassion upon me or not." When that act of decision is performed, then comes the healing! If you hold up your hand for Christ, He will make it a good hand, though now it is all paralyzed and drooping, like a dead thing. Unworthy as you are, He has the power, as you hold up your hand for Him, to put life into it and to give you the blessing your heart desires!

I think I hear somebody say, "Oh, Sir, you would not be praising me too much if you were to say that I do wish to be saved and saved in Christ's own way! I would give my very eyes to love Him." Ah, you need not lose your eyes! Give Him your *trust*; give Him your *soul's* eyes! Look to Him and live! "Oh, that I could be saved," says one. "How I long for it." May the Holy Spirit lead you to resolve in your own soul that you will not be saved by anybody but Christ. O that you would determine—

***"He that suffered in my stead,
Shall my Physician be.
I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me."***

When that is done, I do not doubt that through faith in the Physician you will be quickened by Divine power and you will find healing at once!

IV. So I will just lead you on, in the fourth place, to notice THIS MAN'S OBEDIENCE. We are told that he stretched forth his hand. Christ said, "Stretch forth your hand." Mark says, "And he did so." That is to say, he stretched forth his hand. Now, observe that this man did not *do anything else in preference to what Jesus commanded*, though many awakened sinners are foolish enough to try experiments. Christ said, "Stretch forth your hand" and he did so. If, instead of that, the man had walked across

the synagogue and brought himself up to Christ, the Master would have said, "I bade you do no such thing. I bade you stretch forth your hand."

Suppose he had then, with his left hand, begun to grasp the roll of the Law as it stood in the synagogue and had kissed it out of reverence—would that have been of any use? The Master would only have said, "I bade you stretch forth your hand." Alas, there are many, many souls that say, "We are bid to trust in Jesus, but, instead of that, we will attend the means of Grace regularly." Do that, by all means, but not as a *substitute* for faith, or it will become a vain confidence! The command is, "Believe and live." Attend to that, whatever else you do. "Well, I shall take to reading good books. Perhaps I shall get good that way." Read good books, by all means, but that is not the Gospel—the Gospel is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

Suppose a physician has a patient under his care and he says to him, "You are to take a bath in the morning. It will be of very great service to your disease." But the man takes a cup of tea in the morning instead of the bath and says, "This will do as well, I have no doubt." What does his physician say when he enquires—"Did you follow my instructions?" "No, I did not." "Then you do not expect, of course, that there will be any good result, for you have disobeyed me." So we, practically, say to Jesus Christ, when we are under searching of soul, "Lord, You bid me trust You, but I would rather do something else. Lord, I need to have horrible convictions; I need to be shaken over Hell's mouth; I need to be alarmed and distressed." Yes, you need everything but what Christ prescribes for you—which is that you should simply trust Him!

Whether you feel or do not feel, you should just come and cast yourself on Him, that *He* may save you and He, alone. "But you do not mean to say that you speak against praying, reading good books, and so on?" Not one single word do I speak against any of those things—any more than if I were the physician I quoted, I should speak against the man's drinking a cup of tea. Let him drink his tea! But not if he drinks it *instead* of taking the bath which I prescribe for him! So let the man pray—the more the better. Let the man search the Scriptures, but, remember, that if these things are put in the *place* of simple faith in Christ, the soul will be ruined! Let me give you a text—did you ever hear it quoted properly? "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; but you will not come unto Me that you might have life." That is where the life is—in Christ—not even in searching *Scripture*, good as the searching of Scripture is! If we put even golden idols into the place of Christ, such idols are as much to be broken as if they were idols of mud or idols of dung! It matters not how good an action is—if it is not what Christ commands—you will not be saved by it. "Stretch forth your hand," He says. That was the way by which the healing was to come—the man did nothing else and he received a gracious reward.

Notice that *he did not raise any questions*. Now this man had a fair opportunity of raising questions. I think he might very fairly have stood up in his place and said, "This is inconsistent, good Master. You say to me, 'Stretch forth your hand.' Now, You know that if I can stretch forth my hand, there is nothing wrong with me and, therefore, there is no room for

Your miracle. And if I cannot stretch forth my hand, how can You tell me to do so?" Have you not heard some of our friends who like to make jests of holy things and scoff at our Doctrines of Grace declare that we teach, "You can and you can't; you shall and you shan't"? Their description is right enough, though meant to ridicule us. We do not object to their putting it thus if it so pleases them.

We teach paradoxes and contradictions to the eyes if you only consider the letter—but if you get down into the innermost *spirit*, it is within these contradictions that the eternal Truth of God is found! We know that the man is dead in trespasses and sins—steeped in a spiritual and moral torpor out of which he cannot raise himself—yet we, by the Master's own command say, "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you life!" Or, in other words, we say to the withered hand, "Be you stretched out," and it is done! The blessed result justifies that very teaching which in itself seems so worthy of sarcastic remarks!

Notice further that the man did what *he was told to do—stretch out his hand*. If you had asked him, "Did you stretch out your hand?" perhaps he would have said, "Of course I did. Nobody else did." "Wait a minute, my good man. Did you *of yourself* stretch out your hand?" "Oh, no," he would say, "because I have tried many times before and I could not, but this time I did it." "Then how was it that you were able to do it?" "Jesus told me to do it and I was willing—and it was done." I do not expect that he could have explained the rationale of it and, perhaps, neither can we. It must, indeed, have been a very beautiful sight to see that poor, withered, limp, wilted hand, first hanging down and then stretched out before all the people in the middle of the synagogue! Do you not see the blood begin to flow, the nerves gaining power and the hand opening like a reviving flower?

Oh, the delight of his sparkling eyes! As at first he could only fix them upon the little finger and the thumb to see if they were really all alive! Then he turned, looked at that blessed One who had healed him and seemed anxious to fall down at His feet and give Him all the praise! Even so, we cannot explain conversion and regeneration and the new birth and all that—but we know this—Jesus Christ says, "Believe," and we believe! By our own power? No! But as we will to believe (and *He gives us that will*) there comes a power to do according to His good pleasure. I look around me, wondering where is the man with the withered hand, tonight, or where is the woman with the withered hand. To such I would say, in my Master's name, "Stretch out that hand of yours."

It is an auspicious moment. A great thing shall be done unto you. Believe now! You have said before, "I can never believe." Now trust Jesus. Sink or swim, trust Him!—

***"Venture on Him, venture wholly!
Let no other trust intrude,
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good."***

Our Lord Jesus never casts away a sinner who trusts in Him. Oh, I would almost put it like this—If you do not feel that you can come, or ought to come to Christ, being so unworthy, *sneak* in! Sneak into His house of mercy, just as you have known a hungry dog sneak in where there has

been something to eat! The butcher, very likely, would deal him a kick if he saw him after a bone, but if he once gets it, he may as well make off with it and keep it to himself!

There is this blessed thing about my Master—if you can get a crumb from under His table, He will never take it away from you, for He never casts out those that come. However they come, He neither turns them away nor takes back the blessing. He never says, “Come here, Sir, you have no right to hope in My Grace.” Remember the woman in the crowd that dared not come to Christ before His face, but who came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment? She stole the cure from Him, as it were, and what did He say? “Come here, My woman, come here. What have you done? O, what right had you to touch My garment and steal a cure? For this a curse shall come upon you”? Did He speak thus in indignation? Not at all! Not at all!

He bade her come and she told Him the truth. And He said, “Daughter, be of good cheer. Your faith has made you whole.” Get at Him, Soul! Behind or in front, push for a touch of Him! Make a dash at Him! If there is a crowd of devils between you and Christ, plow your way through them by resolute faith! Though you are the most unworthy wretch that ever trusted Him, trust Him now so that it may be told in Heaven that there is a bigger sinner saved today than ever was saved before! Such a salvation will make Christ more glorious than He ever was! And if yours is a worse case than He ever touched with His healing hands to this day, well then, when He has touched and healed you, as He will, there will be more praise to Him in Heaven than He ever had before!

O soul, I wish I could persuade you to draw near to Him, but only my Master can do it! May He draw you by His great Grace!

V. The last thing to consider is THE RESULT OF THIS STRETCHING OUT OF THE MAN’S HAND IN OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMAND. He was healed! I have already tried to set before you the fact that the healing was *manifest*. It was also *immediate*. The man had not to stand there a long time, for his hand was straightway healed—and yet the cure was *perfect*, for his hand was whole like the other. It was just as useful as his left hand had been, with all the extra dexterity which naturally belongs to the right. It was perfectly healed, though healed in a moment! You may depend upon it, it was *permanently* healed for, though I have heard it said that saved souls fall from Grace and perish, I never believed it, for I have never read of any of the cases which our Lord cured that they became bad again. I never heard of a withered hand that was healed and was paralyzed a second time. Nor will it ever be! My Master’s cures last forever!

I remember seeing in the shop windows, some years ago, that there was to be had within a “*momentary* cure” for the toothache. I noticed after a few months that the proprietor of that valuable medicine, whatever it was, had discovered that nobody needed a *momentary* cure and so the word “*momentary*” was changed for the word, “*instantaneous*,” which was a great improvement. I am afraid that some people’s salvation is a momentary salvation. They get a sort of Grace and then they lose it. They get peace and, by-and-by, it is gone. What is needed is *permanence* and there

is always permanence in the work of Christ! “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance” and His healing is never revoked.

O Soul, do you see, then, what is to be had at this moment from Jesus? Healing for life! Deliverance from the withering power of sin throughout life and eternity! This is to be had by cheerful obedience to the matchless command, “Stretch forth your hand,” or, in other words, “Trust, trust, trust!” Only this week I was talking with one who said he could not trust Christ and I said, “But, my dear Friend, we cannot have that. Could you trust me?” Yes, he could trust me. “Why can you trust *me* and not trust the Lord Jesus? I will put it another way. If you said to me I cannot trust you, what would that imply?”

“Why,” he said, “it would mean, of course, that you were a very bad fellow, if I could not trust you.” “Ah,” I said, “that is exactly what you insinuate when you say you cannot trust Jesus, for he that believes *not* has made Him a liar! Do you mean to say that God is a liar?” The person to whom I spoke drew back with horror from that consequence and said “No, Sir, I am sure that God is true.” Very well, then. You can certainly trust One who is true! There can be no difficulty in that! To trust and rest upon One whom you cannot doubt must follow as a matter of course upon your good opinion of Him. Your belief that He is true is a sort of faith. Throw yourself upon Him now. Just as I lean upon this rail with all my weight, lean like that upon the mercy of God in Christ Jesus! That is faith!

If God’s mercy in Christ cannot save you, be lost! Make it your sole hope and confidence. Hang on your God in Christ Jesus as the vessel hangs upon the nail. As a man casts his whole weight upon his bed, so throw yourself unreservedly upon the Divine Love which was seen in Jesus and is still seen there! If you do this, you shall be saved! And I do not mean merely that you shall be saved from Hell, for the power of faith, working in you by God, the Holy Spirit, shall save you from loving sin! Being forgiven, you will, from now on, love Him who forgives you and you will receive a new principle of action which shall be strong enough to break the bars of your old habits! And you shall rise into a pure and holy life! If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed—and free you shall be at once if you now trust Him!

The Lord grant His blessing, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THE GENTLENESS OF JESUS

NO. 1147

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14, 1873,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He sends forth judgment unto victory. And in His name shall the Gentiles trust.”
Matthew 12:19, 20, 21.***

EVERY single fragment of Scripture is precious. Short texts culled here and there, as subjects of meditation, are useful. At the same time the practice of discoursing upon disconnected extracts may be carried too far, and sometimes the meaning of a passage may be entirely lost by not regarding its connection. The Bible ought to be treated in the reading of it as any other book is treated, only with much more of reverential regard. Suppose that Milton's "Paradise Lost" were used as a textbook—and that its general mode of usage were to take separate lines disconnected from the rest of the great poem—and consider them as positive statements and suitable topics of meditation?

It would be a dangerous experiment! The great poet might well stir in his grave at the proposal. There are grand lines in that matchless epic which would bear the process, and glow like diamonds upon a regal brow, but nobody would form any worthy idea of the glory of the "Paradise Lost" by having it presented in portions, lines and selected passages. Such a mode of study reminds me of the Grecian student, who, when he had a house to sell, carried a brick about the streets to show what kind of a house it was.

The Bible ought not to be torn limb from limb and its joints hung up like meat in the shambles. Beyond all other books it will bear dissection, for it is vital in every sentence and word. Since it is a mosaic of priceless gems, you will be enriched even if you extract a jewel here and there—but to behold its Divine beauty you must contemplate the mosaic as a whole. No idea of the magnificent design of the entire Scriptures can enter the human mind by reading it in detached portions, especially if those separated passages are interpreted without reference to the run of the writer's thoughts. Let Scripture be read according to the rules of common sense and that will necessitate our reading through a book and following its train of thought.

Thus shall we be likely to arrive at the mind of the Holy Spirit. I say this because I may have to disturb your idea of the meaning of a passage of Scripture, this morning, for a short time, but you need not be alarmed, for after I have disturbed, I shall, most probably, confirm it. I shall pull down to build up again! The main force of our sermon will be spent over

the well-known words, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory." We have all our own opinion of the meaning of this verse. We rejoice that the Lord Jesus will deal tenderly with the weak and the gentle in heart, in Grace. And we are thankful that the text appears to us to express that consoling Truth of God.

Now we admit that the verse does teach us that. Does it teach us that directly and mainly? I think not. Read the connection and judge for yourselves. The Pharisees endeavored to discover faults in the Lord Jesus, but they could find nothing against Him except in reference to His disregard of their notions of the Sabbath. They blamed the disciples for plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath and the Lord, Himself, for performing a miracle of healing on that day. Our Lord met them boldly and so utterly routed them that one almost pities them, while rejoicing over their ignominious defeat! They were beaten outright and covered with shame. Our Lord overwhelmed them with five arguments, any one of which completely swept the ground from under their feet.

As, for instance, that question, "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much, then, is a man better than a sheep?" Our Lord's victory was complete and tended very much to weaken their authority. But He did not push His advantage so as to overturn the sway of these religious teachers—they were before Him as lamps so nearly blown out that nothing but a smoldering smoke remained. He did not proceed to quench them. In argument He had proved their folly and had crumpled them up till they were like so many bruised bulrushes—but there He paused.

He did not pursue the conflict further, but retired to Galilee, into the lone places and rural districts of the country, and preached the Gospel. Lest a popular controversy and public tumult should arise, every time He worked a miracle He bade the healed one conceal the fact in order that it might be fulfilled, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He sends forth judgment unto victory." And here let me ask, Do not the last words of this passage imply that the smoking flax *will* be quenched and the bruised reeds *will* be broken when He shall "send forth judgment unto victory"?

How will this be true if the passage refers to feeble saints? The first meaning looks in quite another direction and points to the Lord's enemies. Now is the season of His patience, but a day of His wrath is on the way. He refrained from overthrowing His antagonists in the days of His flesh, but in the time of His second coming He will break His foes in pieces with a rod of iron! He will dash them in pieces like potters' vessels. Now His voice is not heard in the streets, but soon that voice shall be heard by all living and shall resound through the abodes of the dead! Now He strives not for the mastery, but then shall He go forth conquering and to conquer. Today is the time of patience, gentleness and meekness—so with humble reverence let us meditate thereon.

The subject of this morning will be the gentleness and long-suffering of the Lord Jesus. Secondly, the outcome of it, "In His name shall the Gentiles trust," because they find Him so meek and tender. And, lastly, the termination of it, for though He is, at this present time, so merciful that He does not break the bruised reed, yet there is a limit set to it—"till He sends forth judgment unto victory."

I. THE SAVIOR'S FORBEARANCE. The passage wonderfully sets forth the Redeemer's gentleness and we shall contemplate it, first, in His own life on earth. What a quiet, unobtrusive life was that of Him whom they called, "the carpenter's son"! True, it was wonderfully energetic. There is a sense in which it must not only be admitted, but gloried in, that our Lord did both strive and cry, for spiritually He fought against sin even unto agony and blood. And with thrilling eloquence and plenteous tears He *did* cry out against evil and warn men to escape.

He lifted up His voice like a trumpet and cried and spared not so that His persuasive voice was heard in the streets and throughout all the land His Gospel was made known. But the passage teaches us that while others were contentious for power, or, clamorous for gain and eager for notoriety, Jesus was not so. He raised no party, He fomented no strife, He sought no honor, He courted no popularity. He left the arena of this world's contests to others—His was another field of conflict. Born, as He was, amidst the acclamations of the angels. Reverenced by strangers from a distant land. Foretold by Seers and Prophets, one marvels that He did not, even in early youth, shine forth as a "bright particular star." But for 30 years He retires to the workshop of Joseph and is there patiently occupied with "His father's business."

We catch a glimpse of Him in the Temple, but, as in a moment, He vanishes, again, into obscurity. Had we been in His place, young men of mettle and of warm blood, would we have waited 30 years and more? What hand could have held us back from the battle? Like the war horse, we would have champed the bit and pawed the ground, eager for conflict! Jesus was meekly quiet, neither striving, nor crying, nor causing His voice to be heard in the streets. When the time is come for Him to appear in public, He goes quietly to the banks of the Jordan. John is baptizing a multitude in the river—He does not press forward and claim the Baptist's immediate attention, but He waits till all the people have been baptized—and then He tells John that He desires to be baptized by him.

The deed is done and the Holy Spirit descends upon Him in the river, but He does not come up out of the Jordan at once to plunge into the midst of conflict and preach a sermon with the fiery zeal of Peter on the day of Pentecost. Neither does He, at once, go up to Jerusalem and proclaim Himself the Anointed of the Lord. Instead, He is led of the Spirit into the wilderness. His zeal was intense, but He had His spirit well in hand and not a grain of self-seeking ever defiled His ardor. The zeal of God's House had eaten Him up, yet He went quietly to the wilderness, and afterwards to Cana and Capernaum and the more remote spots by the sea.

He did not need excitement from the outside world to maintain the fires of His zeal—there was an inexhaustible fount of fire within—therefore He

was ardent but not noisy, intense but not clamorous. His first labors were very private—His Kingdom came not with observation. He did not seek to entrap men into discipleship by arts which are commonly employed. His first disciples were urged to follow Him by John, who said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.” And then the disciples asked Him, “Master, where do You dwell?” He gathered them one or two at a time. He did not raise an excitement and lead hundreds captive to enthusiasm. Instead of stirring the metropolitan city at once with His ministry, He went away to Nazareth and Cana, little paltry towns away among a rustic population.

He went about healing the sick and teaching, calling John, James, Peter, Andrew and Matthew, but not making very great headway, as we say—spending a whole day talking with a woman at a well—perfectly satisfied to be doing what violent spirits would call commonplace mission work. When He comes up to the feast at Jerusalem to preach, He stands there and declares the Word of God, but when He is opposed He disappears and is back, again, in His retirement in Galilee, still pursuing His lowly work of love. Our Lord came among us in meek and lowly guise—and so He continued among us. You shall not find Christ pushing His way among the politicians, crying, “I claim leadership among the sons of men.”

He never marches at the head of an admiring mob to assert His supremacy by their aid and alarm His foes by terror of their numbers. But He gently glides through the world, seen by His light rather than heard by His sound. He was content to shun fame and avoid applause. He frequently forbade the grateful patients whom He had healed to mention His name or publish the cure. His modesty and love of quiet shrank from notoriety. It was abundantly true of Him, He did not strive nor cry, neither did any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He did not break and a smoking flax He did not quench.

The meaning of what I have said is this—Jesus never became a party leader. He was no place-hunter or demagogue. There arose many in His day who claimed to be great ones and drew many people after them by the pretence that they were the promised deliverers. And by-and-by their clamors created strife, for the troops of the Romans were after them, and tumult and bloodshed were the lamentable sequel. Never did our Lord bid His servants fight, for His kingdom was of another order. When, for once in His life, He rode in state as a king through the streets of Jerusalem, the shouting was only that of children who said, “Hosanna” in the temple, and of a willing, peaceful company of disciples, whose only weapons were palm branches and boughs of the trees.

For a war horse to ride, He chose the lowly ass. As compared with those who clamored for place and power, He was like a dumb man all His days, though able to have awed or charmed the multitude to do His bidding. He loved the lonely mountain better than the throng of the crowd. He could not help being popular—such a speaker as He was must attract His thousands, for, “Never man spoke like this Man.” And such a miracle-worker as He was, how could it be but that the people would follow to witness His wonders and eat of His loaves and fishes? And such a generous spirit—so

noble and so free-hearted—it was little marvel that the people would have made Him a king, but He tore Himself away. They sought Him and found Him not.

He came to endure, not to enjoy—to be despised, not to be crowned. How often did He escape the congratulating crowds! He took a boat and passed over to the other side. Rough waters were more to His mind than hot-brained mobs of transient admirers who could be bought by bread and fish! His design was not to be the idol of the populace, but to break their idols and lead their hearts back to God. Therefore He did not strive nor cry, nor run in the world's race, nor battle in her wars. As He shunned popularity, so He made no use of the carnal forces which lay ready at His hands. No doubt the priests and scribes were sometimes afraid to oppose Him for fear of the people—but they had no need to fear that He would shelter behind the populace.

He asked neither the rich nor the strong nor the many to protect Him, but felt quite secure till His hour was come. He spoke openly before them, unguarded by His friends and with neither weapon nor armor of defense. He never appealed to human passions, or egged on the people against the tyrants of the hour. No sentence of His can be construed into a desire to meet force by force. One of His followers, who loved Him much, said, "Let us call fire from Heaven upon these Samaritans." But Jesus said, "You know not what spirit you are of."

In the garden of Gethsemane He might have summoned legions of angels to the rescue, but He agonized alone. Not a single seraph came from the Throne of Heaven to drive away the Son of Perdition, or the blood-thirsty priests. No destroying angel smote the men who spat in His face. No devouring flame burned up those who scourged Him. The force of His life was the Omnipotence of gentle goodness. He did not lay the weight of His little finger upon the minds of men to compel them to involuntary subjection. His conquests were such as led men in willing captivity. Only think of what He might have done! Only think of what you and I would have done if we had been in His position, having such a work to do and such opponents!

Have you ever felt, when you have seen the sin of this world, as if you wanted to put it down and stamp it out by force? Your indignation has been stirred within you and you have said, "I cannot bear it." When I stood in Rome and saw the idolatries of that city and its swarms of priests, I could not help exclaiming, "How is it that the eternal thunderbolts lie still? Had I one hour of the Lord's power I would sweep away the whole of this filth with the bosom of destruction." But Christ, with these same thunderbolts in His hands, never used them at all. He had no curses for His foes. No blows for His enemies. The only time He did use the semblance of violence was when He took the scourge of small cords and chased the buyers and sellers out of His Father's House, a deed in which the awe inspired by His Presence appears to have been the principal instrument employed.

Such was His gentleness that when He might have shaken the earth and rocked the thrones of tyrants—and made every idol god totter from its

bloodstained throne—He put forth no such physical power—but still stood with melting heart and tearful eyes inviting sinners to come to Him. He used no lash but His love, no battleaxe and weapon of war but His Grace. Has it ever struck you that it was strange He should have stopped in Palestine, a little, miserable strip of country, almost too insignificant to be noticed on the map? Why did He confine Himself to Israel? Why so-journ in the remotest parts of the land?

Why did He not at once go down to Greece and there, at Athens, meet the philosophers and convince them of His superiority? They must, before long, have admitted that there was majesty about His teaching and have acknowledged Him as the wisest of men. Why not march to Rome and face proud Caesar—and if He must die—die in some conspicuous place where all the world would ring with it? Ah, no, He courted no notoriety. We are always saying, “Let us push and get to the front,” but when the world’s march is in the *wrong way*, the true leader is behind! Jesus made no desperate attempts to reach leadership. He relied upon the power of His Spirit and the force of love.

The power of the Truth of God would, He knew, penetrate in quietness the prepared heart. He knew that the Gospel, like fire, could burn its way without noise of drum or sound of trumpet. He was satisfied to pick out His few fishermen and His other disciples in whom His Grace would be placed like a sacred deposit—and let the work go on like the silent growing of the corn in the ground which springs up, man knows not how. I leave the question of His whole life, for I do not think it is necessary to say more to make you see how exactly the Prophet has pictured Him here.

Now, secondly, the same has been true with regard to the spread of the Gospel. The passage does not refer merely to Christ, Personally, but to Christ’s entire work. And it is still true of Him, “He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.” No violence has been employed in the spread of the Gospel. No carnal weapon has been lifted to promote Messiah’s reign. He does not strive nor cry. When Mohamed would spread *his* religion, he bade his disciples arm themselves and then go and cry aloud in every street, and offer to men the alternative to become believers in the prophet, or to die. Mohamed’s was a mighty voice, which spoke with the edge of the scimitar. He delighted to quench the smoking flax and break the bruised reed—but the religion of Jesus has advanced upon quite a different plan.

Other forces, more mighty, but not so visible, have been employed to promote the sway of Jesus. Never has He invoked the secular arm—He has left that to Antichrist and the seed thereof. No demand has been made by Him upon human governments to patronize or enforce Christianity. On the contrary, wherever governments have patronized Christianity at all, they have either killed it, or else the infinite mercy of God, alone, has preserved it from extinction. Jesus would not have the unbeliever fined, or imprisoned, or cut off from the rights of citizenship. He would not allow any one of His disciples to lift a finger to harm the vilest blasphemer, or touch one hair of an atheist’s head. He would have men won

to Himself by no sword but that of the Spirit—and bound to Him by no bands but those of love.

Never, never, in the Church of God has a true conversion been worked by the use of carnal means—the Lord will not so approve of the power of the flesh. You do not find the Lord calling in the pomp and prestige of worldly men to promote His kingdom, or see Him arguing with philosophers that they might sanction His teaching. I know that Christian ministers do this and I am sorry they do. I see them taking their places in the Hall of Science to debate with the men of boastful wisdom. They claim to have achieved great mental victories there and I will not question their claim, but *spiritual* triumphs I fear they will never win in this way.

They have answered one set of arguments, and another set has been invented the next day! The task is endless. To answer the allegations of infidelity is as fruitless as to reason with the waves of the sea, so far as soul-saving is concerned. This is not the way of quickening, converting and sanctifying the souls of men. Not as a book of science will you triumph, O Bible, though your every Word is Wisdom itself! Not as a great philosopher will You conquer, O Man of Nazareth, though You are, indeed, the possessor of all knowledge! But as the Savior of men and the Son of God shall Your kingdom come! The power which Christ uses for the spread of His kingdom is exercised in conversion and is as different as possible from compulsion or clamor.

Conversion is the mysterious work of the Spirit upon the soul. That great change could not be produced by the fear of imprisonment, the authority of Law, the charms of bribery, the clamor of excitement, or the glitter of eloquence. Men have pretended to conversion because they hoped that a religious profession would benefit their trade or raise their social position, but from such conversions may God deliver us! Men have been startled into thoughtfulness by the excitement which arises out of Christian zeal—but any real spiritual benefit they may have received has come to them from another source—for the Lord is not in the wind, or the tempest, but in the still small voice. That which is worked by noise will subside when quiet reigns—as the bubble dies with the wave which bore it.

Hearts are won to Jesus by the silent conviction which irresistibly subdues the conscience to a sense of guilt and by the love which is displayed in the Redeemer's becoming the great substitutionary Sacrifice for us, that our sins might be removed. In this way conversions are worked, not by displays of human zeal, wisdom, or force. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Nor, Beloved, has Christ caused His Gospel to spread by any manifestation of the terrors of His Deity. Oh, if today this guilty land of ours were bruised beneath the feet of a destroying angel, or we, ourselves, were made to sit in darkness that might be felt or found our chambers filled with frogs and loathsome insects, and our fields devastated by devouring locusts—then we *dream* that our countrymen would be struck down in terror at the power of Jesus—but such is not His mode of warfare!

Plagues are more suited for the armory of the Law than for the hospital of the Gospel. He might, if He pleased, send down upon the worshippers

of false gods such terrible judgments that they would cry to the rocks to hide them and to the hills to cover them. While they are bowing before their demon gods, He might cause the earth to open and swallow them up. Or He could smite every priest at this hour with the leprosy, and richly would they deserve the doom! At this hour every deceiver of the people might suddenly be torn in pieces and appointed his portion with the tormentors—and Divine justice would exonerate the deed.

But the Son of Man does not so determine. With wonderful patience He sits still and bears the insults of succeeding generations. Were He not Almighty, He could not so restrain Himself. He allows men, still, to chant hymns to gods of wood and stone. He still allows priests to insult Him by pretending to manufacture the flesh and blood of His Humanity! He allows this blinded nation to follow its wicked priests and to forsake Himself, the only Priest. And all this He does while His saints are crying daily, “O Lord, how long?” and the souls under the altar are day and night petitioning for justice. He pauses in pity, waiting to be gracious—not willing that any should perish—unwilling to destroy.

This smoking flax of heathendom, abominable as it is in His nostrils, He will not yet quench. And those broken reeds of ritualistic confidence on which men rely, He will not as yet break, for He is magnifying His patience and long-suffering. By-and-by He will “send forth judgment unto victory” and men shall see that the patient Lamb is also the mighty Lion of the Tribe of Judah! And He who was Omnipotent to bear offenses will also be Omnipotent to recompense His foes—and to ease Him of His adversaries!

We will now note another illustration of the same Truth of God. We have observed His life and the spread of the Gospel. Now note that the same Truth appears in the experience of every unconverted man. I may be addressing one who has denied the existence of God. Wonder, O Man, that you still live, since you deny the existence of your Maker! You are to Him no better than smoking flax or a bruised reed, but despite your insolence, He neither quenches nor crushes you! You enjoy the bounties of Providence. You are permitted to inhale the air which afterwards you send forth in blasphemy! Is it not a marvel that you are not destroyed?

Perhaps you have become openly profane as well as a secret doubter. You have insulted God to His face and dared Him to destroy your body and your soul. Why did He not, at once, accept your profane challenge? Why? Because He is too great to be in haste to quench such a smoking flax as you are—too kind to deal hastily with you! Justice will close her accounts with you by-and-by, but for the present the Lord lets such a bruised reed as you are, alone. Crush you? Yes, that He could! One word from Him, one look from His eyes and you would lie a corpse—and your putrid carcass would need to be hidden away in the dust.

He spares you, not in indifference but in wonderful patience. He will not quench nor crush you. The Socinian says that Christ is not the Son of God and so robs Him of His greatest glory. But Jesus does not smite him. Hard and cruel things are said against the Lord and His great Sacrifice, but He hurls no flames of fire upon the synagogues of the heretics. He suffers men to live in ease and comfort, even to old age, though every day

they have insulted His Majesty and rebelled against His Throne. Nothing provokes Jesus more than injuries done to His people. There was a time when He saw Saul persecuting His Church and He chided him from Heaven.

His eyes flashed fire upon the Apostle and he fell to the ground—but even then mercy had moved the Savior, and not fury. “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks,” was a reproof such as only the gentle Jesus could have given! But, oh, how is it that He endures to see His people despised, rejected, slandered? How could the Lord Jesus sit still while the Papists were murdering the Vaudois in the valleys of the Alps? How could He be still on St. Bartholomew’s Eve while the alarm was sounding and His own dear sheep were being slaughtered? How could He be quiet when Smithfield was black with the ashes of His saints?

In His forbearance we find the answer. His long-suffering is intended for the salvation of men, and it is amazing! I put it to any here, present, who have been provoking Christ for years—could you have borne with your fellow creatures as Christ has borne with you? You, especially, who hear the Gospel from day to day and yet put off obedience to its commands and indulge in private sins, and partake in evil lusts, in defiance of your conscience and the rebukes of the Spirit of God—I ask you, do you not wonder how Jesus bears with you?

Why, I know men who, if but half a word is spoken to provoke them, will fall to blows! And I know very few who would quietly bear six or seven provocations—but yet here is the Lord Jesus Christ able to destroy you, His adversary—and yet, for the space of 30, 40, 50, perhaps 60 or 70 years, still does His patience wait. Oh, the mercy of the Lord! The mercy of the Lord!! He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax! One more remark should be made here. Our present view of the text proves beyond all question His compassion to those who are weak and feeble, but are of a right spirit. We generally understand the passage to mean that wherever there is a spark of Grace, Christ will not quench it, and wherever there is any brokenness of heart, Christ will not destroy it.

Now, observe, that instead of denying that this is the meaning of the passage, while I do assert that it is not the *first* meaning, I have helped you to see how forcibly this Truth of God may be inferred from the text. For if Christ would not quench those Pharisees and Sadducees who were so obnoxious. If He does not put down cruel kings and great potentates. And if He bears with infidels and skeptics, and with persecutors and profane persons—how much more will He deal gently with those who are truly seeking Him, but whose spiritual life is feeble—so that they are comparable to bruised reeds and smoking flax?

Instead of setting aside, we have rather confirmed and brought into clearer light the meaning which is usually given to the text. O poor Heart, are you seeking Jesus? Is it a poor, trembling search as yet? Are you afraid that He will reject you? Have you begun to pray, but does that prayer seem too feeble to enter the gates of Heaven? Be of good courage! He who has patience with His proudest foe will not be hard and censori-

ous to a trembling penitent! It cannot be that He who is too tender to destroy the howling beast which snarls at Him, should be so severe as to slay the lamb which pines at His feet! Weak and trembling One, be of good courage!

As for you who are converted to Him and can say that all your hope is placed in Him, it may be you are depressed because you do not grow in Grace as you would wish to do. And there are times when your anxiety to be right leads you to make rigid self-examination—and then you are grieved because there does not appear to be more Grace in you than fire in a dying candlewick—nor more true life in you than there is of strength in a bruised reed. Well, never mind. Jesus has a special care for the weak and is tender to the utmost degree towards such as need to be gently handled. Has He not said, “He carries the lambs in His bosom, and does gently lead those that are with young”?

Only let your faith be sincere and if it is but as a grain of mustard seed it shall bring you into the Kingdom. Though you can but look with a bleared eye at the Cross and scarcely see it by reason of the tears of your sorrow, yet, if you do but trust in the great Sacrifice, you are saved, for Jesus is no rough taskmaster towards seeking souls. He is no stern judge or heartless driver of the weak. He is very pitiful and full of compassion.

And you, Backslider, where are you? Your light, once so brilliant, has waned into a mere spark and your only sign of possessing the heavenly fire is the smoke of your desire. You are saying, “Would God I had the life of Grace in my soul! I cannot be happy in the world and yet I fear I have no share in the world to come.” Backslider, you have been broken and rendered useless by *sin*—you have fallen from your steadfastness—you are not fit to be a pillar in the house of your God, but only to be thrown on the dunghill like a broken bulrush. Yet Jesus, when men reject you, will receive you. And when your conscience reprobates you, His love will not discard you. Be of good cheer! He who affords His direst foes a thousand opportunities to repent will not, in His fierce anger, cast out those who crave mercy at His hands!

II. THE OUTCOME OF THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST. “In His name shall the Gentiles trust.” What does this mean? Why, power, violence, harshness, severity are never to be trusted. You cannot win men’s hearts by such means. The Parisians wrote upon the wall of the Imperial Palace, “Infantry, cavalry, artillery”—these were the basis of the imperial power. But an empire founded upon such things melted away like snow in summer. If there had been loyal affection between the ruler and the ruled, a thousand German invasions could not have dissolved the tie.

When the old Napoleon was on the rock of St. Helena, he said gloomily to one of his attendants, “My empire has passed away, because it rested upon force, but the empire of Jesus still lasts, and will last forever, because it is based upon love.” What has Jesus done for His subjects but loved them better than anyone else could have done, suffered for them beyond all and conferred greater blessings upon them than all the universe besides could have bestowed? By such things has He captured their

hearts. You may tempt away Christ's followers from Him when you can find them a better master, or a more loving friend—but not till then.

You shall win us to a new leader when you can show us a better. But you cannot even *imagine* one who could compare for an instant with the Chief among ten thousand, the altogether Lovely! We who are descendants of the Gentiles trust Him, and trust Him implicitly, because He is so Divinely gentle, so Omnipotently tender. Savior, You are no tyrant! You do not trample on the poor and needy, or oppress the weak and trembling! You are Mercy itself, Love embodied, Grace Incarnate—therefore do the people flock to You and in Your name do the Gentiles trust! The power of Jesus over men lies in the fact that He has taught them to trust Him. The firm faith of His followers consolidates His Kingdom.

When His Word comes home to us in its own soft and gentle manner and He manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. And when He permits us to put our finger into the print of the nails and our hand into His side. And when He says, "You are Mine and I am yours," oh, then we feel burning in our soul like coals of juniper—that grand enthusiasm which is the terror of the adversaries of Christ—and the power of the Church! More potent than the edge of the sword is the intense love of saints. As the might of the north wind when it chases away the mist, such is the Divine force of love for Jesus when it fills the heart—it chases away all lethargy and sin.

When we truly trust our Lord we feel that we can do anything for Him! Impossibilities have ceased and miracles have returned. When we trust Christ, self-sacrifice becomes a joy and holy daring is but a natural impulse. By trust in Christ the weakest have been made strong, feeble women have routed their persecutors and humble men have confronted the proudest despots without fear! O Lord Jesus, the Gentiles trust You because You are meek and lowly—and their trustful love is the strength of Your growing dominion!

III. The last thing is this—THE TERMINATION OF THIS GENTLENESS. Our jaded spirits think the end long in coming. Read an account of the Popish Confessional, or stand, as I have done, by the confessional box and read, printed before your eyes, the subjects which are to be matters of question between the priests and the young girls who confess to him. And if you do not feel as if you could invoke a curse upon each shaven head, you are something more or less than man! It makes one's blood boil to think that such wretches should be in a position to insult and corrupt the modesty of maidenhood.

Why does not the Lord's anger flash forth against them and consume them as stubble? So would our hasty justice deal out righteousness, but the Lord is slow to anger and gives His patience room. Yet if men will not alter. If they will not be won by love. If even the wounds of Christ cannot wean them from their lusts. If reason is lost upon them and they make beasts of themselves, there must come an end of it. A God who is all mercy and no justice would, in the long run be a dreadful calamity, just as a judge who never punished crime would be the worst possible magistrate for any nation.

Ah, yes, the very instincts of our Nature make us feel that sin must be punished in due time. The best emotions of the most saintly spirit coincide with the belief in future retribution. There must come a time when the foes of God shall not rule and error shall not dominate over men. It must be so. Jesus, the Friend of man, will “send forth judgment unto victory.” He will do this in a certain sense at the death of every ungodly man and woman. With what surprise will they open their eyes in the next state and see the Christ, whom they despised, sitting upon His Throne!

With what unutterable dismay have some been seized, even before they have been quite dead! While the curtain was just rising and was not fully drawn up, they have howled with horror! And, ah, their dreadful doom! Those who denied that Jesus was God shall see Him as Divine. Those who persecuted His people shall see His people glorified at His side. Those who opposed the Truth He taught shall feel how sure that Truth is and shall learn how dreadful a thing it is to neglect the great salvation and fall into the hands of the living God!

But this is not all. There is a day appointed, an hour of which no man knows, when the Lord Jesus shall descend from Heaven with a shout. Yes, He who was nailed to the Cross, who died and rose, and ascended, leaving the last print of His feet upon Olivet—He shall descend to earth again! He shall come, not to suffer, but to judge! And with Him, as co-assessors, shall come His own beloved followers. Then shall the dead rise from their graves and sea and land yield up the trophies of the grave! Then shall stern Justice take the place of gentleness and pity—for as He Himself repeats the words, “I was hungry and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink; sick and in prison, and you visited Me not”—His Words shall roll like thunder and smite like lightning, “Depart you cursed into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

You rejected mercy, and Mercy will plead with you no more! You challenged power, and Power shall break you like potters’ vessels. You despised love, and Love grown angry now despises you! You rejected the Truth of God, and now Truth shall bind you in chains of fire forever! You would have none of God, and God will have none of you! You would not have the Savior, and He shall say, “I never knew you: depart from Me you workers of iniquity.” He will not, today break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax—but He will by-and-by—when He “sends forth judgment unto victory.” He will sweep out of His Kingdom every offensive thing. God grant that we may not be obnoxious to His anger when He shall be among the sons of men as a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 12:1-30.

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SWEET COMFORT FOR FEEBLE SAINTS

NO. 6

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 4, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“A bruised reed shall He not break and smoking flax shall He not quench,
Till He send forth judgment unto victory.”
Matthew 12:20.***

BABBLING fame always loves to talk of one man or another. Some there are whose glory it trumpets forth and whose honor it extols above the heavens. Some are her favorites and their names are carved on marble—heard in every land and every clime. Fame is not an impartial judge—she has her favorites. Some men she extols, exalts and almost deifies—others, whose virtues are far greater and whose characters are more deserving of commendation, she passes by unheeded and puts the finger of silence on her lips. You will generally find that those persons beloved by fame are men made of brass or iron and cast in a rough mold. Fame caresses Caesar because he ruled the earth with a rod of iron. Fame loves Luther because he boldly and manfully defied the Pope of Rome and with knit brow dared laugh at the thunders of the Vatican. Fame admires Knox, for he was stern and proved himself the bravest of the brave. Generally, you will find her choosing the men of fire and mettle, who stood before their fellow creatures fearless of them—men who were made of courage—who were consolidated lumps of fearlessness and never knew what timidity might be!

But you know there is another class of persons equally virtuous and equally to be esteemed—perhaps even more so—whom fame entirely forgets. You do not hear her talk of the gentle-minded Melancthon—she says but little of him—yet he did as much, perhaps, in the Reformation, as even the mighty Luther! You do not hear fame talk much of the sweet and blessed Rutherford and of the heavenly words that distilled from his lips. Or of Archbishop Leighton, of whom it was said that he was never out of temper in his life. She loves the rough granite peaks that defy the storm cloud—she does not care for the more humble stone in the valley, on which the weary traveler rests. She wants something bold and prominent—something that courts popularity—something that stands out before the world. She does not care for those who retreat in the shade. Therefore, it is, my Brothers and Sisters, that the blessed Jesus, our adorable Master, has escaped fame. No one says much about Jesus, except His followers. We do not find His name written among the great and mighty men. Though, in truth, He is the greatest, mightiest, holiest, pur-

est and best of men that ever lived. But because He was, “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,” and was emphatically the Man whose Kingdom is not of this world—because He had nothing of the rough about Him, but was all love—because His words were softer than butter, His utterances more gentle in their flow than oil—because never man spoke so gently as this Man—therefore He is neglected and forgotten.

He did not come to be a conqueror with his sword, nor a Mohammed with his fiery eloquence, but He came to speak with a “still small voice,” that melts the rocky heart, that binds up the broken in spirit. A voice that continually says, “Come unto Me all you that are weary and heavy laden.” “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.” Jesus Christ was all gentleness. And this is why He has not been extolled among men as otherwise He would have been. Beloved, our text is full of gentleness. It seems to have been steeped in love. And I hope I may be able to show you something of the immense sympathy and the mighty tenderness of Jesus as I attempt to speak from it. There are three things to be noticed!—First, *mortal frailty*. Secondly, *Divine compassion*. And thirdly, *certain triumph*—“till He send forth judgment unto victory.”

I. First, we have before us a view of MORTAL FRAILITY—bruised reed and smoking flax—two very suggestive metaphors and very full of meaning. If it were not too fanciful—and if it is, I know you will excuse me—I should say that the *bruised reed is an emblem of a sinner in the first stage of his conviction*. The work of God’s Holy Spirit begins with bruising. In order to be saved, the fallow ground must be plowed up—the hard heart must be broken—the rock must be split in sunder. An old divine says there is no going to Heaven without passing hard by the gates of Hell—without a great deal of soul-trouble and heart-exercise. I take it, then, that the bruised reed is a picture of the poor sinner when first God commences His operation upon the soul. He is a bruised reed, almost entirely broken and consumed—there is but little strength in him! The smoking flax I conceive to be *a backsliding Christian*—one who has been a burning and a shining light in his day, but by neglect of the means of Grace, the withdrawal of God’s Spirit and falling into sin, his light is almost gone out—not quite—it never can go out, for Christ says, “I will not quench it.” But it becomes like a lamp when ill-supplied with oil—almost useless. It is not quite extinguished—it smokes. It was a useful lamp, once, but now it has become as smoking flax. So I think these metaphors very likely describe the contrite sinner as a bruised reed and the backsliding Christian as smoking flax. However, I shall not choose to make such a division as that, but I shall put both the metaphors together and I hope we may fetch out a few thoughts from them.

And first, the encouragement offered in our text applies to *weak* ones. What in the world is weaker than the bruised reed, or the smoking flax? A reed that grows in the bog or marsh, let but the wild duck light upon it

and it snaps. Let but the foot of man brush against it and it is bruised and broken. Every wind that comes howling across the river makes it shake to and fro and well near tears it up by the roots. You can conceive of nothing more frail or brittle, or whose existence depends more upon circumstances than a bruised reed! Then look at smoking flax—what is it? It has a spark within it, that is true, but it is almost smothered—an infant's breath might blow it out, or the tears of a maiden quench it in a moment! Nothing has a more precarious existence than the little spark hidden in the smoking flax. *Weak things*, you see, are here described. Well, Christ says of them, "The smoking flax I will not quench. The bruised reed I will not break." Let me go in search of the weaklings. Ah, I shall not have to go far. There are many in this House of Prayer this morning who are, indeed, weak. But some of God's children, blessed be His name, are made strong to do mighty works for Him!

God has His Samsons, here and there, who can pull up Gaza's gates and carry them to the top of the hill. He has here and there His mighty Gideons, who can go to the camp of the Midianites and overthrow their hosts. He has His mighty men, who can go into the pit in winter and slay the lions—but the majority of His people are a timid, weak race. They are like the starlings that are frightened at every passerby, a little fearful flock. If temptation comes, they fall before it. If trial comes, they are overwhelmed by it—their frail skiff is danced up and down by every wave. And when the wind comes, they are drifted along like a sea bird on the crest of the billows. Weak things, without strength, without force, without might, without power Ah, dear Friends, I know I have got hold of some of your hands, now, and your hearts, too! For you are saying, "Weak? Ah, that I am. Full often I am compelled to say, I would, but cannot sing. I would, but cannot pray. I would, but cannot believe." You are saying that you cannot do anything. Your best resolves are weak and vain. And when you cry, "My strength renew," you feel weaker than before! You are weak, are you? Bruised reeds and smoking flax? Blessed be God, this text is for *you*, then! I am glad you can come in under the denomination of weak ones, for here is a promise that He will never break nor quench them, but will sustain and hold them up.

I know there are some very strong people here—I mean strong in their own ideas. I often meet with persons who would not confess any such weakness as this. They are strong minds. They say, "Do you think that we go into sin, Sir? Do you tell us that our hearts are corrupt? We do not believe any such thing. We are good, pure and upright. We have strength and might." To you I am not preaching this morning. To you I am saying nothing. But take heed—your strength is vanity, your power is a delusion, your might is a lie—for however much you may boast in what you can do, it shall pass away! When you come to the real contest with death, you shall find that you have no strength to grapple with it—when one of these days of strong temptation shall come—it will take hold of you, mor-

al man, and down you will go! And the glorious livery of your morality will be so stained, that though you wash your hands in snow water and make yourselves ever so clean, you shall be so polluted that your own clothes shall abhor you. I think it is a blessed thing to be weak. The weak one is a sacred thing. The Holy Spirit has made him such. Can you say, "I have no strength?" Then this text is for you!

Secondly, the things mentioned in our text are not only weak, but *worthless* things. I have heard of a man who would pick up a pin as he walked along the street, on the principle of economy. But I never yet heard of a man who would stop to pick up bruised reeds. They are not worth having! Who would care to have a bruised reed—a piece of rush lying on the ground? We all despise it as worthless. And smoking flax! What is the worth of that? It is an offensive and noxious thing and the worth of it is nothing. No one would give the snap of a finger either for the bruised reed or the smoking flax. Well, then, Beloved, in our estimation there are many of us who are worthless things. There are some here, who, if they could weigh themselves in the scales of the sanctuary and put their own hearts into the balance of conscience, would appear to be good for nothing—worthless, useless! There was a time when you thought yourselves to be the very best people in the world—when if anyone had said that you had more than you deserved, you would have kicked at it and said, "I believe I am as good as other people." You thought yourselves something wonderful—extremely worthy of God's love and regard but you now feel yourselves to be worthless. Sometimes you imagine God can hardly know where you are, you are such a despicable creature—so worthless—not worth His consideration. You can understand how He can look upon an animalcule in a drop of water, or upon a grain of dust in the sunbeam, or upon the insect of the summer evening. But you can hardly tell how He can think of *you*, you appear so worthless—a dead blank in the world, a useless thing! You say, "What good am I? I am doing nothing. As for a minister of the Gospel, he is of some service. As for a deacon of the Church he is of some use. As for a Sunday school teacher, he is doing some good—but of what service am I?" And you might ask the same question here. What is the use of a bruised reed? Can a man lean upon it? Can a man strengthen himself with it? Shall it be a pillar in my house? Can you bind it up into the pipes of Pan and make music come from a bruised reed?

Ah, no. It is of no service! And of what use is smoking flax? the midnight traveler cannot be lighted by it. The student cannot read by the flame of it. It is of no use—men throw it into the fire and consume it. Ah, that is how you talk of yourselves. You are good for nothing! So are these things. But Christ will not throw you away because you are of no value. You do not know of what use you may be and you cannot tell how Jesus Christ values you after all. There is a good woman there, a mother, perhaps. She says, "Well, I do not often go out—I keep house with my child-

ren and seem to be doing no good.” Mother, do not say so, your position is a high, lofty, responsible one. In training up children for the Lord, you are doing as much for His name as yon eloquent Apollos, who so valiantly preached the Word! And you, poor man, all you can do is to toil from morning till night and earn just enough to enable you to live day by day. You have nothing to give away and when you go to the Sunday school, you can just read, you cannot teach much. Well, but unto him to whom little is given of him little is required. Do you not know that there is such a thing as glorifying God by sweeping the street crossing? If two angels were sent down to earth, one to rule an empire and the other to sweep a street, they would have no choice in the matter, so long as God ordered them. So God, in His Providence, has called you to work hard for your daily bread. Do it to His Glory! “Whatsoever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to His honor.” But, ah, I know there are some of you here who seem useless to the Church. You do all you can. But when you have done it, it is nothing. You can neither help us with money, nor talents, nor time and, therefore, you think God must cast you out. You think if you were like Paul or Peter you might be safe. Ah, Beloved, talk not so! Jesus Christ says He will not quench the useless flax, nor break the worthless bruised reed. He has something for the useless and for the worthless ones. But mark you, I do not say this to excuse *laziness*—to excuse those that can do, but do not—that is a very different thing! There is a whip for the ass, a scourge for idle men and they must sometimes have it. I am speaking now of those who *cannot* do it. Not of Issachar, who is like a strong ass, crouching down between two burdens and too lazy to get up with them. I say nothing for the sluggard who will not plow by reason of the cold. But of the men and women who really feel that they can be of little service—who cannot do more—to such, the words of the text are applicable!

Now we will make another remark. The two things here mentioned are *offensive* things. A bruised reed is offensive, for I believe there is an illusion here to the pipes of Pan, which you all know are reeds put together, along which a man moves his mouth, thus causing some kind of music. This is the organ, I believe which Jubal invented and which David mentions, for it is certain that the organ we use was not then in use. The bruised reed, then, would of course spoil the melody of all the pipes. One unsound tube would so let the air out, as to produce a discordant sound—or no sound at all—so that one’s impulse would be to take the pipe out and put in a fresh one.

And as for smoking flax, the wick of a candle or anything of that kind, I need not inform you that the smoke is offensive. To me no odor in all the world is so abominably offensive as smoking flax. But some say, “How can you speak in so low a style?” I have not gone lower than I could go myself, nor lower than you can go with me. For I am sure you are, if God the Holy Spirit has really humbled you, just as offensive to your own

souls and just as offensive to God as a bruised reed would be among the pipes, or as smoking flax to the eyes and nose! I often think of dear old John Bunyan, when he said he wished God had made him a toad, or a frog, or a snake or anything rather than a man, for he felt he was so offensive. Oh, I can conceive a nest of vipers and I think that they are obnoxious. I can imagine a pool of all kinds of loathsome creatures, breeding corruption, but there is nothing one half so worthy of abhorrence as the *human heart*. God spares from all eyes but His own that awful sight—the human heart! And could you and I but once see our heart, we would be driven mad, so horrible would be the sight! Do you feel like that? Do you feel that you must be offensive in God’s sight—that you have so rebelled against Him, so turned away from His Commandments, that surely you must be obnoxious to Him? If so, my text is yours.

Now, I can imagine some woman here this morning who has departed from the paths of virtue and, while she is standing in the throng up there, or sitting down, she feels as if she had no right to tread these hallowed courts and stand among God’s people. She thinks that God might almost make the Chapel break down upon her to destroy her, she is so great a sinner! Never mind, broken reed and smoking flax! Though you are the scorn of man and loathsome to yourself, yet Jesus says to you, “Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you.” There is some man here who has something in his heart that I know not of—who may have committed crimes in secret, that we will not mention in public. His sins stick like a leech to him and rob him of all comfort. Here you are, young man, shaking and trembling, lest your crime should be divulged before high Heaven. You are broken down, bruised like a reed, smoking like flax. Ah, I have a word for you, too. Comfort! Comfort! Comfort! Despair not. For Jesus says He will not quench the smoking flax, He will not break the bruised reed.

And yet, my dear Friends, there is one thought before I turn away from this point. Both of these articles, however worthless they may be, *may yet be of some service*, When God puts His hand to a man, if he were worthless and useless before, He can make him very valuable. You know the price of an article does not depend so much upon the value of the raw material as upon workmanship put upon it. Here is very bad raw material to begin with—bruised reeds and smoking flax. But by Divine workmanship both these things become of wondrous value! You tell me the bruised reed is good for nothing. I tell you that Christ will take that bruised reed and mend it up and fit it in the pipes of Heaven! Then when the grand orchestra shall send forth its music, when the organs of the skies shall peal forth their deep-toned sounds, we shall ask, “What was that sweet note heard there, mingling with the rest?” And someone shall say, “It was a bruised reed.” Ah, Mary Magdalene’s voice in Heaven, I imagine, sounds more sweet and liquid than any other! And the voice of that poor thief, who said “Lord, remember me,” if it is a deep bass voice,

is more mellow and more sweet than the voice of any other—because he loved much, for he had much forgiven him. This reed may yet be of use!

Do not say you are good for nothing. You shall sing up in Heaven yet. Do not say you are worthless—at last you shall stand before the Throne among the blood-washed company and shall sing God's praise. Yes, and the smoking flax, too, what good can that be? I will soon tell you. There is a spark in that flax somewhere. It is nearly out, but still a spark remains. Behold the prairie on fire! See you the flames come rolling on? See you stream after stream of hot fire deluging the plain till all the continent is burnt and scorched—till Heaven is reddened with the flame? Old night's black face is scarred with the burning and the stars appear frightened at the conflagration. How was that mass ignited? By a piece of smoking flax dropped by some traveler! It was fanned by the soft wind till the whole prairie caught the flame. So one poor man—one ignorant man, one weak man—even one backsliding man, may be the means of the conversion of a whole nation! Who knows but that you who are nothing, now, may be of more use than those of us who appear to stand better before God, because we have more gifts and talents? God can make a spark set a world on fire—He can light up a whole nation with the spark of one poor praying soul. You may be useful yet—therefore be of good cheer! Moss grows upon gravestones. The ivy clings to the moldering pile, the mistletoe grows on the dead branch and even so shall Grace, piety, virtue, holiness and goodness come from smoking flax and bruised reeds, by God's Grace!

II. Thus, my dear Friends, I have tried to find out the parties for whom this text is meant and I have shown you somewhat of mortal frailty. Now I mount a step higher—to DIVINE COMPASSION. "The bruised reed He will not break, the smoking flax He will not quench."

Notice what is first of all stated and then let me tell you that Jesus Christ means a great deal more than He says. First of all, what does He say? He says plainly enough that He will not break the bruised reed. There is a bruised reed before me—a poor child of God under a deep sense of sin. It seems as if the whip of the Law would never stop. It keeps on—lash, lash, lash. And though you say, "Lord, stop it and give me a little respite," still comes down the cruel thong—lash, lash, lash! You feel your sins. Ah, I know what you are saying this morning—"If God continues this a little longer, my heart will break—I shall perish in despair, I am almost distracted by my sin. If I lie down at night I cannot sleep. It appears as if ghosts were in the room—ghosts of my sins—and when I awake at midnight, I see the black form of death staring at me and saying, "you are my prey, I shall have you." All the while Hell behind seems to burn. Ah, poor bruised reed. He will not break you—conviction shall not be too strong—it shall be great enough to melt you and to make you go to Jesus' feet. But, by His Grace, it shall not be strong enough to break your heart altogether, so that you should die. You shall never be

driven to despair. But you shall be delivered. You shall come out of the fire, poor bruised reed, and shall not be broken!

So there is a backslider here this morning. He is like the smoking flax. Years gone by you found such happiness in the ways of the Lord and such delight in His service, that you said, "There I would forever stay—

***'What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.'***

You are smoking and you think God will put you out. If I were an Arminian, I should tell you that He would—but being a believer in the Bible and nothing else—I tell you that He will not quench you! Though you are smoking, you shall not die. Whatever your crime has been, the Lord says, "Return, you backsliding children of men, for I will have mercy upon you." He will not cast you away, poor Ephraim! Only come back to Him—He will not despise you, though you have plunged yourself in the mire and dirt, though you are covered from head to foot with filthiness. Come back, poor Prodigal, come back, come back! Your Father calls you. Hearken poor Backslider! Come at once to Him whose arms are ready to receive you. It says He will not quench—He will not break. But there is more under cover than we see at first sight. When Jesus says He will not break, He means more than that. He means, "I will take that poor bruised reed. I will plant it hard by the rivers of waters and (miracle of miracles) I will make it grow into a tree whose leaf shall not wither! I will water it every moment. I will watch it. There shall be heavenly fruits upon it. I will keep the birds of prey from it, but the birds of Heaven, the sweet songsters of Paradise shall make their dwellings in the branches."

When He says that He will not break the bruised reed, He means more. He means that He will nourish, that He will help and strengthen and support and glorify—that He will execute His commission on it and make it glorious forever. And when He says to the backslider that He will not quench him, He means more than that—He means that He will fan him up to a flame. Some of you, I dare say, have gone home from Chapel and found that your fire had gone nearly out. I know how you deal with it, you blow gently at the single spark, if there is one—and least you should blow too hard, you hold your fingers before it and if you were alone and had but one match, or one spark in the tinder—how gently would you blow it! So, Backslider, Jesus Christ deals with you—He does not put you out—He blows gently. He says, "I will not quench you." He means, "I will be very tender, very cautious, very careful." He will put on dry material, so that, by-and-by, a little spark shall come to a flame and blaze up towards Heaven and great shall be the fire thereof.

Now I want to say one or two things to Little-Faiths this morning. The little children of God who are here mentioned as being bruised reeds or smoking flax are just as safe as the great saints of God. I wish for a mo-

ment to expand this thought and then I will finish with the other head. These saints of God who are called bruised reeds and smoking flax are just as safe as those who are mighty for their Master and great in strength, for several reasons. First of all, *the little saint is just as much God's elect as the great saint*. When God chose His people, He chose them all at once and altogether and He elected one just as much as the other. If I choose a certain number of things, one may be less than the rest, but one is as much chosen as the other and so Mrs. Fearing and Miss Despondency are just as much elected as Great-Heart, or Old Father Honest! Again—*the little ones are redeemed equally with the great ones!* The feeble saints cost Christ as much suffering as the strong ones. The tiniest child of God could not have been purchased with less of Jesus' precious blood and the greatest child of God did not cost Him more. Paul did not cost any more than Benjamin—I am sure He did not—for I read in the Bible that "*there is no difference.*" Besides, when of old they came to pay their redemption-money, every person brought a shekel. The poor shall bring no less and the rich shall bring no more than just a shekel. The same price was paid for the one as the other!

Now, then, little child of God, take that thought to your soul. You see some men very prominent in Christ's cause—and it is very good that they should be—but they did not cost Jesus a farthing more than you did. He paid the same price for you that He paid for them. Recollect again, *you are just as much a child of God as the greatest saint*. Some of you have five or six children. There is one child of yours, perhaps, who is very tall and handsome and has, moreover, gifts of mind. And you have another child who is the smallest of the family, perhaps has but little intellect and understanding. But which is the more your child? "The more?" you say. "Both alike are my children, certainly, one as much as the other." And so, dear Friends, you may have very little learning, you may be very dark about Divine things, you may but "see men as trees walking," but you are as much the children of God as those who have grown to the stature of men in Christ Jesus. Then remember, poor tried Saint, *that you are just as much justified as any other child of God*. I know that I am completely justified—

***"His blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress."***

I need no other garments except Jesus' doings and His imputed righteousness! The boldest child of God needs no more. And I, who am "less than the least of all saints," can be content with no less and I shall have no less. O Ready-to-Halt, you are as much justified as Paul, Peter, John the Baptist, or the loftiest saint in Heaven. There is no difference in that matter. Oh, take courage and rejoice!

Then one thing more. *If you were lost, God's honor would be as much tarnished as if the greatest one were lost*. A strange thing I once read in an old book about God's children and people being a part of Christ and

in union with Him. The writer says—"A father sits in his room and there comes in a stranger. The stranger takes up a child on his knee and the child has a sore finger, so he says, 'My child, you have a sore finger.'" "Yes!" the child says. "Well, let me take it off and give you a golden one!" The child looks at him and says, "I will not go to that man any more, for he talks of taking off my finger. I love my own finger and I will not have a golden one instead of it." So the saint says, "I am one of the members of Christ, but I am like a sore finger and He will take me off and put a golden one on." "No," says Christ, "No, no—I cannot have any of My members taken away. If the finger is a sore one, I will bind it up, I will strengthen it." Christ cannot allow a word about cutting His members off! If Christ loses one of His people, He would not be a whole Christ any longer! If the meanest of His children could be cast away Christ would lack a part of His fullness—yes, Christ would be incomplete without His Church! If one of His children must be lost, it would be better that it should be a great one, than a little one. If a little one were lost, Satan would say, "Ah, you save the great ones, because they had strength and could help themselves. But the little one that has no strength, you could not save him." You know what Satan would say, but God would shut Satan's mouth, by proclaiming, "They are all here, Satan—in spite of your malice, they are all here. Every one is safe. Now lie down in your den forever and be bound eternally in chains and smoke and fire!" So shall he suffer eternal torment, but not one child of God ever shall!

One thought more and I shall have done with this head. *The salvation of great saints often depends upon the salvation of little ones.* Do you understand that? You know that my salvation, or the salvation of any child of God, looking at second causes, very much depends upon the conversion of someone else. Suppose your mother is the means of your conversion. You would, speaking after the manner of men, say that your conversion depended upon hers—for her being converted, made her the instrument of bringing you in. Suppose such-and-such a minister to be the means of your calling. Then your conversion, in some sense, though not absolutely, depends upon his. So it often happens that the salvation of God's mightiest servants depends upon the conversion of little ones. There is a poor mother—no one ever knows anything about her—she goes to the House of God. Her name is not in the newspapers, or anywhere else. She teaches her child and brings him up in the fear of God. She prays for that boy. She wrestles with God and her tears and prayers mingle together. The boy grows up. What is he? A missionary—a William Knibb—a Moffat—a Williams. But you do not hear anything about the mother. Ah, but if the mother had not been saved, where would the boy have been? Let this cheer the little ones and may you rejoice that He will nourish and cherish you, though you are like bruised reeds and smoking flax!

III. Now, to finish up, there is a CERTAIN VICTORY. “Till He send forth judgment unto victory.”

Victory! There is something beautiful in that word. The death of Sir John Moore, in the Peninsular war, was very touching. He fell in the arms of triumph and sad as was his fate, I doubt not that his eyes were lit up with luster by the shout of victory. So also, I suppose, that Wolfe spoke a truth when he said, “I die happy,” having just before heard the shout, “they run, they run!” I know victory, even in that bad sense—for I look not upon earthly victories as of any value—must have cheered the warrior. But oh, how cheered the saint when he knows that victory is his! I shall fight during all my life, but I shall write “*vict*” on my shield. I shall be “more than conqueror through Him that loved me.” Each feeble saint shall win the day—each man upon his crutches—each lame one—each one full of infirmity, sorrow, sickness and weakness—shall gain the victory! “They shall come with singing unto Zion, as well the blind, lame and the woman with child, together.” So says the Scripture. Not one shall be left out. But He shall “send forth judgment unto victory.” Victory! Victory! Victory! This is the lot of each Christian! He shall triumph through his dear Redeemer’s name!

Now a word about this victory. I speak first to aged men and women. Dear Brothers and Sisters, you are often, I know, like the bruised reed. Coming events cast their shadows before them. And death casts the shadow of old age on you. You feel the grasshopper to be a burden, you feel full of weakness and decay, your frame can hardly hold together. Ah, you have here a special promise. “The bruised reed I will not break.” “I will strengthen you.” “When your heart and your flesh fails, I will be the strength of your heart and your portion forever”—

***“Even down to old age, all My people shall prove
My Sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love!
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn
Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.”***

Tottering on your staff, leaning, feeble, weak and wan—fear not the last hour—that last hour shall be your best! Your last day shall be a consummation devoutly to be wished for. Weak as you are, God will temper the trial to your weakness. He will make your pain less, if your strength is less. But you shall sing in Heaven, “Victory! Victory! Victory!” There are some of us who could wish to change places with you, to be so near Heaven—to be so near Home. With all your infirmities, your gray hairs are a crown of glory to you! For you are near the end, as well as in the way of righteousness. A word to you middle-aged men, battling in this life’s rough storm. You are often bruised reeds. Your religion is so encumbered by your worldly callings, so covered up by the daily din of business, business, business, that you seem like smoking flax. It is as much as you can do to serve your God and you cannot say that you are “fervent in spirit” as well as “diligent in business.”

Man of business, toiling and striving in this world, He will not quench you when you are like smoking flax! He will not break you when you are like the bruised reed, but will deliver you from your troubles! You shall swim across the sea of life and shall stand on the happy shore of Heaven. And you shall sing, "Victory," through Him that loved you. You youths and maidens! I speak to you and have a right to do so. You and I oftentimes know what the bruised reed is, when the hand of God blights our fair hopes. We are full of giddiness and waywardness—it is only the rod of affliction that can bring folly out of us—for we have much of it in us. Slippery paths are the paths of youths and dangerous ways are the ways of the young. But God will not break or destroy us. Men, by their over caution, bid us never tread a step lest we fall. But God bids us go and makes our feet like hind's feet, that we may tread upon high places. Serve God in your early days! Give your hearts to Him and then He will never cast you out, but will nourish and cherish you!

Let me not finish without saving a word to little children. You who have heard of Jesus, He says to you, "The bruised reed I will not break, the smoking flax I will not quench." I believe there is many a little prattler, not six years old, who knows the Savior. I never despise infantile piety. I love it. I have heard little children talk of mysteries that gray-headed men knew not. Ah, little children who have been brought up in Sunday schools and love the Savior's name, if others say you are too forward, do not fear, love Christ still—

***Gentle Jesus, meek and mild
Still will look upon a child!
Pity your simplicity—
And suffer you to come to Him.***

He will not cast you away. For smoking flax He will not quench and the bruised reed He will not break!

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

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

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA, A SIGN NO. 2777

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 4, 1902.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1878.

*“The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.”
Matthew 12:42.*

The scribes and Pharisees might easily have ascertained that Jesus was the promised Messiah if they had only taken the trouble to examine His credentials. They had the Law and the testimony at their fingertips and they might also have made an appeal to the Prophets and, then, they could scarcely have failed to note the many wonderful points of resemblance between Jesus of Nazareth and the Messiah who was to come—but they refused to thoroughly investigate His claims, took it for granted that He was an impostor and, therefore, rejected Him. When they were driven into a corner by the Truths of God that He spoke, they demanded of Him a sign—and there again they showed that they were not sincere, for He had given them many signs—some of which they must have recognized, because their anger had been excited by them, as, for instance, when Jesus went into their synagogue and healed on the Sabbath, a man who had a withered hand. They had condemned Him as a Sabbath-breaker because He worked this miracle, so it must certainly have come to their knowledge, yet, while this and multitudes of other miracle were constantly being reported of Him, they still continued to reject Him, disdainingly to confess that He was the Christ, even though He proved it to their faces.

They asked Him for a sign, but the Savior tells them that they shall have no signs beyond those they had already had. One of those signs was the Prophet Jonah coming up from the belly of the fish after having lain there three days. Christ Himself would rise again the third day and, by His Resurrection, He would fulfill the type of Jonah. This would be such a sign as they could not gainsay. Then there were the signs of the men of Nineveh, repenting at the preaching of Jonah, and the queen of the South coming to Solomon. The Gentiles, the far-off ones, should be signs to the unbelieving Jews—they would see that Jesus was the Christ because He called unto Himself a people who knew Him not and they ran

unto Him because of the Lord His God, who had sent Him as His Messenger. If the scribes and Pharisees would continue to reject these Infallible signs, no others would be given to them, but the great King's signet would be set to the writ of execution, condemning Jerusalem to destruction and the people to be scattered abroad.

I think we may truly say that the queen of Sheba is a sign even to this generation, for each generation, though differing in some respects from others, has many points of resemblance to them. When you perceive what other men have been, you see very much what you yourself are. It is a commonly admitted truth that history repeats itself and it does so because it is the result of the same sort of passions and the same sinful tendencies in wicked human hearts. So I believe that the present age is, in many points, very like the one in which Christ Himself appeared. And if He were corporeally here, at this moment, He could with great accuracy say, "The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here."

I pray the Lord especially to bless His own Word to any of you who are unconcerned and I beg all the Lord's people to pray that it may be so. You who are saved will get a blessing through your own prayers while you are seeking a blessing on what is spoken, in the name of Christ and by the aid of God's gracious Spirit. And others will get a blessing, also.

Our divisions shall be these—first, *the conduct of the queen of Sheba condemns unbelievers*. Secondly, *that condemnation is strengthened by many circumstances connected with her history*. And thirdly, *the condemnation of such a witness must be solemn and overwhelming*.

I. First, then, THE CONDUCT OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA CONDEMNS UNBELIEVERS.

For, first of all, *she was interested in the report of Solomon's wisdom*. We do not know much about her, except that she came from a great distance, constrained by her desire after knowledge, her wish "to hear the wisdom of Solomon." I suppose she was a woman of intelligence and thoughtfulness and, therefore, she sought the king who was of the same way of thinking. A man of taste, living in a city, or only visiting it, very soon knows all about its sculpture and paintings and he very naturally gets reports concerning its chief artists brought to him. Even in a little village, a lover of science and art very soon finds people informing him of details and facts which bear upon scientific and artistic matters. He attracts to himself those who are somewhat like himself and, in similar fashion, Solomon attracted this woman because she was evidently the possessor of some wisdom and she desired to have more.

Her action is a strong condemnation of the many people in the world whose thoughts never rise above their bodies and whose only questions are, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed?" There are thousands who would not go half a mile to obtain even the ordinary kind of wisdom—they shun all forms of education—they have no

idea beyond their usual day labor, or the pursuits in which they occupy their time. But this queen of Sheba longed for wisdom and traveled far to obtain it. In contrast to her, look at the great majority of people in this vast city of London, and in various parts of our own and other lands. Some are interested in science, art, politics and such matters, but as for the higher things which He who is “greater than Solomon” would teach them—they seem to have no inclination for them!

You may build a chapel or mission hall in some dark neighborhood and it may be by self-denial that you provide the means for its construction. You may feel intense anxiety about the people in that region and use all lawful inducements to bring them inside the place you have built—yet you cannot stir them, or interest them. Oftentimes, it is the very hardest task in the world to get even a moment’s hearing for the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Plenty of people will read the newspaper through from the first word of the title to the last advertisement, but they will scarcely deign to look at a gracious treatise, or tract, or their Bibles—there is nothing there to interest them! Anything about war, or the wreck of a ship, or an accident in a coal mine or, worse still, the story of some foul crime, or the details with which the Divorce Court is familiar—there are many who are quite sure to read all that through—but as to that which concerns the soul, eternity, Heaven, Hell, the Christ of God—all this appears to be a matter of perfect indifference to a large mass of our fellow creatures—

***“Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?
Is it nothing to you, that Jesus should die?”***

We may well take up that lament, for the practical answer to our question from great multitudes upon whom we dwell will be, “It is nothing to us. We care for none of these things. If you will feed us. If you will clothe us, well and good. But if you begin to speak about the Gospel, or talk to us about our immortality and of our need to be prepared for eternity, our ears are deaf! We are like the adder that will not hear, charm you ever so wisely.” Oh, how will this queen of Sheba who was so interested in the best things that she knew of, and who sought them as a merchant seeks goodly pearls—how she will rise up in the judgment and condemn multitudes of careless folk in this worldly generation!

She will also condemn many because *she believed the report of Solomon’s wisdom when she heard it*. She was not only interested in hearing it, but what she heard, she believed. I do not know who brought the report to her, but Solomon was a great merchant and traders came from all parts to do business with him. So one and another who had stayed at Jerusalem and heard of the marvelous wisdom of the great king, and had seen some of his matchless architectural feats, his vast reservoirs, his wonderful ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord, carried the report of all this to the queen of Sheba and she believed it. I do not say that it was very amazing that she should believe it, yet her belief condemns the skepticism of this age and condemns it all the more be-

cause, in some respects, this is a very credulous age. We readily believe what travelers tell us. There have been some very extraordinary stories told which once were *not* believed, yet afterwards were found to be true and, now, we generally accept the testimony of a man who comes back and says that he has seen such-and-such things. Our learned Societies invite these men to visit them and tell their story. There may be some who doubt but, on the whole, they are believed.

Yet, when we give our report concerning the Lord Jesus, we have often to ask, "Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" We tell men not only what God says in His Word, but what we ourselves have tasted, handled and felt—yet even when we get them interested in our message, they do not always believe it. Nothing appears to be more popular, at this present time, than the casting of doubts upon everything that is sacred! And he seems to be reckoned the cleverest man who takes a tar brush and goes through the sanctuary daubing all the holy vessels! And whereas, of old, "a man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees," that he might use them in building for God, it seems now as if every man's axes were for breaking down the carved work and damaging the cedar of which the temple of the Lord is constructed! The queen of Sheba, in her belief of the report which, I do not doubt, bore upon its face some degree of improbability—for marvelous stories were told about Solomon—yet, believing it because it came to her upon good, fair, honest testimony of men who had no objective in deceiving her—she shall rise up in condemnation of the people of this generation who will not believe Christ Himself, nor God Himself, but even say that this Book is God's and then deny the things which are most plainly taught therein—and so make God Himself to be a liar!

This queen of Sheba will condemn the unbelief of this generation, in the next place, because she was not only interested in the highest things that came in her way, and believed the honest report that was brought to her, but also because *she acted upon it*. She determined to go where she could hear more of the wisdom of which she had been told. She loved wisdom and sought for it as for rubies. She, therefore, made up her mind to take the long and perilous journey and to go and find Solomon, that she might hear his wisdom. She so believed the report that she set out upon her journey—and a journey in those days was a different thing from what it is now. Even a century or so ago, our grandfathers made their wills before they went 100 miles, so what must it have been for the queen of Sheba to go to Jerusalem to see the great and wise king who reigned there? She believed that she would be fully rewarded for all the trouble she was taking, so she went.

This is a very important point, for we have, in our congregations, a large number of persons who profess to believe everything that they hear, yet, in their hearts, they cannot really be believing anything, for they do not act upon it. O Sirs, if you do believe yourselves to be sinful, why do you not seek forgiveness? If you believe yourselves to be in danger, why

do you not bestir yourselves and search for a way of escape? If you believe that there is a God, why do you not ask how you may be reconciled to Him? If you believe the words of Jesus, why do you not trust in Him and obey Him? It will go very hard with those of you who have been believers in the Bible and lovers of orthodoxy all your lives, and who very earnestly condemn anything like doubt, yet who prove that you do not, yourselves, truly believe because your belief does not lead you to action! God grant that if any of you are guilty of such a sin as this, the arrow of conviction may pierce your conscience now!

The queen of Sheba will also rise up in judgment against unbelievers because she not only acted upon the report she received and believed, but *she persevered in doing so under very great difficulties*. I have already said that a journey to Jerusalem was no small thing for her to accomplish. We little know what were the difficulties of traveling at that time. She may not have been afraid of thieves and other evildoers who were in the way, for Solomon's great power, I do not doubt, kept a wide district very much more quiet than it would otherwise have been, but still, it was a serious task for her to undertake. Yet now, alas, there are many who would like to hear of the wisdom of Christ, but they fear that it would cost them too much and that there would be too many hardships to be borne. They would have Christ if He could be had by a careless soul, or by one who is living in sin! But the idea of starting out to seek for Christ and facing difficulties—which, indeed, would soon vanish if they had but resolute hearts—that idea daunts them! Like Pliable, they cannot push their way through the Slough of Despond. Anybody else may have the Celestial City, but they cannot go to it through such a foul place as that.

These people are afraid of the laugh of a foolish companion—afraid of the cold shoulder from a wealthy associate—afraid of the sneer of an unbeliever—afraid of having to give up some favorite sin! The queen of Sheba could go from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but they cannot go to Christ, who is far wiser and “greater than Solomon” ever was! They think the way is much too long and difficult for them. This woman hoped to get wisdom by her journey but these people need salvation—they should go with a view to their soul's eternal destiny—but the cost is too heavy for them, so they will not go.

Another point that is worth noticing is that this queen of the South *had to stoop from a high position*. Her position, at any rate, involved her in greater difficulty than many others would have experienced. Was she to leave her throne? Then, what would become of her dominions during her absence? Perhaps there would be plots to overthrow her—she might not be able to trust her counselors in power. Shall she, a woman, nursed in luxury as she has been, brave all these dangers to make such a journey as that to Solomon's court? Well, she did all that—so she condemns those who will not do likewise. There is something to be said for those who are in high places and who fear not God. I would not say anything to apologize for their neglect of Christ, yet I remember His own words, “How

difficult shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!" But the most of you have not that kind of hindrance—you could not say that you have a kingdom to rule, or a large business to manage. You have your cares but, still, they are not such as to be an excuse for you if you do not seek the Lord. This woman, with a kingdom's cares about her, went to Solomon for wisdom—how she condemns those who have very little to do, yet who say that they have not time to think about these things!

You have not to step down from a throne, which is a very trying position for any of the Lord's people to occupy. You have not to shake off the manners of the court, the vices of the court, the pomp of the court to come down and listen to some poor minister of the Gospel—no, you know that you are not at all demeaned when you are sitting here, listening to a plain preacher like myself! There is no necessity for you to have the Archbishop of Canterbury to preach to you—I am quite big enough for you in that respect. Well, now, there is an advantage in all this, and it is still true that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." There are some poor, miserable rich people who never do have the Gospel preached to them and I do not see how they ever will. Perhaps they live in a grand mansion in the country where everybody looks up to them. It may be and it often is the case that in the parish church there is nothing but Popery. Now if they went to the little Methodist chapel, they might hear the Gospel—and if you were in that part of the country, you would go—but they could not. I do not know that they *could* not, but I do know that they *think* they could not. And, indeed, if they did, everybody would notice them! They would be such objects of attraction and talk that that would be a difficulty in their way.

Well now, you have not had that obstacle! This queen had it with all its weight—yet she came to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. Oh, then, when Jesus, the "greater than Solomon," is near, should not the poor, to whom He delighted to preach—the common people, like the most of us here—should not we feel that there is nothing in our way to keep us from coming to Him? We can come on a Thursday night, or on the Sabbath to listen to the Gospel and nobody thinks that there is any great condescension when we are found occupying a seat among our fellow worshippers! Yet it might be a far more difficult matter with others in a higher station.

One thing more about this wise queen is that *she made great use of Solomon when she reached his court*, for she asked him hard questions and searched and pried into everything that she could. Now, in this, I think she rebukes a great many half-believing professors. You have come to Him who is "greater than Solomon." You have come to the Infinite Wisdom of our great Lord, and there is many a hard question that you puzzle over, but you do not take them to Him. You do not commune with Him concerning all that is in your heart as the queen of Sheba did with Solomon. You do not get from Christ rich gifts as she received from So-

lomon. Oh, when you get to Jesus, make use of Him! It is no good for you to have a Savior if you do not use Him. If God, in His great Grace, has given Him to you, get out of Him all that you can—and do not think that He will consider you to be intruding! It is the delight of His heart to give out of His fullness to His needy people! He is best satisfied with you when you are best satisfied with Him. He gets most from you when you get most from Him. Remember that and never, never, never, start back from a golden promise as though you must get it changed before you spend it!

Some Christians seem as if they could not touch the sovereigns that lie before them in heaps, but they must take only a half-crown at a time and think they have taken a great deal. O you poor saints, be rich—take your spending money with a lavish hand and lay it out before God! There is a blessed prodigality in Grace—you may spend as much as you please, yet you shall not be considered a spendthrift! God grant that the queen of Sheba may rebuke us if we have not used Him who is “greater than Solomon” after the same fashion as that in which she used Solomon when she came to him!

Thus much by way of proof that the conduct of the queen of Sheba condemns those of us who still remain unbelievers.

II. Now, secondly, THE QUEEN OF SHEBA’S CONDEMNATION IS STRENGTHENED BY MANY CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH HER HISTORY.

The first of those circumstances is this—*the report which came to her could not have come with the same force as the report which comes to us.* As I have already said, it is probable that the merchants who traded with Solomon told what they had seen and some of their servants, no doubt, talked to some of the queen of Sheba’s servants and, possibly, they told very extraordinary tales, and drew the long bow, as we say. In this case, however, they might draw the longest bow they could get because when they had said all they did say, the half was not told! Solomon was wiser than they thought he was, yet they thought him to be almost impossibly sage. The report of his wisdom could not have come to the queen, one would think, from many who had been eyewitnesses, yet it was sufficient to convince her. But the report concerning Christ comes to you in the Word of God, from many witnesses and it is repeated to you by many ministers of the Gospel, and by many others of God’s servants, living men and living women who tell you what they know, what they have felt, what they have experienced. Ah, some of you had the report, first of all, from one whose word you never doubted—your mother told it to you when you were a child. Is she dead? Then I feel sure that among the last words that she spoke, she told you that report, again, and bade you seek Him who is “greater than Solomon.”

Perhaps I am addressing some whose dear grandfather, now in Heaven, told them the report when they were little children. And your brother, your sister, your friend and several of your acquaintances have again

and again said to you, "It is true! I have tried it, and proved it. I know it is so." There are very many converted people around some of you, and if you do not believe their report, you practically make them out to be liars and, as I have already reminded you, you make God Himself a liar! The queen of Sheba had no Divine Witness, she had only the testimony of men. But you believe this bible to be the Book of God, and the Witness of God is greater than the witness of men. Beware, therefore, lest you reject the testimony of God against yourselves and the witness of all His people, age after age, and the witness of your kinsfolk and acquaintances! If you do not believe when you have so many to bring you the report, the queen of Sheba condemns you, for she believed, though she had so few to report to her.

I do not wish to have a congregation that will accept teaching simply upon my bare word. No, dear Friends, "let the Word of Christ dwell in you." There is always a tendency to follow this divine or that, but I charge you not to do anything of the kind! Go to the Book for yourselves! Go to Christ and to His Inspired Word on your own account. We will teach you the Truths of God, as far as we know them, but we will never bear the responsibility of being the standard for other men's beliefs. It may suit so-called "priests" to take away the Bible from the people, but true preachers of the Gospel always push the Bible to the front. Therefore we urge you to search the Scriptures and we pray God to grant that as you search them, they may search you, and, as you dwell upon the reading of them, that what you read may dwell in your hearts to your permanent profit, making you wise unto salvation!

The report that comes to you, also, concerns *much weightier matters than the queen of Sheba heard of*. Solomon's wisdom interested the queen of Sheba because she loved all kinds of wisdom, but it did not matter much to her, after all. Her country would still have been as productive of its wondrous spices and gold if she had never gone to Solomon. Why, then, should she go to him? But the matters about which God's Word reports to you, and God's Spirit reports to you, and God's servants report to you unbelievers, concern your souls, yourselves, your sins, your fears, your hopes! It is about your everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and the Glory of His Power, or your eternal happiness in Christ Jesus. I do not understand some of you. You are not fools in secular matters. Jingle a guinea near you and you quickly hear the sound of it, and are pretty sharp to catch it. You are shrewd traders, keep your books correctly and look well to your accounts—yet you neglect your souls! If a man had a bag full of bank notes and he went down the borough with it and got into a crowd, it would be strange if all his anxiety was lest he should lose a cotton pocket handkerchief, while he never thought about his bank notes! You would conclude that there was a great flaw in his judgment! Yet that is exactly what men do. They care about what, after all, are comparative trifles and let their never-dying souls take care of themselves as best they can!

The queen of Sheba will, next, condemn unbelievers very seriously, *because the report that came to her was not nearly so touching as that which comes to us.* There was no report like this—that Solomon had died for her. There was no message of love, there were no tidings of self-sacrifice which indicated a heart of pity. No, simply that he was wise—and so she resolved to go and see him. O Sirs, what a different report I have to bring to you! I have not to set before careless souls merely a wise Savior, but a loving, condescending, self-sacrificing, dying Savior! And if that report does not lead men to seek Him, they will be fearfully condemned by this queen of Sheba who came to see Solomon because of the report she had heard of him in her own land.

Then, again, *this report was, in her case, accompanied by no Divine command.* She heard a report about Solomon, but there was no law, either human or Divine, ordering her to go to Solomon. She could do precisely as she pleased about it. But when *you* hear about Christ, O Sinners, it is not left to your own option whether you will come to Him, or not—but “God now commands all men everywhere to repent” And He has bidden us go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and to say to them, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.”

Besides that, *the queen of Sheba had no invitation to go to Solomon.* He did not send to her, and say, “Come, and hear my wisdom.” She came uninvited, but, O sons and daughters of men, you have been invited again and again! “Come unto Me,” is Christ’s constant message. You are invited to come to Him, yet you will not come.

And again, *the queen of Sheba had no promise that she would be welcomed if she did come.* She could not tell that Solomon would receive her, yet she came, believing that he would, and he did. But you have the Savior’s gracious assurance, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Oh, with what readiness and promptness ought you to respond to the sacred invitation of love, backed by the Divine command and confirmed by the sacred promise! The Lord grant that some of you, while I am thus simply stating the claims of my Lord Jesus, that “greater than Solomon,” may resolve to come to Him that you may receive eternal life!

And then again, dear Friends, this woman came simply through a report. But, in your case, it is not merely by report. When I tell you about what Christ has done, which is written in the Word, that is a report. But when you see—and many of you have seen—the finger of God upon some of your friends, that is not a report! I put it to some here present who are unconverted, but who have had godly mothers—was not your mother’s life one of the things you never could get over when you tried to doubt your Bible? And is it not still to you a very wonderful life as you look back upon it? How calm, how joyous she was in suffering or in poverty! How quiet, how patient she was in putting up with you! Then, as to her death, was there not something almost Divine about that patient waiting for her Lord and that dying smile, and that last triumphant hymn? Why,

if ever I doubted the Word of God, some of the deathbeds that I have witnessed would bring me back to faith immediately!

Well do I remember a working man who used to go out preaching the Gospel, and with whom I was intimate in my early days. I went to see him when he was dying. He was sitting up in his bed and his eyes had failed entirely. Disease had made him blind, but when he heard me come into the room, he said to me—

***“And when you hear my eye-strings break,
How sweet my minutes roll!
A mortal paleness on my cheeks,
The glory in my soul.”***

There is no deception about a scene like that! That is not a mere report—that is a thing to hear, to see, to know—and such things are constantly happening all around us! Old men and old women lean on their staffs and die as Jacob did. Young men and young women go down to their graves through consumption, not regretting it, but exulting to be so early in the morning with Christ! Why, Sirs, some of you must surely believe or else you will gag your conscience, violate the best instincts of your nature and commit spiritual suicide! God grant that you may not do this.

And then, when this woman heard the report, *she had not the opportunity of testing it at once without a long journey.* She had to go all the way to Jerusalem. But you, Sirs, have not to go an inch in order to find Christ. What says the Apostle? “The word is near you, even in your mouth.” Note that expression, “in your mouth.” Why, hungry man, if I say to you, “There is bread on the table, take as much as you need,” it is your own fault if you do not eat it. But if I can say, “Man, it is in your mouth,” you will have to exert yourself to reject it! It will cost you more pains to spit Christ out than to feed upon Him! There are some men who seem to me to choke themselves in trying to get rid of the Gospel which God has put in their mouths—they will not let a crumb of it go down their throats. If that is your case, when you are damned, you will have to say, “Amen,” to your own condemnation—and all who will hear it will say, “That man’s destruction was, indeed, just, for he deliberately took the trouble to be his own destroyer.”

The queen of Sheba had to travel a long way to get to Solomon, but you do not have to go a long way to get to the Savior. “Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring Christ up, again, from the dead). But what does it say? The Word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart; that is the Word of faith which we preach, that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”

I must not weary you with these many particulars, but I cannot help saying that *the queen of Sheba, in coming to Solomon, did not have anything like the inducements which are put before you in coming to Christ.*

Solomon could prove to her his own possession of wisdom, but he could not make her wise, though I think that, generally, people learn a good deal of wisdom by seeing and hearing it in others. But, in coming to Christ, you have not the inducement of merely learning how much He knows, but He will make you wise unto salvation and He will give you unspeakably precious gifts! Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba great gifts, of which I hope to speak another time, yet he had never promised that he would do so. But you may come to Christ with the confident expectation that of His fullness you shall receive Grace for Grace, for this is His way of welcoming all who come unto Him.

Who will come to my Lord and Master for the first time? It is now many years since I first came to Him, but I have never once regretted that step. Blessed was the day and blessed was the hour, when I came to Him. Oh, if I had not come to Him, I think that my soul would never rest until it had found Him! If it had all to be done over again—yes, if the coming had to be continually repeated, as indeed it has—“to whom coming, as unto a living stone”—I would delight to do it all over again! And if I had to begin preaching the Gospel to you, I would still preach the same Gospel that I have preached to you. I would seek to preach it better, but it should be the same “old, old story of Jesus and His love.” I love it so much because I know that it is true! I prove it, every day, by happy personal experience. Believe it, O you careless ones who now are found at the post of Wisdom’s doors—and come in to see Him, the Lord Jesus, who, in His dominion, and in His person, and in His wealth, and in His Grace, is “greater than Solomon!”

III. I have only time for just a few closing words upon the third point, which is that **THE CONDEMNATION OF SUCH A WITNESS MUST BE SOLEMN AND OVERWHELMING.**

I have shown you that all along—that is the point at which I have continually been aiming. Surely you will, none of you, wish to be condemned by a heathen queen! It is bad enough to be condemned by the example of Christian people, and by what they say—but this heathen queen, with swarthy countenance, will rise up in the judgment and condemn you who do not believe in Jesus, though you live in the midst of Christian Light and even call yourselves Christians, and talk about being inhabitants of a Christian country! The queen of Sheba lived in a dark age, but this, you know, is a very wonderful age. Some people are never weary of crying it up—according to them, this is the most marvelous generation that has ever existed on the face of the earth! Our fathers—what were they, poor creatures? What did they know? Yet somehow or other, they got through the world almost as well as we do now, even though we break our necks in railway accidents and send our ships to the bottom of the sea so speedily by our new inventions!

We are wonderful people, there is no doubt about that! Raise a pyramid a thousand times higher than Mont Blanc, and set the man of the times upon it. When you have him up, I can only stand at the base and

say, “These are your gods, O Israel”—the man of the 19th Century—the thinker—the critic—the philosopher—the scientific man! Some of us poor, simple Christian people never did pay much reverence at all to them, but think them only magnified pieces of bombast and presumption, always crying out about what they know, whereas there are many other things they do not know, which, if they did, would make them a great deal more humble. We have invented the phonograph. We have invented the telephone. What shall we not invent next? Nobody knows. We are wonderful people, yet a heathen queen of the dark ages will rise up in the judgment and condemn us if we do not believe, because she acted better with her little Light of God than we do with our far greater Light. When God teaches us more about His works, some of us think less about their Maker—and when He reveals more of the secrets of Nature, some care less about the secrets of His Divine Grace.

Verily, the queen of Sheba will condemn this generation! Christ will call her up as a witness and at the sight of her—albeit His condemnation will also come, yet, at the sight of her—this heathen queen—the unbelieving world will stand condemned! Looking into her dark face, their own faces will turn deadly pale, for her faith, and her coming to Solomon, will condemn all unbelieving ones, and especially those who only pretended to believe, yet who never acted upon the faith they professed to possess.

May God the Holy Spirit bless this word, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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“A GREATER THAN SOLOMON”

NO. 3166

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1909.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 29, 1873.**

***“The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”
Matthew 12:42.***

WE cannot tell exactly who the Queen of the South was, nor exactly where Sheba lay. The expression used is Yemen, the south. Yemen is the name of a part of Arabia Felix and it would appear from the spices which the Queen brought with her that she came from that region. At the same time, the Abyssinians claim her as having been their queen. They say that she was converted through her conversations with Solomon, that afterwards the faith of God was preserved in the country, and hence that that famous Ethiopian, who was a eunuch of great authority under Candace in later times, was a proselyte to the Jewish faith on account of that faith existing in Abyssinia. We do not know. It may have been so and it is possible that the supposition of her having come from Arabia—and the supposition of her having come from Abyssinia may both be true—for it appears that the two countries were at one time under the same government, both shores of the Red Sea making up in far distant ages one empire. And she may have been the queen of both.

Very extraordinary are the stories which tradition has handed down with regard to her—some of them not to be repeated—others of them, when repeated, not at all ministering to the profit of the hearer. They tell us of many things with which she tried Solomon. Among the rest there is a tale of her bringing some flowers, artificial flowers most beautifully made, so that no one could detect them and, putting before Solomon the real and the manufactured, she asked him which were the true flowers. The wise king simply ordered that the windows should be opened and he observed to which flowers the bees flew—and at once knew which were the true flowers of the gardens. Many other things are reported concerning attempts she made to test him, but the king in every case, of course, came off triumphant. Scripture has omitted these because they would be of no spiritual use to us—and the Book was not written to minister to curiosity, but to be helpful to the salvation of our souls.

This evening all that we shall have to say about her will hang upon this fact—that she came from the very ends of the earth, from a far off and remote country—to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And that in this she rebukes persons who lived in the age of Christ and, I also think we had better come to make it practical, and say that she rebukes many of us.

The points in which she rebukes us, or some of us, will be six. I will mention them one by one.

I. The first is this. *Her interest in Solomon was readily awakened.* She heard different reports concerning him and she took an interest in them. She heard that he was the wisest of kings. Then she thought within herself, “I would like to know wherein he is wise, and be a partaker of his wisdom.” She was told that he was the richest of monarchs. Then she thought, “I would like to see something of his glory—the vast magnificence with which he surrounds himself.” Some talked about that wonderful house which he had built for his God—the Temple, a building so glorious that none had ever rivaled it, and she said, “I should like to see it.” They spoke of the mighty stones which he had moved from afar, and squared and fashioned and dropped into their places without the use of hammer or engraving tools and she wondered how this was done. His wisdom, his wealth and his various building works, no doubt, were told to her again and again. And she sought out persons who could tell her yet more, gathered up all the information possible and took an interest in it. I do not see so very much that is commendable in that except that it shows that she was a woman of mind—a woman of intelligence—that while many of her day would have passed the matter over with, “Well, it may be so, but it is nothing to me,” or would have made it a nine days wonder. She, on the other hand, had her whole mind stirred by it, thought it over, and laid it to heart.

Here is the point, however, at which the Savior aimed when He said that she would rise up in judgment against many, “For,” He said, “she *took an interest in Solomon, but you take no interest in Christ.*” A greater than Solomon was in the streets of Jerusalem, but the mass of the people cared not who He was! He went up and down the sacred land proclaiming the Gospel—the bulk of the people took some interest in the bread and the fish with which He fed them, but not in the Doctrine which He taught! And while He claimed to be Divine, and asserted Himself to be the Son of David and the King of the Jews—and also to be the Son of God, God over All, blessed forever—great crowds turned away from Him as though it was nothing at all to them and utterly despised Him. Here was a woman, a stranger, a foreigner—not of Jewish race—and yet her enquiring mind rendered her inquisitive about the great king whose scepter of peace was swayed over so wide a territory! And here were those who were of the same race as Jesus, who saw Him at their doors and heard Him in their streets—and yet they passed Him by as though it were a mere trifle with which they had no concern!

Now, in the present day, Jesus Christ is not here. *He is risen and gone back to His Father. But His Gospel is with us, and every day it is proclaimed.* What multitudes gather together on the Sabbath, but out of the great city of London how comparatively few are those multitudes, for the mass of our fellow citizens do not attend the means of Grace at all. It seems to be no matter of curiosity to them to know who the Savior is, or how they can be saved by Him. It is enough to make the heart bleed to think that next door to places where the Gospel is proclaimed with the greatest power there will be found persons who actually never enter within the place where it is preached—and who have no care to enter, and who, if pressed to go and hear the Word, would say that they did not care to do so! Nor is it merely those that stay away. The worst of it is that many who *do come* yet come carelessly. Perhaps many of you are well acquainted with the letter of the Gospel, but you have never enquired into

the *spirit* of it. You know that Christ is a Savior, but yet you do not know what it is to be saved! You hear that faith is the great instrument of salvation but you have no faith and do not practically know what faith is. You have never bestirred yourselves to make enquiry! You have not set yourselves down doggedly to search into Scripture and see what is the Truth of God. You have not turned over page after page to find what there is for you, or promise after promise to see what promise you might lay hold of and claim as your own. You have not stirred, though God is at your doors, though Christ is close to you, though the Kingdom of God has come near unto you! You are content to sit and listen to the Gospel which is more precious than diamonds, and yet treat it as though it were a common thing!

What would the dying give if they could have their Sabbaths back again? What would the damned in Hell give if they could hear the Gospel once more? What would we, any of us, give in the Day of Judgment if we could once more stand where Mercy could deal with us and where the silver scepter could be extended to us with the blessed invitation, “Believe and live”? Ah, it seems to you, perhaps, child’s play to preach and to listen to sermons, but a day will come when this will be the most solemn work of all! The greatest events of history are not the battles of the conquerors, not the changes of dynasties, but the preaching or the non-preaching of the Gospel—the putting of the candle into the candlestick, or the taking of the candlestick out of its place! The most important points in English history are the points where shone the light of Christ’s Cross, or the eras wherein that light was dimmed by superstition! And *to every unconverted person here the most important thing is, if he did but know it, that he is still within Mercy’s reach—he is still where he may look to Jesus and be saved—he is still where he is wooed and entreated to turn from the error of his ways that he may live!*

But, alas, it does not seem so to the most of men. They are all agog about a racehorse or about a famous trial at law! They are all concerned to talk about the rise and fall of markets and even such silly things as the petty gossips of a street, or the little jangles of a family circle. All these are thought worthy of immortal souls—but that the eternal God bowed the heavens and came down to save men, that the Infinite became an Infant, that the Ever-Blessed stooped to be spit upon and to be despised and rejected of men, and that on the Cross He offered up a propitiatory Sacrifice for human guilt—ah, this seems to be a mere trifle, a thing for poor religious people to think over, but not for your great wits and your smart intellects, not a subject worthy of the young man who is in the prime of his abilities, or worthy of the thoughtful man who is accustomed to revolve great themes in his mind! O Queen of Sheba, you do condemn this listless generation! We can scarcely get a hearing for Christ, the most of us who are Christ’s servants, and those of us who do win a hearing have to strain our brain and tax our powers. Whereas if men were in their senses, they would be glad to hear Jesus preached in the humblest tone, and by the most illiterate of His ambassadors! Now we must seek for illustrations and parables and proverbs and goodly words, or else men’s ears are like the adder’s ears that are deaf and stopped. Oh, if they were but wise—they would be glad to learn about Jesus Christ even if the Gospel were put in the most dull form! And they would be

pleased to find Him to be their Savior *whoever* might conduct them to Him!

Thus you see, then, first of all, the Queen of Sheba condemns many for lack of interest in the Gospel.

II. Secondly, she equally *condemns many for their lack of candor in judging about the Savior*. She was a candid woman. There was a rumor about Solomon. Well, it is probable that she did not believe all the rumor as it came to her. In fact, she told Solomon she did not believe it. It seemed too good to be true, too great for her to receive it all. She knew, as we do, that things that travel generally, like snowballs, grow bigger as they roll, and that many a thing which is a Niagara ten thousand miles away would dribble into a very small lake if it were anywhere nearer home. Travelers proverbially take considerable license and we are obliged, and we usually do, perhaps, too much diminish their reports in order to get at the truth. Now, this woman was so candid that she desired to hear more, and whenever a Phoenician boat touched on her shore, she would enquire of those great navigators what they knew concerning the prince who was in alliance with Hiram, their king. Whenever a caravan came from the east, having crossed Solomon's territory to go south, she would get hold of the most intelligent persons of the caravan to learn a little more. And she weighed and judged and estimated. She was not prejudiced. While she would not swallow everything she was told, neither would she reject all, and say, “I won't believe a word of it.”

Oh, that men were candid toward the Gospel of Jesus Christ! But the mass of men are prejudiced—prejudiced against the Savior and against their own salvation. Men sit and make up their minds what the Gospel ought to be, and then they do not come to hear what it is but to judge what is preached by their own preconceived notions. Many are prejudiced by their education. The errors of their father they endorse and the mistakes of their mother seems to be a heritage entailed upon them. They are not manly enough to *think*. Oh, a great change would come over religious opinion in England if people were not led by that absurd idea that they ought to be just what their parents were! If we once could grow a race of men and women that would read the Scriptures for themselves, and judge of Doctrines for themselves, we would have grand times again! The most of men do not think. They want somebody to do their thinking for them and they go to the place of worship simply to suck in the thoughts of other people—not to judge for themselves! Oh, a sorry matter it is to have a set of followers of that sort! A far greater thing it is to be surrounded by independent spirits who have bowed themselves personally before the shrine of the Truth of God—sought for themselves to know what the Truth of God is—asked for themselves the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and so have shaken themselves clear of prejudice and come into the clear Light of God!

I am certain that if many who are now skeptics could but, by God's good help, consider the questions which now they think they have decided, they would alter their decision. I would like some men to think a little about the fact that there are hundreds and even thousands of men in this world of good repute—honest, sober men, the very best witnesses that a lawyer would desire to put into the box, whom everybody would believe—who all bear testimony that Jesus Christ has been most precious to them! Without any discrepancy in their statements, they declare

that He gave peace to them when their conscience was disturbed, that He has cured in them the love of sin and incited them to seek after holiness. Now, it would be strange if all these people were mistaken! There must be *something* in their testimony—and *every candid man ought to accept it as such* and then go on to try for himself whether it is so or not! The Queen of Sheba had not many witnesses. Perhaps some of them were not very reliable. But about Christ we have all the Prophets, the Apostles, all the saints that followed after them and we have the witness and testimony of hundreds at the present day who are all rejoicing in Christ and who find Him to be precious to their souls! I do pray you, dear Hearers, *if you do not know the Gospel, never rest until you do!* And in your search after the Gospel, lay aside everything which would give a twist to your judgment. WEIGH AND PROVE AND TEST. “To the Law and to the Testimony.” If what you hear preached is not according to that Word, it is because there is no Light of God in it. Be as judicious and as candid in weighing the evidences as was this Queen of Sheba!

III. But now again, thirdly, the queen is to be commended and she judges us because *after having her curiosity aroused, and having candidly weighed evidence, she proceeded to make personal investigation.* She did not send an ambassador to see if it were true. That might have helped her, but it would not have satisfied her. Neither did she want to pick up further evidence from others. But, as long as the distance was, she set off to see for herself! There is nothing like that. If a man wants to know, he had better sift the evidence himself! “Seeing,” she said, “is believing. I will try this matter and if I find it so, all very well—my assurance will be doubly sure.”

Now, in the matter of the things of Jesus Christ, it is hard to bring men to test Him themselves, and yet there is no other way of knowing Him. As I have already said, the Queen of Sheba might have known something about Solomon by sending an ambassador, but we cannot know Christ to any purpose by sending the best possible proxy. We must go to Him ourselves. Now every man shall be commended, as well as the Queen of Sheba, who shall say in himself, “I hear that faith in Jesus Christ quiets the conscience. My conscience is disturbed, so I will go and see what reason there is to trust in Christ. I will see who He is and what He has done. If I spend night after night in searching it out, I will find out what this plan of salvation is which, it is said, affords this peace. And I will try it for myself.”

O, Beloved, I am not afraid of what the result would be! It has never been my misfortune, yet, to meet with one who said, “I sought the Savior and I have not found Him,” or, “finding Him I did not find peace to my spirit,” No, and it shall not be so. *No one that trusts in Him shall be condemned.* There is the matter of faith in prayer, too. You are told repeatedly that there is a prayer-hearing God, that answers to prayer are received. Now, the best way about that is not to read an article against prayer, or to study a book on it, or to weigh theoretically the likelihood or the unlikelihood of the case, but to try it—*try it for yourselves!* And those who have resorted to God’s Mercy Seat in prayer have unanimously been compelled to bear witness that there is a power in prayer. “Whether or not God can renew my soul if I go and confess my sin to Him is a question, but it is a question I mean to have solved.” Every wise man will say

that. “Whether or not there is power in the Gospel of Christ to lift me up from the ruins of the Fall and make me a new man, may be a question—but it is a question that I will try for myself. I will not leave it to the opinion of this or that. The sneer of the skeptic shall not make me doubt it and the assurance of the confident professor shall not make me certain of it. I will go and try for myself and see.”

I wish you would even come and try Christ with your hard questions, as this Queen of Sheba did Solomon. *Come and see whether He can forgive great sins. Come and see whether He can help you in great trials. Come and bring to Him your great doubts and your grievous distresses. Come and tell Him of your despair and your horrible thoughts, and the blasphemous questions that creep through your mind. Come and see whether He is a Savior able to save you.* It will be a new thing if He shall have to say, “You are beyond My power. You have sinned beyond the reach of My love.” Come and try Him, I say, with your hardest question and most difficult case—and you shall only prove the Truth of His Word—“Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” The Queen of Sheba went for herself, and that is the point. Come see for yourselves. May the Spirit of God help you to do so.

IV. The fourth point in which she deserves our imitation is this—that in coming to Solomon *she was not to be deterred by great difficulties.* She was a queen. Must she leave her government? How can that be done? Suppose while she was away there should be a rebellion and a riot? Great lords and counselors might object to the absence of the supreme power, and there might come serious damage to the State through the absence of the royal authority. Never mind! She would waive that, and she considered that she could afford to run that risk if she might but know something of the wisdom of Solomon. Then it was a very long journey. Our Lord called it the ends of the earth, and journeys in those days were far longer than now—when they had to travel across deserts—places where there were no roads, scarcely a goat path. This great woman had to gather together a whole train of servants, for she could not travel as an ordinary person might. She must take with her, in fact, a very great army of attendants—and it might be that the tribes through whose territory she passed would rise in arms against her! She might be waylaid by robbers, or if not by ordinary robbers because her train was too strong, then the very strength of her train would provoke the hostility of the various kings through whose territory she passed.

She must have been a bold woman to undertake such a journey. It must have been extremely expensive and wondrously hazardous. And yet, whatever it might cost her, she was so enamored of wisdom, so fond of that which instructs the mind that she must go to hear for herself the wisdom of Solomon! But now-a-days, oh, how little a thing keeps men from seeking the wisdom of Christ who is far greater than Solomon! To go up to the house of God to hear about Him is sometimes wonderfully difficult. Persons go out on Monday to business who cannot go out on Sunday. It is raining on Sunday and it is very curious how rain on Sunday will keep some people in—their health is so weak—though the same rain on Monday does not affect them at all in that particular way! Have you never observed how some persons appear to be periodically ill on Sundays? That seems to be a favorite day for being ill! And then they will say they cannot walk so far and they would object to ride, the objection

probably being to going at all! And then you will hear persons say, “Well, I found that I must stay at home with this child,” or, “I had something that must be done in the family.” You do not make those excuses if there is going to be a party to which you are invited, or if there is some festival to be held. Then they make up their mind to go. To go and hear some attractive man, or to hear the voice of some sweet singer—that may be managed! But to go and hear of Jesus Christ, well, they cannot—they cannot manage it. It is too difficult. There is a lion in the way—they cannot do it.

And then, after they have heard of Christ, when it comes to following Him, you will hear them say, “Do you know, if I were really to believe the Gospel and follow Christ, why, my friends would altogether forsake me! I could not do it. I should sink in society. I should not be admitted into the circles where I am now received with admiration!” One man says, “I do not see how I could carry on my trade.” Another says, “My mother would persecute me.” Another observes, “I am sure my father and my brothers would ridicule me out of it. It could not be.” They cannot make any journey to go to Jesus. They cannot bear any risks for Jesus, though the Queen of Sheba could risk everything to hear the wisdom of Solomon! Oh, in those old days when Christ was preached on the sly, down in the dark catacombs of Rome, servants at the peril of their lives stole away from their masters’ houses at the dead of night to hear the Gospel preached! And in later times of persecution, every man that went to sermon went knowing that if he were caught—imprisonment, the rack and perhaps death would be the result—yet they chose to go! They hungered and thirsted after the Bread of Life! Then they followed the preacher—secret signals being given—and listened to him wherever the congregation was summoned.

Do not those people put us to the blush? But now, when we have next to nothing to suffer—for really, persecution has become almost a myth compared with what it used to be when Smithfield’s stakes became fiery chariots for God’s Elijahs—now we find soft beings that do not dare to think! Oh, *I would scorn to be what some people are—the slaves of their neighbors and their friends!* They are always asking, “What will Mrs. Grundy say? What will fashion think about it? What will the neighbors think of it?” Why, to a brave spirit it might almost tempt us to do—I was going to say to do *wrong*, to escape from the shackles of always being bound by custom! But certainly in the doing right, he is not worthy of the name of man—and never shall be called a Christian—who is always putting such difficulties as these before himself and fearing the face of his fellow man! God grant us Grace to be willing to lose everything if we may find Christ—and to sacrifice all esteem and friendship if we may but be honest and faithful servants of our great Lord and Master!

V. Now, there is another point in which the Queen of Sheba is to be greatly admired. I will be brief upon it and it was this—that *when she came to Solomon and had seen his wisdom, she was quick to acknowledge what she had learned.* She said to Solomon that there was no spirit left in her at the sight of what she had seen and that the half had not been told her.

Now here I shall speak rather to Christians who know Christ than to others. My dear Friends, there is among you who know the Lord a great

deal too much reticence—quietness about what you know. I do not like a man who is so expressive that he says a great deal more than he knows. There are some such. On the other hand, it is an injurious thing to know much of the things of God, but to be anxious to conceal rather than to publish! If our religion had any lies in it, it might be well to hide it away. If our religion tended to sin, we might well be so ashamed of it as never to mention it. But since the telling of the Gospel can never do anybody any hurt—it must always do good since there is nothing in our religion we need to blush at, since there is everything in it of which we may glory and in which we may boast—*we cannot too often publish abroad what we know concerning our dear Lord and Master.* And I ask my dear Brothers and Sisters here. I ask them very gently, and pray that their conscience may give the answer—do you not think, dear Friends, that sometimes you have been too quiet about the things of God? In your own family circle, for instance, have you not said a great deal less than you ought to have said about the Master? “I have been afraid of being obtrusive,” says one. A very proper fear, too, for some people—but that fear may be run too hard until we might be afraid of another thing, namely, “I was afraid of being cowardly.” Do you not think that oftentimes when we say to ourselves, “I didn’t want to intrude,” the English of it is that we had not the courage to speak, or we thought it the easiest thing to hold our tongue? And may not it really be that we have not zeal enough? And if we had more love to Christ we would often speak where now we are very quiet? When you have weighed the things concerning Christ and, above all, have tasted them and tested them for yourself, *is it not due to the Lord Jesus that you should bear your testimony?*

There has been a great trial going on about the Savior, Jesus Christ, for many a day. Some say, “He is a good Man.” “No,” say others, “but He deceives the people.” Some say, “He is the Son of God.” Others say, “No, He is not.” Now, if you know, and know by the best possible means, namely, by personal knowledge—by experience, by testing and trying—do not stand back, but go into court! Take your place as a witness and bear your evidence, for when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in the Glory of His Father, with all His holy angels with Him, I for one shall feel it a very sweet thing to be able to say, “There He is! There He is! They mocked Him, they despised Him, they called Him impostor. They said that He was not Divine—they would not have Him for their Savior. But I was accustomed to stand up and say I knew Him to be the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely.” I think when I rise from my grave it will be no small consolation to feel, “I was on His side. I was always on His side. I stood up for Him. It was with a poor feeble testimony that was marred in a thousand ways, but still I was on His side.” I should like—oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I would have all of you to be so bearing your witness for Jesus—so lovingly, so wisely, so continually, so honestly, so completely that when the Lord came, you, too, may be able to say, “I did not deny Him before men. I was not ashamed of Him. I did confess Him”—for then, remember, His promise is He will confess you before His Father and before the holy angels! When you shall come up ashamed, as it were, and trembling, and the question will be asked, “Who is this man? Does anybody know him?” and you feel in your soul, as it were, as if you expected to be unknown and to be driven into banishment, Christ will say, “O My Father, I knew him. I knew him. Angels, listen! I knew him.

This poor man confessed me in Baptism.” “This poor woman used to confess Me before her neighbors in the court.” This merchant lost some of his trade because he followed Me so closely.” “This little child acknowledged Me, though her father mocked Me.” This young woman was accustomed to follow My rules and Laws, and to live near to Me though all around her were Godless and Christless.” O, Beloved, do imitate, then, the Queen of Sheba—what you know, tell out! Admit it and glorify the greater than Solomon about it!

VI. The last point about her was this—that *after Solomon had told her all that she asked, she gave to Solomon so great a treasure that, rich as he was, it is said he had never had such a treasure before, or even afterwards—she brought to him such costly precious things and she gave them freely.* He gave her abundance in return. In the exchange, I do not suppose she was a loser, but still her heart was so full of thankfulness for what she had learned that she could not but make an offering unto the king who had been her instructor. I wish all Christians would imitate her in this. If we have salvation from Christ, let us never count the giving of our substance to Him to be any hardship. Let us not need to be pressed to give, or begged to give, or incited to give by the example of other people—let us do it conscientiously, out of love to Him, doing it as unto Him.

I heard of a gentleman some time ago who gave a sum of money to a Chapel and said to his minister that he might put that down as the widow’s mite, but his minister said, “No, Sir, I don’t think I would like to take so much as that from you.” “How is that, Sir?” “Why,” said the minister, “if you had given me only half the widow’s mite, that would satisfy me.” “What do you mean?” “Well,” he said, “if you would give me £50,000 that would satisfy me well. That is half the widow’s mite.” “How so, Sir?” “Why,” he said, “to my knowledge you are worth a hundred thousand pounds. The widow’s mite was *all that she had.* I won’t take as much as *that* from you. I shall be quite satisfied if you will give half the widow’s mite.” I thought the man who called his offering by that sacred name, “the widow’s mite,” deserved the rebuke that he received! Though we have not to give all we have as she did, we should give till we feel it—and I think that we do not give much until we begin to feel the pinch—until we feel it! We have not done much for a friend if we have only given him our superfluities. True love proves itself when it comes to something like self-denial, but how few of God’s servants ever reach to self-denial for Jesus? They could not remember, if they sat down, that they ever denied themselves a penny’s worth of anything to eat or drink, or denied themselves a pound’s worth of finery, or a comfort in their homes, or anything else for the sake of Christ! We should do better if we could get to feel that we love Christ so much that we could not give too much to Him.

Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, I invite you all—and I ask that I may be able myself—to give to our Lord, who is greater than Solomon, our whole being, every power of thought and expression, every faculty of affection or of judgment—all that we are and all that we have, for if we gave Christ our gold and nothing more, He would not accept it! He wants us to live from morning’s light to evening’s shade for Him—to eat and drink and sleep to His Glory—to do all to His honor. This is the obligation of the Christian and this his truest privilege. May the Spirit of God help us rise

to this, so that when we came to see King Solomon and learn His wisdom, and behold the splendor of His palace, we may feel that He has got our hearts to be entirely His own, His portion and His treasure, forever and forever!

God bless you, dear Friends, this night, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 12:38-42.**

Verses 38, 39. *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from You. But He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the Prophet Jonas.* The Pharisees change their manner, but they are in pursuit of the same object. How hopeless had the religionists of that age become! Nothing would convince them. They manifested their hate of the Lord Jesus by ignoring all the wonders He had worked. What further signs could they seek than those He had already given? Pretty enquirers these! They treat all the miracles of our Lord as if they had never occurred! Well might the Lord call them, “evil and adulterous,” since they were so given to personal lasciviousness and were spiritually so untrue to God. We have those among us now who are so brazen as to treat all the achievements of Evangelical Doctrines as if they were nothing, and talk to us as if no result had followed the preaching of the Gospel. There is need of great patience to deal wisely with such.

40. *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* The great sign of our Lord's mission is His Resurrection and His preparing a Gospel of salvation for the heathen. His life is well symbolized by that of *Jonah*. They cast our Lord overboard, even as the sailors did the man of God. The sacrifice of *Jonah* calmed the sea for the mariners—our Lord's death made peace for us. Our Lord was a while in the heart of the earth as *Jonah* was in the depth of the sea but He rose again, and His ministry was full of the power of His Resurrection. As *Jonah's* ministry was certified by his restoration from the sea, so is our Lord's ministry attested by His rising from the dead. The man who had come back from death and burial in the sea commanded the attention of all Nineveh, and so does the risen Savior demand and deserve the obedient faith of all to whom His message comes!

41. *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* The heathen of Nineveh were convinced by the sign of a Prophet restored from burial in the sea. And moved by that event, they repented at his preaching. Without quibble or delay they put the whole city in mourning and pleaded with God to turn from His anger. Jesus came with a clearer command of repentance, and a brighter promise of deliverance—but He spoke to stubborn hearts. Our Lord reminds the Pharisees of this and, as they were the most Jewish of Jews, they were touched to the quick by the fact that heathens perceived what Israel did not understand, and that Ninevites repented while Jews were hardened!

All men will rise at the judgment— “*The men of Nineveh shall rise.*” The lives of penitents will condemn those who did not repent! The Ninevites will *condemn* the Jews “*because they repented at the preaching of Jonas.*” And the Jews did not. Those who heard Jonah and repented will be swift witnesses against those who heard Jesus and refused His testimony.

The standing witness to our Lord is His Resurrection from the dead. God grant that everyone of us, believing that unquestionable fact, may be so assured of His mission, that we may repent and believe the Gospel.

RESURRECTION is one proof. In fact, it is THE SIGN, although, as we shall see, it is supplemented by another. The two will convince us or condemn us.

42. *The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.* The second sign of our Lord’s mission is HIS KINGLY WISDOM. As the fame of Solomon brought *the Queen of the South from the uttermost parts of the earth*, so does the Doctrine of our Lord command attention from the utmost isles of the sea. If Israel perceives not His glorious wisdom, Ethiopia and Seba shall hear of it and come bowing before Him. The Queen of Sheba will rise again, and will “*rise up*” as a witness against unbelieving Jews, for she journeyed far to hear Solomon, while they would not hear the Son of God, Himself, who came into their midst. The superlative excellence of His wisdom stands for our Lord as a sign which can never be effectually disputed. What other teaching meets all the needs of men? Who else has revealed such Grace and Truth? He is infinitely greater than Solomon, who from a moral point of view exhibited a sorrowful littleness. Who but the Son of God could have made known the Father as He has done?

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**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***“The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and condemn it: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and, behold, a greater than Salomon is here.”
Matthew 12:42.***

Our LORD, on this occasion, was addressing a number of captious critics who, instead of listening to what He said and giving it the attention due to its own weight, said, “Show us a sign.” Our Lord replies to them that He will give them no sign except the two signs of Jonah and of the Queen of the South. The first was very much to the point. Jonah, a lone man, working no miracle, went to Nineveh, a great city, where he was completely unknown. There he commenced to preach. The whole subject of his testimony was, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Through the broad streets of that gigantic city and through its lanes and alleys, in its public squares the voice was heard, sharp and shrill, of that lone man—“Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” No rod was turned into a serpent. No mountains were made to smoke. None were struck dead by the sudden hand of God. No paralytics and sick folk were healed. No signs were given to the men of Nineveh, but the declaration of that one man sent of God was sufficient to denounce and discover their sin! They felt that they had been guilty of sins that deserved to be denounced. He pronounced their punishment and they also felt that the punishment was well deserved and, therefore, from the king on the throne to the meanest of the citizens, all the inhabitants of that great city humbled themselves and Jonah’s work was done! And God forgave the city. And the Lord Jesus seemed to say, “I also speak to you and tell you Truths of God which ought to have as much power upon your consciences as Jonah’s testimony had upon the men of Nineveh, but you turn away, albeit that I speak truth which you cannot answer, and tell you things which you cannot meet nor deny. Yet you say, ‘Show us a sign,’ fools that you are! There shall no sign be given you except the sign of Jonah, the Prophet.” The second sign was also quite as much to the point. It was the case of the Queen of Sheba. She had heard, by report, that Solomon was the wisest of men. She knew that men flocked to his court to be instructed from his lips. Under many disadvantages and at much expense, she set out upon a long journey that she might listen to the wise man’s teaching. She found it to her benefit and returned with

joy. “But”—Christ seems to say, “I am as wise as Solomon. I am able to instruct you as well as that monarch instructed those who came to his court and yet you show no eager desire to know what it is I teach! You are not willing to open your ears to receive, nor your minds to give a candid judgment upon what I utter, but you cry out at once, ‘Show us a sign.’ You would open your eyes and stare in vacant wonder at a miracle, but the mightiest wisdom that I can deliver to you, you tread under foot as swine tread under feet the choicest pearls.”

So Christ would give them no sign. He felt that they needed it not and, indeed, it would be wasted upon them. If they had possessed the same naive mind that was found in the Queen of the South, they would have listened to Him. And if they had been of the same honest spirit with the men of Nineveh, they would have repented upon His testimony, even as they did of old, who heard the Prophetic voice of Jonah!

Ah, my dear Hearers, this very night the same spirit broods over thousands! They do not, when they go to hear a sermon, think of the matter of what they hear, but they must have it delivered with cleverness, with refined speech, with polished periods. Ah, if men were wise, they would care but little how these Truths of God were given to them, but they would weigh the Truths themselves! We do not claim that you should believe all that we say—if we speak anything contrary to God’s Word, we charge you to reject what we say, but we do ask you to judge it, to weigh it and to let the important Truths which we are charged by God to deliver to you, have a place in your attention—let them exercise your judgment, let them move your heart and will—let them influence your lives!

Coming now, however, at once to the text, we shall notice, in the first place, *that Jesus is “greater than Solomon.”* In the second place, that *Jesus “is here.”* And in the third place, that *if we do not listen to Him and obey Him, the Queen of the South may well rise up to condemn us.*

These things, I think, are very evidently in the text. In the first place, then, in the text—

I. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST CLAIMS TO BE “GREATER THAN SOLOMON.”

You all know the history of Solomon. Solomon was great in several particulars and we shall point out to you that in each of these, Christ is greater than he.

In the first place, *Solomon was very great as a ruler.* His father, David, had, by much perseverance, valor and industry, very much enlarged the boundaries of his once small dominion. He was a man of war and he left to Solomon a heritage, indeed—a well-filled treasury and an army of veterans. Solomon ruled over the whole of Israel. There seems to have been no disloyal rebellion, no revolt throughout the whole of his reign. In David’s reign there were many rivals and the people were a restless, discontented, turbulent people. No people, perhaps, were more difficult to govern than the Jewish people in the days of David! But Solomon was so judicious, noble and just a ruler, that he left the whole nation at peace with itself.

He was a monarch whom all respected and Solomon, too, in his time, enlarged the boundaries of his territory until it reached to the borders of Egypt and to the river Euphrates on the other side. They that dwelt in the wilderness “bowed before him and his enemies licked the dust.” Many nations paid him tribute and all the strangers who remained in the land, whom the children of Israel did not destroy, did him service. He had dominion from sea to sea and, to use an Oriental extravagance of expression, “from the river even unto the end of the earth.” Solomon had a kingdom from his father and with it a special Divine Blessing—the gift of wisdom which enabled him to rule well. His army was one of the largest of the various armies of the Oriental kings. He ruled with wonderful state. The throne which he had built for himself is said to have had none like it in the whole of the then known world. His treasury was filled so full that as for silver, it was accounted for nothing. He made gold to be as silver, and silver as stones in Jerusalem! He was the greatest monarch that Israel had ever seen!

And yet, dear Friends, what a petty, little king he was, and when we compare him for a single moment with our Lord Jesus Christ, what a contrast there is! All the power of Solomon is gone and not a speck of it is left. He had dominion in his day over vast numbers of humankind, but he has no dominion now. But the Throne of the Man who was crucified on Calvary has power over tens of thousands of human hearts at this present moment. Lo, these 1,800 years Christ has reigned over multitudes who have been all too glad to kiss His feet and have rejoiced in the light of His Countenance! His Kingdom, instead of waning, has continually increased and the day shall come when all kings shall yield their scepters to Him and He shall gather sheaves of them beneath His arm when all monarchs shall doff their diadems and He, alone, shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords—the universal Head of the great monarchy—the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands which shall yet fill all the earth! The power of the Lord Jesus Christ over His Church is like the power of Solomon over Israel. He keeps it at one, and together!

Apart from Christ, the Church is a broken thing, divided into sects and parties, but in Christ Jesus, the Savior’s prayer is answered, “That they all may be one.” Bring any one of us to the Cross and you shall not know this from that, for there we all agree to trust Him, to worship Him, to count His authority to be paramount and His example to be our pattern! Yes, Lord Jesus Christ, all Your children praise You! All those that are of Your household put the crown upon Your head. You rule in the household and You rule well, You “first-born among many brethren.” Moreover, our Lord’s dominion extends beyond His Church. He rules even to the river of Egypt. Know you not that Christ is Lord paramount over Providence? Nothing occurs without Jehovah-Jesus’ purpose, decree, or permission! The very hairs of your head are all numbered—

***“He overrules all mortal things,
And manages our mean affairs.”***

Nor is this all. The Lord Jesus has the government upon His shoulders—and that government extends not only to earth, but to Heaven and Hell—

***“Lo! In His hands, the Sovereign keys
Of Heaven, and death, and Hell.”***

The power of Christ is felt beneath Hell’s most profound wave and His Glory is sung on Heaven’s most starry heights! He has put all things under His feet. He is exalted far above all principalities and powers, and every name that is named, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things on earth, and things that are under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that He is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father. Our Lord Jesus Christ, then, has a dominion which, for duration and for extent, is infinitely superior to anything of which Solomon ever conceived! And as for majesty and glory—talk not of the peacock—throne of the Great Mogul, all set with many colors and with gems and precious stones that shine resplendent like a rainbow in the glittering sun! There is no throne like unto the Throne of Jesus, the Emperor of all worlds! See before Him the sea of glass mingled with fire. Around Him stand His seraphic courtiers. There stand the elders with their “vials full of sweet odors.” And as you listen you can hear their “harps of sweeter sound.” And mark you not the countless hosts who all cast their crowns before Him and, with one soul and voice, cry, “You are worthy to take the book and to loose the seals thereof, for You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood”? Oh, cannot your ears hear this very moment the mighty booms of that great sea of music which rolls up to the Throne of Jesus? Can you not catch some stray notes from the harps of angels and archangels, as unceasingly they sing, “You are worthy! You are worthy to take the book and to loose the seals thereof”? Beloved, we cannot *think* of comparing Christ with Solomon, but we must contrast them, for a “greater than Solomon is here, as a Ruler.”

Let us learn from this the obvious lesson of practical value and wisdom. If, from the far-off South, the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon, how wise will it be for us to come to see Jesus! Oh, that we would do so and make Him our King! Let us enlist in His warrior bands. None ever served so great a master! Let us be members of His household, for happy are they that stand continually in His Presence. Let us give over our enmity and cast down the weapons of our rebellion! And let us say by Grace —

***“Oh, King of Grace, my heart subdue—
I would be led in triumph, too,
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the triumphs of His Word,”***

Solomon was great as a builder. For this, perhaps, he is best known among us. ‘Twas a mighty deed to bring the towering cedars of Lebanon, all fashioned and prepared, to Jerusalem to make a house for the Lord—to hew from the quarries in the mountains, great stones and goodly ones, all squared, and each one fitted and made ready for its place so that there might be no sound of hammer, nor lifting up of chisel in the building of the house. Happy were the eyes that looked upon the Temple of

Solomon! Even at this very day, when the explorers come upon what they suppose to be the Temple, they are astounded at the masses of stone which they find there! Our Lord said that one stone should not be left upon another, but that all should be cast down—but even as they lie in the places where they were cast down—they are amazing! Even modern engineers have marveled how they could ever have been brought and put into their places—they are of such enormous size and yet so well squared and prepared for the building! Besides this, Solomon built a house of the forest of Lebanon, of which we have a descriptive account in the pages of Inspiration and which also seems to have been a marvelous work. In addition to that, he was great in the erection of works for the carrying of water. He made pools in Zion—the upper and the nether pools. He seems to have carried aqueducts where they were never heard of before his time, and it is possible that many of the great discoveries of modern days were well known to Solomon, even all those years ago. He seems to have built an ascent to the house of the Lord, which particularly struck the Queen of Sheba as being a most wonderful piece of masonry. Besides this, he was the builder of treasure cities. He also built Gezer, Bethhoron, Baalath, Tadmor in the wilderness, and so on. Solomon was a great master builder—none could excel him as a piler of huge stones, one upon another.

Ah, but my Brothers and Sisters, a greater than Solomon is the Lord Jesus! It is easy enough to build with stones, granite, bricks and cedar. These are dead, coarse things that you can hew and cut as you will. Get enough sawing and cutting power and you can make what you will of these things. It is only brute mechanical force that is needed, with judgment here and there to direct and guide it. Get strength enough and, as Archimedes said, you might move the world with a lever—it is only one physical force pitted against another. But what shall we say of Christ, who has built a house that is made of living, immortal souls, built of what Peter, taught of the Spirit, calls, “living stones”? You do not cut these, nor polish them quite so easily. Men with strong, stubborn wills. Men with diseased imaginations. Men with perverse affections, men altogether gone from original righteousness—our Lord Jesus Christ has taken these and He has prepared them to make a Temple in which there shall be nothing but holiness and perfection! I trust that some of us have been prepared to be built into “a living Temple, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” But if the Lord Jesus Christ shall ever make tens of thousands—and thousands of thousands of once guilty men all perfect, and shall build these altogether, fitting each one into its place and making each one willing to maintain and stay in its place—this will be such a thing as a thousand Solomons could not have attempted! This is no work of brute force, of mechanical power, my Brothers and Sisters—this is the power of the Holy Spirit Himself—a *spiritual* power, a power which comes from God, who is a Spirit, and who will have those who worship Him, worship Him in spirit and in truth! Can you conceive of this Temple? My

soul seems to rise upon the wings of imagination at the very thought of it—a Temple all alive, a living Temple—each stone a priceless soul, glittering with immortality! John tells us of a city, the foundations whereof were of precious stones and he tells us of the “new Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven,” and I know not what besides. That was but a faint picture of the living Temple of Jesus, where each soul shall be more precious than the whole world, even though all the world were one pearl of the purest water—a Temple built by Him, for Him, to His own praise!

Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the great Master Builder, has built many a pool and aqueduct. We sang about one just now, such as Solomon never knew—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins!
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains!”***

This is more glorious than the Pool of Gihon, the upper and the nether pool! Moreover, Solomon brought a river into Jerusalem that the multitude might drink, but it was not like this—“The water that I shall give you, shall be in you a well of water, springing up into everlasting life.” Beloved, we have said that Solomon built treasure cities, but our Lord has given us promises that hold richer treasures than Tadmor ever knew—a Covenant—oh, the grandeur of that word, *Covenant*—a Covenant stored with all the fullness of God, for in Christ “dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily”!

I shall lose myself if I attempt to extol my Master as a Builder! I only pray that you and I may be built upon His Foundation—that we may come to the Fountain which He has opened and may be cleansed therein—that we may come to His treasure city and be enriched, all our necessities being removed. And may we dwell with Him in the palace which shall never be taken down! A greater than Solomon, then, is Christ as a Builder!

And now for a third view of Solomon. *Solomon was the greatest man of his age as a trader.* A careless reader may not observe this, but a careful student of the narrative will discern the reason why Solomon was so immensely rich. Possessed of great wisdom, he saw at once that the wealth of a people must largely depend upon its commercial enterprise and activity. He therefore took a city upon the banks of the Euphrates, and when the great caravans, laden with costly treasures from India and China, sought to make their way to Egypt, Greece and Rome, they crossed at the very ford which Solomon possessed. He seized upon an oasis in the great desert and upon it he built a city, known to this day as Tadmor—“Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness.” This little oasis, this spot of green earth in the midst of the desert, the caravans must pass. It was the only place where they could obtain water—and here Solomon built these cities which became the great depot, where exchanges were continually made of the productions of Egypt, India and China! The trade which, after the days of Solomon, went farther west and at last passed

through the port of Venice—and then went still farther west and went through Holland, and has now come to London—all that trade was in the hands of Solomon. If you read carefully the record of his life, you will see that he was a most clever trader and managed for a time to secure a complete monopoly of all the provinces of the East. For this, the Queen of Sheba marveled at him. She wondered how it was that he could have been so wise as to be able to do this.

But our Lord says that “a greater than Solomon is here.” Our Lord Jesus Christ has been a Trader of no common sort, my Brothers and Sisters. By His most precious blood He has brought us the supplies of the skies! Solomon could only bring to himself gold, and silver, and spices, and apes, and peacocks—but our Lord Jesus Christ has, by His precious blood, opened up the skies to the commerce of souls so that now, through Christ, there comes to us pardon for our sin, acceptance in the Beloved, sanctification by the Spirit, preservation by the indwelling of God and all those priceless gifts of which we cannot now speak particularly, only we must say of them, “Blessed be the name of Jesus, that ever our souls learned to trade in this heavenly direction.” Yes, Christ is, indeed, greater than Solomon! Oh that you would seek to be enriched by Him! Oh that you would seek to obey that text in which He says, “I counsel you to buy of Me gold, yes, fine gold, tried in the fire, and the white raiment that you may be clothed.” God give us Grace that we may come to this greater Trader than Solomon!

Moreover, *Solomon was exceedingly great as a sage*. I shall not amuse you, for that is no objective of mine, with the various legends that are told of him. The one instance of his decision between the two women reminds us of the excellency of his judgment.

He was renowned for this. You have his Proverbs, his Ecclesiastes, one of his thousand and one songs, and you may be assured that he was a mastermind in his day.

But the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ far transcends this, for He can open up all the dark questions of your mind! He can teach you, O man, what you most want to know. He can teach you the way to Heaven, the way to escape from the power as well as the result of your sins, the way to get peace with God! The sages could not tell you this, but Jesus can. Seek Him, for He is greater than Solomon! I had more to say upon this point, but time will not allow, for I must have a word or two upon the second head, which is—

II. THIS JESUS IS HERE

He is not here in body. As we reminded you last Sabbath evening, He is gone. He is not here in that sense, “for He is risen.” But Christ is here by His Spirit. If you want to get to Christ, this is the way—think of Him. That is, coming towards Him. Read His life. Study His death. Meditate upon Him. Let the thought of His laying down His life for His enemies dwell upon your minds. I wish that some of you would read the story of His Crucifixion very, very often. If you have not any faith, perhaps faith

will come while you are reading it. "God commended His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." He did not die for those good people who have not any sin. He had nothing to do with those good people who are so righteous that they can get to Heaven their own way. Christ died for the guilty, the lost, the worthless. He comes like a physician to the sick—like one who gives sustenance to the perishing poor. Oh, read His life, for this will help you to come to Him!

The true way in which to come to Christ is to believe Him, to trust Him. If any man trusts in Christ to save him, he has come to Him! When I used to hear sermons about coming to Christ, I thought, "Well, I would do it if I only knew how! If I had to walk from here to York, or no matter how far, I would find my way." But you do not come to Christ with your feet—you come to Him with your mind, heart and will—and he that trusts in Jesus, who says, "I will lean alone upon what Christ has done. I have been trying a thousand ways of salvation, but they shall all go to the winds and now, sink or swim, I believe that Jesus Christ died to save sinners and I trust in Him"—that man is saved! If you trust in Him, and lean on Him and if, just as you now see me throw the whole of my weight upon this rail, you lean the whole weight of your soul on Christ, you are saved!

That is the only way of salvation, to throw yourselves completely on Jesus! God must punish sin, but Christ bore what was due to our sin in the place of sinners, of all who trust Him! If you trust Him, then Christ was punished instead of you and no penalty can fall on you. Your debts have all been paid by Christ and God cannot—for He is righteous—demand from you what Jesus has already endured for your sake. If you trust Jesus Christ, then, as sure as God is true, He will save you! It is His own promise, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Now, for the purpose of trusting, *Christ is here*. If you could see Him with your eyes, you could not trust Him any more than you can tonight when you cannot see Him, though He is here and oh, wonder of wonders, He is also engaged yonder in Heaven, according to this Book, in pleading for you! You do not need to see a man to trust him. I can trust a man who is in India. I can trust a brother whom I may have in Australia, I can trust a man who may be in the backwoods of America and trust him quite as well as if I saw him—perhaps my trust might be all the more like trust because I did *not* see him. We say that there are some people whom we can only trust as far as we can throw them, that is to say, we cannot trust them at all! But Christ is not of that kind. For all the purposes that are needed, then, to save you, Christ is here! By His Spirit He is here, and here now, and He will now whisper into your soul, "Peace. Your sins are forgiven you." If you will now trust Him, you shall have in your heart a peace which passes all understanding, which shall be the best proof to you that Jesus is here. Oh, why do you put it off? Oh, why do you who feel you need a Savior, continue so long away from this simple faith." I prayed for you just now—the Lord knows how sincerely I prayed—that

we might all meet in Heaven. We never shall, unless we all believe in Jesus, for He is the one Door—if we will not enter by Him, we cannot enter—there is no stealing or climbing our way there.

If we have to come and rest in Christ, why should we not do it tonight? Oh, why should we this night not be led to rest alone in Christ? If we do this, we are saved, already saved, completely saved, irrevocably saved—so saved that neither death nor Hell shall ever divide the Believer from his Lord! May this be done by us all, for Jesus is here. And now I have to close by saying that if, with this Gospel before us, we do not come to this greater than Solomon—

III. THE QUEEN OF SHEBA WILL CONDEMN US!

For look! *She was a heathen who had heard but a little about Solomon* and yet she came to see if it were true. You profess to be Christians, many of you. You have heard about Jesus from the time when you left the cradle. If you come not, these many Sundays, these many sermons, these good books and these Bibles of yours—what shall they be but like the big stones that were hurled at Achan to destroy him for his sin? May God grant that you may not sin against the Light of God, but may the Light lead you to Christ that you may be saved!

This woman *came to see Solomon from afar*. We know not how far it was—whether she was the queen of the southern part of Arabia, or whether her territory was upon the other side of the Red Sea in Abyssinia—she seems to have been the queen of both countries. But from whichever she might have come, it was a long journey. You have no distance to go. Thought can travel all the distance in a moment! Faith can throw a bridge across every difficulty! Believe in Christ and you are with Christ! Trust Christ and Christ is with you—and you are with Him and in Him!

The Queen of Sheba had to meet a thousand dangers. Traveling in those days was no easy task. The Bedouins would attack her caravans. She had many trials and hardships to put up with, but there are no such hardships to you. You have simply to trust. All the way to Heaven is only two steps—the first is to step out of yourselves and the second is to step into Christ. First to have done with all that you can do and secondly, to ask for all that Christ has done. You have no difficulties, then.

Now, this woman, when she came, did not come bringing her own wisdom to Solomon, but she came to learn from Solomon. You must come to Christ, not to bring your own knowledge, but to learn of Him what He would have you to do. If you are to be saved, you must be taught as well. “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

And this woman *did bring very great presents to Solomon*—spices and I know not what. Now Christ asks you to bring nothing! And if you do not come on such terms, well may she condemn you. He needs no merits of yours. He needs no good heart. He needs nothing good from you. “Surely He needs faith and repentance,” says one. Yes, but—

**“True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings me nigh,**

***Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”***

“But I must *feel* my needs,” says one. Yes, but—

***“This He gives you—
’Tis His Spirit’s rising beam.”***

You are to come to Christ without anything—and Christ will give you everything!

This woman had never been invited to come. She went on a haphazard journey. Solomon never sent the Queen of Sheba an invitation to visit his court, but she came and was well rewarded. But you have been invited hundreds of times. I must bear this witness against you. I have invited you very earnestly times without number. Oh, why, why, why—when the Gospel is so simple, why do you kick against it? If my Lord were hard I could understand your lifting up the heel against Him. If He laid down some difficult conditions, I could excuse you if you said, “Master, we cannot come up to them.” But when the only thing He says is, “Take what I give you. Receive it as a gift of Grace”—oh, not to receive it is unkindness, is madness, is wickedness! May God forgive your unbelief! I know the very difficulty in your case is that it is so easy. I do believe if salvation were more difficult, some of you would like it better. You are just like Naaman. If the Prophet had bid him do some great thing, he would have done it, but when it was nothing but, “Wash and be clean,” it did not suit his pride. And it does not suit yours just to come and trust in Christ. I know you say you are afraid it would not be true. Ah, then you prefer your opinion to the testimony of God, for this is God’s simple testimony, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be condemned.”

May the Eternal Spirit bring you, empty-handed and ruined, to the All-Sufficient Savior and may you be enabled to now rely upon Him and you shall find that He is true! “Him that comes unto Me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.”

The Lord bless you for Christ’s sake!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 119:113-120.**

The proper way in which to read these verses is to peruse them in the spirit of prayer, turning every verse into a personal supplication to God. I trust that many of us may be so in the Spirit, today, that these words may suit us.

Verse 113. *I hate vain thoughts: but Your Law do I love.* The moralist is quite content to look after his actions, but the Christian is never happy until his thoughts are sanctified. The true Believer hates vain thoughts because they lead to vain words and to vain actions—because vain thoughts nailed his Savior to the tree, because vain thoughts spoil his devotion, mar his communion with God and, like the birds which came

down upon Abraham's sacrifice—would destroy all his offering. "I hate vain thoughts." The converse of this is, "But Your Law do I love." There is nothing vain there. Nothing in Your Law to distract me. Nothing to give me unhallowed thoughts. Brothers and Sisters, here is a cure for vain thoughts! When you have been assailed by vain thoughts, let your mind be lovingly stored with texts of Scripture, with passages of God's Word! The Psalmist, while writing these words, is evidently under a sense of danger, so he said—

114. *You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your Word.* Here is a hiding place to escape to from danger and a shield to protect while in danger. A hiding place is not enough because that cannot be moved—but the shield can be carried everywhere. It is buckled on the warrior's arm and into every conflict he can take it. So, at evening, when I tell my troubles to my God, He is my hiding place. But all the day long, while I myself abide in the heat of the conflict, He is my shield! See where the Christian's hope is, dear Friends! It is not in his own integrity, or faithfulness, or sincerity—but, "I hope in Your Word."—

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

115. *Depart from me, you evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.* By which David did not mean that he would not speak with ungodly men. Monkish seclusion would be no advantage to a Christian! We are to be in the world, though not of it, as a ship is in the sea, but the sea is not in the ship, or else soon would she go to the bottom. We are to take care of the world—to hold such society with them as may come from necessity—but as to any nearer communion, "Depart from me, you evildoers. Your company I cannot bear! Your example pollutes the air! You do me damage, you vex my ears, you dishonor my God—depart from me, you evildoers, for I will keep the commandments of my God." You see, it seems as if this was not possible as long as there was an intimate association with the ungodly. I know nothing that is so likely to destroy the purity of a Christian's life as an intimate association with ungodly people. You cannot run with the hare and hold with the hounds, too. It is impossible for you to join with world and yet be true followers of Christ.

116. *Uphold me according unto Your Word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.* You see, he feels his weakness and he cries to his God.

117. *Hold You me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.* The brightest archangel owes all his glory to God—and the perpetuity of that glory depends upon the constant gift of the Gracious One. How wise, then, is it of men, conscious of their weakness, to hang constantly upon their God! As the vessel hangs upon the nail, and if the nail can move, the vessel must fall, so must we hang upon God. If He is not faithful, and true, and potent, then we must perish—but, thank God, concerning this we have no doubt!

118-119. *You have trodden down all them that err from Your statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love Your testimonies.* You see, the Psalmist's mind is entirely occupied with this spirit of perseverance. He seems to tremble and to be filled with awe lest he should by any means prove an apostate and be unworthy to enter into the Kingdom. He looks with solemn mind upon God as casting all the wicked of the earth down under His feet, just as men cast out the refuse—as the slag of the furnace is sometimes thrown down to make the footpath. So he says, "You put away the wicked of the earth like dross. You have trodden them down." David was filled with a heavy trembling lest this should be his lot—lest, after he had thought he had known and experienced the happiness of communion with God, he should be found to be reprobate silver and be given over to destruction! Does such a fear as this come upon you, my Brothers and Sisters? If it does not, there is room for you to fear, for even our holy Apostle had this as his anxiety, "Lest, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." It is not as to whether God will be faithful to me, but whether I am really His, whether my conversion has been genuine and my union to Christ vital. These are questions which breed a holy anxiety, which is one of the very best means of keeping a Christian in the path of right and so of guaranteeing the perseverance which God has promised.

120. *My flesh trembles for fear of You and I am afraid of Your judgments.*

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

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

THE QUEEN OF THE SOUTH, OR THE EARNEST ENQUIRER NO. 533

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 4, 1863,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”
Matthew 12:42.*

OUR Savior, in this chapter, administered a rebuke to two sorts of people. He reproveth those who hear the Gospel, but who are not brought to humiliation and repentance. He rebuked them by the example of the Ninevites, who, having but one short and terrible warning from the Prophet Jonah, clothed themselves in sackcloth, turned unto God in penitence and so preserved their city. He then rebukes another class—those who have not curiosity enough to care to hear the Gospel, or who, if they hear it, give it no attention, as though it were not worthy of human thought.

First, He rebukes those who hear and despise the Word and then those who are of so stolid a heart as to refuse to give it an honest and candid hearing. These are shamed by the example of this Queen of the South, who came from the uttermost parts of the earth, enticed by fame to listen to the wisdom of King Solomon. He declares that her hallowed curiosity which led her to journey so far to profit by the wisdom of a *man*, will, in the day of judgment, condemn *us*, if we refuse to hear the voice of the Son of God, and are not moved to enquire concerning the heavenly wisdom which He reveals.

Will you kindly open your Bibles at the tenth chapter of the First of Kings, for I shall have to constantly refer to the historical narrative in order to bring out in full relief the conduct of the ancient queen. O that the Spirit of God may convince some of you of sin, by the example of that wise-hearted woman!

The three points we shall consider this morning, with regard to the Queen of Sheba, are these—first, let us *commend her for the possession of an enquiring spirit*. Then let us observe *how she conducted her enquiry*. And, in closing, let us remark *the result of an enquiry so well conducted*.

I. First LET US COMMEND HER FOR HER ENQUIRING SPIRIT. In this point she will rise up in judgment against many here present. *She was a queen*. Queens have many cares, multitudes of occupations and engagements, but she neither considered it beneath her dignity to search into the wisdom of Solomon, nor a waste of valuable time to journey to his dominions. How many offer the vain excuse that they cannot give due at-

tention to the religion of Jesus Christ for want of time? They have a large family, or a very difficult business to manage.

This woman rebukes such, for she left her kingdom and threw off the cares of State to take a long journey that she might listen to the royal sage. How much rather ought men to be willing, if it were absolutely necessary, (and I believe it never is), to neglect their business for a season, that they might find out the way of salvation for their souls? “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” And, on the other hand, of what account would be his loss, though he should lose his all, if he did but find his soul and were saved at the last? You cannot say, any of you, that you have an excuse in the shortness of your time, or in the difficulties of your position. If the Queen of the South can come to Solomon, you also can consider the teaching of Christ.

Her royal court was, doubtless, *already stored with wisdom*. The princes of the eastern realms were always careful to gather to themselves a band of wise men who found in their patronage both subsistence and honor. In the court of so great a lover of learning as was the Queen of Sheba, there would certainly be a little congress of magi and wise men—and yet she was not content with what she knew already—she was determined to search after this Divine wisdom, of which she had heard the fame. In this she rebukes those of you who think you know enough—who suppose that your own home-spun intelligence will suffice, without sitting at the feet of Jesus.

If you dream that human wisdom can be a sufficient light without receiving the brighter beams of Revelation. If you say, “These things are for the unintelligent and for the poor, we will not listen to them,” this queen, whose court was full of wisdom, and yet who leaves it all to find the wisdom which God had given to Solomon, rebukes you. The wisdom of Jesus Christ as much surpasses all human knowledge as the sun outshines a candle. Comparison there can be none, contrast there is much. He who will not come to the Fountain which brims with wisdom, but trusts to his own leaking cisterns, shall wake up too late to find himself a fool.

Consider, too, that the queen *came from a very great distance* to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The journey from Arabia Felix, or from Abyssinia, whichever the country may have been, was a long and dangerous one—a much more serious matter than it would be in these times. And performed by the slow process of traveling by camel, the journey must have occupied a very long season. Coming, as Matthew says, “from the uttermost parts of the earth,” there were doubtless mountains to be climbed, if not seas to be navigated and deserts to be crossed.

But none of these difficulties could keep her back. She hears of wisdom and wisdom she will have. So she boldly ventures upon the journey with her numerous train, no matter how far she may have to travel. Very many have the Gospel brought to their doors and yet will not leave their chimney corners to listen to it. We have thousands in London who have but to walk across the street and hear the Word and yet they lie about at home. And there are hundreds of others who when they do come, are inattentive under the ministry, or, if they listen, pay no more real attention to it than

though it were some old worn-out story which it is a respectable custom to hear, but which could not possibly be of any service to them.

The Queen of Sheba, toiling across the desert, of the weaker sex though she was, shall rise up in judgment against those who neglect the great salvation and treat the Savior as though it were nothing to them that Jesus should die.

Do not forget, too, that this woman was *a foreigner* to Solomon and that *she already had a religion*—probably one of the older forms of idolatry—perhaps the Sabeian worship of the sun. Now, many persons argue in these times, “Would you have me change my religion?” It is supposed to be an impertinence to imagine that a Roman Catholic could give any considerations to the claims of the religion of Free Grace. Or that men belonging to another Church should listen with anything like candid attention to a doctrine at variance with that which they have heard from their youth. “Would you have me change my religion?”

Yes, that I would, if your religion is false. If your religion has not changed *you*, I would that you would change your *religion*—for a religion which does not renew a man’s character and make him holy—which does not change his confidence and make him rest upon Christ—a religion which does not make altogether a new man of him, from top to bottom, is a religion of no value and the sooner he gives it up the better. Because my mother or my grandmother happened to be blind, am I to be blind, too, if there is sight to be had? Suppose they dragged a heavy chain behind them all their days, am I to drag the same, because, indeed, I sprang of their loins?

Hereditary godliness, if it is not personal godliness, is a thing of small value. But hereditary *ungodliness* is a most damnable heritage—get rid of it, I pray you. Remember, to your own master you stand or fall on your own account. Each soul enters through the gate of life alone. And through the iron gate of death it departs alone. Every man should search in solitary earnestness, apart from all the rest of the world, to know what the Truth of God is, and knowing it, it is his to come out alone on the Lord’s side. Yes, we would have you give attention to the things of God, even though you should have been brought up in other customs and should have honestly espoused another form of religion. Prove the spirits whether they are of God. If your soul has been deceived, there is yet time to be set right. God help you, that you may find out the Truth.

It is worthy of observation that this woman coming from afar, *made a journey which was very expensive*. She came with a great train of camels bearing spices and very much good and precious stones. She looked upon the treasures of her kingdom as only valuable because they would admit her into the presence of the keeper of the storehouse of wisdom. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ asks *nothing* of men except their *hearts*. He does not sell the Truth to any of them, but *gives* it freely without money and without price. And what if men will not have it, if they refuse to lend their ears and to give their thoughts to Divine things, shall they not be utterly inexcusable when this heathen queen shall rise up and shall declare that she

gave her rubies and her pearls, her spices and her camels to King Solomon, that she might learn his human wisdom?

O Sirs, should we lose the light of our eyes and the use of our limbs, yet were it better to enter into life blind and lame, than having those eyes and limbs to be cast into Hell fire. “Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life.” And if he would give all that for his temporal life, oh, how much more costly is the *spiritual* life and how cheap were the price if he could give a thousand martyrdoms to redeem his soul? But nothing of this kind is asked—the Gospel presents freely to every needy soul just that which he requires. It cries—“He that has no money, let him come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” O my dear Hearers, if you have refused the invitation of Christ’s Gospel, well may you tremble at the thought that the Queen of Sheba shall rise up in judgment against you!

Note that this queen had *received no invitation*. King Solomon never bade her come. She came unsought for, unexpected. *You* have been *bid* to come—hundreds of times in this House of Prayer has the voice been heard crying, “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.” Even you who are strangers to this House, in every corner of the streets of this city you may hear the invitation of Christ. The Bible, which is God’s written invitation, is in all your houses and you may search it if you will. Therefore, if you, followed with invitations and urged with line upon line and precept upon precept, will not come when God’s Providence brings the Gospel to your very gates, if you will not seek King Jesus, then shall you be condemned indeed, by this Queen of Sheba.

Little had she ever heard of Solomon, remember that—nothing but a rumor of his fame. Some of his ships which went to Tarshish for gold had probably been driven by stress of weather to the Abyssinian coast, or possibly they may have gone the way from the head of the Red Sea round to the Indies, where probably Tarshish was situated. And so they made a common practice of calling at one of the ports of Southern Arabia or Abyssinia. From these sailors her subjects had heard strange stories of the mighty king. They had heard of his throne of gold and ivory, of the glory of his army and the multitude of his chariots. Above all, they had heard something concerning the temple and his God.

She, influenced merely by rumor, comes that distance. Well, but we have a sure word of testimony brought to us by Prophets and priests innumerable. We have it here in this Book, written by the Divine finger and stamped with the eternal seal. We, ourselves, know that there is wisdom in Christ, our own consciences tell us that He is no deceiver—that His Gospel is most true and precious. What fools are we, what fools twice told, if, with this certainty of gaining so much, we yet shrink from the glorious adventure and will not go to Him who will give us wisdom and eternal life!

One might continue thus to show the excellence of this woman’s enquiring spirit, but we have only space to notice that *the object which she journeyed after was vastly inferior to that which is proposed to our enquiry*. We bid the careless soul think himself of the Son of God. She went that distance to see a son of *man*, a mere *man*, who, with all his wisdom was a

fool. She journeyed all that way to see one who was wise himself, but who had power to impart but a very small portion of his wisdom. Whereas we invite the sinner to come to one who is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. We tell him that all Christ has He is ready to bestow, that His abundance is only an abundance for others, and His fullness is that out of which all of us have received.

She went to hear a man who had wisdom—we bid you come to one who is Wisdom—Wisdom itself consolidated. Talk you of the royalty of Solomon? We invite you to a greater king than he, who is Lord of Heaven and earth, and Hell. Speak you of his riches?—we tell you of One who has unspeakable riches of Divine Grace and glory. True, she *might* gain by the journey, it was but a probability—but whoever comes to Christ becomes rich to all the intents of bliss. No soul ever trafficked with our Solomon without being at once enriched. If he came empty-handed, poor, feeble, naked and sinful to accept from our Jesus His great salvation, he was never sent away empty. You that despise the Gospel, who go in and out of the place of worship as those doors turn upon their hinges, take heed, lest this Queen of the South rise up in judgment against you to condemn you.

II. Let us observe to this queen's worthy commendation, HOW SHE CONDUCTED THE ENQUIRY. Observe that she did it in *person*. She did not send an ambassador to go and search into the matter, but personally and on her own account, she set out to see Solomon himself. Was it not the Duke of Wellington who, on one occasion rebuked one of his officers for railing against the Bible, by asking him if he had ever read it and when the other frankly confessed he had not, showed him how base it was to find fault with that which he did not understand?

Most persons who object to the religion of Christ have never investigated it. This I am sure of, no man has ever had an intelligent idea of the Person of the Savior, of the graciousness of His work, who ever could think or speak against Him afterward. Watts is correct when he says—

***“His worth, if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love Him, too.”***

To know, to comprehend the Character and office and work of Jesus Christ is the road to obtaining an earnest faith in Him and love towards Him.

Nor can I think that any man did ever honestly enquire at the hand of Christ what that gracious mystery is that He came to teach, without receiving from Him a gracious smile of encouragement. Whosoever will be converted let him become as a little child. And becoming as a little child and sitting at the feet of Jesus, he shall get the treatment of all other little children—he shall hear the Master say, “Of such is the kingdom of Heaven.” The honest seeker after the Lord Jesus, who personally draws near in earnest prayer and humble entreaty, shall find peace and good.

Remark, in the next place, that *the queen went first of all to Solomon*. She went and she went *to* Solomon. The way to learn the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, is to go to *Him*. Some people want to begin at the doctrine of election and so they stumble at the stumbling stone. Some must learn, first of all, where predestination meets free will—and if they cannot see

that, they turn aside with disgust. Others would remove the difficulties of the Pentateuch, or solve the problems of geology. But if they were wise, they would go at once to the Master Himself. I find not that she enquired of the butlers, of Adoniram who was over the tribute, or even of the king's mighty men, the Cherethites and Pelethites, but she sought Solomon.

From his own lips, from him immediately and directly she will get the resolution of her knotty questions and understand his wisdom. Go to God, poor Soul, in Christ Jesus. Straightforward makes the best runner. There are things which will puzzle you, there are depths too deep for you, but go to God in Christ Jesus hanging upon yonder Cross. Reflect upon the mystery of His great Atonement and yield your faith up to it—and you shall then begin to understand the wisdom of our mighty Solomon. If you cannot comprehend all teaching, may the Spirit enable you to grasp His Person and that is enough.

When she had obtained an audience of the king, observe what she did—“*She told him all that was in her heart.*” This is the way to know the Lord—tell Him all that is in your heart. Your doubts, your fears, your hardness of heart and impenitence—confess the whole. That man is near to knowing Christ who begins to know himself. And he who will confess as much as he knows of his own corruption, depravity, sinfulness, necessities and inabilities, shall soon have a gracious answer of peace.

Tarry not because your heart is vile, it is viler than you think it is—but go with it just as it is and tell Jesus all. Are you like the woman with the issue of blood? I pray you tell Him all the truth and He will say, “Your faith has made you whole.” Why do you try to hide anything from Omniscience? He knows the corners of your heart, the deep places and the dark places there are in His hands. If you should tell Him He will know no more! Why then do you hesitate? Tear off the veil from your heart and then you shall find mercy.

Moreover, *she proposed to Solomon her hard questions.* I do not know what they were, and I do not particularly care. The Jewish rabbis have invented a few very stupid ones, which they say were her hard questions. But I know if you come to our Solomon, to Christ, these will be your hard questions, “My Lord, how can mercy and justice kiss each other? How can God forgive sin and yet punish it?” Jesus will point you to His wounded hands and feet, He will tell you of His great Atonement, how by a substitution God is dreadful in His justice and boundless in His love. Then you will put to Him the question, “How can a sinful creature be accepted in the sight of a holy God?”

He will tell you of His righteousness and you will see how, covered with the imputed righteousness of the Redeemer, a sinful soul is as acceptable before the Lord as though it had never offended. You will say to Him, “Can you tell me, Jesus, how it is that a weak soul with no power shall yet be able to fight with the devil and overcome the world, the flesh and Satan?” And Jesus will answer, “My Grace is sufficient for you. My strength shall be perfect in your weakness,” and so, all the knotty questions will be answered. No, if you are puzzled about electing love, or anything else in Scripture, if you will tell Him all that is in your heart and be willing to

learn from Him, there is no hard question which your soul can suggest, but Jesus Christ will answer it.

This good woman, in pursuing her enquiry, *listened carefully to what Solomon told her*. It is said he answered all her questions. Oh, there is a blessed communion between Christ and a trembling soul. If you will tell Him all your failings, He will tell you all His merit. If you will tell Him your weakness, He will tell you all His strength. If you will tell Him your distance from God, He will tell you His nearness to God. If you will show Him how hard your heart is, He will tell you how His heart was broken that you might live. Be not afraid, only make a clear revelation to Him and trust in Him and He will make a sweet Revelation to you.

When she had gone thus far, she went on to notice everything in connection with Solomon. The Queen of Sheba saw “the wisdom of Solomon. And *the house that he had built*.” She did not notice the house *first*, you see, she went to *Solomon* first. A seeking soul goes to Christ first, tells Him her heart, learns the love of Jesus, and then afterward sets to work to learn everything else about Jesus. Now, it is very pleasant to a seeking soul to find out *the house* which Christ has built—His glorious Church built of costly stones purchased by His own blood. It is built of great stones—great *sinners* made into great trophies of His love—made of hewn stones, stones hewn out of the quarry of sin, cut and shaped by His own Grace to lie in our predestined niche forever.

It is a glorious thing to understand Christ’s Church—to know the foundations of it—laid in the Covenant of Grace. The pinnacles of it towering to the highest Heaven. The great Master who reigns in it, Jesus Christ, who is Head over all things to His Church—her glorious windows letting in light through the ordinances and the preaching of the Word—her doors that admit in the saints—her gates of brass and bars of steel shutting out the devils of Hell and all the thieves and robbers that would break in. There is enough to occupy a soul for years in understanding the house which Jesus has built.

Then she observed “*the meat of his table*.” “For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed.” Oh, how ravishing to a poor soul to discover that Christ, who is our life, is also the staff of life—“I am that living bread. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. He that eats of the bread that I shall give him, shall never hunger and shall never thirst.” Oh, the meat of His table! What luxuries! Men, indeed, did eat angels’ food, but—

**“Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming Grace and dying love.”**

What sweet food—what satisfying food—what abundant food—what constant provisions—what rare provisions, too!

In the same book of Kings you will find how many fallow deer and roebucks and bushels of fine corn and fat oxen and birds King Solomon had to put upon his table every day. But my Lord and Master places the infinite treasures of His own Person upon His table every day and sends out the summons to His children—“All things are ready. My oxen and fatlings

are killed. Come you to the supper.” Happy soul that knows concerning the meat of His table!

She looked next to “*the sitting of his servants.*” See how we sit to learn at the feet of Jesus—how we sit to commune at the feet of Jesus, as Mary did—no, how some of the servants today are sitting up yonder in glory—no, all of them are there—for He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Oh, if the soul ever comes to know what “sitting in heavenly places” means—what being in Heaven means while we are on earth—then the sitting of the servants will be a marvel!

And the next were “*his ministers.*” Well, and Christ has ministers everywhere. Streams and tempests are His servants—clouds and darkness are His slaves. “Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere.” Think of His ministers that are in Heaven—“He makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.” And then there are His ministers here on earth, who may be called *His cupbearers*. There are those whom He has called out from among men and gifted to preach the Word, who take the cup of salvation in their hands and bear it to fainting souls, and in the name of Jesus act as His *butlers*. For so it is in the margin—like good stewards bringing out of His treasury things new and old.

There is a near connection between faithful ministers and Christ. For when John saw Christ, He walked among the candlesticks—that is, in the Churches. But He had the stars in His right hand. So are His ministers ever there, and thus their being taught and owned of the Lord is a subject worthy of wonder. Happy soul that has learned to see the beauty of Christ in His ministers and cupbearers. *And their apparel*—ah, here is a subject! Why, this is the apparel of all His saints—the white linen of the righteousness of Christ.

And then those priestly garments with which He girds His people, so that they, as the high priest of old, make music as they walk, while the sweet bells of faith and the pomegranates of good works sweetly smite together and give forth golden notes. “Her clothing shall be of worked gold,” says the sweet Psalmist, when he sings of the Church. “She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.” Now such is the apparel of every child of God, and it is little wonder if an enquiring soul like the Queen of Sheba should be made to marvel at it.

There remained one thing more—the most wonderful of all—it was “*his ascent to the house of the Lord,*” the gigantic viaduct from the palace to the temple. She looked at that. “Why,” she said, “I never thought that such a valley could be bridged, I never dreamed that ever two such mountains as those, so wide apart, could be brought so close together.” As she saw the king and his royal train walk along the viaduct, her soul was utterly astonished. Methinks I see my King’s ascent to the House of the Lord. There was the mountain of our Fall and ruin, and yonder the great mountain of God’s love and a valley of Divine justice went between. Jesus Christ has built a noble viaduct. He first trod it Himself, opening for us a new and living way of access between man and God. He Himself ascends up on

high, with trumpets' joyful sounds, and opens the gate of Heaven to all Believers, by thus making an ascent to the House of the Lord.

You and I may ascend unto His holy hill, may climb to the seventh Heaven and sit down with Christ upon His Throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father upon His Throne. Oh, glorious ascent to the House of the Lord! I think the Septuagint version reads it, "*And his thank-offerings in the House of the Lord.*" Well, that is the same thing, because our Savior's sacrifice is the living way by which we ascend into the holy hill of the Lord. If nothing else can fill one with wonder, we must be amazed even in eternity, to think of His matchless offering. He gave His body to be wrung with anguish and His soul to be torn with grief—"who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." The first-born sons of light desire in vain to know the depth of this love, they cannot reach the mystery, the length and height of this glorious ascent to the House of the Lord.

Do note that she did not begin with all this. You see she began with Solomon. She did not begin with the ascent to the House of the Lord, much less with the ministers and butlers—she began with the king himself. Sinner, begin with Jesus. Let your first enquiry be, "Is there balm in Gilead? Is there a physician there?" Let your cry be that of the startled jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" Like he, obey the Apostolic injunction, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

May the Holy Spirit bring you to this, and then afterward He shall lead you into all the Truth of God. He shall take the keys and open room after room and cabinet after cabinet, and casket after casket, till He has shown you all the crown jewels and revealed to you the regalia of the King of kings, and let you into the secret of the heart of God in Christ Jesus your Lord. Only be willing, like the Queen of Sheba, to search. For, if not, her wisdom in *her* enquiry shall rise up in judgment against you to condemn you.

III. And now, thirdly, let us note THE RESULT OF OUR ENQUIRY. The first result was *a confession of faith*. "It was a true report that I heard in my own land, of your acts and of your wisdom." She did not hold her tongue and go slinking back to Abyssinia without a single word of confession—but having tested and being convicted—she could not refuse giving her testimony to the truth of the rumor.

Soul, if you shall come to Jesus Christ and try Him, when you shall have joy and peace in believing, you will say it was a true report. Why, I have seen hundreds and thousands who have given their hearts to Jesus, but I never did see one that said he was disappointed in it, never met with one who said Jesus Christ was less than He was declared to be. I remember when first these eyes beheld Him, when the burden slipped from off my heavy-laden shoulders, and I was free. Why, I thought this, that all the preachers I had ever heard had not half preached, they had not half told the beauty of my Lord and Master. So good! So generous! So gracious! So willing to forgive! It seemed to me as if they had almost slandered Him.

They painted His likeness, doubtless, as well as they could, but it was a mere smudge compared with the matchless beauties of His face. You that

have ever seen Him will say the same. I go back many a time to my home, mourning that I cannot preach my Master even as I, myself, know Him—and what I know of Him is so little compared with the matchlessness of His Grace. Would that I knew Him more and that I could explain it better! Instead of thinking that your trust in Christ has been an unprofitable speculation, you will exclaim with joy, “The half has not been told me.” She expressed, then, her faith in Solomon. And oh, if you have any faith and have found Him to be true, out with it! Be not secret Believers, but stand forward for your Lord and Master.

Next she made *a confession of her unbelief*. “Howbeit I believed not the words until I came and my eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: your wisdom and prosperity exceeds the fame which I heard.” “I did not believe it,” said she, “until I came and saw.” It is the way with you. We have to cry, “Who has believed our report?” Men will not readily believe our report, but when you once come and try it, you will think, “How could I have doubted, how could I ever have been unbelieving?” God forgives your unbelief, but you will never forgive yourselves. You will say, methinks, even in Heaven, “How could I have been so foolish as to doubt the message which came to me from the Most High.” Does not faith always lead to a sense of unbelief? And when most of all we have learned not to stagger, is it not *then* we discover more and more how vile a thing it is to doubt the Word of the Most High?

Having done this, she declared that *her anticipations were exceeded*. Upon that we will say no more and only add that next she *spoke a kind word for his servants*—“Happy are your men, happy are these, your servants, which stand continually before you and that hear your wisdom.” Why she thought that every little page in Solomon’s court was more honored than she was! She was a queen, but then she was a queen of a distant land and so she seems to have drunk in the spirit of David when he said, “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” She seemed almost willing to give up Sheba and all its spices and its gold, if she might but be a maid of honor in the court of king Solomon!

I am sure that is the way with any of us who have ever been to Jesus. How we love His people! You are no lover of Christ if you do not love His children. As soon as ever the heart is given to the Master of the house, it is given to the children of the house. Love Christ and you will soon love all that love Him. Do you not, dear Friends, esteem the people of God to be the excellent of the earth? Are they not all your delight? Time was, if they dropped into your house, you looked at the clock for fear they should talk too long upon religious subjects. But now, if they will but talk of your Master, they may stop all night if they like. Now you feel it so pleasant to speak of His name, that if you meet a Christian you feel a love to him—and if he is despised and his character is slandered, you feel you must stand up for him.

I know some of you wish you could always be in God’s House. There are some children of God in this place who are here whenever the door is opened. They wish there were seven Sundays in the week that they could

always sit and hear the name of Jesus. They delight to see His minister and rejoice that sometimes the cupbearer brings forth the spiced wine of the Lord's pomegranate and bids His children drink of it even to the full.

This good woman next *blessed Solomon's God* in these beautiful words—"Blessed be the Lord your God, which delights in you, to set you on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made He you king to do judgment and justice." She blessed his God. So we are drawn to a sweet union of heart to God through a knowledge of Christ, and as our love flows downward from Christ to His people, so it goes upward from Christ to His Father.

You will notice that she avowed her love to Him because of His everlasting love to His people. Notice she does not say anything about Abyssinia—she is thinking about Israel, about the chosen. She sees distinguishing, discriminating, electing love—and she perceives the everlastingness of this love—"Because He loved Israel *forever*, therefore He has made you king." O Brothers and Sisters, may we so grow in Divine Grace that we may love the Father because He has made Christ to be the Anointed—because He loved His Church and gave His Son for it, that He might cleanse it from all sin by His own precious blood!

Once more, she then did what was the best proof of her truthfulness, *she gave to Solomon of her treasures*—"She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store and precious stones there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon." And so souls that know the beauty of Christ give Him all they have. There are no such spices as those which come from newly-converted souls. Nothing gives Christ greater delight than the love of His people. We think our love to be a very poor and common thing, but He does not think so—He has set such a store by us that He gave His heart's blood to redeem us.

And now He looks upon us as being worth the price He paid. He never will think that He had a bad bargain of it and so He looks upon every grain of our love as being even choicer spices than archangels before the Throne can render to Him in their songs. What are we doing for Christ? Are we bringing Him our talents of gold? Perhaps you have not one hundred and twenty, but if you have one, bring that.

You have not very much spices, but bring what you have—your silent, earnest prayers, your holy, consistent life, the words you sometimes speak for Christ, the training up of your children, the feeding of His poor, the clothing of the naked, the visitation of the sick and those in prison, the comforting of His mourners, the winning of His wanderers, the restoring of His backsliders, the saving of His blood-bought souls—all these shall be like camels laden with spices—an acceptable gift to the Most High.

When she had done this, *Solomon made her a present of his royal bounty*. She lost nothing. She gave all she had and then Solomon gave her quite as much again, for I will be bound to say King Solomon would not be outdone in generosity, such a noble-hearted prince as he and so rich. I tell you, Jesus Christ will never be in your debt. Oh, it is a great gain to give to Christ. We give Him pence and He gives us pounds. We give Him years

of labor and He gives us an eternity of rest. We give Him days of patient endurance and He gives us ages of joyous honor. We give Him a little suffering and He gives us great rewards.

“I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Besides what He gives us in the Covenant of Grace, you note, He does for us what Solomon did for her, *He gives us all that is in our heart*, all that we can desire. What a King is our Savior who will not let His people have one ungratified wish, if that wish is a good one! Knock and the gate shall open. “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it,” says the Lord. “According to your faith so be it done unto you.” “Whatsoever you ask in prayer believe that you have it and you shall have it.” What precious promises! And all these are given to those who come with a humble enquiry, willing to get Christ first and then to get the rest afterward.

Well, Beloved, we are told that this Queen *went home to her nation* and tradition says that she was the means of *proselytizing* the Abyssinian people. I do not know whether that was true or not. It is remarkable that in the Apostles’ days, there should have been an eunuch, a man of great authority under Candace, Queen of Ethiopia. It looks as if there may have lingered something of the Divine light in this woman’s dominions right on to the day of the Savior, so that there was found another queen there at that time and another noble personage who would come all that distance to Jerusalem to worship.

Well, whether she did or not, I know what *you* ought to do. If you have come to King Solomon and searched and found for yourselves, go and spread the fame of it. Talk about Him everywhere. It was the fame of Him that first brought you—*increase that fame and others will come*. Talk of Him when you stay in your house and when you go by the way, when you sit down and when you rise up. Count no place to be an unfit place to talk of Jesus. Bear Him in your bosom in your business. Carry Him in your heart in your pleasures. Wear His name as a frontlet between your eyes and write it on the doorposts of your house—for He is worthy for Whom you shall do this.

His name shall be remembered as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him—yes, all men shall call Him blessed, all kings shall fall down before Him. The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts, the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. Amen and amen! The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, were ended. And so shall ours be, too, when that consummation shall have really taken place.

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THE SOWER

NO. 2842

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 2, 1903.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1888.**

***“Behold, a sower went forth to sow.”
Matthew 13:3.***

THIS was a very important event. I do not say that it was important if you took the individual case, alone—but if you took the multitudes of cases in which it was also true, it was overwhelmingly important in the aggregate—“A sower went forth to sow.” Yes, Christ thinks it worthwhile to mention that a single sower went forth to sow, that a Christian man went out to address a meeting on a village green, or to conduct a Bible class, or to speak anywhere for the Lord! But when you think of the hundreds of preachers of the Gospel who go out to sow every Lord's-Day and the myriads of teachers who go to instruct the children in our Sunday schools, it is, surely, in the aggregate, the most important event under Heaven! You may omit, O recording angel, the fact that a warrior went forth to fight—it is far more important that you should record that “a sower went forth to sow.” You may even forget that a man of science went into his laboratory and made a discovery, for no discovery can equal in importance the usual processes of farming. Do you hear the song of the harvest home? Do you see the loaded wagons follow one another in a long line to the farmer's barn? If so, remember that there would be no harvest home if the sower went not forth to sow! As the flail is falling upon the wheat, or the threshing machine is making the grain to leap from among the chaff and the miller's wheels are grinding merrily, and the women are kneading the dough, and the bread is set upon the table and parents and children are fed to the full, do not forget that all this could never happen unless “a sower went forth to sow.” On this action hinges the very life of man! Bread, which is the staff of his life, would be broken and taken from him—and his life could not continue did not a sower still go forth to sow! This seems to me to prove that the event recorded in our text is of prime importance and deserves to be chronicled there.

And, dear Friends, the *spiritual* sowing stands in the same relation to the spiritual world that the natural sowing occupies in the natural world! It is a most important thing that we should continually go forth to preach the Gospel. It may seem to some people a small matter that I should oc-

cupy this pulpit and I shall not lay any undue importance upon that fact—yet eternity may not exhaust all that shall result from the preaching of the Gospel here—there may be souls, plucked like brands from the burning, saved with an everlasting salvation, lamps lit by the Holy Spirit that shall shine like stars in the firmament of God forever and ever! Who knows, O Teacher, when you labor even among the infants, what the result of your teaching may be? Good corn may grow in very small fields. God may bless your simple words to the babes that listen to them. How know you, O my unlettered Brother, when you stand up in the cottage meeting to talk to a few poor folk about Christ, what may follow from that effort of yours? Life or death, Heaven or Hell, may depend upon the sowing of the Good Seed of the Gospel! It is, it *must* be the most important event that can ever happen, if the Lord goes forth with you when you go forth as the sower went forth to sow!

Listen to the songs of the angels! See the overflowing brightness and excessive glory of your Heavenly Father's face! He rejoices because souls are born to Christ—but how could there be this joy, in the ordinary course, and speaking after the manner of men—without the preaching of the Word? For it still pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe! I shall not, therefore, make any apology for again preaching upon an event which is so important, even though it is recorded in such simple words! “A sower went forth to sow.”

I am going to try to answer three questions concerning this answer. First, *who was he?* Secondly, *what did he do?* And, thirdly, *what was his objective?*

I. First, WHO WAS HE?

We do not know anything at all about him except that he was a sower. His individuality seems to be swallowed up in his office. We do not know who his father was, or his mother, or his sister, or his brother. All we know is that he was a sower and I do like to see a man who is so much a minister that he is nothing else but a minister! It does not matter who he is, or what he has, or what else he can do if he does this one thing. He has lost his identity in his service, though he has also gained it over again in another way. He has lost his selfhood and has become, once and for all, a sower and nothing but a sower!

Observe, dear Friends, that *there are many personal matters which are quite unimportant*. It is not mentioned here whether he was a refined sower, or a rustic sower—and it does not matter which he was. So is it with the workers for Christ—God blesses all sorts of men. William Huntington, the coal-heaver, brought many souls to Christ. Some have doubted this, but, in my early Christian days, I knew some of the excellent of the earth who were the spiritual children of the coal-heaver. Chalmers stood at the very opposite pole—a master of cultured gracious speech, a learned, well-trained man—and what multitude Chalmers brought to Christ! So, whether it was Huntington or Chalmers, does not matter. “A sower went forth to sow.” One preacher talks like Rowland Hill, in very plain Saxon with a touch of humor. Another, like Robert

Hall, uses a grand style of speech, full of brilliant rhetoric and scarcely ever condescending to men of low degree, yet God blessed both of them! What did it matter whether the speech was of the colloquial or of the oratorical order so long as God blessed it? The man preached the Gospel—exactly how he preached it need not be declared. He was a sower, he went forth to sow—and there came a glorious harvest from his sowing!

Now, my dear Brother, you have begun earnestly to speak for Christ, but you are troubled because you cannot speak like Mr. So-and-So. Do not try to speak like Mr. So-and-So! You say, “I heard a man preach, the other night, and when he had done, I thought I could never preach again.” Well, it was very naughty on your part to think that. You ought rather to have said, “I will try to preach all the better, now that I have heard one who preaches so much better than I can.” Just feel that you have to sow the Good Seed of the Kingdom and if you have not so big a hand as some sowers have, and cannot sow quite so much at a time, go and sow with your smaller hands, only mind that you sow the same Seed, for so God will accept what you do! You are grieved that you do not know so much as some do and that you have not the same amount of learning that they have. You regret that you have not the poetical faculty of some, or the holy ingenuity of others. Why do you speak about all these things? Our Lord Jesus Christ does not do so—He simply says, “A sower went forth to sow.” He does not tell us how he was dressed. He mentions nothing about whether he was a black man, or a white man, or what kind of man he was. He tells us nothing about him except that he was a sower. Will you, my dear Friend, try to be nothing but a soul-winner? Never mind about “idiosyncrasies,” or whatever people call them! Go ahead and sow the Good Seed and God bless you in doing so!

Next, notice that as the various personal matters relating to the man are too unimportant to be recorded, *his name and his fame are not written in this Book*. Do you want to have your name put to everything that you do? Mind that God does not let you have your desire and then say to you, “There, you have done that unto yourself, so you can reward yourself for it.” As far as ever you can, keep your own name out of all the work you do for the Lord! I used to notice, in Paris, that there was not a bridge, or a public building, without the letter, “N,” somewhere on it. Now, go through all the city and find an, “N,” if you can. Napoleon hoped his fame would live in imperishable marble, but he had written his name in sand, after all, and if any of us shall, in our ministry, think it the all-important matter to make our own name prominent, we are on the wrong tack altogether! When George Whitefield was asked to start a new sect, he said, “I do not condemn my Brother Wesley for what he has done, but I cannot do the same—let my name perish, but let Christ’s name endure forever and ever!” Do not be anxious for your name to go down to posterity, but be more concerned to be only remembered by what you have done, as this man is only remembered by Christ’s testimony that he was a sower.

What he did, in his sowing, is some of it recorded, but only that which refers to his special work. Where his seed fell, how it grew or did not grow and what came of it or did not come of it, that is all there—but nothing else about his life, or history is there at all. I pray you, do not be anxious for anything that shall embalm your reputation. Embalming is for the dead—so the living may be content to let their name and fame be blown away by the same wind that blows it to them. What does our reputation matter, after all? It is nothing but the opinion or the breath of men and that is of little or no value to the child of God. Serve God faithfully and then leave your name and fame in His keeping. There is a day coming when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father!

We have no record of the name and the fame of this man, yet *we do know something about him*. We know that he must have been, first of all, an eater, or he never would have been a sower. The Gospel is Seed for the sower and Bread for the eater. And every man who really goes out to sow for God, must first have been an eater. There is not a man on the face of the earth who treads the furrows of the field and sows the seed, but must first have been an eater of bread—and there is not a true servant of God, beneath the cape of Heaven, but has first fed on the Gospel before he has preached it! If there are any who pretend to sow, but who have never, themselves, eaten, God have mercy upon them! What a desecration of the pulpit it is for a man to attempt to preach what he does not, himself, know! What a desecration it is of even a Sunday school class—for an unconverted young man, or young woman to be a teacher of others! I do not think such a thing ought to be allowed. Wherever it has been permitted, I charge any who have been trying to teach what they do not, themselves, know, to cry to God to teach them that they may not go and pretend to speak in the name of the Lord, to the children, till, first of all, Christ has spoken peace and pardon to their own hearts and He has been formed in them the hope of Glory! May every worker here put to himself the question, “Have I fed upon and enjoyed that good Word which I am professing to teach to others?”

Next, having been an eater, he must also have been a receiver. A sower cannot sow if he has not any seed. It is a mere mockery to go up and down a field and to pretend to scatter seed out of an empty hand! Is there not a great deal of so-called Christian work that is just like that? Those who engage in it have not anything to give and, therefore, they can give nothing. You cannot pump out of a man or a woman what is not there—and you cannot preach or teach, in God’s way, what is not first in your own heart! We must receive the Gospel Seed from God before we can sow it! The sower went to his master’s granary and received so many bushels of wheat. And then he went out and sowed it. I am afraid that some would-be sowers fail in this matter of being receivers. They are in a great hurry to take a class, or to preach here, or there, or somewhere else, but there is nothing in it all. What can there be in your speech but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, unless you have received the Liv-

ing Word from the Living God and are sent forth by Him to proclaim it to men?

A true sower, also, is a disseminator of the Word of God. No man is a sower unless he scatters the Truth of God. If he does not preach Truth, he is not a sower in the true meaning of that term. A man may go whistling up and down the furrows and people may mistake him for a sower, but he is not really one—and if there is not, in what we preach, the real, solid Truth of God's Word—however prettily we may put our sweet nothings, we have not been serving the Lord. We must really scatter the Living Seed or else we are not worthy of the title of sower.

We seem to know a little about this sower, now, and we further know that *he was one of noble line*. What our Lord really said was, "THE SOWER went forth to sow," and I think I see Him coming forth out of the ivory palaces from the lone Glory of His own eternal Nature, going down to Bethlehem, becoming a Babe, waiting a while till the Seed was ready and then standing by the Jordan, by the hillside, at Capernaum and Nazareth, and everywhere scattering those great Seeds that have made the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose! See how all Christendom has sprung from the sowing of that Man! And our glorious Lord has long been reaping and is still reaping, today, the harvest of the Seed-sowing on the hillsides of Galilee. "The Sower went forth to sow." Are you not glad to be in that noble line? Do you not feel it to be a high honor, even if you are the very least of the sowers, to be one of those who have sowed the Gospel of God?

But who are the sowers who came next? Men "of whom the world was not worthy." Men who suffered for their Lord and Master, His Apostles, and those who received their word and who were faithful even unto death—a goodly army of all sorts of people, old and young, rich and poor, wise and unlettered. And there has always continued a band of sowers going forth to sow, men who could not help doing it, like the tinker of Bedford, to wit. They commanded him not to sow any more of the Seed and they cast him into prison because he would still do it. But, through the window of that prison he kept on sowing great handfuls of Seed which are, even now, falling upon the broad acres of our own and other lands! When they made him be quiet, he said, "If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the Grace of God." "Oh, then!" they answered, "go back to your cell, Sir." "Yes," he said, "and I will lie there till the moss grows on my eyelids before I will make you any promise that I will be silent." He must sow—he could not help it! Well, now, today, it is imagined by some that the new theology is to put an end to our sowing of the Good Seed of the Kingdom—but will it? I believe that the sowers will still go to every lane and alley of the city and to every hamlet and village of our country, when God wills it, for the Gospel is as everlasting as the God who gave it and, therefore, it cannot die out! And when they think that they have killed the plant, it will spring up everywhere more vigorous than before.

The sower is not only a man of an honorable line, but he is also a worker, together with God. It is God's design that every plant should propagate and reproduce its like and especially is it His design that wheat, and other cereals so useful to men, should be continued and multiplied on the face of the earth. Who is to do it? God will see that it is done and, usually, He employs men to be His agents. There are some seeds that never can be sown by men, but only by birds. I need not go into the details, but it is a fact that no man could make the seed grow if he did sow it—it must be done by a bird. But as to wheat, man must sow that—you cannot go into any part of the world and find a field of wheat unless a man has sown the seed to produce it. You may find fields full of thistles, but wheat must be sown. It is not a wild thing, it must have a man to care for it and God, therefore, links Himself with man in the continuance of wheat on the face of the earth. And he has so arranged that while He could spread the Gospel by His Spirit, without human voices—while He could bring untold myriads to Himself without any instrumentality—yet He does not do so and, as means to the end He has in view, He intends you to speak, that He may speak through you, and that, in the speaking, the Seed may be scattered, which He shall make to bring forth an abundant harvest!

II. Now, secondly, WHAT DID THIS SOWER DO? He went forth. I am going to dwell upon that fact for a few minutes.

I think this means, first, that *he bestirred himself*. He said, "It is time that I went forth to sow. I have waited quite long enough for favorable weather, but I remember that Solomon said, 'He that observes the wind shall not sow.' I feel that the sowing time has come for me and I must set about it." Can I look upon some here who have been members of the Church for years, but who have never yet done anything for the Lord? Brother or Sister, if you have been a servant of God for many years and have never yet really worked for the salvation of souls, I want you now to say to yourself, "Come now, I must really get at this work." You will be going Home soon and when your Master says to you, "Did you do any sowing for Me?" you will have to reply, "No, Lord, I did plenty of eating. I went to the Tabernacle and I enjoyed the services." "But did you do any sowing?" "No, Lord. I did a great deal of hoarding. I laid up a large quantity of the Good Seed." "But did you do any sowing?" He will still ask—and that will be a terrible question for those who never went forth to sow!

You are very comfortable at home, are you not? In the long winter evenings that are coming on, it will be so pleasant to enjoy yourselves at home for an evening. There, stir the fire and draw the curtain close, and let us sit down and spend a happy time. Yes, but is it not time for you, Mr. Sower, to go forth? The millions of London are perishing! Asylums for the insane are filling, jails are filling, poverty is abounding and drunkenness is at every street corner! Harlotry is making good men and women to blush! It is time to set about work for the Lord if you are ever to do it! What are some of you doing for God? Oh, that you would begin to take stock of your capacity, or your incapacity and say, "I must get to work for

the Master. I am not to spend my whole life thinking about what I am going to do—I must do the next thing and do it at once, or I may be called Home—and my day over before I have sown a single handful of wheat.”

Next, *the sower gave up his privacy*. He came out from his solitude and began to sow. This is what I mean. At first, a Christian man very wisely lives indoors. There is a lot of cleaning and scrubbing to be done there. When the bees come out of their cells, they always spend the first few days of their life in the hive cleaning and getting everything tidy. They do not go out to gather honey till they have, first of all, done the housework at home. I wish that all Christian people would get their housework done as soon as they can. It needs to be done. I mean acquaintance with experimental matters of indwelling sin and overcoming Grace. But, after that, the sower went forth to sow. He was not content with his own private experience, but he went forth to sow. There are numbers of people who are miserable because they are always at home. They have cleaned up everything there, even to the bottoms of the saucepans outside, but now they do not know what to do—so they begin blacking them over again and cleaning them once more—always at work upon the little trifles of their own kitchen. Go out, Brother! Go out, Sister! Important as your experience is, it is only important as a platform for real usefulness. Get all right within in order that you may get to work without!

The sower, when he went forth to sow, also *gave up his occupation of a learner and an enjoyer of the Truth*. He was in the Bible class for a year or two and he gained a deal of Scriptural knowledge there. He was also a regular hearer of the Word. You could see him regularly sitting in his pew and drinking in the Word. But, after a while, he said to himself, “I have no right to remain in this Bible class—I ought to be in the Sunday school and lead a class myself.” Then he said to himself, on a Sabbath evening, “I have been to one service, today, and have been spiritually fed, so I think I ought to go to one of the lodging houses in the Mint and speak to the people there, or find some other holy occupation in which I can be doing some good to others.” So he went forth to sow and I want to stir you all up to do this! Perhaps I do not need to say much upon this matter to my own people here, but there are also many strangers with us. I would like to do with you what Samson did with the foxes and firebrands. We have far too many professing Christians who are doing next to nothing! If I could send you among the standing corn of some of the churches, to set them on fire, it would not be a bad Thursday evening’s work!

“A sower went forth to sow.” Where did he come from? I do not know what house he came from, but I can tell you the place from which he last came. *He came out of the granary*. He must have been to the granary to get the seed. At least if he did not go there before he went to sow, he did not have anything that was worth sowing! O my dear Brothers and Sisters, especially my Brothers in the ministry, we must always go to the granary, must we not? Without the diligent and constant study of Scrip-

ture, of what use will our preaching be? “I went into the pulpit,” said one, “and I preached straight off just what came into my mind and thought nothing of it.” “Yes,” said another, “and your people thought nothing of it, too.” That is sure to be the case! You teachers who go to your classes quite unprepared and open your Bible and say just what comes first, should remember that God does not need your nonsense. “Oh, but,” says one, “it is not by human wisdom that souls are saved.” No, nor is it by human ignorance! But if you profess to teach, learn. He can never be a teacher who is not first a learner. I am sure that when the sower went forth to sow, the last place he came from was the granary—and mind that you go to the granary, too, dear worker.

I wonder whether this sower did what I recommend every Christian sower to do, namely, to come forth from *the place where he had steeped his seed*. One farmer complained that his wheat did not grow and another asked him, “Do you steep your seed?” “No,” he replied, “I never heard of such a thing.” The first one said, “I steep mine in prayer and God prospers me.” If we always steep our heavenly Seed in prayer, God will prosper us, also. For one solitary man to stand up and preach is poor work, but for two of us to be here is grand work. You have heard the story of the Welsh preacher who had not arrived when the service ought to have begun, so his host sent a boy to the room to tell him that it was time to go preach. The boy came hurrying back, and said, “Sir, he is in his room, but I do not think he is coming. There is somebody in there with him. I heard him speaking very loudly and very earnestly, and I heard him say that if that other person did not come with him, he would not come at all! And the other one never answered him, so I do not think he will come.” “Ah,” said the host, who understood the case, “he will come and the other One will come with him!” Oh, it is good sowing when the sower goes forth to sow and the Other comes with him! Then we go forth with steeped Seed, Seed that is sprouting in our hands as we go forth! This does not happen naturally, but it does happen *spiritually*. It seems to grow while we are handling it, for there is Life in it—and when it is sown, there will be Life in it for our hearers!

Further, this sower *went forth into the open field*. Wherever there was a field ready for the sowing, there he went. Beloved Friends, we must always try to do good where there is the greatest likelihood of doing good. I do not think that I need to go anywhere else than here, for here are the people to whom I can preach. But if this place were not filled with people, I should feel that I had no right to stand here and preach to empty pews. If it is so in your little Chapel—if the people do not come—I do not desire that the Chapel should be burned down, but it might be a very mitigated calamity if you had to turn out into the street to preach, or if you had to go to some hall, or barn, for some people might come and hear you, there, who will never hear you now. You must go forth to sow! You cannot sit at your parlor window and sow wheat—and you cannot stand on one little plot of ground and keep on sowing there. If you have done your work in that place, go forth to sow elsewhere! Oh, that the Church of

Christ would go forth into heathen lands! Oh, that there might be among Christians a general feeling that they must go forth to sow! What a vast acreage there still is upon which not a grain of God's Wheat has ever yet fallen! Oh, for a great increase of the missionary spirit! May God send it upon the entire Church until everywhere it shall be said, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow."

There is a, "behold," in my text, which I have saved up till now. "Behold, a sower went forth to sow." He went as far as ever he could to sow the good seed, that his master might have a great harvest from it—let us go and do likewise.

When did this man go forth to sow? Our farming friends begin to sow very soon after harvest. That is the time to sow for Christ. As soon as ever you have won one soul for Him, try and win another, by God's Grace! Say to yourself what the general said to his troops when some of them came riding up and said, "Sir, we have captured a gun from the enemy." "Then," said he, "go and capture another!" After the reaping, let the sowing follow as speedily as possible. In season, this sower sowed. It is a great thing to observe the proper season for sowing, but it is a greater thing to sow in improper seasons, also, for out of season is sometimes the best season for God's sowers to sow. "Be instant in season and out of season," was Paul's exhortation to Timothy. Oh, for Grace to be always sowing! I have known good men to go about and never to be without tracts to give away, and suitable tracts, too. They seem to have picked them out and God has given them an occasion suitable for the tracts, or if they have not given tracts, they have been ready with a good word, a choice word, a loving word, a tender word. There is a way of getting the Gospel in edgewise when you cannot get it in at the front. Wise sowers sow their seed broadcast, yet I have generally noticed that they never sow against the wind, for that would blow the dust into their eyes—and there is nothing like sowing with the wind. Whichever way the Holy Spirit seems to be moving and Providence is also moving, scatter your Seed that the wind may carry it as far as possible and that it may fall where God shall make it grow.

Thus I have told you what the man did—"A sower went forth to sow."

III. I must answer briefly the last of the three questions I mentioned, **WHAT WAS THIS SOWER'S OBJECTIVE?**

On this occasion, he did not go forth *to keep the seed to himself*. He went forth to throw it to the wind—he threw it away from himself, scattered it far and wide. He did not go out to defend it, but he threw it about, and left it to take its chance. He did not go, at this time, to examine it—to see whether it was good seed, or not. No doubt he had done that before, but he just scattered it. He did not go out to winnow it, and blow away the chaff, or pick out any danner that might be in it. That was all done at home. Now he has nothing to do but to sow it—*to sow it*—TO SOW IT. And he sows it with all his might. He did not even come to push others out of the field who might be sowing bad seed, but he took occasion, at this particular time, to go forth to sow and to do nothing else—

**“One thing at a time, and that done well,
Is a very good rule, as many can tell”**

and it is especially so in the service of God. Do not try to do 20 things at once—“A sower went forth to sow.” *His objective was a limited one.* He did not go forth to make the seed grow. No, that was beyond his power—he went forth to sow. If we were responsible for the effect of the Gospel upon the hearts of men, we should be in a sorry plight, indeed, but we are only responsible for the sowing of the Good Seed. If you hear the Gospel, dear Friends, and reject it, that is your problem, and not ours. If you are saved by it, give God the Glory—but if it proves to be a savor of death unto death to you, yours is the sin, the shame and the sorrow. The preacher cannot save souls, so he will not take the responsibility that does not belong to him.

And he did not, at that time, go forth to reap. There are many instances in which the reaper has overtaken the sower and God has saved souls on the spot while we have been preaching. Still, what this man went forth to do was to sow. Whether there is any soul saved or not, our business is to preach the Gospel, the whole Gospel and nothing but the Gospel—and we must keep to this one point—preaching Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. That is sowing the Seed. We cannot create the harvest—that will come in God’s own time.

This man’s one objective was positively before him and we are to impart the Truth, to make known to men the whole of the Gospel. You are lost, God is gracious, Christ has come to seek and to save that which is lost. Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. On the Cross He offered the Sacrifice by which sin is put away. Believe in Him and you live by His death. This sowing, you see, is simply telling out the Truth of God and this is the main thing that we have to do, dear Friends—to keep on telling the same Truth over and over, and over and over again, till we get it into the minds and hearts of men—and they receive it through God’s blessing.

If the sower had sat down at the corner of the field and played the harp all day, he would not have done his duty. And if, instead of preaching the simple Gospel, we talk of the high or deep mysteries of God, we shall not have done *our* duty. The sower’s one business is to sow, so, stick to your sowing, Brothers and Sisters. When that is done and your Master calls you Home, He will find you other work to do for Him in Heaven, but, for the present, this is to be your occupation.

Now, to close, let me remind you that *sowing is an act of faith.* If a man had not great faith in God, he would not take the little seed he has and go and bury it. His good wife might say to him, “John, we shall need that wheat for the children, so don’t you go and throw it out where the birds may eat it, or the worms destroy it.” And you must preach the Gospel and you must teach the Gospel as an act of faith. You must believe that God will bless it. If not, you are not likely to get a blessing upon it. If it is done merely as a natural act, or a hopeful act, that will not be enough—it must be done as an act of confidence in the living God. He bids you speak the Word and makes you His lips for the time—and He

says that His Word shall not return to Him void, but that it shall prosper in the thing where He has sent it.

This sowing was also *an act of energy*. The word, sower, is meant to describe an energetic man. He was, as we say, “all there.” So, when we teach Christ, we must teach Him with all our might, throwing our very soul into our teaching. O Brothers, never let the Gospel hang on our lips like icicles! Let it rather be like burning lava from the mouth of a volcano! Let us be all on fire with the Divine Truth that is within our hearts, sowing it with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

This sowing was also *an act of concentrated energy*. The sower “went forth TO SOW.” He went forth, not with two aims or objectives, but with this one—not dividing his life into a multitude of channels, but making all run in one strong, deep current along this one riverbed.

Now I have done when I invite my Brothers and Sisters here to go forth from this Tabernacle to sow. You will go down those front steps, or you will go out at the back doors and scatter all over London. I know not how far you may be going, but let it be written of you tonight, “The sowers went forth to sow”—they went forth from the Tabernacle with one resolve that, by the power of the living Spirit of God, they who are redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus would make known His Gospel to the sons of men, sowing that Good Seed in every place wherever they have the opportunity, trusting in God to make the Seed increase and multiply! Ah, but do not forget to do it even within these walls, for there are some here whom you may never be able to get at again. So, if you can speak to your neighbor in the pew, say a good word for Christ! If you will begin to be sowers, nothing is better than to begin at once. Throw a handful before you get outside the door—who knows whether that first handful shall not be more successful than all you have sown, or shall sow, in later days?

As for you dear Souls who have never received the Living Seed, oh, that you would receive it at once! May God, the Holy Spirit, make you to be like well-prepared ground that opens a thousand mouths to take in the Seed and then encloses the Seed within itself and makes it fructify! May God bless you. May He never leave you barren or unfruitful, but may you grow a great harvest to His Glory, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 106.

This is one of the “Songs of Degrees.” They are supposed to have been sung as the pilgrim caravan was going up to the Temple at Jerusalem. Every time they halted and pitched their tents, they sang a Psalm. If carefully read, it will be found that these Psalms exhibit a real advance in experience. For instance, the keynote of the 125th is stability, while that of the 126th is joy, and especially joyful hope. Each one appears to advance a stage higher than the one that precedes it.

Verse 1. *When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like they that dream.* “It seemed too good to be true. We were in a deli-

rium of joy. ‘We were like they that dream.’ Our slumber had been profound—we thought that God had altogether forgotten us—but when we found that He was coming to our rescue, ‘we were like they that dream.’”

2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.* “We wanted to express our joy, so laughter came, which is a natural, genuine mode of expressing delight. Our mouth was filled with laughter. We not only laughed, but we laughed again and again, even as Abraham laughed when a son was promised to him and as Sarah laughed when Isaac was born.”

2. *Then said they among the heathen, The LORD has done great things for them.* It is a fine time when even the heathen begin to see the joy of Believers. They could not help hearing and seeing it and, with astonishment they said, “Jehovah has done great things for them,” to which the godly replied that it was so. They were not at all ashamed to acknowledge it. They had not any of that unhallowed modesty which is afraid to speak to the glory of God, but they said—

3. *The LORD has done great things for us; of which we are glad.* I heard a Brother at a Prayer Meeting some time ago, say, “Of which we desire to be glad.” That is not what these people said and if the Lord has done great things for you, you *are* glad, not only do you desire to be glad, but you *are* so! It is always a pity to try to improve on Holy Scripture, for it does not go to be improved upon. When the Lord does great things for His people, they are as glad as they can be, and they cannot help saying so.

4. *Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.* The riverbeds, when the Southern torrents have been dried up, seem to be nothing but a gathering of stones and dust. Then comes a copious rain, bringing a sudden flush of water and the captivity of the stream is gone. That is the meaning of the prayer, “Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south.”

5, 6. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* Notice that word, “doubtless.” If you have any doubt about it in your own case, may the Lord drive all your doubts away! When God says, “doubtless,” we must not be doubtful. “He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—427, 483, 539.

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

**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON
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THE SEED UPON A ROCK

NO. 2844

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 16, 1888.

“Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.”
Matthew 13:5, 6.

ON another occasion I hope to preach from the words, “because they had no root,” but, at this time, my subject is, “They sprang up, because they had no deepness of earth.” Every farmer knows the wonderful effect of heat below the soil, how quickly it makes things grow. I do not gather that this was a stony piece of ground, but that it had a mass of stone not far from the surface. It was ground where the soil was very shallow and underneath it was a hard pan of rock that had never been broken up, so that, when the sun shone upon it, the rock reflected the heat and what with the sun above, and the heat below, the seed was very soon made to sprout and up came the green blade almost immediately. But this very shallowness of the soil which made the seed spring up so quickly was the cause of its ruin, for the sun had not long shone upon it before that which made it grow also killed it. The heat scorched it and it withered away.

Those people who are represented by this soil which has no deepness of earth, very soon make the Good Seed to appear to grow in them. They hear a sermon, are apparently converted and they fancy that they are saved. Or there is a revival meeting where some earnest addresses are given by different speakers, and they at once profess to be Believers. They are brought forward as converts and there is great rejoicing over them—but after a very little while, days of trial arise and there being no depth in them, they wither away and their names are struck from the church roll. The hopeful success, as it seemed, becomes a bitter failure. Men ask, “Where are those converts?” And echo can only answer, “Where?” for nobody knows but the Lord—who was never deceived by them.

I want you to clearly understand that the fault did not lie in the suddenness of their supposed conversion. Many sudden conversions have been among the best that have ever happened. Take, for instance, the case of Saul of Tarsus, struck down on the road to Damascus. Within three days his sight is restored to him and he is baptized as a true, real,

out-and-out Christian. There was great depth of earth in him, yet the seed sprang up very rapidly! And we have hundreds and even thousands of instances of persons who have been suddenly converted and yet who have been truly converted. The work has been very thorough—nobody could doubt its genuineness—yet it took place quite unexpectedly and was looked upon as a wonder.

Do not judge the reality of your conversion either by the suddenness of it or by the length of time which it occupied, for it is true that superficial conversions are usually sudden, although all sudden conversions are not superficial. There are many who, in the sight of God, are not converted at all, who appeared as if they were the subjects of a great, remarkable and complete change. Where there is no depth, there is no durability. That familiar proverb is a true one, “Easy come, easy go.” As a general rule, those persons who have, as they say, “found religion” all of a sudden, without any mental struggle and who have never found it in their heart and soul, are the very people to let it go quite as readily whenever a time of trial comes.

In case there should be any persons of that sort here unwarned, I am going to speak of them and to them now, answering these three questions. First, *what is meant by having deepness of earth?* Secondly, *what is meant by the scorching of the sun?* And, thirdly, *how can we avoid the evil of having no deepness of earth and so being withered by the scorching of the sun?*

I. First, then, WHAT IS MEANT BY HAVING NO DEEPNESS OF EARTH?

I think it is, with some people, *a general superficiality of character*. There are some persons whom you ought to be able to see through, for there is so little substance in them. I do not say that you can always see all there is in them, for a pool, if it is not deep, may be very muddy and you may not be able to see to the bottom of it, even though it is quite shallow. And I think I know some people in whom there is as much deception as there is superficiality. Probably we all know some persons who, from their very early days, have always been superficial and changeable, like the man described by Dryden—“Everything by starts and nothing long.” Even in business they have been about 20 different things, “Jack of all trades and master of none.” Nobody knows what they are going to be next and they, themselves, have no idea. The weathercock does not shift more often than they do! When they went to school, they pretended to learn a thing, but they forgot it the next day. Even in their play, they never put any heart—there never was any earnestness about them in anything! And now they are just thin, shallow, vapid, empty. Like the baseless fabric of a vision, “such stuff as dreams are made of,” there is nothing in them.

When such people become affected by religion, they are just the same. They hear, yet they do not hear, for they are looking around the place half the time. If anyone else is affected by the preaching of the Word, they may be affected too, or may appear to be so. They are the kind of people who are always ready, like a flock of sheep, to follow the leader, but their following is only temporary, their affection is mere affectation. They pro-

fess to be Christians, but they will give up that profession before long. As far as they can be, they are sincere—what little there is of them—but their sincerity is, after all, a poor, feeble, fickle thing. They will soon be as sincerely wrong as they are, for the moment, sincerely right! You know the kind of people that they are—they were born without any backbone, and it is very hard to grow one if you do not possess one! They seem to go through the world soft, plastic, like Mr. Pliable, who figures in the early part of Bunyan's, "Pilgrim's Progress." He resolved to go to the Celestial City, but, very soon he was quite as determined to get out of the Slough of Despond on the side nearest to his own home. You know the sort of people that I am trying to describe.

Next, the lack of deepness may mean something else—not so much superficiality of character, *as lack of knowledge*. I believe that, at this present time, we are in great danger of being burdened with a crowd of so-called converts who do not really know anything as it ought to be known. They attended a revival meeting, were much excited and thought they were converted—but just ask them to explain to you the simplest Truths of the Gospel and you will soon discover how little they know. Could they explain the three R's—ruin, redemption and regeneration? Do they know what the ruin is? Do they know what the remedy for that ruin is? Do they understand at all what it means to be born-again? Do they comprehend what the new nature is, or what, "justification by faith" means? Perhaps someone says, "They do not comprehend your theological terms." I do not mind whether they know the meaning of the terms that are familiar to many of us, but do they know the *Truths*, themselves?

There is a certain degree of Christian knowledge which is absolutely necessary to salvation. David said, "The Lord is my light and my salvation" and we must always have light first. The first word of the spiritual creation, as of the natural, is, "Let there be light." Where there is no light, there is no life. Where there is no knowledge of God, there is no peace with God. O dear Hearers, if you think you are converted, I trust that it will prove to be so, but do not be content unless you really know the Truth! Search the Scriptures! Try to sit under an instructive ministry. You need not seek to make yourself a Doctor of Divinity, but do learn all you can of the Truth of God. "Grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Know yourself. Know Christ Jesus as your Savior. Know the work of the Holy Spirit. All this is knowable and must be known, or else, before long, you will wither away because you have no deepness of earth. Some atheist or infidel will come along and turn you aside. Someone will lead you to trust in a priest, or in some false doctrine and if you do not know the Truth, you will be bowled over at once!

Sometimes, this lack of deepness of earth means *lack of thought*, because there may be people who have knowledge, but who have never used their knowledge to any proper purpose. Knowledge is the food of the mind, but thought is the digestion by which we turn knowledge into true mental nutriment. I believe in a serious thoughtful conversion and I hardly think that any other kind can be real. You have sinned against

God. *Think* of that great fact. You are lost. *Think* of that. “God is angry with the wicked every day” and He must punish them. *Think* that over most solemnly. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” *Think* that over and try to understand what is meant by that declaration. *Think* how He stood in the sinner’s place, how He suffered in the sinner’s place. While you are thinking all this over, it will look very different to you from what it did before you thought it over! Hearing of these Truths with the ear may just be a useless process, but when you get them into the *mind*—when you read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them—then your conversion will be like the Good Seed sown in deep, prepared soil and that which springs up in your heart will not wither away because there was no depth of earth.

So do, I pray you, especially before you make a profession of religion, think what you are doing. In joining a Church, I would try to find out what that Church believed and I would not join it if I did not believe its doctrines. I would also want to know what I, myself, believed, for I would be afraid to profess that I believed what I did not believe. I like to see a convert who thinks at every step and who does not put his foot down without first considering whether it is a right place to set his foot. Think, carefully, what the Lord would have you to do and, then, when you come to Him, you will come in deed, and of a Truth. Much thought produces much deepness of earth.

Further, I think that in truly gracious conversions, the deepness of earth, at least in part, lies in *deepness of emotion*. I often regret that I do not see so many converts of the old-fashioned sort as I used to meet with. I know that emotion does not save the soul, but I believe that those who are saved are usually filled with emotion. We are saved by faith, but that faith produces very decided feelings. For instance, where there is true deepness of earth, there is generally a deep sense of sin. A man does not usually truly say, “I believe in Christ,” until he has first of all felt, “I need a Savior.” In the present day, far too many seem to come out of the City of Destruction without any burden on their backs—and I am afraid that means that they never really come out at all. Some of us had the burden on our backs much longer than we need have, and we do not hold ourselves up as examples to others. But I, for my part, have often blessed God for those bitter years of conviction, because now I know what others may have to endure and I can help other poor souls who are deep down in the dungeons of Giant Despair. But where there is no true sense of sin, or very little of it, there is generally a very poor sort of conversion.

If that kind of man ever tries to preach, and he may do so, he never says much about Free Grace and dying love. He is the man who talks a great deal about the dignity of human nature and the evolution of Grace out of man’s own sinfulness. He does not know any better, so he talks according to his light, which is darkness. But, my dear Hearers, may God give you to have so much depth of earth that you may be pricked in your hearts and may be weighed down with a sense of your own sinfulness! May the great steam-plow of the Law of God go right through the rock

that lies at the bottom of your heart! May God's almighty Grace change the rock into good, soft soil which will be suitable to the Good Seed!

Where there is very little feeling, there is generally only a poor conversion, for, as a general rule, where there is no great sense of sin, there is no great sense of love. It is a grand thing to see a converted Pharisee—but a converted harlot may bring more glory to God. Look, she is washing the Savior's feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head! And why is that? Because she has had much forgiven and, therefore, she loves much! When publicans and sinners are converted, we find what precious metal there is in them. They love their Lord so fervently and oh, how they pray, and how they praise, and how they serve, and how they delight in God! You who have broken hearts on account of sin can indeed give joy to Christ when whole hearts do not. Bruised and mangled sinners glorify the Great Physician who sets their broken bones and binds up their gaping wounds. Poor bankrupt sinners who have not a rag left to put on their backs cannot help magnifying Him who paid all their debts and clothed them with the spotless robe of righteousness which He had, Himself, worked for them! But if any of you think that you do not owe Him much, I fear that thought comes to you because you have not much depth of earth and that you may be like those converts who soon wither away in the sun.

Another mark of those who are without much depth of earth is that *they do not count the cost when they are converted*. They never expect to meet with any difficulties, or troubles, or persecutions, or doubts or fears—and when they have, afterwards, to count the cost of being Christians, they turn back to the world.

This lack of depth of earth also means *lack of reality*. There is no soul in what they do and he who is not converted in his whole soul needs converting over again. He that does not go in for it with body, soul and spirit, all for Christ, and Christ all to him, needs to go back to the wicket-gate and start on the heavenly journey once more. The fact is, depth of earth means heart—putting our heart into whatever we do. But where there is no faith in the heart, no repentance in the heart, when everything is from the lips and outward, instead of being from the very heart, and upward, then it all comes to nothing in a very short time!

II. I shall only occupy a few minutes in trying to answer the second question, WHAT IS MEANT BY THE SCORCHING OF THE SUN?

Our Lord told His disciples that it meant that *tribulation arises*. The man was so joyful and felt so happy at being converted that, on the next Sunday, he shut his shop up. But, on the Monday night, he said to himself, "I lost so much yesterday that I shall not close my shop next Sunday." So he returns to his Sunday trading, or in some other way, if there is any trouble for the sake of the Gospel, the sudden convert who has not much depth of earth finds that he has made a mistake and he tries to retrieve his position and to get back to where he was before.

The scorching of the sun also means *persecution*. Yes, the man professed to be converted, but there was not much depth of earth in him so, when he went into the workshop where he was employed, he heard one of the men ask another, "Were you at such-and-such a place, the other

night?” “No,” replied the other, “I was not there, but I heard that some of your mates were there and that one of them was converted. He is a full-blown saint this morning, the very man who used to swear and drink as much as any one of us.” And the men chat away among themselves, all the while hitting side blows at him—and they say some very cruel, nasty, sarcastic things. And as he has not much depth of earth, he says, “I can’t stand this chaff. If I lived in a Christian family, I should go to Heaven with the rest, but, as I have to work with the men in this shop, I shall have to do as they do. The old saying is, ‘If you go to Rome, you must do as the Romans do.’ Therefore I shall do just the same as the other men do.” He was going to run with the hare, but the hounds barked so loudly that he must run with them, so away he goes! You know the gentleman, do you not? There are plenty of that sort all round us.

The scorching of the sun, however, comes in many other forms. Sometimes, it is in the form of *great depression of spirit*. The woman professed to be converted and she felt oh, so happy. But, after about a week or so, she was perhaps not in good health, or something happened that crossed her and she felt oh, so unhappy! “Oh, dear,” she exclaimed, “I thought I was always going to travel in the sunshine.” Do any of you think so? If so, you are mightily mistaken! If you fancy that all the way to Heaven it will be hosannas and palm branches, we may as well correct your mistake at once. There are lions to be faced and giants to be fought with! There is the Slough of Despond, the Valley of the Shadow of Death and Vanity Fair! The pilgrim’s way lies through them all and if you are not prepared for these experiences, I do not wonder that, having no depth of earth, you say, “I shall give it all up.” As for myself, I am resolved that if I never have a ray of comfort between here and Heaven. If I live to be 80 years of age in darkness, I will still follow Christ! “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” If that resolution is not in your mind, I fear that you have not much depth of earth and that you will very soon wither away.

Sometimes the scorching of the sun comes in another form, namely, that of *outward debate and discussion*. The young convert meets with somebody who says to him, “But you know that what Mr. Spurgeon tells you is not philosophical. Many discoveries have been made of late and the learned Dr. So-and-So says just the very opposite of what you hear at the Tabernacle.” You do not know how to answer him and I do not suppose that anybody else does, because any fool can raise difficulties and it may not be easy, at once, to answer them, though they can be answered. Now, if you have much depth of earth, you will say to yourself, “Difficulty or no difficulty, I trusted my soul to Christ and I mean to do so to the very end.” But if you have not much depth of earth, you will be staggered by the objections that you hear. “I cannot answer this man,” you will say, “so I do not know what I shall do.” Well, if you cannot answer him, do not try to answer him—is there any reason why you should? If nobody is to go to Heaven until he can explain all the difficulties that anybody can suggest to him, who will ever go there? What you need is not the wisdom which can answer puzzling questions, but the *faith* which clings to Christ through thick and thin. That is the deepness of earth which will keep the Good Seed alive within your soul.

I know another kind of scorching of the sun which many poor souls cannot endure, and that is *difficulties arising from Christian people*. “Well,” you say, “when I was anxious about my soul, Mrs. So-and-So was very kind to me, but now that I trust I have believed in Christ, she does not take any notice of me.” Well, what if she does not? Of course we nurse the babies, but when you begin to run alone, we do not keep on nursing you, for we are looking after other babies! A young man said, “When first I joined the Church, the members paid me great attention, but now I seldom get anybody to speak to me.” Well, suppose it is so—have we not something else to do beside be always looking after you? We expect you now to be looking after other people! I have before mentioned to you that I had the portraits of my two sons taken on their birthdays for many years. The first year they were in a baby carriage. I did not object to that. But suppose that, at the age of twenty-one, they had still been in a baby carriage? I would have thought myself a very unhappy parent! And are we always to have Christians in baby carriages and, because we begin to treat you as you ought to be treated, namely, make you look to yourselves a little, is that to cause you to go away from us? Well, if it does, then it is evident that you have not much depth of earth.

“Ah,” says another, “but I have not found Christian people to be all that I thought they were.” I daresay you have not! Nor have I and, more than that, I have not found myself to be all that I ought to be, or hoped to be. And I should not wonder if it has been the same with you. But, after all, in this matter of cleaving to Christ, are you to forsake Him because you do not quite admire all His disciples? If they prove unworthy of your admiration, give it all to Him! If they do not write a good fair hand, imitate the style of the great Writing-Master, for then you will write correctly. The inconsistencies of Christians ought not to make you shrink back from following the eternal Son of God, but should rather cause you to cling the more closely to Him!

But perhaps the fiery trial comes to you in this form. *You are surrounded by evil examples*. You say, “I do not know how I am to be a Christian at home—and in the circle in which I move, I do not know how I am to hold out.” Ah, such talk as that proves that you have not much depth of earth. May I beg you, in laying hold on Christ, to lay hold on Him with both hands for yourself? Do not be a sort of, “lean-to” Christian—you know what that expression means? A man built a lean-to house resting against his neighbor’s wall and, when his neighbor took his wall down, his house went down too! Build your house with every wall of it your own, on your own ground, so that whoever pulls his wall down, your structure will stand! God help us to avoid being dependent upon other people about these things! Let us not have a second-hand religion which we bought from somebody else, but let us go direct to Jesus Christ, Himself, and get it for ourselves and believe in Him for ourselves. Then shall we have much depth of earth and, let the sun shine as fiercely as it may, its beams shall only cause us to grow and we shall give God all the Glory!

III. Now I must turn, for a little while, to the third question—HOW CAN WE AVOID THIS EVIL OF BEING SO SHALLOW, THEREFORE WITHERING IN THE SUNSHINE?

Dear Friends, above all things, dread insincerity and, next to that, above all other things, dread superficiality in religion. You know that the beginning of all godliness is believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, so *mind what and why you believe*. Do not be content to say, “I believe,” but *really* believe and, in order to this, know *what* you believe and *why* you believe it. Get a clear view of who Christ is, what He did, what right you have to trust Him and the way in which what Christ did avails for your salvation. Clear out the space for the foundation of your building. Get right down to the solid rock before you lay a single brick or stone. That is to say, let your faith be real faith, clear, distinct, Scriptural faith in what God has revealed and in the Savior whom God has set forth as the Propitiation for our sins. Begin, in that way, with real faith—and you will begin with a good depth of earth.

Then, as repentance comes with faith, *see that you have real repentance*. Think much of the evil of sin and of the consequences of sin both in this life and in that which is to come. Pray to God, with Charles Wesley—

**“Before me place, in dread array,
The pomp of that tremendous day,
When You with clouds shall come
To judge the nations at Your bar.
And tell me, Lord, shall I be there,
To meet a joyful doom?”**

Think of what would result from your appearing there red with your guilt! And when you have thought that over most seriously, pray to God to make you really hate sin, every sin. If you do not hate every sin, you do not, with all your heart, hate *any* sin. They must all go. Sin, as sin, is to be abhorred, repented of and practically quitted in your life. Oh, may God help you to make sure work of your repentance! Make no profession of faith if you have not real faith—and have no repentance at all rather than sham repentance.

Then, *in every spiritual Grace, and in every religious duty, be thorough*. If you pray, really pray. If you praise, do praise. I like the thought of a holy man of God who said that he would never give up praying till he had prayed. When he came to be instructed in the reading of the Scriptures, he would read till he was instructed. And when he praised God, he said, he would not cease from the holy exercise till he felt that his heart did truly praise God. O Brothers and Sisters, let us beware of leaving our heart out of our worship or service! You never read, in the Old Testament, that anybody ever brought a fish to be offered upon God’s altar. Why not? Because you could not bring it alive—and every victim must be brought to the altar alive. God loves living worship. Among the old Romans, when they killed a bullock as a sacrifice, if they did not find its heart, or if the heart was shriveled, they never offered that animal, for they considered that it was an omen of evil when the heart was not there in full vigor. So must it be with all the sacrifices that we bring to the Lord—

**“God abhors a sacrifice
Where not the heart is found.”**

I pray you never to go beyond reality in any part of your worship. If you do not really pray, do not pretend to pray. If you have no experience of the things of God, do not talk as if you had. To be a liar anywhere is hateful—but to lie in religion is the most abominable form of lying that can be! God make us straight as a line about all these things! Then, we shall soon come to much depth of earth.

I would say finally, Beloved, *bring your hearts to God and ask Him to search you.* After many years of looking at one's self, how little one knows about himself after all! A gray-headed man of long experience thinks, “Well, now, I really do know something about my human nature.” So you do, Brother, but not much, for “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” And when a man says, of any particular temptation, “I shall never fall in that way,” the probability is that this is the very way in which the man will fall. I well remember a lady, whom I would not be slandering if I said that she was as proud as she was tall, but, on one occasion, when I scarcely knew her, she said to me, “I always pray for you, Mr. Spurgeon, every day.” I said, “I thank you very much,” and she added, “My one prayer for you is that God will keep you humble.” I said, “Thank you, Madam, that is a very wise prayer. I am sorry that I have not remembered you in that way, but I will do so in the future.” “Oh,” she said, “but I do not need it, for I was never tempted to pride.” “Madam,” I said, “I shall remember you, now, twice a day, night and morning, for I think that you are in greater danger of pride than anybody whom I have met with for a long time.”

There was a person who said that she had not any pride and was not in danger of being tempted to be proud, yet, if I had asked any half-dozen of her acquaintances to find me a proud woman, they would have called on her, and said that I needed to see her—I am sure that they would. So is it with us! When we think that we are getting over some particular temptation, it is just then that *it* is getting over us! When you suppose that you are master of that temptation, in all probability it has mastered you. Come, Brothers and Sisters, we had better give over this kind of folly. This person, whom we are trying to search, is much too deep for us. I mean, that we are so ready to cheat ourselves, that we cannot find ourselves out! Let us rather pray to the Lord, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

I suggest to you this prayer, “Lord, show me the worst of my case. Put me in the place where I ought to be. Make me to feel and know what I really am and then, my Lord, break my heart if it never was broken, and heal it if it is broken. Empty me of myself and bring me to Yourself. Turn me upside down till the last drop of my self-sufficiency runs out even to the dregs—and then pour in the fullness of Your Grace in Christ Jesus till I am filled even to the brim.”

The Lord hear that prayer, and bless every soul here now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:14-32, 43-48.**

Our Lord had been absent from the people and transfigured on the top of the mountain. When He came down from this manifestation of His Glory, He was brought face to face with Satan's work at almost the first step He took. Let us read about what He did.

Verses 14, 15. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes disputing with them. And straightway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.* There was a Glory about His face not altogether unlike that of Moses when he came down from the other mountain, so that the people were struck with wonder when they looked upon Him.

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* The battle had been raging between Christ's enemies and His disciples but now that their Captain has come, He rallies His forces and at once attacks His foes—"What are you discussing with them?"

17. *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit.* We do not know if the scribes gave any answer to Christ's question and it does not matter at all. What does *always* matter is practical, living, earnest *prayer*. So what the scribes may have said is not recorded, but the prayer of the poor father is—"Master, I have brought unto You my son, who has a dumb spirit." If any of you have come here to quibble, we shall take no notice of that! But if there is a soul that has come here to pray, the recording angel will write it down in the eternal book.

18. *And wherever he takes him, he throws him down and he foams and gnashes his teeth, and pines away: and I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out, but they could not.* No, it was no use going to the disciples, it is of no use to pray to saints and angels—go to the Master Himself! "Straightforward makes the best runner." There is nothing like carrying your case to headquarters. Get to the Court of King's Bench as soon as you can, for there the matter will be finally settled.

19. *He answered him and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.* Grand words, "Bring him to Me." Lord, he has a dumb spirit. "Bring him to me." It is the devil who is his enemy. "Bring him to Me."

20. *And they brought him to Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit threw him down; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.* What a dreadful sight! He struggled on the ground, like one in a fit of epilepsy.

21, 22. *And He asked his father, How long is it since this came unto him. And he said, From childhood. And oftentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.* "Help us," he cries, identifying himself with his child. Father, Mother, when you pray, use the plural, as this man did, "Have compassion on *us* and help *us*." That is the way to pray for every sinner whom you bring before Christ. Join yourself to the poor

soul for whom you are pleading and say, "Have compassion on us, and help us."

23. *Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.* Hear that, any of you who have come in here desiring to be delivered from sin, to be made holy, to break off old habits and to become new men in Christ Jesus! "All things are possible to him that believes." So, take courage, trust in Christ and cry unto Him to save you.

24. *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief.* There were within him two men, as it were, a believing man and an unbelieving man—and the two struggled for mastery. "Lord, I do believe, but there is so much unbelief in me, I pray You to drive it out, that I may believe in You wholly."

25, 26. *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him and enter no more into him. And the spirit cried, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him.* It must obey Christ. The Master bids that dog of a devil to lie down and he must do so. It shows what an abject creature, after all, the Prince of Darkness is! He must obey the voice of Christ. Lord, speak to him at this moment and drive him out of other souls by your Omnipotent Word!

26. *And he was as one dead; inasmuch that many said, he is dead.* It was not a case of "kill or cure," but it seemed to be one of "cure and kill" and, sometimes, poor sinners, in their struggles with sin and Satan are brought to such despair that they are afraid that they will die before they get a glimpse of hope. "Many said, he is dead," but he was not.

27. *But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.* So may the Lord come and take by the hand any here who seem to be dead in despair! A touch of His hand will enable them to stand.

28, 29. *And when He was come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.* The watchword for Christ's disciples is, "intensity." Here was the devil in an intensely terrible form and he could only be driven out by intense Grace. There must be prayer and fasting. Even Christ, Himself, must exert the greatness of His power to work a cure in such a case as this. Oh, for more intensity in us all! Carry that word in your ear as we read on.

30-32. *And they departed from there, and passed through Galilee; and He would not that any man should know it. For He taught His disciples, and said unto them, The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they shall kill Him; and after He is killed, He shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.* See how intense He was—always thinking of His approaching death, that cruel, bitter death—yet He hastened towards it, longed for that baptism to be accomplished, for the great redeeming price to be paid! Oh, that you and I were as fully absorbed in the service of God as our great Master was! Now let us see what intensity He requires of us.

43. *And if your hand offends you, cut it off; it is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.* Anything is better than the loss of your soul. It

is better to lose the greatest joy, skill, comfort, honor that you ever had, than to lose your soul forever.

44-46. *Where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. And if your foot offends you, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than having two feet to be cast into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.* That is the second time He said these words. Our Lord was not fond of dreadful metaphors and terrible language, but He knew that they must be used, though some of His servants shrink from the use of them. Are they more loving than He is? Is it, after all, a greater love for souls that makes men keep back terrible Truths of God? Is it not more honest and loving to tell the whole Truth, whatever it may be? It is harder to speak, but does it not show a tender heart to be able to speak so as to warn men of their peril? If anything should seem as necessary to you as your foot, so that you can make no progress in life without it, yet if it would cost you your soul, give it up! Just as it would be better to live without a foot than to die, so is it better to go to Heaven without even the necessities of life on the road than to perish everlastingly.

47. *And if your eye offends you, pluck it out.* Notice how severe our Savior is, how deep He goes. He does not say, "Shut it, cover it up with a green shade," but, "Pluck it out."

47, 48. *It is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into Hell fire: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.* That is the third time He has uttered those terrible words! Then they must mean something. What do they mean? Can they mean anything less than everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord? Oh, that we might be prepared to sacrifice everything rather than be lost forever! Dear Hearts, are you saved or not? If you are not saved, see first to this all-important business! Let everything else go sooner than that, in eternity, you should find yourself forever shut in where hope can never come!

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

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

MORE AND MORE, OR LESS AND LESS

NO. 1488

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 10, 1879,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance:
but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has.”
Matthew 13:12.***

Two great general principles are conspicuous in the Gospel. The first is that God gives of His Grace to the empty—“He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.” The second principle is that where God has given a measure of Grace He is known to give more—“He gives more Grace.” There is no stint with the Lord of Love and no limit to the abundance of Divine Grace which those who come to Him may receive. He gives Grace to those who have none and more Grace to those whom He has already favored. These two principles do not contradict each other, but help to make each more complete.

In their proper order they exhibit both sides of one Truth of God and give us instruction as to the Lord's dealings with two different stages of spiritual condition. Each principle has its own range. Are you as yet unsaved? Then the principle which you have to do with is this, that God will fill the empty and feed the hungry. You have to go to Him with nothing of your own except your needs and ask for everything at His hands. Your wisdom is to hasten to the Savior just as you are, tarrying not to gather a price which you may carry in your hands, but coming empty-handed to the generous Lord. In all your sinfulness you must look to Him for pardon. In all your nakedness you must fly to Him for clothing. In all your weakness you must cry to Him for strength. Yes, in all your death you are to look to Him for life, even as He has said, “Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.”

Take care that you are quite clear upon this point, for unless your eyes can discern this, your whole soul will be full of darkness. Grace is for the undeserving, the guilty, the needy—otherwise it would not be Grace. The Gospel is not the Law and, therefore, it does not demand a holy character as a condition of receiving its blessings. It comes to sinners as they are, casts on them an eye of pity, forgives their sins and makes them new creatures and holy creatures. In dealing with the sinner, God acts on the principle of undeserved love and unmerited favor. Trembling Sinner, you have to go to Him with your empty bucket that He may fill it out of the deep well of His overflowing love!

When a man has received Grace, or when he professes to have done so, he comes under the second principle. He must take care that he has, indeed, and of a truth received that which God in the Gospel presents to him, for if he does not at the very beginning really and truly receive the true Grace of God, he will begin with falsehood and end in shame. He must see to it that he has the beginnings of Grace or he cannot have the

increase. If there is a mistake as to the actual receipt of Christ into the heart, there may be an *appearance* of having Christ and this appearance may last for a while, but as there is really nothing commenced, there will be no addition.

While I am like the unsown soil, I am simply to receive the Seed when it is scattered. But after the scattering of the Seed, if I think I have received it, I must see to it that I am not deceived. I must watch that the Word of God does really lodge in the furrows of my soul, for unless that is the case, beyond all question—so far from obtaining growth in Grace, I shall, by-and-by, lose what I *think* I have and I shall be openly proven to be barren and unfruitful. If I have received the light of Heaven into my soul, however small its beginnings, the Lord will add a gracious increase. And as I follow on to know Him, I shall be as the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day. If I am a mere pretender, I shall fade away, but if I am a sincere Believer I shall become brighter and brighter.

I shall endeavor to use this last principle at this time for our warning and instruction. May the Holy Spirit greatly bless it to our hearts so that those who *profess* to be the people of God may make sure that their profession is founded on the Truth of God and may those who are mere hearers of the Gospel be disturbed in their consciences and awakened from the sleep of death!

I. First, we shall study this principle as IT IS ILLUSTRATED IN THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER. YOU will not fail to observe that this saying of our Lord occurs in three Evangelists in connection with the parable of the sower. Besides our text, you will find it in Mark 4:24 where it is at the close of the parable of the sower. You will meet with it again in Luke 8:18, still in connection with the same parable. The principle must be very important, or else our Lord would not have taken care to have it recorded by three Evangelists. And He must have intended that we should read it in the light of the parable, or He would not have connected it with it.

That parable was spoken in reference to the hearing of the Word of God—and it is concerning the Word of God and its blessings that He says, “Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has.” To know the mind of the Spirit it is always wise to view a passage in its context. We do this with the writings of men if we wish to understand them and reason, itself, teaches us to do likewise with the Word of God.

Let us consider our text in its original context. Each Evangelist has given a shade of difference to his record. In Matthew, where we take our text, the words stand in connection with the hearing of the Word of God—not any mode of hearing—but hearing, itself. Read the ninth verse—“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” There are some who hear not, for “their ears are dull of hearing.” There are others of whom it is written, “Blessed are your ears, for they hear.” Beloved, we must take care that we truly *hear* what we hear, for if we do not, we shall soon lose all power to hear. But if we hear the Truth of God attentively and heartily, we shall be privileged to hear it yet more fully and to make larger profit by listening to it, even as our Lord says, “He answered and said unto them, It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it

is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.”

Our Savior's first picture in the parable of the sower is that of the Seed falling upon the wayside or the hard road. There was much traffic through the field—a footpath, which was packed hard by many feet, ran from one end to the other—and a handful of Seed fell upon it. So the Gospel falls upon men who are occupied with obstinacies, prejudices, pursuits, ambitions, cares—and these have so much traffic through their minds that they are hardened towards the Gospel and it never reaches the inner man—it lies, a rejected thing, upon the hard surface. When they hear it, they hear it and that is all. As the saying goes, “it goes in one ear and out the other.” The Truth never enters the man! They would not like to altogether absent themselves from religious services and yet they do much the same thing, for only their bodies are there—their hearts are far away, engaged with very different themes. They bring to the preacher ears which are sealed up and eyes which are curtained against the light. They see, but do not perceive! They hear, but do not understand!

What is the sure result of this mimic hearing? The Savior in the parable pictures the birds of the air as taking away the Seed which fell upon the roadside and devouring it—and He tells us by way of explanation that Satan comes and takes away the Word, lest later it should obtain an entrance into the heart. Thus is the text fulfilled—“Whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has.” How many of our hearers are of this kind! They lose what they have because the fact of the matter is they never had it! Their attendance at worship is coming and going, coming and going and nothing more. Like a dog in and out of the fair, they have no business to do when they go to the house of God. They are no more the better by their going and coming than the door which swings on its hinges and turns in and turns out and then rests in its place.

Such persons, like the wayside, do not receive anything and, receiving nothing, they continue to receive nothing. No, they even go from bad to worse, for though they received nothing at first, they at least *seemed* to do so, but in due course even that *seeming* disappears. They become less likely to profit by the Gospel and more and more hardened against it. While those who really do hear and drink in the Truth of God become capable of hearing and understanding more—more mysteries are opened up to them, deeper Truths are revealed and they perceive a greater sweetness and a more Divine power in the Word of God.

Those who do not receive the Word lose what little notional knowledge of the Word of God they once possessed. Though it may be the same preacher and the same preaching of the same doctrines, yet the results are very different—to those who have a part and a lot in the matter, the paths of the Lord drop fatness—while to careless, unbelieving hearers the ministry becomes more dull every day till they cry out, “What a weariness it is.” Satan is doing his work thoroughly and is taking away from the hard heart all desire towards the Word of God and all interest in it.

In Mark 4:25 our text is used in reference to the doctrine which is to be heard. The Savior, in the 24th verse says, “Take heed what you hear.” I would press that important exhortation upon you all as most necessary at

this time. Nowadays people do not care what they hear. If a man can speak fluently; if he can be rhetorical and sensational; if he can tell many pretty stories; if he can use claptrap and bombasts, he will have many hearers! Time was with our fathers when, if a man went half an inch astray as to orthodoxy, they would have nothing to do with him! And though we would not have you so censorious, for we are not to make a man an offender for a single word, yet we would have you jealous for the Truth of God! If we, or an angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel than that which you have received, I charge you not to listen to it! Be the good sheep of the Good Shepherd, of whom it is written, "a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers."

The false shepherds try to charm you with their excellent speech, but be deaf to their charms. False doctrine is a poisoned dish, however daintily it may be served! The false teachers would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. But you know what the Savior said, "All that ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them." "Take heed what you hear." A man cannot bear false doctrine long without being injured by it. He may, at the first, say, "I like the man, I admire his cleverness although I dissent very much with what he says." This is treacherous ground to stand upon, for imperceptibly evil comes of it—"their word does eat as does a canker." You cannot expose the soil of your heart to a continual sowing of tares because some tare or other will take root and, by-and-by, instead of having the good wheat growing in your soul, there will spring up the tares whose end is to be burned and you will have lost the harvest which should have been produced in your spirit.

The wise man says, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causes you to err from the words of knowledge." "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." "Be not carried about with many and strange doctrines, for it is good that the heart be established with Grace." Therefore take heed what you hear! There are many who, when they hear the Gospel, are, according to our Lord's second picture, mere superficial hearers. They take some heed to their hearing, but not to what they have heard, for if they regarded the value and dignity of the Word of God, they would take it more thoroughly to heart and it would permanently affect their lives. These are they who receive the Word in stony places.

When the Gospel comes to them they catch at it without much consideration—they are hot and eager for it and rejoice because it has come in their way—"And with joy they receive it." They sing and shout at once, "Happy day! Happy day! This is the Gospel for me! I have found peace and Heaven and will never be anxious again!" These people have not counted the cost, or weighed the Truth of God, or entered into its inner meaning and spiritual certainty. There has been no repentance of sin, no sense of guilt, no humbling before God, no brokenness of spirit, no inner conflict and no work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It has all been a sort of happy-go-lucky business in which they caught at what came in their way and promised them fair. They will soon fling away that which they have so inconsiderately embraced—when the sun is up, the plant which has no root

will wither—when persecution arises, the unregenerated convert will be offended.

Our Savior warns us against this in the language of the text. If you truly receive what you hear, you shall have more, for unto everyone that has, more shall be given and he shall have abundance. But if, like the stony ground, you never really have the Seed, but simply allow it to sprout in the surface-soil which conceals the rock of your unrenewed nature, then under trial you will lose what you have—the sprouting of the grain so prematurely will only end in an equally rapid withering and all will be gone. Oh, my dear Hearers, be sincere and solid in all things! Believe what you believe and take care that what you believe is worth believing and is the very Truth of the living God!

Let it sink deep into your soul and take root there. I pray you do not espouse religion as a man puts on his coat to take it off again—let it be woven into the woof and warp of your being! Let it be part and parcel of yourselves, running like a thread through all your thoughts, desires and aims, so that if anything else of yourselves should be torn away, yet it would be impossible to tear away from you the blessed Gospel because it is *in* and *of* you—a component part of your truest selves. If you thus receive the Gospel and give it root-hold, you shall know more and more of its blessings. But if you do not thus receive it, but leave it to a rootless sprouting of mere surface religion, it shall be taken away from you when trouble and persecution arise.

In Luke 8:18 this grand principle is used in reference to taking heed how we hear. Our Lord said—“Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever has not, from him shall be taken even that which he seems to have.” Many are attentive to the Gospel and they have some discernment and will not listen to what is unsound, so that they regard what they hear and yet they have small consideration for how they hear it—and that especially on one point. The suitable way to hear the Gospel is to give it full and entire possession of the heart. The Gospel is exclusive. It will not be one of two masters. I would have you, my Brothers and Sisters, be among “the exclusive Brethren” in a very excellent and admirable sense of the term.

Our Savior gives us a picture of the non-exclusives, who are set forth as the Seed sown among thorns. The soil received the good Seed after a fashion and then it received the nettles and the thorns. And these nettles and thorns and wheat all began to grow together—a happy family, some would say—but a devil’s garden is nearer the truth. In these days such a garden is projected on a large scale by some of our public writers and speakers. The Church and the world are to become one—and saints and sinners are to blend together in one universal round of play-going. We are actually urged by persons who suppose themselves to be Christians, to renew the old league which was established in the days of Noah and brought on the Flood—when the sons of God and the daughters of men joined in alliance because the sons of God thought that they should greatly improve the world by uniting with it.

At this time we are told that it is wrong on our part to forsake the debasing amusements of the ungodly, for if we would join with them, we

might improve their tone and quality! If Heaven would go down to Hell, Hell would be greatly improved! See how benevolent Satan has become and how anxious to be reformed? Hear the voice of God which runs in another manner—"Come you out from among them! Be you separate and touch not the unclean thing." "If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Beware of religious play-going and pious theatricals, for they are a snare into which only the vain and foolish will fall! Let thorns be thorns and let not wheat attempt to grow among them.

See that plot of ground? How charming is its aspect—wheat springing up with its green blades among the thorns and thistles! Is it not a delightful compromise? What was the end of this conglomeration? Why, the wheat died—it was choked and could not grow in such uncongenial society! Don't you know that if you receive Christ you must cast out the love of the world? Christ will be *aut Caesar aut nullus*—either King or nobody! He will have the whole of our heart or none of it! We must altogether give ourselves up to His influence and to His sway, for if we set up another king and say to him, "You shall reign and Christ shall reign, too," Christ will not have it! He will up and away, for His jealousy will not endure a rival and His sovereignty will not tolerate a consort.

Take care, then, how you hear the Gospel! Hear it, knowing it to be the only Word of God which can save your souls. Receive it into your being to become everything to you, for if you do not, there shall be taken away from you that Gospel which you think you have, since you have not afforded it the reception which it demands and deserves. If you say to sin, self and all else, "Be gone! My heart is for Christ, alone. This good Seed must not be cumbered with such weeds as you are," then the Truth is in you and shall be more and more fully apparent within you, bringing forth fruit abundantly after its kind. In the context with this parable, then, the sum and substance of our text is this—the Word of God must truly dwell in us and then it will dwell in us richly. But if it enters not, in very deed, into the heart, we shall lose it altogether before long.

The Jewish people heard *Christ* preach the Gospel and because never Man spoke as He did. They listened to Him, but they never received His Word, for they understood not His meaning. They only caught at the symbols under which He couched the sacred mysteries, but the mysteries themselves they knew not. Consequently, after a little while, they grew angry with the Divine Messenger of the Covenant. They persecuted Him and hounded Him to death. While He gave them loaves and fishes and there was something to be got by hearing, they hung upon His lips in crowds—but when He offered them no longer any other food than the Bread of Heaven, then they straightway lifted up the heel against Him and would have none of Him.

In consequence of this, the preaching of the Word of God ceased among them. The Apostles turned to the Gentiles, who gladly received the Truth and the Jewish nation was left in blindness, in which, alas, it abides unto this day! The same is constantly happening among us now. Men hear the Gospel, but they do not receive it into their hearts and, therefore, after awhile they grow weary of it—they are tired of being perpetually reminded of a danger in which they do not believe and of being invited to a feast

which they despise—and, therefore, they turn upon their heels and go. If, from force of habit, they remain, the Gospel seems to have lost all power over them and they have no appreciation of its ministry. What they once had is taken from them because they never truly had it—they are blinded by the Light which they refused to see, choked by the morsels which ought to have been their food and cast down to Hell by the Rock on which they should have mounted to Heaven.

He who receives gets more! He who does not receive loses what he seemed to have. There is no standing still—there is a necessary movement one way or other. In this business a man daily grows richer or poorer. This is no stagnant sea. The current bears all vessels onward either to the fair havens or to the black sea of eternal ruin. Here stands the inevitable decree—he who has shall have—he who is a mere pretender and has not, shall lose even his power to *seem* to have!

II. Let this suffice. And now, dear Friends, let us try and bring out the same principle IN REFERENCE TO THE EXPERIENCE OF ALL GRACIOUS SOULS. Our experience verifies the truth of the text, “Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” In the world among men it is commonly observed that it never rains but it pours. Where you see a sheep there is generally a flock. Money makes money. Poverty remains poor. Lack of capital brings bankruptcy. A company starts on imaginary or borrowed capital—it makes a fuss and a noise, but it never prospers. By-and-by it breaks up and all is lost—and yet it never had anything of its own to lose. Thus it verifies to the letter the Truth of God—whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has.

Ordinarily, prosperity is a hen which likes to lay where there is a nest egg and when one swallow of success comes, others will follow it. Certainly we have found it so in the things of Grace—where Grace has been given, more Grace comes! Spiritual capital well worked multiplies the stock and spiritual wealth is realized where there is a solid base to begin upon. Let us give examples. When a man believes the Gospel in its most elementary form, that man will soon be taught the higher Truths of God. When we begin with some people by telling them the plain way of salvation, they raise doubts and quibbles. “But” is their favorite word. They cry, “I cannot see this and I cannot understand that.”

We never thought they would see it or understand it, for they generally desire to understand the most difficult parts of the Gospel, first, like a man who must stand on the top of Mont Blanc before he has reached the valley at its base! Imagine the folly of such a conversation as this—“Here are your letters, my child. This letter is A.” “Sir, I cannot learn A B C, for as yet I cannot read a single line of Homer’s Iliad.” “Come then, my child, and learn the multiplication table.” “Alas, Sir, I cannot do it, for I am not yet acquainted with differential calculus.” Surely the child mocks us and is unwilling to learn! The elements can be mastered, although the higher grades of study have not been reached. Half the difficulties of unbelievers is the result of unreadiness to be taught!

When a man says, “I understand very little, but I know that I am a sinner and I perceive that Christ came into the world to save sinners, therefore I will trust Him to save me,” that man has something and he shall

have more! When a seeker confesses, “I am very foolish and slow of comprehension, but I perceive that I need a new heart and that only the Spirit of God can renew me and, therefore, I seek Him for His Grace”—then it is clear that he has some belief—and to him shall be given so that he shall have more abundance! If you are struggling with unbelief, be willing to believe what you can believe—have a will towards believing.

Dear Friend, if you cannot yet follow the Lord into the depths, He will save you if you follow Him into the shallows as far as you can. If you are staggered by any one Truth of God, do not, therefore, reject your Lord, but be willing to accept that which does *not* stagger you. Touch the hem of His garment if you cannot reach His Divine Person, and you shall soon find that your faith in the elementary Truths of the Gospel will, by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, lead you to an understanding of the deeper mysteries! Use your starlight and you shall soon have sunlight!

As it is with faith, so is it with the possession of any real, genuine Grace. Take repentance for instance. A man may say, “My heart is hard and I cannot repent as I would.” No, my dear Friend, but do you really hate evil and do you labor to avoid the faults into which you formerly fell? Do you mourn and regret mistakes, errors and transgressions of which you are convicted? Well, then, this repentance of yours will deepen—you will come to be very sensitive, one of these days, and you will chasten yourself even for a sinful *thought*. Though now you cannot reach the sensitiveness which you long for, yet, if your repentance is real, though it is weak at first, to him that has shall be given and your repentance shall grow.

If there is in your heart an evident love of sin, it is idle for you to hope that your repentance will increase, for you have none! Your green bay tree is not the weeping willow and will never grow into one, however much it may spread. But the least twig of the willow, if planted by the water-courses, will be sure to flourish. Take faith, again. If you really believe in Jesus Christ and look only to Him for salvation, that faith, though it is very weak, will become strong. If it is, there at all it will wax great in the soul. But if you say, “I *think* I believe,” and yet you really do *not* believe, you will never grow in faith. In fact, the faith you *think* you have will, in the day of trouble, vanish altogether and you will find yourself in despair.

If you will really trust my Lord and Master, though your faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, yet, if it is real, you shall have more and more till your faith can move mountains and pluck up trees. It is God’s plan to add more to the first little deposit of faith, even as a master builder adds stone to stone till the structure is complete. It is so with love to God. Who among us loves God as he would wish to love Him? We sigh out—

**“Yes, I love You and adore,
Oh, for Grace to love You more.”**

But, Beloved, the point you have to watch is not so much the possession of the flaming love of a Samuel Rutherford or a Madame Guyon, but the making sure of even the lowest degree of genuine love to Jesus! See that it is true even if it is feeble. A spark of fire is true fire and is quite enough to begin with. It turns everything with which it comes in contact into its own nature and it spreads by the force of its own intensity.

The *same* is true of love. If you have real fire, it will burn, but if you have only a *painted* fire, it will not increase. A painted love of Christ, by which I mean the mere imitation of love to Him, will not increase, but will eventually disappear altogether. See that you truly love Jesus. I implore and beseech you to mind this. Do not fake love, but *feel* love. Give Him your whole heart, for lip love is mockery. How can you say, I love you, when your heart is not with me? It is the same with zeal for God's Glory—we are, none of us, as zealous as we ought to be for Christ—but the way to get to be flamingly zealous for His name is to be truly zealous at the first. If you desire His Glory, though that desire is faint, it will become more and more intense. If you feel that you must live to praise Him. If you desire to be made willing, even, to *die* to praise Him, you will, before long, feel seraphic zeal.

True Grace must grow—there is no fear about its increase. If the bulb of the lily is really alive, the fair flower will crown its stem before long. But if it is a dead bulb to start with, you may place it in the best soil and water it every moment, but nothing will come of it. A seed may be so small that you can scarcely see it and yet, if it is a living seed, none can tell how much it will develop. But if it is one of those dead seeds which are far too plentifully mixed up with the seedsman's parcels, you may do what you will with it but its only change will be decay. You see, then, that where there is true Grace, we should not despise the day of small things, but look for more Grace and a grander display of the Divine power.

The way in which the promise of the text is carried out by our gracious God is worthy of observation. "Whoever has, to him shall be given." If this is connected with the parable of the sower it becomes clear that God gives more by a process of *growth*. And then, turning the Truth of God the other way, we see that all growth in Grace is still the *gift* of God and we should not forget that it is so. If you have *any* faith, if you are to grow strong, the same Grace that gave you your first confidence in Christ must give you more. It is quite true that there is a growing power about the inner life, but its growing power is dependent upon the immediate working of God upon it! If he were to cease to communicate more Grace, the new life must cease to grow. Well says the Apostle, "He gives more Grace." You grow, but that growth is God's *gift* and you must look to Him for it. Why didn't the Lord give us the largest measure of Grace to begin with—why promise more abundance as an after result? I think it is because we value Grace all the more when it comes to us little by little.

Again, it is to our good to be exercised to get more Grace. A poor woman is allowed to go and glean in a field. Your generosity might say, "Come, my good woman, I will give you the corn and you shall not have the trouble of gleaning." But this might not be so good a thing for her as to allow her to gather the wheat by her own efforts. It is often much better to enable the poor to help *themselves* than to help them without their own exertions. God is wise towards us—He means to give us the corn—but He decides that we shall glean it and so exercise ourselves unto godliness. We are to become rich in Grace, but it is to be by heavenly trading.

Growth is a *gift*—remember that. God's Grace is received, not as a dead external thing, but as a living outgrowth and for outgrowth there must be

inner life. You, then, who hope that you have a little genuine Grace in your souls, may well take courage. Let the Truth of God contained in the text cheer you—unto you shall more be given and you shall have more abundance. Do not think, because you have but little faith, you are always to be doubting and trembling. You shall grow out of it, my Brother, my Sister, as your faith becomes established. Do not suppose that because your hands have been weak and your knees have been trembling, they are always to be so. We are not *always* to be infants in arms—we are daily nearing fullness of stature.

You are very glad to have little ones at home. They may be dear tiny babies, but you are not at all dissatisfied with their being so little, seeing it is right that they should be. A baby of six months is not expected to be very tall. You are pleased to have a son though he is little—you even admire his littleness! But, suppose your child should live 20 years and should still remain a baby in stature? You would be sorely distressed and say, “Surely my child is a dwarf. What a sad thing that my boy should be so deformed.” You young beginners need not mind being little—we expect you to be so—but it does not do for you older folks who have been Christians these 20 years to still be babies, for, if so, we shall begin to be afraid that you are not a child of the Lord’s own family, for Divine life *grows!*

A dead post which we saw in the ground 20 years ago is still the same post, no bigger, no smaller—and only altered by becoming rotten underground. But the *tree* which you saw 20 years ago—what a difference there is in it! It was then a sapling which you could bend, but now it has become as an iron pillar and there is no moving it! So ought it to be with us and we must aspire to have it so. May God the Holy Spirit work it in us, for Jesus’ sake. The main point, however, to come to, is this—have we really obtained the *first* living principle? Have we really the heavenly Seed in our souls? I cannot preach to you at this time as I should like because it is not so much a subject for discourse as for personal use. O for a discerning eye to look through a window right into the heart of each one of you!

The most of you profess to be the people of God, but are you really so? I have no reason to suspect you—have you any reason to suspect yourselves? You were converted, you say, but was it conversion or not? You say, “I do believe in Jesus,” but is it that real faith which hangs, alone, upon Him? You know a person may be a long time a professor and not find out that he has deceived himself even for scores of years—and I am afraid that there are some who will never open their eyes to their willful self-deceit till they find themselves in Hell! Oh do not let us go on increasing the number of the Church without duly searching ourselves to see whether we truly belong to the number of the faithful.

A prince may get his treasury full of shining stones, but what if they should all turn out to be paste gems? A collector of coins might accumulate a multitude of them—there are dealers who will gratify his taste and supply him with an endless number of counterfeits—but if a master of the science should look over his treasures and condemn them as mere shams, what a disappointment would befall him! Brothers and Sisters, let each one of us test himself—let us ask the Lord to search us lest we be found

destitute of Grace. To him that has, more shall be given—but if we have not true Grace, it shall not be given to us—and we shall even lose what we have.

III. I must now mournfully conclude with THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TRUTH AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INSINCERE. In-sincere men and women find that what they had is taken away from them. I will illustrate this point very rapidly. It is in this way. Many who hear the Gospel have been brought up to do so from their childhood. But if they do not heartily receive the Gospel, they, in many instances, give up attendance upon the outward means of Grace when they get away from the restraints of religious society. They find it dull work to sit so long and listen to drowsy prayers and dull preaching. They find it uncomfortable to get into crowded congregations; cold to be in small ones and unhealthy to sit in the close atmosphere of a Meeting House.

They see many faults in the service and grumble quite cleverly. At first they stay away one part of the day. Once is quite enough for them, they say—they cannot stand twice. Then, by-and-by, every excuse is made for staying at home. Sometimes it is wet. At another time they feel a little out of sorts. These things would not keep them from business, but a very little suffices to excuse a man's staying at home on *Sunday*. At length they do not go at all. Thus there is taken away from them what they really did not have—they did not really hear and now they do not nominally hear. There are thousands of people in London at home, today, hardly dressed even at this hour, from whom is taken away all wish to hear the Gospel.

Here is another form of the same thing. The man keeps on hearing, but not having received the Gospel, he loses all power to appreciate it. "I do not know what has come over our minister," he says, "I used to, at one time, feel something when he was preaching, but it is not so now. He is getting old and has about spun himself out." Other people do not think so, however, for they have been converted and blessed under his ministry. What has happened? Why, this man has lost what he seemed to have, namely, the power to appreciate the Gospel! He remembers the day when he used to stand in the aisles all the time, longing to catch every syllable, and then would go home and get on his knees and, after a fashion, pray for mercy. Nothing affects Him now. Tremble, my Hearers, if that is your case, for you are going fast to Hell, with nothing to stop you! You are dying at the root and will continue to lose all sensation until death ends in corruption!

In certain persons this takes yet another form. They received the Grace of God in a way and there was an effect produced upon them, but it all disappeared. I have seen an unconverted man admirably reformed for a time by hearing the Word. The drunkard's cup has been given up and foul language has ceased! There has been a great moral improvement for which we have all been very glad. But, alas, it has not lasted. Unless Gospel work is inward *heart-work*—if it merely lies in *external* reformation—the man often goes back to be worse than he was before. The evil spirit which had left him, returns, and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself! And they enter in and dwell there—and the last end of that man is worse than the first. If the Gospel does not save you, it may,

in the end, even make you worse! If it is not a savor of life unto life, it will become a savor of death unto death.

One more version of this same Truth of God and I have done. Some appear to receive the Word even farther than those in whom it produces an external reformation, for they make a confession of faith in Christ. They pray and perhaps they preach. Their voices are heard in Christian assemblies and they appear to live the lives of Christians. I have seen them even become eminent for supposed sanctity—but if they have not really and truly received the Word of God, what a miserable life theirs must be! They do not get the secret comfort of true religion and yet they have to keep up an *appearance* of it! Surely the poorest people in the world are those who have to keep up appearances and have not the means with which to do it—they are always getting in debt and yet have to look everybody in the face. I always pity a penniless nobleman, the Earl of Nowhere, Lord Lackland!

Many professors are in the same plight—they have a name to live and are dead. They do not really believe what they profess to believe. They have a shrewd suspicion that all is not right within and, therefore, they get no comfort from all their religious talking and doing. It is a task, a dreary, cheerless task. They have no proof in their own hearts of the Truth of the Gospel, for they lack the internal evidence which is the best of all. Their religion has never changed them, nor stirred the deeps of their being and at last it becomes impossible to keep up the charade! Just as with a man who continues to live beyond his means, there comes a time when he must be bankrupt and so there comes a time with the spiritual deceiver when he cannot keep it up any longer.

Look at Judas! He sold his soul for 30 pieces of silver and a rope—that was his way out of his profession. Others have become grosser skeptics and viler haters of Christ than others—their hypocrisy has curdled into blasphemy. Others have settled down in utter indifference, callousness, carelessness and have slept themselves into Hell. Where the cheat is kept up till the end, what a waking awaits the deceiver! He will have to go from the hearing of the Gospel to the howling of the lost—from his pew in the house of God to his place in Hell! He will have to be dragged away from the cup of the Lord, to drink, in very deed, the cup of devils—he will be shut out from the association of the saints to dwell forever with the condemned!

He will then realize that the God whom he professed to worship has rejected him when Jesus Himself shall say, “I never knew you! Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity.” God saves us from such a doom, for His sake. Amen.

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

SOWN AMONG THORNS

NO. 2040

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 19, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

***“And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them.”
Matthew 13:7.***

***“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the Word; and
the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches,
choke the Word and he becomes unfruitful.”
Matthew 13:22.***

WHEN that which comes of his sowing is unfruitful, the sower's work is wasted—he has spent his strength for nothing. Without fruit the sower's work would even seem to be insane, for he takes good wheat, throws it away and loses it in the ground. Preaching is the most idle of occupations if the Word is not adapted to enter the heart and produce good results. O my Hearers, if you are not converted, I waste time and energy in standing here! People might well think it madness that one whole day in the week should be given up to hearing speeches—madness, indeed, it would be if nothing came of it to conscience and heart. If you do not bring forth fruit to holiness and the end is not Everlasting Life, I would be better employed in breaking stones on the roadside than in preaching to you.

Fruit bearing made the difference appear in the various soils upon which the sower scattered seed. You would not so certainly have known the quality if you had not seen the failure or success of the seed. We do not know your hearts until we see your bearing fruit toward the Gospel. If it produces in you holiness and love to God and humanity, then we know that there is good soil in you. But if you are merely promising people but not performing people, then we know that the ground of your heart is hard, or stony, or thorny. The Word of the Lord tries the hearts of the children of men and in this it is as the fire which distinguishes between metal and dross.

O my dear Hearers, you undergo a test today! Perhaps you will be judging the preacher but a greater than the preacher will be judging you, for the Word itself shall judge you. You sit here as a jury upon yourselves. Your own condition will be brought clearly out by the way in which you receive or refuse the Gospel of God. If you bring forth fruit to the praise of God's Grace—wonderful! But if not, however you may seem to hear with attention and may retain what you hear in your memories—if no saving effect is produced upon your souls we shall know that the soil of your heart has not been prepared of the Lord and remains in its native barrenness.

What fruit have you borne so far from all your hearing? May I venture to put the question to each one of you very pointedly? Some of you have

been hearers from your childhood—are you any the better? What long lists of sermons you must have heard by now! Count over your Sundays—how many they have been! Think of the good men now in Heaven to whom you once listened! Remember the tears that were drawn from you by their discourses! If you are not saved yet, will you ever be saved? If you are not holy yet, will you ever be holy?

Why has the Lord spent so much on one who makes no return? To what purpose is this waste? Surely you will have much to answer for in that great day when the servants of God shall give their accounts and shall have no joy when they come to mention you. How will you excuse yourselves before God for having occasioned them so much disappointment?

At this time I will only deal with one class of you. I will not speak to those of you who hear the Word and retain none of it because of the hardness of your hearts—such are the wayside hearers. Neither will I address myself to those who receive the Truth with sudden enthusiasm and as readily quit it when trial befalls them—such are the rocky-ground hearers. But I will deal with those of you who hear the Word attentively and, in a sense, receive it into your hearts and understandings so that the seed grows in you, though its fruit never comes to perfection.

You are religious persons and to all appearance you are under the influence of godliness. You exhibit plenty of leaf but there is no corn in the ear, no substance in your Christianity. I cannot speak with any degree of physical vigor to you by reason of the infirmity under which I struggle. But what I do say to you is steeped in earnest desire that the Lord may bless it to you. An eloquent congregation will make any preacher eloquent—help me, then, this morning. If you will give me your ear, you will make up for my deficiency of tongue—especially if you give to God your hearts, He will bless His Truth, however feebly I may utter it.

First, I desire to talk to you a little about the seed which you have received. Secondly about the thorns. Thirdly about the result.

I. First a little about THE SEED. Remember, first, that it was the same seed in every case. Yonder it has brought forth thirty-fold. It was the same seed which was lost upon you. In a still better case, the seed has brought forth a hundred-fold. It was precisely the same corn with which your field has been sown. The sower went to his Master's granary for all his seed—how is it that in your case it is all lost? If there were two Gospels, we might expect two results without fault in the soil which failed. But with many of you to whom I speak there has been only one Gospel throughout the whole of your lives.

You have been attending in this House of Prayer where we have never changed our seed but have gone on sowing the one eternal Truth of God. Many have brought forth fruit a hundred-fold from the seed which has been scattered broadcast from this platform. They heard no more than you have heard but how much better they treated it than you have done! I want you to consider this. How covered with briars and thorns must your mind be that the Gospel which converted your sister or friend never touched you! Though you may be nominally a believer in the Word of God,

it has never so affected you as to make you gracious and holy. You are still a hearer only. How is this? The fault is not in the seed, for it is the same which has been so useful to others.

You have heard the Gospel with pleasure. "Heard it!" You say, "I heard it when a little child." Your mother brought you to the House of God in her arms. You have heard it and still hear it, though it is rather like an old song to you—but is this to be all? I am very grateful that you do hear the Gospel, for I hope that one of these days God may cause it to grow in you and yield fruit. But still a grave responsibility is upon you. Think how favored you have been! How will you answer for this privilege if it is neglected and rendered useless by that neglect?

Dear Hearers, if we lived in the heart of Africa and we died without believing in a Christ of whom we had not heard, we could not be blamed for that. But here we are in the heart of London where the Gospel is preached in all our streets and our blood will be on our own heads if we perish. Do you mean to go down to Hell? Are you so desperate that you will go there wearing the garb of Christians? If you do persist ruining your souls, my eyes shall follow you with tears. And when I cannot warn you any longer, I will weep in secret places because of your perversity.

Those described in my text were not only hearers but in a measure they accepted the good Word. The seed fell not only on this ground but into it, so that it began to grow. Of you, it is true, that you do not refuse the Gospel, or raise disputes concerning it. I am glad that you have no difficulties about the inspiration of Scripture, or the Deity of our Lord, or the fact of His atonement. You do not befog yourselves with "modern thought"—you avow your belief in the old, old Gospel. So far, so good.

But what shall I make of the strange fact that your acceptance of the Truth of God has no effect upon you? It is a very lamentable case, is it not, that a person should believe the Gospel to be true and yet should live as if it were a lie? If it is the Truth, why do you not yield obedience to it? The person knows that there is an atonement for sin but he has never confessed his sin and accepted the great sacrifice. Those great Truths of God, which circle about the Cross like a coronet of stars—he has seen their beauty and enjoyed their brilliance but he has never allowed their light to enter his heart and find a reflection in his moral character.

This is evil, only evil. If you believe the Truth of God, do you more than the Devil? No, you are behind him, for he believes and trembles and you have not gone so far as the trembling. It should be so, that every great Truth which is believed should influence the mind, sway the thoughts and mold the life. This is the natural fruitage of great spiritual Truth. The Doctrine of Grace, when it takes possession of the mind and governs the heart, produces the purest results. But if it is held in unrighteousness, it is a curse rather than a blessing to have a head knowledge. Is it not a dreadful thing to believe God's Revelation without receiving God's Spirit? This is to accept a well but never to drink of the water. To accept corn in the barn and yet die of hunger. God have mercy upon the possessors of a dead faith!

The seed sown among thorns lived and continued to grow. And in many people's minds the Gospel of Divine Truth is growing after a fashion—they understand it better, can defend it more valorously and speak of it more fluently. Moreover, it *does* influence them in some form and degree, for gross vices are forsaken. They are decent imitations of Believers—you can see the shape of an ear—the stalk has struggled up through the thorns until you can see its head and you are led to expect corn. But go to that apparent corn-ear and feel it—there are the sheaths but there is nothing in them. You have all the makings of an ear of corn but it will yield no corn.

I would speak to those before me who, perhaps, have been baptized and are members of the Church. I want to ask of them a question or two. Do you not think that there is a great deal of empty profession nowadays? Do you not think that many have a name to live and are dead? "Yes," you say, "I know a neighbor whom I judge to be in that condition." May not another neighbor judge the same of you? Would it not be well to raise the question about yourself? Have you really believed in the Lord Jesus? Are you truly converted from sin and self?

Turn that sharp eye of yours homeward for a while. Examine your own actions and judge your condition by them. Put yourself into the crucible. O my God, what if I should be a preacher to others and should be myself a castaway! Will not every deacon and elder and every individual Church member speak to himself after the same fashion. You will go to your Sunday school class this afternoon. Will you be teaching the children what you do not know? You mean to go to a meeting this evening and talk to others about Conversion—will you be exhorting them to that which you have never yourself experienced? Will it be so? You do not need fine preaching but you do need probing in the conscience. A thorough examination will do the healthy no harm and it may bless the sick. "Lord, let me know the worst of my case," is one of my frequent prayers and I suggest it to you.

So much then about the seed—it was good seed, it was sown, it was received by the soil, it grew and promised well but yet in the end it was unfruitful. No doubt multitudes, who receive Christianity, become regular attendants at our place of worship and are honest in their moral character. But Christ is not All in All to them. He holds a very secondary place in their affections. Their wheat is overshadowed with a thicket of thorns and is so choked that it comes to nothing. Their religion is buried beneath their worldliness. Sad will their end be. God in mercy save us from such a doom!

II. But now, secondly, I would speak a little about THE THORNS. They are by Matthew described as "the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches." Luke adds, "and pleasures of this life," and Mark still further mentions, "the lusts of other things." I suppose that the sower did not see any thorns when he threw the handful of corn. They had all been cut down level with the surface. He probably hoped that it was all good ground and therefore he sowed it little suspecting that the thorns were in possession.

Note well that thorns are natural to the soil. Since the Fall these are the first-born children of the ground. Any evil which hinders religion is not at all an extraordinary thing—it is what we ought to expect among fallen human beings. Grace is an exotic—thorns are indigenous. Sin is very much at home in the human heart and, like an ill weed, it grows quickly. If you wish to go to Heaven, I might take a little time to show you the way and I would need to stir you up to diligence. But if you must go to Hell—well, “easy is the way to destruction”—it is only a little matter of neglect. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

Evil things are easy things—for they are natural to our fallen nature. Right things are rare flowers that need cultivation. If any of you are being injured by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, I am not astonished. It is natural that it should be so. Therefore, be on your guard against these mischiefs. I pray you say to yourself, “Come, there is something in this man’s talk. He is very slow and dull but still there is something in what he says. I may, after all, be tolerating those thorns in my heart which will kill the good seed, for I am of like passions and infirmities with other people.” I beseech you look to yourselves, that you be not deceived at the last.

The thorns were already established in the soil. They were not only the natural inhabitants of the soil but they were rooted and fixed in it. Our sins within us claim the estate of our faculties and they will not give it up if they can help it. They will not give way to the Holy Spirit, or to the new life, or to the influences of Divine Grace, without a desperate struggle. The roots of sin run through and through our nature, grasp it with wonderful force and keep up their grasp with marvelous tenacity. O my dear Hearer, whoever you may be, you are a fallen creature!

If you were the Pope himself, or the President of the United States, or the Queen of England, it would be true of you that you were born in sin and shapen in iniquity and your unregenerate heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. The established Church of the town of Mansoul has the Devil for its archbishop. Sin has enclosed our nature as a boa constrictor encircles its victim and when it has maintained its hold for twenty, forty, or sixty years, I hope you are not so foolish as to think that holy things will easily get the mastery.

Our evil nature is radically conservative and it will endeavor to crush out every attempt at a revolution by which the Grace of God should reign through righteousness. Therefore, watch and pray, lest temptation choke that which is good in you. Watch earnestly, for Divine Grace is a tender plant in a foreign soil, in an uncongenial climate—while sin is in its own element—and is strongly rooted in the soil.

Do you know why so many professing Christians are like the thorny ground? It is because processes have been omitted which would have gone far to alter the condition of things. It was the husbandman’s business to uproot the thorns, or burn them on the spot. Years ago when people were converted, there used to be such a thing as conviction of sin. The great subsoil plow of soul-anguish was used to tear deep into the soul.

Fire also burned in the mind with exceeding heat—as people saw sin and felt its dreadful results, the love of it was burned out of them.

But now we are dinned with bragging about rapid salvations. As for myself, I believe in instantaneous conversions and I am glad to see them. But I am still more glad when I see a thorough work of Divine Grace, a deep sense of sin and an effectual wounding by the Law. We shall never get rid of thorns with plows that scratch the surface. Those fields grow the best corn which are best plowed. Converts are likely to endure when the thorns cannot spring up because they have been plowed up. Dear Hearer, are you undergoing today a very severe conviction of sin? Thank God for it. Are you in awful trouble and anguish? Do not think that a calamity has happened to you. May God Himself continue to plow you and then sow you and make sure work in you for years to come!

So you see these thorns were natives and old-established natives and it would have been well had they been cut up. The thorns were bound to grow. There is an awful vitality in evil. First the thorns sent up a few tiny shoots. These shoots branched out and more and more came to keep them company, until the corn stood as a lonely thing in a thicket of briars and was more and more overtopped and shadowed by them. The thorns aspired to the mastery and they soon obtained it. That done, they set to work to destroy the corn. They blocked it up, crowded it out and some of the thorn shoots twisted around it and held the corn by the neck until it was choked.

The thorns sucked away all the nutriment from the grain and it was starved, for there is only a certain quantity of nourishment in the soil and if the thorns have it, the corn must go without it. There is only a certain amount of thought and energy in a person. And if the world gets it, Christ cannot have it. If our thoughts run upon care and pleasure, they cannot be eager about true religion—is not that clear? That is the way in which those thorns served the grain. They starved it by devouring its food and they choked it by keeping off the air and sun. The poor thing became shriveled and weak and quite unable to produce the grain which the sower expected of it.

So it is with many professing Christians. They are at first worldly but not so very worldly. They are fairly religious, though by no means too zealous. They seek the pleasures of the world, but by no means quite so much as others we could name. But very soon the thorns grow and it becomes doubtful which will win, sin or Grace, the world or Christ. Two masters there cannot be and in this case it is especially impossible since neither of the contending powers will brook a rival. Sin has sprung from a royal though evil stock and if it is in the heart, it will struggle for the throne. So it came to pass that the tares, being tolerated, choked the good seed.

Let me describe these thorns a little. Putting together Matthew, Mark and Luke, we find that there were four sorts of thorns. The first is called “the care of this world.” This assuredly comes to the poor. They are apt to grow anxious and mistrustful about temporal things. “What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?” This trinity of dole-

ful questions afflicts many. But anxiety comes to rich people also. Care dwells with wealth as well as with poverty. "How shall I get more? How shall I lay it up? How shall I still increase it?"—and so on.

It is "the care of the age" which we are most warned against. Each age has its own special fret. It is not a care for God—that is not the care of *any* age. But the care of the age is some vanity or another and as a standing thing it is the ambition to keep up with your fellows, to be respectable and to keep up appearances. This is the care which eats as does a canker in the case of many. Grim care turns many a black hair, white, and furrows many a brow. If you let care grow in your soul, it will choke up your religion—you cannot care for God and for mammon, too.

"We must have care," says one. There is a care which is proper and there is an anxiety which is improper. That is proper care which you can cast upon God—"Casting all your care upon Him. For He cares for you." That is an improper care which you dare not take to God but have to bear yourself. Take heed of anxiety. It will eat the heart out of your religion.

There were others who felt "the deceitfulness of riches." Our Lord does not say "riches," but "the deceitfulness of riches." The two things grow together—riches are evermore deceitful. They deceive people in the getting of them—for people judge matters very unfairly when a prospect of gain is before them. The jingle of the charming guinea, or of "the almighty dollar," makes a world of difference to the ear when it is hearing a case. People cannot afford to lose by integrity and so they take the doubtful way and either sail near the wind or speculate until it amounts to gambling. They would not endure the idea of such conduct were it not that the hope of gain deceives them. Our line of conduct ought never to be ruled by gain or loss. Do right if the heavens fall. Do no wrong, even though a kingdom should be its reward.

People turn to Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," a wonderful book, and there they find certain laws which I believe to be as fixed and unalterable as the laws of gravitation. Led on by the deceitfulness of riches, people make these laws into an excuse for grinding the faces of the poor. They might as well take people to the top of a rock, fling them down and dash them to pieces and then cry out, "This is the natural result of the Law of gravitation." Of course, the Law of gravitation operates remorselessly and so will the Law of supply and demand. We must not use either of these laws as a cover for cruelty to the poor and needy, yet many do so through, "the deceitfulness of riches."

Riches are very deceitful when they are gained, for they breed in men and women many vices which they do not themselves suspect. One man is purse-proud but he thinks he is humble. He is a self-made man and worships him that made him. Is it not natural that a person should worship his maker? In his heart he thinks—"I am somebody. I came up to London with half-a-crown in my pocket and now I could buy a whole street!" People ought to respect someone of that kind, ought they not—even though he may have made his money by very strange practices? It little matters how you make money nowadays—only get it—and you will

have plenty of admirers and the deceitfulness of riches will enable you to admire yourself.

With pride comes a desire for wealthy society and vain company and thus again religion receives severe injury. There is apt to grow up in the mind an idolatry of this world and its treasures. "I don't love money," says one. "You know it is not money that is the root of all evil but the love of it." Just so. But are you sure that you do not love it? Your thoughts run a good deal after it. You hug it rather closely and you find it hard to part with. I will not accuse you, but I would have you awake to the fact that riches worm themselves into a person's heart before he is well aware of it.

You may perceive the deceitfulness of riches if you note the excuses which people make for getting so much and withholding it from the cause of God. "They intend to do a great deal of good with it." Did you hear the Devil laugh? I am not speaking of many dear people in this place who are doing a great deal of good with their means. But I am speaking of those who are simply living to accumulate wealth and who say that they will one day do a great deal of good with it. They say so. Will it ever be more than saying? I fear that in this thing many rich people deceive themselves. They go on accumulating the means but never using them—making bricks but never building. All they will get with it will be a corner in "The Illustrated London News" to say that they died worth so much.

O Sirs, how can you be content to have your good things choked? Wherever this deceitfulness of riches is allowed the upper hand, it chokes the good seed. A person cannot be eager to get and eager to keep and eager to increase, and eager to become a millionaire, and at the same time be a true servant of the Lord Jesus. As the body grows rich, the soul grows poor.

Luke tells us of another kind of weed, namely, "the pleasures of this life." I am sure that these thorns play a dreadful part nowadays. I have nothing to say against recreation in its proper place. Certain forms of recreation are needful and useful. But it is a wretched thing when amusement becomes a vocation. Amusement should be used to do us good "like a medicine." It must never be used as the food of the individual. From early morning until late at night some spend their time in a round of frivolities, or else their very work is simply carried on to furnish them funds for their pleasures.

This is vicious. Many have had all holy thoughts and gracious resolutions stamped out by perpetual trifling. Pleasure, so called, is the murderer of thought. This is the age of excessive amusement. Everybody craves for it, like a babe for its rattle. In the more sober years of our fathers, men and women had something better to live for than silly sports. The thorns are choking the age.

Mark adds, "and the lusts of other things." I will not enumerate all those other things—but all things except the things of Christ and of the Father—are "other things." If anybody spends his life on any object, however good, short of the glory of God, the good seed is choked by the inferior object. One person is eminently scientific and he will do well if his science is used for holy purposes, but it can be used to choke the seed. An-

other person is a great proficient in the arts and he does well if the arts are used as a mule for Christ to ride upon, but if art is to ride upon Christ, then it is ill enough.

I met with a clergyman many years ago who was going a long distance to find a new beetle. He was a great entomologist and I did not blame him for it, for to a thoughtful person entomology may yield many profitable lessons. But if he neglected his preaching to catch insects, then I do not wonder that a parishioner would wish that the beetles would nibble his old sermons, for they were very stale. I call it choking the seed when any inferior pursuit becomes the master of our minds—and the cause of God and Truth takes a secondary place. The seed is choked in our souls whenever Christ is not our All in All.

You see my drift—be it what it may—gain, glory, study, pleasure—all these may be briars that will choke the seed. Mr. Jay was never more pleased than when at Bristol he had a note sent up to him which ran as follows—“A young man, who is prospering in business, begs the prayers of God’s people that prosperity may not be a snare to him.” Take care that you look thus upon your prosperity. My dear Friend Dr. Taylor, of New York, speaks of some Christians nowadays as having a “butterfly Christianity.” When time and strength and thought and talent are all spent upon mere amusement, what else are men and women but mere butterflies?

“Society” is just a mass of idle people keeping each other in countenance. O dear Hearers, surely we did not come into this world to play away our days! I do not think we came into this world, either, to slave ourselves to death, or to rust away in laziness. We have come here as a man enters into the porch that he may afterward enter the house. This life is the doorway to the palace of Heaven. Pass through it in such style that you may enter before the King with holy joy. If you give your mind and thoughts to these passing things, be they what they may, you will ruin your soul, for the good seed cannot grow.

III. So I close in the last place by noticing THE RESULT. The seed was unfruitful.

These briars and thorns could not pull the seed up, or throw it away. It remained where it was but they choked it. So it may be that your business, your cares, your pleasures have not torn up your religion by the roots—it is there still, such as it is. But these things suffocate your better feelings. Someone that is choked is not good for much. If a thief gets into his house and he desires to defend his property, what can he do while he is choked? He must wait until he gets his breath again. What an amount of choked religion we have around us! It may be alive. I do not know whether it is or not. But it looks very black in the face. God save you from having your religion choked!

I have already told you it was drained of all its sustenance. Look at many Christians. I call them Christians for they call themselves so. A boy in the streets, selling mince pies, kept crying, “Hot mince pies!” A person bought one of them and found it quite cold. “Boy,” said he, why did you call these pies hot?” “That’s the name they go by, Sir,” said the boy. So there are plenty of people that are called Christians but they are not

Christians—that's the name they go by. All the substance is drained out of them by other matters. You see the shape of a Christian, the make of a Christian, and some of the talk of a Christian but the fruit of a Christian is not there. That is the result of the choking by the thorns of care, riches, pleasure and worldliness in general.

What life there was in the grain was very sickly. Let me remind certain persons that their spiritual lives are growing weak at this time. Morning prayer this morning, how long did it take? Do not grow red in the face. I will say no more about it. You are not coming out tonight, are you? Half a Sunday is enough worship for you. Would you not like to live in some country place where you did not need to go out to a place of worship even once? Bible reading, how much do you do of that? Family prayer, is that a delight to you? Why, numbers of so-called Christians have given up family religion altogether.

How about weekday services? You are not often at a Prayer Meeting. No, the distance is too great! Thursday night service? "Well, well, you see I might come but there happens to be a lawn tennis party that night." Will you come in the winter? "Yes, I would but then a friend drops in and we have an evening at bagatelle." How many there are in this condition! I am not going to judge them but I remember that an eminent minister used to say, "When weekday services are forsaken, farewell to the life of godliness." Such people never seem to bathe in their religion but they give themselves a wetting with the end of the towel—they try to look decent but they are not inwardly cleansed.

As to confessing Christ before men and women, many fall altogether. If you were pushed into a corner and were asked if you are a Christian, you would say, "Well, I do go to a place of worship," but you are by no means anxious to own the soft impeachment. Our Salvation Army friends are not ashamed of their religion—why should you be? Our Quaker friends used to wear broad brims but they are very properly giving up their peculiar garb. I hope it is not to be to you an indication that you may conceal your religion and be as much as possible like the world. Do you hope to be soldiers and yet never wear your regimentals? This is one of the marks of feeble religion.

When it comes to defending the Gospel, where do you see it in this age? I hoped that many would be found among Baptists who would care for the Truth of God. But now I come to the conclusion that it is with many, as with the showman when asked which was Wellington and which was Bonaparte—"Whichever you please, my little dears. Pay your money and take your choice!" Free will or Free Grace, human merit or Christ's atonement, it does not matter now. New theology or old theology, human speculation or Divine Revelation—who cares? What do they care whether God's Truth or the Devil's lies stand? I am weary of these drivellers! The thorns have choked the seed in the pulpits and in the Churches as well as in private individuals.

Oh, that God would return! Oh, that His Spirit would raise up among us people who believe, indeed, and prove the power of their belief! The fruit of much modern piety is nil. I sat down one day with three or four old

Christian men. We had no sooner met than we began to speak of the providential dealings of God with His people. We related instances of answers to prayer and we spoke of the Sovereign Grace of God and His faithfulness to His saints. When we had gone a little forward in the conversation, one remarked how he had enjoyed the talk.

“Alas,” said he, “nobody talks about God now. His Providence and His readiness to hear prayer are seldom mentioned now. The talk is all about the markets and the weather and Home Rule and Mr. Gladstone and Disestablishment, but little enough about the Lord Jesus Christ.” That witness was true. In old times the Lord’s people spoke often one to another and the Lord stood at the window and listened—“The Lord hearkened and heard it.” He liked their talk so well that He said He would print it—“A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon His name” (Mal. 3:16).

Where do you get experimental Christian talk now? The thorns choke holy communion upon the best things. Fervent prayer! Mighty prayer! Where do you meet with it? Thank God, we have some Brothers and Sisters here whose prayers could unlock the windows of Heaven, or shut them up. But it is not so with many. Go to the Prayer Meetings of most of the Churches. What poor things! Of course I find in country places that many drop the Prayer Meeting during hay time and harvest. In London they do not drop the Prayer Meetings in summer because they are too small to need dropping.

They take up the fragment of a Prayer Meeting and mend with it the worn-out lecture, so that it becomes neither lecture nor Prayer Meeting. How can we expect a blessing when we are too lazy to ask for it? Is it not evidence of a dying religion when, to cover their carelessness about meeting for prayer, we even hear ministers doubting the value of Prayer Meetings and calling them “religious expedients”?

Where do you meet with intense enjoyment of the things of God? The spiritual life is low when there is little delight in holy service. Oh, for the old Methodist fire! Oh, to feel our hearts dance at the sound of Jesus’ name! Oh, to flame up like beacon fires and blaze toward Heaven with holy ecstasy! It is a sorrowful day when religion goes abroad without wearing her ornaments of joy. When an army has left its flag behind, it has evidently given up all idea of victory.

If there is a declension in spiritual life, we cannot expect to see deeds of holy consecration. Oh, for men and women who bring their alabaster boxes to Jesus! I am glad when I hear this kind of lamentation. “My dear Sir, I have not done for the Lord what I ought to have done. I have been a Believer now for many years but I have not given to His cause what I ought to have given. Tell me what I can do.” There are hopeful signs in such inquiries and therefore they are well but it would be better to begin early and avoid such regrets.

I would put it to you, my dear Hearer, have you been fruitful? Have you been fruitful with your wealth? Have you been fruitful with your talent? Have you been fruitful with your time? What are you doing for Jesus now? *Salvation is not by doings*—you are saved by Divine Grace—but if you are

so saved, *prove it by your devoted life*. Consecrate yourself anew this day wholly to your Master's service. You are not your own but bought with a price and if you would not be like these thorn-choked seeds, live while you live, with all-consuming zeal.

"Well," says one, "but there *are* the thorns." I know there are. They were here when our blessed Lord came among us and they made Him a cruel crown. Are you going to grow more of them? May I urge you to give up cultivating thorns? They are useless. They come to no good. Whatever the pursuit is, short of the glory of God, it is a thorn—and there is no use in it. It will, in the end, be painful to you as it was to your Lord. A thorn will tear your flesh, yes, tear your heart. Especially when you come to die will these thorns be in your pillow. Even if you die in the Lord, it will grieve your heart to think you did not live more to Jesus.

If you live for these things, you will rue the day, for they are like thorns, painful in the getting, painful in the keeping and painful in the extraction. You who have had a thorn in your hand know what I mean. Worldly cares come with pain, they stay with pain, and they go with pain.

Still, there is a use for thorns. What is that use? First, if you have thorns about you today, make a child's use of them. What does a child do? If he gets a thorn in his finger, he looks at it and cries. How it smarts! Then he runs off to his mother. That is one of the sweet uses of his adversity, it admits him to his mother at once. She might say, "What are you coming in for? Run about the garden." But he cries, "Please, mother, I've got a thorn in my finger." This is quite enough argument to secure him the best attention of the queen of the house. See how tenderly she takes out the little dagger! Let your cares drive you to God. I shall not mind if you have many of them if each one leads you to prayer. If every fret makes you lean more on the Beloved, it will be a benefit. Thus make good use of the thorns.

Another service to which thorns may be put is to make a hedge of them, to keep the goats of worldly pleasure from eating the young shoots of your graces. Let the sorrows of life keep off temptations which else might do you serious mischief.

May we meet in Heaven! Oh, may we all meet in Heaven! What a congregation I have addressed this morning! I feel overawed as I look at you. From the ends of the earth have many of you come. The Lord bless you! Strangers are here in vast numbers, for the most of our regular hearers are at the seaside. I may never see you again on earth. May we all meet in Heaven, where thorns will never grow! May we be gathered by the angels in that day when the Lord shall say, "Gather the wheat into My barn"! Amen. So let it be!

Portion of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Matthew 13:1-23.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 643, 30.

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WHEAT IN THE BARN

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*“But gather the wheat into My barn.”
Matthew 13:30.*

“GATHER the wheat into My barn.” Then the purpose of the Son of Man will be accomplished. He sowed good seed and He shall have His barn filled with it at the last. Be not dispirited, Christ will not be disappointed. “He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.” He went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, but He shall come again rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.

“Gather the wheat into My barn.” Then Satan’s policy will be unsuccessful. The enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, hopeful that the false wheat would destroy or materially injure the true—but he failed in the end, for the wheat ripened and was ready to be gathered. Christ’s garner shall be filled—the tares shall not choke the wheat. The Evil One will be put to shame!

In gathering in the wheat, good angels will be employed—“the angels are the reapers.” This casts special scorn upon the great evil angel. He sows the tares and tries to destroy the harvest and, therefore, the good angels are brought in to celebrate his defeat and to rejoice together with their Lord in the success of the Divine Husbandry. Satan will make a poor profit out of his meddling—he shall be defeated in all his efforts and so the threat shall be fulfilled, “Upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat.”

By giving the angels work to do, all intelligent creatures, of whose existence we have information, are made to take an interest in the work of Grace—whether for malice or for adoration, redemption excites them all. The wonderful works of God are made manifest to all, for these things were not done in a corner.

We too much forget the angels. Let us not overlook their tender sympathy with us—they behold the Lord rejoicing over our repentance—and they rejoice with Him! They are our watchers and the Lord’s messengers of mercy. They bear us up in their hands lest we dash our foot against a stone. And when we come to die, they carry us to the bosom of our Lord. It is one of our joys that we have come to an innumerable company of angels—let us think of them with affection.

At this time I will keep to my text and preach from it almost word by word. It begins with, “but,” and that is—

I. A WORD OF SEPARATION.

Here note that the tares and the wheat will grow together until the time of harvest shall come. It is a great sorrow of heart to some of the

wheat to be growing side by side with tares. The ungodly are as thorns and briars to those who fear the Lord. How frequently is the sigh forced forth from the godly heart, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" A man's foes are often found within his own household. Those who should have been his best helpers are often his worst hinderers. Their conversation vexes and torments him. It is of little use to try to escape from them, for the tares are permitted, in God's Providence, to grow with the wheat—and they will do so until the end. Good men have emigrated to distant lands to found communities in which there should be none but saints, but, alas, sinners have sprung up in their own families! The attempt to weed the ungodly and heretical out of the settlement has led to persecution and other evils—and the whole plan has proven a failure. Others have shut themselves away in hermitages to avoid the temptations of the world, and so have hoped to win the victory by running away—this is not the way of wisdom! The word for this present is, "Let both grow together." *But* there will come a time when a final separation will be made. Then, dear Christian woman, your husband will never persecute you again! Godly sister, your brother will heap no more ridicule upon you! Pious workman, there will be no more jesting and taunting from the ungodly! That, "but," will be an iron gate between the God-fearing and the godless! Then will the tares be cast into the fire, *but* the Lord of the harvest will say, "Gather the wheat into My barn."

This separation must be made, for the growing of the wheat and the tares together on earth has caused much pain and injury and, therefore, it will not be continued in a happier world. We can very well suppose that godly men and women might be willing that their unconverted children should dwell with them in Heaven, but it cannot be, for God will not have His cleansed ones defiled, nor His glorified ones tried by the presence of the unbelieving. The tares must be taken away in order to the perfectness and usefulness of the wheat. Would you have the tares and the wheat heaped up together in the granary in one mass? That would be bad husbandry with a vengeance! They can neither of them be put to appropriate use till thoroughly separated. Even so, mark you, the saved and the unsaved may live together *here*, but they will not live together in another world! The command is absolute—"Gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them: *but* gather the wheat into My barn." Sinner, can you hope to enter Heaven? You never loved your mother's God and is He to endure you in His heavenly courts? You never trusted your father's Savior and yet are you to behold His Glory forever? Are you to go swaggering down the streets of Heaven, letting fall an oath, or singing a loose song? Why, you know you get tired of the worship of God on the Lord's Day—do you think that the Lord will endure unwilling worshippers in the Temple above? The Sabbath is a wearisome day to you—how can you hope to enter into the Sabbath of God? You have no taste for heavenly pursuits and these things would be profaned if you were permitted to partake in them! Therefore that word, "but," must come in and you must part from the Lord's people, never to meet again! Can you bear to think of being divided from godly friends forever and ever?

That separation involves an awful difference of destiny. "Gather the tares in bundles to burn them." I do not dare to draw the picture, but when the bundle is bound up, there is no place for it except the fire. God grant that you may never know all the anguish which burning must mean, but may you escape from it at once. It is no trifle which the Lord of Love compares to being consumed with fire. I am quite certain that no words of mine can ever set forth its terror. They say that we speak dreadful things about the wrath to come, but I am sure that we understate the case. What must the tender, loving, gracious Jesus have meant by the words, "Gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them"? See what a wide distinction there is between the lot of the Lord's people and Satan's people! Burn the wheat? Oh, no—"Gather the wheat into My barn." There let them be happily, safely housed forever! Oh, the infinite distance between Heaven and Hell!—the harps and the angels, and the wailing and gnashing of teeth! Who can ever measure the width of that gulf which divides the glorified saint, robed in white and crowned with immortality, from the soul which is driven forever away from the Presence of God and from the Glory of His power? It is a dreadful, "but"—that, "but" of separation! I pray you, remember that it will interpose between brother and brother—between mother and child—between husband and wife. "One shall be taken and the other left." And when that sword shall descend to divide, there shall never be any union later!

The separation is eternal. There is no hope or possibility of change in the world to come. "But," says one, "that dreadful 'but'! Why must there be such a difference? The answer is because there always was a difference! The wheat was sown by the Son of Man—the false wheat was sown by the enemy. There was always a difference in character—the wheat was good, the tares were evil. This difference did not appear at first, but it became more and more apparent as the wheat ripened and as the tares ripened, too. They were totally different plants—and so a regenerate person and an unregenerate person are altogether different beings. I have heard an unregenerate man say that he is quite as good as the godly man, but in so boasting he betrayed his pride. Surely there is as great a difference in God's sight between the unsaved and the Believer as between darkness and light, or between the dead and the living! There is in the one a life which there is not in the other—and the difference is vital and radical. Oh, that you may never trifle with this essential matter, but really be the wheat of the Lord! It is vain to have the name of wheat—we must have the nature of wheat! God will not be mocked—He will not be pleased by our calling ourselves Christians while we are not! Be not satisfied with Church membership, but seek after membership with Christ! Do not talk about faith, but exercise it! Do not boast of experience, but possess it. Be not *like* the wheat, but be the wheat! No shams and imitations will stand in the Last Great Day! That terrible, "but," will roll as a sea of fire between the true and the false! Oh, Holy Spirit, let each of us be found transformed by Your power! The next word of our text is, "gather,"—that is—

II. A WORD OF CONGREGATION.

What a blessed thing this gathering is! I feel it a great pleasure to gather multitudes together to hear the Gospel! And is it not a joy to see a house full of people on weekdays and Sundays who are willing to leave their homes and to come considerable distances to listen to the Gospel? It is a great thing to gather people together for that, but the gathering of the wheat into the barn is a far more wonderful business. Gathering is, in itself, better than scattering, and I pray that the Lord Jesus may always exercise His attracting power in this place, for He is no Divider, but, “unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Has He not said, “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me”?

Observe that the congregation mentioned in our text is *selected and assembled by skilled gatherers*. “The angels are the reapers.” Ministers could not do it, for they do not know all the Lord’s wheat and they are apt to make mistakes—some by too great leniency and others by excessive severity. Our poor judgments occasionally shut out saints and often shut in sinners. The angels will know their Master’s property. They know each saint, for they were present at his birthday. Angels know when sinners repent and they never forget the persons of the penitents. They have witnessed the lives of those who have believed and have helped them in their spiritual battles, and so they know them. Yes, angels by a holy instinct discern the Father’s children and are not to be deceived. They will not fail to gather all the wheat and to leave out every tare!

But they are *gathered under a very stringent regulation*, for, first of all, according to the parable, the tares—the false wheat—have been taken out and then the angelic reapers gather nothing but the wheat. The seed of the serpent, fathered by Satan, is thus separated from the seed of the Kingdom, owned by Jesus, the promised Deliverer. This is the one distinction and no other is taken into consideration. If the most amiable unconverted persons could stand in the ranks with the saints, the angels would not bear them to Heaven, for the mandate is, “Gather the wheat.” Could the most honest man be found standing in the center of the Church, with all the members round about him and with all the ministers entreating that he might be spared, yet if he were not a Believer, he could not be carried into the Divine garner! There is no help for it. The angels have no choice in the matter—the peremptory command is, “Gather *the wheat*,” and they must gather none else!

It will be *a gathering from very great distances*. Some of the wheat ripens in the South Sea Islands, in China, and in Japan. Some flourishes in France, broad acres grow in the United States—there is scarcely a land without a portion of the good grain! Where all God’s wheat grows, I cannot tell. There is a remnant, according to the election of Grace, among every nation and people, but the angels will gather all the good grain to the same garner.

“Gather the wheat.” *The saints will be found in all ranks of society*. The angels will bring in a few ears from palaces and great armfuls from cottages! Many will be collected from the lowly cottages of our villages and hamlets, and others will be raised up from the back slums of our great cities to the metropolis of God! From the darkest places angels will bring those children of sweetness and light who seldom beheld the sun, and

yet were pure in heart and saw their God! The hidden and obscure shall be brought into the Light of God, for the Lord knows them that are His—and His harvest-men will not miss them.

To me, it is a charming thought that *they will come from all the ages*. Let us hope that our first father, Adam, will be there. And mother Eve, following in the footsteps of their dear son, Abel, and trusting in the same Sacrifice. We shall meet Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Daniel, and all the saints made perfect! What a joy to see the Apostles, martyrs, and Reformers! I long to see Luther, and Calvin, and Bunyan, and Whitfield. I like the rhyme of good old father Ryl—and—

**“They all shall be there, the great and the small!
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul.”**

I do not know how that will be, but I have not much doubt that we shall have fellowship with all the saints of every age in the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven!

No matter when or where the wheat grew, *it shall be gathered into the one barn*—gathered never to be scattered—gathered out of all divisions of the visible Church, never to be divided again! They grew in different fields. Some flourished on the hillside where Episcopalians grow in all their glory! And others in the lowlier soil, where Baptists multiply, and Methodists flourish! But once the wheat is in the barn, none can tell in which field the ears grew. Then, indeed, shall the Master’s prayer have a glorious answer—“That they all may be one.” All our errors removed and our mistakes corrected and forgiven, the one Lord, the one faith and the one Baptism will be known of us all—and there will be no more displeasure and envying! What a blessed gathering it will be! What a meeting! The elect of God, the *elite* of all the centuries, of whom the world was not worthy! I should not like to be away. If there were no Hell, it would be Hell enough to me to be shut out of such heavenly society! If there were no weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, it would be dreadful enough to miss the Presence of the Lord, and the joy of praising Him forever, and the bliss of meeting with all the noblest beings that ever lived! Amid the necessary controversies of the age, I, who have been doomed to seem a man of strife, sigh for the blessed rest wherein all spiritual minds shall blend in eternal accord before the Throne of God and of the Lamb. Oh, that we were all right, that we might be all happily united in one spirit! In the text there is next—

III. A WORD OF DESIGNATION.

I have already trespassed upon that domain. “Gather *the wheat*.” Nothing but “the wheat” will be placed in the Lord’s homestead. Lend me your hearts while I urge you to a searching examination for a minute or two. *The wheat was sown of the Lord*. Are you sown of the Lord? Friend, if you have any religion, how did you get it? Was it self-sown? If so, it is good for nothing! The true wheat was sown by the Son of Man. Are you sown of the Lord? Did the Spirit of God drop eternal life into your bosom? Did it come from that dear hand which was nailed to the Cross? Is Jesus your life? Does your life begin and end with Him? If so, it is well!

The wheat was sown of the Lord—it is also *the object of the Lord's care*. Wheat needs a deal of attention. The farmer would get nothing from it if he did not watch it carefully. Are you under the Lord's care? Does He keep you? Is that word true of your soul, "I the Lord do keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"? Do you experience such keeping? Give an honest answer, as you love your soul.

Next, wheat *is a useful thing*, a gift from God for the life of men. The false wheat was of no good to anybody—it could only be eaten of swine—and then it made them stagger like drunken men! Are you one of those who are wholesome in society, who are like bread to the world, so that if men receive you, your example and your teaching, they will be blessed thereby? Judge yourselves whether you are good or evil in life and influence.

"Gather the wheat." You know that God must put the goodness, the Grace, the solidity and the usefulness into you, or else you will never be wheat fit for angelic gathering. One thing is true of the wheat—that *it is the most dependent of all plants*. I have never heard of a field of wheat which sprang up and grew and ripened without a farmer's care. Some ears may appear after a harvest when the corn has shaled out, but I have never heard of plains in America or elsewhere covered with unsown wheat. No, no. There is no wheat where there is no man, and there is no Grace where there is no Christ! We owe our very existence to the Father, who is the Farmer.

Yet, dependent as it is, wheat stands in the front rank of honor and esteem—and so do the godly in the judgment of all who are of an understanding heart. We are nothing without Christ—but with Him we are full of honor. Oh, to be among those by whom the world is preserved, the excellent of the earth in whom the saints delight! God forbid we should be among the base and worthless tares! Our last head, upon which also I will speak briefly, is—

IV. A WORD OF DESTINATION.

"Gather the wheat *into My barn*." The process of gathering in the wheat will be completed at the Day of Judgment, but it is going on every day. From hour to hour saints are gathered—they are going heavenward even now. I am so glad to hear as a regular thing that the departed ones from my own dear Church have such joy in being harvested. Glory be to God, our people die well! The best thing is to live well, but we are greatly gladdened to hear that the brethren die well, for, full often, that is the most telling witness for vital godliness. Men of the world feel the power of triumphant deaths!

Every hour the saints are being gathered into the barn. That is where they want to be. We feel no pain at the news of ingathering, for we wish to be safely stored up by our Lord. If the wheat that is in the field could speak, every grain would say, "The ultimatum for which we are living and growing is the barn, the granary." For this the frosty night! For this the sunny days! For this the dew and the rain—and for this everything! Every process with the wheat is tending towards the granary. So is it with us—everything is working towards Heaven—towards the gathering place—towards the congregation of the righteous—towards the vision of our Re-

deemer's face! Our death will cause no jar in our life-music! It will involve no pause, or even discord—it is part of a program—the crowning of our whole history!

To the wheat the barn is the place of security. It dreads no mildew there. It fears no frost, no heat, no drought, no wet when once in the barn. All its growth-perils are past. It has reached its perfection. It has rewarded the labor of the Farmer and it is housed. Oh, long-expected day, begin! Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a blessing it will be when you and I shall have come to our maturity and Christ shall see in us the travail of His soul!

I delight to think of Heaven as *His* barn! *His* barn, what must that be? It is but the poverty of language that such an expression has to be used at all concerning the home of our Father, the dwelling of Jesus! Heaven is the palace of the King, but so far to us a barn because it is the place of security, the place of rest forever! It is the homestead of Christ to which we shall be carried and for this we are ripening. It is to be thought of with ecstatic joy, for the gathering into the barn involves a harvest home and I have never heard of men sitting down to cry over an earthly harvest home, nor of their following the sheaves with tears! No, they clap their hands, they dance for joy and shout right lustily! Let us do something like that, concerning those who are already housed. With grave, sweet melodies let us sing around their tombs. Let us feel that, surely, the bitterness of death is passed. When we remember their glory, we may rejoice like the travailing woman when her child is born, who “remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” Another soul begins to sing in Heaven—why do you weep, O heirs of immortality? Is the eternal happiness of the righteous, the birth which comes of their death-pangs? Then happy are they who die! Is Glory the end and outcome of that which fills our home with mourning? If so, thank God for bereavements! Thank God for sad severing! He has promoted our dear ones to the skies! He has blessed them beyond all that we could ask or even think! He has taken them out of this weary world to lie in His bosom forever! Blessed be His name if it were for nothing else but this! Would you keep your old father here, full of pain and broken down with feebleness? Would you shut him out of Glory? Would you detain your dear wife here with all her suffering? Would you hold back your husband from the immortal crown? Could you wish your child to descend to earth again from the bliss which now surrounds her? No, no! We wish to be going Home ourselves, to the heavenly Father's house and its many mansions! But concerning the departed, we rejoice before the Lord as with the joy of harvest! “Therefore comfort one another with these words.”

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 13:1-23; 15:13-28; 1 CORINTHIANS 3:17-23.**

Verses 1, 2. *The same day went Jesus out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He*

went into a boat, and sat, and the whole multitude stood on the shore. He had thus a little breathing space between Him and the people—a better opportunity for His being both heard and seen. A noble instance of open-air preaching. And if our climate would permit, what a blessing it would be if we could turn out of these houses and sit in a boat or stand on the seashore!

3-9. *And He spoke many things unto them in parables saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow. And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them. Some fell upon stony places where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched: and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them; but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who has ears to hear, let him hear.* Upon the very surface of it, this parable teaches those of us who have to sow that we must not expect to have our choice of the ground—and that we are not even to make a choice of the matter, but we are bound to go, as this sower did, and cast a handful there upon the hard trodden road and a handful there among the thorns and nettles, and a handful here again where there is no deepness of earth and God be thanked if a handful shall fall on good ground. Still, for us to suppose that we are to sort out the characters and to select the ground is a very great mistake! “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” A distinction will soon come! The seed will be the grand detective of the soil. It will show what the soil is. Just as Christ on the Cross is the discernor of men’s thoughts, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed, so is the preaching of Christ Crucified the test of human condition! You shall see now who it is that has the honest and good ground, and who has not. Not by a geological inspection, but simply by throwing a handful of seed on it. That will soon discern between the precious and the vile.

10-16. *And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why do You speak unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even what he has. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not, and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.* A judicial blindness and deafness of heart had come over the nation of Israel, so that even when the sun shone in its strength in the Person and teaching of Christ, they could not see. And when God spoke more plainly than He ever spoke before, by His Son, yet they could not hear so as to under-

stand. And I sometimes fear that some measure of this judicial blindness has happened unto many in our land. Those who take the metaphors of Scripture and interpret them literally and dare to take out of the old Law excuses for ritualistic observance—what can we say of them, but that this people's hearts have waxed gross? God has done very much for our country. He has seeded it with the blood of martyrs. The scars of martyrdom have hardly passed away and, after all this, if men will go back to the fooleries of popish ceremony—if they will put from them the blessed light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—depend upon it, God will give them up to some kind of hardness of heart, so that they will plunge from one superstition to another, and their last end shall be worse than the first! But blessed are they who, being taught of God, can perceive the spirit beneath the letter, and do not confound the emblems which the Savior used, but suck out the meaning from them as bees do the honey from the flowers!

17-19. *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see and not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them. Hear you, therefore the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom and understands it not, then comes the Wicked One and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.* Do you notice here the importance of the Word of God? But when it is heard, but not understood, you would suppose that the devil might as well let it stay where it was, for what hurt could it do to his kingdom for the man to hear it and not to understand it? But he is so frightened at the Word of God that he comes, like an evil bird, and takes it away for fear lest lying even in the dull heart without understanding, yet, somehow, it should breed an understanding in the heart! And so he takes it away from the thoughts and the memory, so fearful is he of it. "Nothing makes the devil tremble like the Gospel," said Martin Luther, and I do not doubt that all the churches in the world, with all their ceremonies, are less feared by the devil than one single Doctrine or text out of the Word of God! So he comes, like an evil bird, and catches away that which was sown in the heart. You must expect to lose a good deal of your teaching. As farmers drop several beans in the hole and say, "That one is for the worm; this one is for the crow—then there is another which they hope will spring up—so must we expect it to be with our teaching—much of which will be lost.

20, 21. *But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and with joy receives it. Yet has he not root in himself, but endures for a while: but when tribulation or persecution arises, because of the word, by-and-by he is offended.* A straw fire blazes fiercely, but lasts not long. And so there are some who we hope are converts who show an extraordinary zeal, and you would fancy that, surely, they would outrun all Christians! But they have not breath. They are not good stayers. They soon cease in the race. They are soon hot—soon cold. And we may expect to have many disappointments from persons of this charac-

ter, and all the more so among children—readily impressed, but easily do they lose the impression.

22. *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.* Dear Friends who have to teach the young, you have, in their case, less danger in this respect. They have not yet come to the time when the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches will choke the Word. You have some advantage over us, though even the little things of a child's play may make nettles and thorns. Things which we could not consider to be cares—that seem too trivial—are cares to them. It may be that our heavenly Father thinks of our cares very much as we think of our children's cares—and as we should smile to see them distrustful, so it may be that He smiles and grieves whenever He finds us so. For, mark you, even among God's own people, God's Word cannot grow in our hearts at the rate it should, for we have the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. We must cry to be lifted above these—delivered from the evil influences of the world in which we dwell—or else our good Lord and Master will waste many a handful of good seed upon us, though, I trust, that out of us He will get some harvest.

23. *But he that received seed into good ground is he that hears the word, and understands which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.* For all Christians are not alike fruitful. Would God they all reached to the hundredfold and went beyond it! Such seed, and such a sower, and such fruitful seasons as He has given to some of us, and such plowing and such tilling, and such feeding, and such watering, and such sunshine, and such dew—oh, we ought to bring forth a hundredfold! Let us chide ourselves and whenever we have to complain that we do not get a harvest from our sowing, or as much as we could desire, let us look within and say, "My heart, you are like the field I have to sow. My Master, I fear, gets as little out of you as I get when I go unsuccessfully to my work."

MATTHEW 15:13-15; 21-28.

13. *But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.* He had not any peculiar tenderness towards them, they were not plants of his Father's planting—they deserved to be rooted up and their teaching was so utterly false that if He had offended against it, He was glad to have done so.

14. *Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* The bad teacher and he that is badly taught, for they are both responsible, shall both fall into the ditch. No man can lay the sin of his being misdirected entirely upon his priest or his teacher. He had no business to have submitted to him. At the same time, it is a very serious responsibility for a man who knows not God to attempt to teach the things of God. I know a man who, in a certain place of worship was deeply convinced of sin—the arrows of God stuck in him and, being in great distress, he went to the minister and told him how he felt the burden of his guilt. The minister said to him,

“My dear Friend, I really had no intention of making you uneasy—what was it I said?—I will get the sermon—I am very sorry, but really I do not know anything about it.” The man said, “You told us we must be born-again.” “Oh,” said the minister, “that was done for you when a child—your parents did it.” “You know, Sir, we must be converted.” “Well, really I do not understand it. I am afraid I have disturbed you unnecessarily.” Our friend, however, was not to be put off, so he sought and found the Savior. But how dreadful a thing it is when the blind lead the blind—they shall both fall into the ditch!

15. *Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do not you yet understand that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. There is no defilement about that. Cleanliness is to be observed, but not the mere act of washing just for the sake of it, every time you eat bread, which defiles not a man! But oh, what defilement there is in evil thought! In anger, which breeds murder! In lust, which leads to adultery and fornication! In covetousness which begets theft! And in a false heart which leads to false witness, and in a profane mind which leads to blasphemy! Oh, that God would cleanse our secret thoughts, the very center of our hearts, for until the fountain is made clean, the stream that comes from it cannot be pure!*

21, 22. *Then Jesus went from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David! My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* “But He answered her not a word.” How painful that silence must have been! In what suspense she was.

23. *But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away: for she cries after us.* They were mistaken. She did not cry after them—she knew better than that! She cried after the Lord, after the great Son of David, not after them, but, however, she disturbed them.

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Christ’s personal ministry was confined to the Jews. He came as a Savior to redeem all mankind, but as a Preacher, He was a minister to the Circumcision and He came to speak only to Israel.

25. *Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!* Her prayer got shorter and she grew more intense, more energetic, more determined to win the blessing. “Lord help me!”

26-28. *But He answered and said, It is not right to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Oh, can you exer-

cise a like faith in Christ? If so, you shall get a like blessing! Only believe in Him! Only make up your mind and however great the mercy, it cannot be too great for Him to give! And believe that He will give it, rest on Him to bestow it and you shall have it! God grant that many may receive it at this very hour!

1 CORINTHIANS 3:17-23.

17-18. *If any man defiles the Temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the Temple of God is holy, which Temple you are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* Do not let him seek to be reckoned wise by the philosophers of the period who are always against the Truth of God. Let him consent to be thought to be a fool—yes, let him know in his own heart that he is not wise—and then let him yield himself up to the wisdom of God. Consciousness of ignorance is the vestibule of knowledge! And he that knows right well that he is a fool is on the way to becoming a wise man! He that would pass into the Temple of Wisdom must first of all confess his ignorance.

19, 20. *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.* What a wonderfully small difference there is, after all, between the very cultured man, who thinks himself so, and the man who makes no pretense to it whatever! The knowledge which the wisest man has is about equal, in the Presence of God, to the knowledge which one child of three years old has over a child of two years old! To God we must all seem masses of ignorance! And if you could put the whole British Association, all the doctors of divinity, and all the LL.D.'s and all the men of high degrees together, the things they did *not* know would make a great many volumes—and the things they *did* know would not go very far. “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are vain.”

21. *Therefore let no man glory in men.* There really is not anything to glory in, in men! “The best of men are men at the best.” Never need we exalt ourselves or extol others. “Lord, what is man that You are mindful of him?” “Let no man glory in men.”

21 *For all things are yours.* Children of God, all men are yours, to serve your highest benefit! All ministers and leaders in Christ are yours to seek your souls' good! Treat them as bees do flowers, and gather honey from them all. “All things are yours.”

22-23, *Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours. And you are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

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

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

A GREAT BARGAIN

NO. 1424

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

***“Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant, seeking good pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”
Matthew 13:45, 46.***

A MERCHANT endeavors to trade so as to make a profit. Whether he deals in pearls or in grain, he does not hope to obtain riches by *labor*. He leaves that to those who eat their bread in the sweat of their face. He tries to get his by the sweat of his *brain*. He is dependent not so much upon labor as upon knowledge, upon skill, upon the advantage which superior acquaintance with the article which he deals in gives him. Now, this merchant is, at the very commencement, in some measure, a picture of the seeker after Christ. Christ and His salvation are not to be earned—they are not to be procured as the result of *labor*. Christ is to be had by *knowledge*. What says the Scripture? “By his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many,” that is, through their knowing Christ they become justified.

This is, indeed, another way of putting the system of salvation which is stated thus, “How shall I hear without a preacher?” The work begins with *hearing* the preacher. It then goes on to *believing* what you hear and through believing you are saved. This is virtually knowledge—the knowledge communicated by God’s messenger or by God’s Word—the knowledge heard, the knowledge believed. So men come to the knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal, for when a man knows Christ and understands Him so that he gives his heart to Him, then is he saved!

Inasmuch, then, as the merchant seeks his advantage by superior knowledge, he becomes a type of the man who gets saved through obtaining the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I shall not, however, enlarge upon this analogy, but proceed at once to speak of the merchant in this parable, for here we have a fit emblem of many who lay hold on Christ and find Him to be their All in All. Let us watch this merchant while he is doing four things. First, seeking, then finding. Then selling and, fourthly, buying again.

I. First, then, we shall WATCH HIM WHILE HE IS SEEKING. “The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant seeking good pearls.” It is different from the man we read of just now who, by accident, discovered a treasure while he was in the field. He was looking for something else and came upon the treasure. That is the man whom God, in infinite Sovereignty, saves, though He was heretofore indifferent and careless. This is a person of a nobler sort. He is of a higher grade of mind. He is of an altogether different mental constitution. He is seeking good pearls—something good, not exactly seeking the one Pearl of Great Price, for at first he does not

know about it. But, still, he is seeking pearls and he comes upon one pearl in consequence of his seeking.

Now, notice about him, as a seeker, that he has his mind awakened and engaged. He is thinking about something—thinking about pearls. His heart is occupied with his business. His energies are thrown into it. All his thoughts are in the direction of precious stones. Oh that we could wake men up to exercise the faculty of thinking and then to direct, to regulate and to control their thoughts! But *thinking* is an occupation that a great many persons altogether dislike! They are frivolous. We cannot get them to think about *anything*. Why is it that people are so passionately fond of reading novels and so seldom read the true histories which are quite as interesting and far more capable of affording pleasure and pastime? It is because the minds of men are frivolous.

An idle tale—a silly story of a love-sick maiden—will engross them by the hour together! But anything that is solid and worth the knowing seems to have small charm for their shallow brains. Many minds never get on the wing at all. Many men work so hard with their hands and suffers such fatigue from bodily labor that they are scarcely able to think much, while there are others who dissipate their time and consume their lives in idleness till they are utterly disqualified for any vigorous thought. They are lazy and sluggish. They have dry rot in their very souls! Their brains do not work. They seem to live in one everlasting lethargy and daydream. Oh that men were wise, that they were thoughtful! Happy was the preacher who knew that he was addressing himself to a thoroughly intelligent, thoughtful congregation! We would expect, then, that the handfuls of good seed would drop into the furrows readily and bring forth an abundant harvest!

This merchant's mind was awakened. He had something before him. Equally evident is it that he had a fixed definite objective. He had given himself to pearl hunting and pearl hunting was to be the one objective of his life. If you had met him and said, "What are you seeking?" He would have answered in a moment, "I am seeking good pearls. Have you any to sell me?" He would have been sure to have the answer ready to hand. But ask many a man whom you meet with, "Sir, what are you living for?" he would, perhaps, tell you what his trade or what his profession might be! And if you pressed him with the question, "What is your main objective in life?" he would not like to say that he was living only to enjoy himself—seeking his own pleasure. He would hardly like to say that he was living to grasp and grab and get a fortune. He would hardly know how to answer you!

Many young men are in this condition—they don't have a definite objective. Now, you will not make a good captain if you do not know the port you are sailing for. You will make a poor life of it, young Man, if you go out as an apprentice and then, afterwards, as a master with no definite aim and end. Say to yourself, "I can only live for two things. I can live for God, or I can live for the devil—which, now, am I going to do?" Get your mind well fixed and firmly resolved as to which it shall be. I will put it to you as boldly and baldly as even Elijah did when he said, "If Baal is God, serve

him, but if Jehovah is God, serve Him.” If the world, if the flesh, if the devil are worth serving, go follow the career of a sensualist and say so! Let yourself know what you are at—but if God is worth serving and your soul worth the saving, go for that! Do not sneak through this world really seeking yourself and yet not having the courage to say to yourself, “Self, you are living for yourself.” Have a definite and distinct objective, or else your vital energies will be wasted and your most industrious days will be recklessly squandered!

This merchant, in the next place, had an objective which was not at all commonplace. Other people might go in for bricks and stones, or for grain, or for timber. He went in for *pearls*. He was a merchant seeking pearls and those the best he could find. He did not go in for common sea pearls, or pearls such as you may get in a Scotch river, but he went in for good pearls. He took a high aim, as far as that line of action was concerned. He went into a fine business. I would to God that many who have not found Christ, nevertheless had sufficient common sense, sprinkled over with Grace, to say, “I will go in for something *good*. My life shall not be an evil one”—

**“Lives of great men all remind us
We may make our lives sublime.”**

It goes well for a young man when he has such an aspiration as this within him—“My life, too, shall be sublime. I will not seek mean or menial objects. I will not cultivate any depraved or groveling tastes. I will seek something that I can commend to my own conscience—something that will bear reflection when I come to die—something that will carry the sterling mark when I have to value it in another world.” O young Merchant, if you are about to start in business, I recommend this business of seeking good pearls! Seek the Truth of God, seek honor, seek temperance, seek peace, seek love, seek that which will make you good and true and right! I will tell you, soon, where you may find these, but for the present it may suffice me to inculcate a laudable ambition for everything that is honest and of good repute—and an eager desire with your heart for that which your conscience commends.

The merchant went to seek pearls and he sought them with diligence. The merchant was seeking good pearls. He did not open a shop and say, “Pearls bought here if anybody likes to bring them,” but he went forth in quest of them. How far he traveled I do not know, but the oriental trader frequently goes immense distances. You may meet a Nijni-Novgorod, in the south of Russia, with traders who have been all round the globe seeking what they want—men who do not always travel by railway, but who will walk any distance to obtain the very article on which they have set their minds and in which they deal. Distance seems, with them, to be no object. Ah, and when a man has got a noble objective before him, and says, “Before I die, I will accomplish something that shall be right and true and beneficial to my fellow men,” he will face hardships that would baffle his fellows!

I pray God that he may have the perseverance to carry that out and that he may say, “Is there anything right to be learned? I will learn it, let it

cost me what it may of care and toil, of headaches and heartaches, of buying experience and burning the midnight oil! If there is anything to be done that is good and true, I will do it at any hazard, for I am seeking good pearls." And as the merchant was seeking, so he was using discrimination at the same time. When we are very diligent and full of desire, we are in imminent danger of being easily deceived, but this man, seeking good pearls, was not like a lady unacquainted with the nature of pearls—he was a man who knew a pearl when he saw it! He knew the character of pearls and the value of pearls. He could tell which were cloudy and which had a soft radiance and which were of the first water.

Indeed, he could tell a genuine pearl from an imitation one! He was a merchant seeking good pearls. Yes, dear Friend, and I pray God that if He put into the heart of any Brother or Sister here to live for the right and for the true, He would give you great discrimination, for there are many shams in the world and you may readily grasp that which appears to be substantial goodness—and it may turn out to be a shadow. Seek not only pearls, but seek *good* pearls. Go in for the good! Yes, cast your soul about to find the best! Evidently this merchant went into the business with comparatively moderate expectations. He was seeking pearls. They must be of a tolerable size and pure. He evidently expected to buy a good many of them. It was what he was seeking, seeking good "pearls" (in the plural).

He had not reckoned that he should be fortunate enough to light upon one huge pearl that should be worth an emperor's ransom! That he had not looked for, though he did feel a desire that way. If anybody had said, "Would you like to find a big pearl?" he would have said, "That I would! That is infinitely better than to find a number of little ones." He hardly hoped for it and, therefore, he did not seek it, but, still, he was ready enough to have it if it came his way. And so, my dear Friends, I am speaking of a class of persons—and I hope there may be representatives of them here—who want everything they can get that is good and true.

You need to be temperate in all things. You need to have an unsullied character. I remember that was my own desire, when first I thought of the life that lay beyond me. Before I knew the Lord I used to think, "O that I might be kept from dishonesty, that I might be preserved from falsehood, that I might be kept from a malicious spirit, that I might be right-hearted and true." Those were the pearls that I wanted! I did not know, just then, that I could find something that would include all these minor pearls and a good deal more! Still, it is well when such a desire as that is in the heart, especially of any young man. I wish it were in the heart of the old, if up till now they have never found the Pearl of Great Price!

Thus have I shown you the man while he is seeking. I wonder whether he has come in here tonight and is sitting among this assembly. Perhaps it is not a man at all, but a woman, a merchant woman. They can do trading well. Lydia, that seller of purple, was, no doubt, an admirable tradeswoman, and in the Divine trade of which we are now speaking there is no difference. Well, you do not know the Lord yet, dear Friends, but you do need to seek everything that is excellent. So far so good.

II. Let us go a stage farther, then, and look at this man's FINDING. He was buying pearls everywhere. Where he went he asked people if they had any pearls. He went down back streets, into the slums of big cities and searched out the Jews in those old days, living in the dirtiest corners of the city. He wanted to know whether they had any pearls. It was pearls in the morning, pearls at mid-day, pearls at night! If under his window at night anybody had cried, "Pearls!" he would have been downstairs in an instant to get them! He was hard after pearls and so it came to pass that he lit upon a pearl that he never hoped to see. It was more than he expected! Ah, I pray God that some here, whose hearts are honestly seeking after that which is right, may find Christ, who has in Him more of the spirit of temperance, uprightness, truth and philanthropy than will be found anywhere else! Oh, that they might find Him who *is* the Truth and whose doctrine is perfect holiness and everlasting life! It will be more than they ever expected to find! And when they do find it, how glad they will be!

Certainly this man was in the way of finding a fine pearl if anybody was. He was seeking good pearls, not the one pearl, but he was in the pearl line and so he was likely to discover the best pearl if *anybody* discovered it. "Being in the way, the Lord met with Him," says one of old. Oh, if you have desires after that which is right and true and good, I trust that the Lord Jesus will manifest Himself to you and that you will say, "This is the very thing I sought for! I have longed and pined after it and here it is." This find was to this merchant a remarkable one! He did not find good pearls—he found what was much better—one pearl. And to him that one pearl contained all the little pearls that he had before been seeking after. Tell it and let all men know it, that all that is good beneath the sun—all that is true, all that is right, all that is loving, all that is philanthropic, all that is of good report, commendable before God and praiseworthy among men—is to be found in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ!

And it will be *given* to us and worked in us when we submit ourselves to Him and make Him our All in All. He who is a Christian, if he is perfectly a Christian, has all good things in one! If there is anything that is to be praised and extolled by philosopher or sage, you shall find it in the example of the Master! And He will *give* us Grace to exhibit it in ourselves! So this man found all in one. What the value of that pearl was I do not know. The estimate of its value is not given. We only know that *he* thought it worth all that he had and he went away and sold all that he had that he might buy it. And he evidently thought it worth all the other pearls he had ever been seeking because if he spent his all upon that one pearl it would be clear that he must have abandoned the searching after smaller pearls since he had no capital left!

But he thought the one pearl of more account than all other pearls and worth more than all that he had. Yes, I guarantee you that he thought it worth a *great deal more* than all that he possessed. He would not have sold all that he had in stock to buy it if he had not the notion that it was worth ten times the price then and, that when he had paid for it, he should have made his fortune and should be rich beyond a miser's dream—for that is how traders in such things are sure to fetch their bar-

gains! Well, when a man finds Christ I cannot tell you how much he values Him, but this I know—all the world besides seems nothing to a Christian when he has once found His Lord and Master! “Oh what a Christ I have!” he says. But he cannot tell how dear—how inconceivably precious—the Christ of God is to his soul!

Concerning this find we must mark, next, that the man, having *found* it, was resolved that he would *have* it. Having found a pearl of great price, he did not question whether he should buy it or not. If he had not gone out honestly to seek pearls, he would have objected to the price, but being intent upon finding pearls, he no sooner found this one than he said, “I must have that. I can let the little pearls go if you like, but I must have that.” And it is a grand thing when the Lord brings the human mind to this! “I see that in Christ there is everything I need—pardon for my sin, cleansing for my nature, Grace to maintain my character and to make me perfectly fit for Heaven. There is all in Christ that I need and I must have Him! I must have Him! It comes to this—at any price—whatever it may cost me, I must and I will have Him!”

Now, although the parable does not say it in so many words, it is perfectly clear that the person with whom he was dealing was willing to sell. When he had found a pearl of great price, he bought it, which he could not have done if the other had not been ready to sell it. Albeit the Lord, in His mercy, does not *sell* His Grace, but *gives* it freely, the manner in which He disposes of it is here described under the figure of selling. If you want Christ, you may have Him if you are willing to come to the terms which God lays down. Of this I shall have to speak presently. If you desire this Pearl of Great Price, there is no reason in the world why that Pearl should not be yours tonight!

If now you have found Him, who is “the chief among ten thousand” and, “altogether lovely,” and you value Him so that you cannot be happy without Him, He will become, at once, your portion! If, having heard of Christ, your desire is toward Him as all your soul can need and you are ready to say, “I will not leave this house of prayer till Christ is mine,” there is no obstacle to your possessing this priceless Gift! Yes, God, even the Father, is willing that you should have His only begotten Son to be your Pearl from now on and forevermore!

III. Having thus described the seeker and described the finder, we must go on to describe him **SELLING**. He sold all that he had. It had taken him a long time to get it together and, I have no doubt, he had much pleasure in the accumulation. But now he has great pleasure in selling. “Buy my farm,” he says to one man. “Come, buy it!” “I don’t know that I want to buy farms,” says the other. “It is nothing! It is nothing!” “Nevertheless, let us come to terms. I need money and I must have money.” And away went the furniture in the house, one article after another! They must all go! Clear them all out! This was a rapid sale. He must have money. *Everything* must go for that pearl! Though he did not tell anybody his motive, that pearl was on his brain and on his heart—and all must go.

He is more glad to get rid of his possessions than ever he was to obtain them! Away they shall go at the best price they will fetch, but go they

must, for he must have the pearl! Well now, Jesus Christ is to be had, but there is a great deal that a man must give up if he is ever to call Christ his own. "What, then," says one, "what am I to give up?" Well, there must be a selling off tonight of a whole mass of old prejudices. Sometimes when the Truth of God, as it is in Jesus, comes to a man's mind, he repels it because it is so different from what he has learned ever since he was a child. And the notion is that you had better follow the religion of your parents. If you had been a Hottentot, you would have worshipped a fetish. If you had been born in Hindustan, you must have worshipped Juggernaut, according to *that* theory.

But it is a great mercy when a man says, "Now, I understand that Jesus, the Son of God, has died in the place of sinners that believe in Him and I am simply to believe in Him and I shall be saved! On my believing I shall receive a new nature and be born again by the Holy Spirit, and from that time on I shall become the disciple and the servant of Christ. Now," says the man, "I will do it! It is contrary to what I have always been told. I have been led to think that it was my good works which would save me. I have heard that Saving Grace was in the sacraments, but at last I perceive that God teaches in His Word that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, and I will have it! I will sell my prejudices! Away they shall go."

Next to that you must sell off your righteousness. It will not fetch much, but I daresay *you* think it is a fine thing. Up to now you have been very good and your own esteem of yourself is that as far as the Commandments—"All these have I kept from my youth up." And what with a good deal of Church going, or attendance at the Meeting House and a few extra prayers on Christmas and Good Friday, and just a little dose of sacraments, you feel yourself in tolerably good shape! Now, Friend, that old moth-eaten righteousness of yours that you are so proud of, you must sell off and get rid of, for no man can be saved by the righteousness of Christ while he puts any trust in his own! Sell it all—every rag of it! And if nobody will buy it, at any rate you must part with it! Assuredly it is not worth putting among the filthiest of rags, for it is worse than they are!

And everything else that you have before now thought fit to boast of—come on, you must get rid of it! You *know* so much. Well, you had better sell off what you know, for unless a man become as a little child he cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven. You are *somebody*—you fancy you are not cast in a common mold—you have a great strength of will and can *force* your way to Heaven! You will have to get rid of *that* little conceit, for that strength of yours will be your weakness! It is only when we are *weak in ourselves* that we can ever be strong in Christ! Are you content to do so? Will you sell off all the old prejudices and all the old righteousnesses? Going, going, gone! Will you let them go, or have you got a reserve price? Let them go, for they are dross and dung and the sooner they are gone the better—for then you can buy the Pearl of Great Price—but not till then!

Yes, and there are some men that will have to give up a good deal of what they call pleasure—sinful pleasure. No pleasure which is honest, which is really beneficial to us, need ever be denied to us—

"Religion never was designed

To make our pleasures less.

It makes them vastly more! But any pleasure that savors of sin is to be done away with. Come, can you sell all that? That mixing in loose company, anything approaching to lewdness, anything that has to do with the gratification of the vile passions of the flesh—come, for Christ's sake, can you give it up? Well, if you cannot, of course you cannot have the Pearl! If you must have the world you cannot have Christ. If you can find pleasure in the haunts of sin, you are of your father, the devil, and you do his works. But come out from it! Give them all up! Cast it behind you. These things must be sold off if we are to have the Pearl.

And, then, sometimes, in some cases, men have to give up a good deal of the honors and the satisfaction of life that arise from the esteem of their fellow creatures. Has it come to this, "If I become a Christian they will ridicule me"? Well now, can you not put up with a little disgrace for Christ? "But if I am an earnest Christian, then I shall have to encounter all sorts of slander." Be it so. And can you not give up the applause of men for the sake of Christ? Come and let the dogs tear your character to shreds as long as you are right before Him and your motive is pure! "Yes, but I know what it is. I shall get the cold shoulder in society if I become a thoroughly earnest Christian. There is Lady So-and-So, for whom I have very great respect, whose good opinion I would not forfeit on any account—and she would not recognize me any more." Very well, but can you put the whole lot of it into the scale and say, "I sell it all off! I let it all go, that I may have the Pearl"?

That man is not worthy of Christ who would be ashamed to stand in the pillory with Him, or go with Him to prison and to death! We must so love Him that we count reproach for His sake to be honor, even as Moses counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. "Well, you have taken enough, surely." Yes, but this pearl hunter sold *all* that he had, but you have got a little left. You have got some prospects. If you become a Christian your old uncle will cut you out of his will. You know very well that if you shall go to hear the Gospel at such-and-such a place you are very likely to be fired from your employment. "But we must live," says somebody. This is not at all clear to *my* mind! I know that we must *die*, but as to, "must live" I do not feel quite so certain about that!

It is infinitely better to die than ever to do a dishonorable thing! If Jesus Christ is our Master, we must be content to let the fairest prospect go and all things that seem to encourage our success in this life must be secondary in our thinking! We must seek, first, the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Yes, and sometimes even love that has been longed for must go for Christ's sake. Company that has been delightful must be forsaken for Christ's sake. And if all this is done, yet it is still not enough! He that has Christ must give himself and all that he has to Christ! I should doubt whether I were a follower of Christ if I had not in my very soul given up to Him all that I am and all that I have, to be forever His.

He has bought us with a price and it is not right for us to give him only one arm, one eye, one foot and half a heart! He that is a true Christian is

a Christian through and through! Whatever he possesses of talent. Whatever of substance he owns, he looks upon nothing as being his own, but as all belonging to his Master and he is prepared to use all for his Master's Glory and to part with all if so it were necessary for the maintenance of his Master's kingdom! The merchant sold all that he had! I think I see you draw back. "This—this is too hard a line." Very well, if you do not want to buy the Pearl—that is to say, if you do not want to make your fortune, for the buying of the pearl was the making of the merchant's fortune—if you do not think the Pearl is worth it, pray do not have it!

It is not possible to estimate the intrinsic value, the real worth of Christ! We do not cast pearls before swine. If you do not want Him, there are plenty who do. He need not come begging of you that you will be His customer. God forbid you should refuse, but if you do not want Him, then say so! Only say it, and definitely and distinctly say it, "I will have nothing to do with Him." But this man went and sold all that he had. I tell you he was glad to sell it. He counted that the man who bought his farm was doing him a favor. "Take it," he said, "there, I will let you have it under price if you will only let me have the money. I so much want to get money."

No, but he did not dare tell him such for fear he should go and raise the price, but in his heart, "I do so much want to get that pearl that I really would be obliged to anybody who will take that stock off my hands." So if you really want Christ, instead of needing Him to urge you to dispose of these poor effects which I have described, you will be eager to be rid of them that Christ may be yours! May the Spirit of God work in you such a high resolve!

IV. Now, the last thing is THE BUYING. He had sold all that he had and then he pays the shekels—pays them over that he may have the pearl—and he gets the pearl. It was a considerate purchase—a deliberate bargain. He did not see the pearl and then, in a hurry go and sell his goods and guess at the value of it. No, but he had looked at it, for he was a seeker of pearls. He knew a pearl when he saw it, though I dare say he did not tell the seller all that he had seen in it. He said to himself, "That is a wonderful pearl. If I can get the money—my little stock won't fetch above 500 pounds—but if I can get it for that, I am a made man."

And so he thought it over. It did not need much thinking over. Oh, if a soul did but know Christ, he would not think twice before he would have Him! If men were not such fools—if they had but light from Heaven to see the value of my Lord and Master—instead of our standing here and having to beg and persuade and find out new words of commendation, I think they would only say, "Tell us about Him! We will have Him! What does He ask of us? What can we do for Him? What can we submit to so long as we may but make sure of Him who forgives all sin, who gives immediate and perfect salvation to all who trust Him? So long as we may have the Christ of whom it is written, 'He that believes in Him has everlasting life,' we shall be content."

It was a well considered purchase. And it was an *immediate* purchase. He did not go home and say, "I shall think about this." No, but he knew that pearl and he said, "If I let that slip through my fingers I shall never

see the likes of it again. If anybody else gets that bargain, then I shall have lost the one opportunity of my life.” And so he does but take time enough to go and sell his farm and the little land he had and the little property he had. He was back quickly with his money, only afraid somebody might have slipped in between and offered another thousand or two more than he was able to raise and that he might lose the pearl. So, dear Friends, he that comes to Christ aright may well deliberate about it, but the end of his deliberation ought to be very speedy. “If He is to be had, let me have Him. Oh, if I can know my sins forgiven, let me know it! Oh, if by any means I can have peace with God—if I can become a child of God and an heir of Heaven—if my eternal happiness can be secured, oh, let it be secured! How is it done? Come, tell me at once! I wish not to leave my seat till I have found that which you speak of.”

It was a deliberate bargain—an immediate bargain. And then it was a joyful one! I am sure his eyes twinkled as he paid over his money. I should like to have a picture of his face, when at last he had got his pearl! Now, that which he had been all over the world for, he not only got, but something a great deal better! He got his pearl and, I dare say, he was ready to jump for joy to think that he got it! Ah, when a soul gets Christ it is—

**“Happy day, happy day,
For He has washed my sins away.”**

It is the beginning of delight to a soul when he can say, “Jesus is mine! I know He is! Grace has enabled me to lay hold upon Him.” And, oh, what an enriching purchase it was which the man had made! When he had once got the pearl, instead of his property, he thought to himself, “Why, I have got a hundred times more property, now, than I had! Though I have given up that bit of land I can buy half a province, now, if I like, with this pearl which I have obtained!

So, Brothers and Sisters, if you have ever given up anything for Christ, I am sure that the Lord Jesus Christ has made you very ample rewards! Some years ago a person rather eccentrically advertised for persons who had been losers by obedience to the Divine Command—that if anyone who had lost anything through love to Christ would apply to him, he would make it up. The odd advertisement appeared for some months in one of our religious periodicals. But the oddest thing is that nobody ever answered it! I would have thought that *somebody* would have tried and made up a case, but nobody did! You cannot make up such a case—you are no losers by Christ!

“But,” say some, “the martyrs were, were they not?” Well, they are up there, ask them! They will tell you as you look at them with their ruby crowns, all brilliant in the light of God, as they stand—

**“Fairest of the sons light,
Midst the bright ones, doubly bright,”**

that they counted it their *honor* that they should be permitted to lay down their lives for Jesus’ sake! Oh, there is no losing when you deal with Him! You will make 500 per cent over this exchange—be sure of that! No, it shall be a thousand per cent, for, “No man,” says He, “shall lose house and lands for My sake that shall not receive in this world a hundredfold, and in the world to come, life everlasting.”

This was a final purchase. The merchant, according to the parable, never went buying pearls anymore. “No,” said he, “No. I have bought a pearl of great price and now I will go out of the business.” And when a man once finds Christ—ah, then he seeks nothing more! If Jesus Christ is mine, more than all in Him I find. He does not need a secondary object. His desires all stay home and satisfy themselves with the fullness that is in Christ Jesus. He went out of the pearl-hunting line, for he had found all the pearls he should ever need. And it was a purchase he never regretted. The parable does not say that he came back to the seller and said, “There, take your pearl, and let me have my house and lands back.” No, it was done! The great transaction was done! He never wished to have it undone! With his pearl of immense worth, he was a rich man, worthy to be the rival of princes, and he felt that it was enough.

Oh, blessed are they who can say, “It is enough,” and can rejoice and bless and magnify the Lord—

***“Now rest, my long-divided heart!
Fixed on this blissful center, rest!
With ashes who would grudge to part,
When called on angels’ bread to feast?”***

Let me, however, just put in one word of caution. Take care, dear merchant Brothers, that when you buy a pearl, you buy a good one—that it is the Pearl of Great Price! I have known noble spirits whom I have admired and felt ready to weep over—men that have been heroic in the pursuit of that which seemed to them perfectly true and have made a sacrifice of all that they had for it—and yet they have been deceived. They have grasped *antichrist* instead of Christ! They welcomed the lie of Hell which came to them in the garb of the angel of light! Mind, mind that you get Christ and His Truth as you find it revealed in Scripture and revealed a second time in your own heart by the Holy Spirit—for whatever is short of Christ will prove a cheat and deceive you.

Some years ago one of the largest pearls that was ever found passed into the hands of a Russian. It was a very large pearl, indeed—as large as an egg and of a pear shape. He purchased it, the party who had it being ignorant of its value. He was a man of substance and he kept it and prepared a house which, though sparse on the exterior, was sumptuously furnished within. And he would take his guests into an inner chamber which, when it was unlocked, contained a table of marble in the center of which was a box which had to be unlocked with several keys and the reading of an alphabet, and so forth, and at last he produced this pearl. He was very reluctant of ever permitting it to depart from his hands, for it was of immense value.

The Emperor of Russia bid an enormous price for it and promised him honor and rank, but he would not part with it. It happened, however, that the possessor of this pearl was implicated—whether truthfully, or not, I cannot tell—in a conspiracy and had to leave his home at St. Petersburg. He took with him nothing but his pearl and came to Paris sufficiently rich in the possession of that pearl. On a certain day, the Duke of Brunswick, who was his only rival in such matters, came with some others to see the pearl. The owner unlocked it with great care and much deliberation. And

when he had opened it, he was observed to turn suddenly pale. It seemed as if he had been stricken with death. Unhappy man! His pearl had suddenly become clouded, as pearls sometimes do. It had been taken with some disease which happens to pearls, if I may so express it. In a short time it would turn to powder—it had ceased to be of any value, whatever, and he had come down from a millionaire to a pauper! Yet he *had* bought a good pearl, notwithstanding this seemingly tragedy.

There is only one Pearl that never can be clouded and will last right on throughout eternity and that is the Son of God, “who only has immortality.” If you get Him, you have a Divine hope which can never fail you! But if your hope is in priests or a hope connected with sacramentarianism, or any other hope but that of which Christ is top and bottom, beginning and end—you may make what sacrifice you will—your brightest prospects will end in bitterest disappointment! May the Lord grant that none of us may ever be thus balked of our life-confidence—that no such blank bewilderment may ever fall on our spirits.

Listen to me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek the Lord. The voice of Jesus is heard in this parable of the kingdom describing and directing the seekers. Such persons comprise no small fraction of an assembly like the present. It would, indeed, be strange if seekers were not *always* largely represented here and, in every stage of anxious enquiry! I am sure some of you have seen the Pearl you want sparkling before your eyes. I wonder how many of you have resolved to sell all you have to buy it? But who among you all have actually made the Pearl your own and rejoice in its possession? That such of you will go on your way rejoicing there is no doubt! But will you not return and give glory to God? Shall we not have the happiness of greeting you here in the fellowship of the kingdom of His Grace? The Lord grant it may be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING NO. 3305

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

***“Jesus said unto them, Have you understood all these things?”
Matthew 13:51.***

THIS is a question which might often be asked of us when we have been reading the Scriptures, when we have been attending upon the public means of Grace, or when we have been partaking of the Lord's Supper—“Have you understood all these things?” It were well for someone to run up to us, as Philip did to the eunuch, who on his return from Jerusalem was reading in his chariot, and say to us as Philip did to him, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Or the question might be put to us, “Do you understand what you hear? Do you understand even what you say?” I fear there are hundreds of religionists in this country who never think of understanding that which they attend to under the name of religion. They pass through the habitual forms, listening to and it may be, joining in the liturgy, till at length the service is finished, the day is over and the thing is done! The language of devotion has thus slipped through the lips without having leaped from the heart. Among ourselves, I fear there may be many who are content with listening to the sound of gracious words, who never pierce through the shell of the words into the kernel of the meaning—satisfied with the external, which is nothing—they miss the internal, which is everything!

“Do you understand these things?” then, is a question which may be asked and should be asked often of every worshipper, for it is only so far as we enter into religious worship, *understanding* what we are doing, and casting our hearts into it, that it can be at all acceptable to God. The Lord's Prayer is quite as good said backwards as forwards if you do not say it from the heart. There is quite as much likelihood of a benediction in a number of words thrown out pell-mell, without any kind of connection, as there would be in the best-arranged sermon, if there is not an attentive ear and an understanding heart. Words that touch not the understanding glide over us as oil over a slab of marble, without effect. Men may perish with the Gospel in their houses! They often do perish with the Gospel ringing in their ears, for until they understand its importance, it cannot become a soul-saving word to them!

Nor can it become a sanctifying word to any except as far as they receive it into the understanding. If we were to hear the Gospel in Latin, after a fashion never so orthodox, one might be no more edified by it than by listening to so much blasphemy, because it is not the thing heard, but the thing understood and received into the heart which blesses the soul. Do let me exhort all of you who are in the habit of going up to the House of God, never to be content unless you feel that you have got a hold upon the Truth of God that is being taught. O you Christian people, I beseech you not to be satisfied with merely the terms of theology without getting into the pith and marrow of them! To realize in your own soul, by experience, the meaning of a Doctrine is the only way of knowing it! Those men never forget a Truth who have had it burned into them as with a hot iron, by feeling the bitterness of their soul for need of it and the preciousness of that Truth to their soul when they receive it. He who does not receive the Truth of God in the very power and force of it has but a name to live while he is dead.

I think these observations are warranted from the fact that though our Lord preached the mystery of the Kingdom of Heaven in the plainest parables to the listening crowd, the very plainness of His speech, in using familiar metaphors to make spiritual Truths common, became, through the hardness of their hearts, embarrassing to them—they stumbled at the mere outward figure, but never learned the inward meaning! It was to His own chosen twelve, His favored and elect ones, He expanded the riddles when He took them aside and then afterwards enquired of them lest they should have missed the meaning of His exposition, “Have you understood all these things?” The outward testimony of the Gospel may be addressed to the multitude, but the *understanding* of it is conveyed with transparent clearness to His own people. To hear it is a privilege, but such a privilege as may end without the salvation of your soul and with the aggravation of your doom! But to understand it is the privilege which leads to eternal life—and happy are they who thus find the way to God’s right hand.

I. Let us first consider this searching question—“Have you understood all these things?”—as spoken to those who can humbly, but yet confidently, say, “YES, WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD THESE THINGS.”

I believe there are many of us here who, although we would not like to boast of what we know and could but confess our ignorance before God, yet dare not be so false to our own experience as to deny that we do know the things which make for our eternal peace. We can say with the man whose eyes were opened, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” We understand at least as much as this—that we are sinners, lost and ruined in ourselves, and that in Jesus all our help is found. We understand that we were cast away in the first Adam, and that our rescue is found in the Second Adam, to whom we look and to whom we are now united by a union that can never be broken. We understand this, al-

so, that upon His Advent into this world, upon His holy life, His blessed death, His Resurrection, His Ascension and the power which He now possesses at the right hand of the Father—upon Him in all these respects we rest, and rest entirely! If we have not learned enough to understand all mysteries and open up all prophecies, yet we do know that Christ is precious to our soul, that He is the appointed Savior, that He is *our* Savior and that we are saved through Him. Yes, blessed be His name, we can say that we have understood, in our measure, all these things—not as we shall understand them, not as we shall know them, by-and-by, when clouds and darkness shall all have disappeared and we shall be in the clear light of the Throne of God—but we have understood these things sufficiently to be led to cast ourselves on Jesus and to be affected in our daily life and conversation by the Truths which Jesus Christ has taught us!

If we have thus understood all these things, what then? *Let us be thankful to God with all our hearts that we can say as much as this*, for this understanding of Divine Truth is not due to any natural intelligence that we possess! We were by nature blind as bats to the things of Divine Truth. Neither is it by searching that we have found out God, for it was by His searching after us rather than by our searching after Him. If we have received an understanding to know Him and the height and depth of His precious love, truly we have received it as a Free Grace gift from the hand of our Lord! Had He withheld it, we would never have found the Savior! But it is because He, out of His own good pleasure, irrespective of anything in us, was pleased to touch our eyes with eye-salve that we should see, and to bring us out of darkness into His marvelous light! It was because of His rich, free, Sovereign, distinguishing Grace that we have been made what we are! Come, then, let us bless the name of God! Do we feel distressed with remaining sin? Yet let each one of us remember, “by the Grace of God I am what am.” If I have but little Grace, let me be thankful for that little—I might have had none at all. And if I am struggling with corruption, let me be thankful that I have Grace to struggle with it, for time was when I would have enjoyed my corruptions instead of lamenting and deploring them! Whatever trial may depress my spirit, let me not rob my God of a song, but if, indeed, He has made me to understand the things which save my soul, let me praise Him and extol Him for His amazing Grace towards such an undeserving one—the least deserving of all His family!

Further, Brothers and Sisters, if you have been led to understand these things, *ought not this to encourage you to seek to understand more?* The young beginner in Grace should feel that it will not be impossible for him to grow to the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus because Grace has quickened him and made him a babe. That is the greatest thing—to be made alive at all! When Grace has gone so far as to give me

life and put me in the family of God, I need not fear but what Grace will nurture that life and ultimately bring me to perfection! If I find myself growing in God's garden, though I am the tiniest plant in all the bed, yet it is such a mercy to be in the garden at all—I who was a wild rank weed out in the wilderness before—that I will not doubt but what He will water me when I need it and that He will tend and care for me till I shall come to perfection. Never think, dear Christian Friend, that you cannot master the Gospel Doctrine! Why, you have learned that Christ is yours—that is the secret of the Lord! All other Doctrines after this are learnable and comparatively easy. Give yourself up to the teaching of the Divine Spirit. Wait upon Him in believing prayer and He that has led you through the veil will not keep back the keys of any of the chambers of the Temple that shall be profitable for you to enter! Having understood so much, it behooves you to hope to understand more—and as an intelligent Believer in Christ, it becomes you to seek to understand more!

And surely if you have understood all these things, my dear Christian Friend, you should not be backward to tell them to others! We are not sent in the Divine School to be scholars merely for ourselves. We are to be in this world as pupil-teachers—pupils always, but teachers, too! Pupils learning constantly at the Master's feet and, at the same time, teachers instructing others in the Truths of God we know. Let it never be supposed that the office of teaching in the Christian Church can exclusively belong to one man, or to one class of men! It belongs to every Christian man, and to every Christian woman, too! You cannot teach beyond what you have been taught of God, and it is in proportion as you are taught of God that your teaching takes a wider sphere. But you must teach what you know! You will seldom learn much to your own profit unless you are diligent in imparting knowledge and edifying one another, for it is in the distribution to the rest of the brotherhood of the good things which God has given you that you shall enjoy the blessing of the Lord which makes rich! If you will not communicate to the backsliding, to the desponding and to the feeble, the comforts which God gives you, you have cause to fear that in your time of trouble you may have those comforts withheld which you once stifled in your own breast, not knowing how to use them for the Church's benefit! Never keep a Truth of God to yourself, my Brother! Have you found honey? There are other mouths that would gladly know its flavor and there is enough in that Jonathan's forest of the Scripture for all the hosts of Israel to eat! They cannot exhaust it! Thus would I have you tell others what a dear Savior you have found. Let other candles be lit from your candle and your candle shall burn none the less brightly! But rather in this it may be said that to enrich yourselves in all knowledge, you must enrich others with the knowledge that you have!

“Have you understood all these things?” There I will leave you, dear people of God. May your hearts glow and your thoughts be stirred in pondering this question of the text when you are alone!

II. But SOME WHO THINK THEY UNDERSTAND ALL THESE THINGS DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEM.

In all our congregations we have many who would say, as quickly as the question was heard, “Do you understand all these things?” “Indeed I do! I have been a hearer these 30 years. I tell you, Sir, I know the difference between Calvinism and Arminianism! A man is not going to deceive me—as soon as I hear a sermon, I can tell at once whether it is sound or unsound.” Well then, dear Friend, I am glad to hear that you have so much knowledge. But I want to ask you—Is your life in accordance with what you know? Knowing the right from the wrong so well, is your life conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, or are you living for all the world as if you did not know anything about these things? Because, let me say to you, dear Friends, it is a very, very solemn thing to have a sort of understanding of Divine Truth, but not to be affected by it so as to repent of sin, so as to live unto God, so as to seek after holiness! All this religion of yours will be a painted pageantry for you to go to Hell in—it will be nothing better than a millstone tied about your neck to sink you deeper and deeper! It were better, very likely, for you that you never had known the way of salvation at all than that having known it, you should have done despite to it and have lived in opposition to its spirit and its precepts! You had better have been born in the interior of Africa and never have listened to the missionary telling of the Crucified One, than to have been born in London and fostered under an orthodox ministry, if you befool your soul with a name to live while you are dead, boasting about your knowledge, but never proving your holiness! Talking about faith, but having a faith that is lifeless, producing no fruits, resulting in no works answerable to your profession! I charge you, knowing professor, to remember your solemn responsibility! I beseech you, as you love your own soul, not to make a downy bed out of your knowledge, for it shall be a thorn in your dying pillow! I charge you not to make Hell hotter to yourself than it need be by taking all this knowledge in and panting after more, while you forget that “to obey is better than sacrifice,” to trust is better than to boast, to love is better than to rival and to serve out of simple affection is better than to chatter, to discuss, to criticize and to censure!

It were well if everyone who understands the things of the Gospel, or who think he does, would constantly examine himself about this business, especially those of us who are ministers. It is a very easy thing for us to be self-deceived—probably more easy for us than for any other people because, having a sacred office for a secular vocation, we handle these things every day. Assuming it to be our duty to admonish others, we are prone to resent admonition ourselves. If we have not been converted, it is the least likely thing in all the world that we ever will be. I have made the remark myself, and I have heard it verified by others, that

for pew-openers to be converted is a thing probably unheard of. They are busy here and there, till they are known to forget their own obligation to worship! Unless they are converted before they take that office—concerning which I think we should make strict enquiry—in all likelihood they never will be because they are so concerned about the pews, and about putting people in them, and I know not what besides, that it seems impossible for them to give their ears to hear, or their conscience to feel, or that the voice of Truth should ever reach them. Next to them comes the preacher who is always dealing with the shell of Truth. When he sits down to read the Bible, he cannot help thinking whether this or that text would make a sermon. When he is praying, often the temptation is to glide into a kind of ministerial prayer—not the prayer of a poor sinner coming near to God!

Perhaps, after all, the least likely person to get a blessing is the knowing professor! I tell you that the drunk and the harlot are often rescued when such professors are not even reached with the thrilling message! The sermon which is made useful to a man who never heard the Gospel before is of no use to the hard-headed critic, because he knows too much to get any good out of it! Oh, there are some people you cannot preach to aright. If the Holy Spirit Himself were to speak, they would accuse Him of being heterodox! If an angel from Heaven were to deliver the Truth of God fresh from the mouth of God, he would not satisfy them. They are always on the look-out for a word amiss. They are always seeking, if they can, to pick holes, detect flaws and find fault—this is their trade, their craft, the thing at which they are expert—to make the message of mercy a kind of target into which they may shoot their arrows! These men seldom, I might almost say, never, get a blessing. I do not see how they can. The infinite mercy of God can do what it will, but seldom does God's Sovereignty light on these shallow professors who are eaten up with conceit. Oh, for a solemn searching, a sincere self-examination of our hearts! Perhaps we may find that our heads are growing and our hearts are shriveling. Some children die early because they get the rickets. Their heads are too big, poor things, and there are many professors with big heads and small hearts. Alas, they have not got the life of God in them at all! God save us from this temptation!

III. Are there not in every congregation SOME WHO WOULD HARDLY KNOW HOW TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION—"Have you understood all these things?"

They do understand them, yet they do not. They do up to a point theoretically comprehend them, but spiritually and experimentally, they discern them not. Fearing lest there might be in the present assembly such as really do not understand the very first principles of the Truth of God, I would pointedly and earnestly address myself to their particular case. My dear Friend, it would be a very dreadful thing for your soul to be lost for lack of knowledge and to perish for lack of understanding! Solomon says

that for the soul to be without knowledge is not good. You tell me that you understand the Gospel. I reply to you, Then why do you not accept it? You know you are lost, you tell me. You know that Jesus Christ is set forth as the only Savior and you know that a simple trust in Him will save you. How is it you can continue peaceful and happy while you are not a partaker of the Grace of God? How is it you can remain satisfied when knowing there is but one way of salvation, you have not yet entered upon it, when, acknowledging Christ to be the Son of God, and to be the only way of salvation, you have lived up till now a despiser or a neglecter of Him? I would gladly hope—for it would be the only excuse I could offer for you—that perhaps, after all, you really do *not* understand these things which you think you do. Let me remind you now—you are an unsaved sinner, you are lost, your sin has condemned you, you fell in Adam, you have sinned personally and actually and you are condemned to die! It is not that one day you will be condemned—you are already condemned! At this present moment you are spared and allowed to go about this world, but you are like a criminal in a condemned cell! The sentence has gone out against you and only God's long-suffering keeps that gleaming axe from falling and utterly destroying you! Do you understand that? Have you really got that thought into your mind? There you are, just like a man about to be beheaded, with your neck on the block, and the axe lifted up—and it may fall—while I am yet speaking, the axe of death may fall and you, soul and body, may be lost forever before that clock ticks again! You know this, but do you really understand it? Will you try to understand it? Will you try to make it real to your thoughts tonight? For I think if you would, there might be some hope that now you would escape from your present ruin and lift up your heart to the great Father of Mercies, and say, "Lord, save me, or I perish."

You know another Truth of God and you say you understand it. Let me put it to you. Jesus Christ came into this world. He was God's only-begotten Son, but He became Man and as Man, for man He suffered. God most punish sin, but He punished Jesus Christ for the sins of His people. And those who trust Him are secure because Jesus Christ was their Substitute—and they go free. Now, there is no other hope of redemption from the fiery wrath of God but by having a part and lot in the substitutionary work of Christ! You know that, but you have not got a part and lot in it and you must be lost if you continue without that part or lot. How is it that you can be quiet? You sleep soundly at night. You eat and drink cheerfully and you sometimes enjoy a merry ringing laugh. How can you revel in the pleasures of sense? How can you give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids until you get the one thing necessary, the one thing which alone can make eternity happy—that infinite future upon which you are so soon to enter? If Jesus Christ, standing in Heaven, is preached to you tonight and you are bid to believe in Him,

and you do not believe in Him, then you do, as far as you can, crucify Him afresh and open His wounds again and make them bleed! Do you mean to do that? Do you understand that this is what you are doing every day? Would you, dear Friend, would you call God a liar? And yet the Apostle John says that, "He that believes not God, has made Him a liar because he believes not the record that God gave of His Son." Do you understand what this unbelief of yours really is? You doubt Christ! That is to say, you do not think Christ to be truthful, or good, or able, or strong! Oh, but you say, you know better than that! Then, if you know better why do you act as if you did not know better? If He is able to save, and willing to save, O my dear Hearer, why not come to Him as you are and cast yourself at His feet—and rest in Him in whom your only rest can be found? "Have you understood all these things?" then, is a question which you cannot, after all, answer in the right way! I beseech you never to rest until you can!

Should there be, my dear Hearers, something which keeps you back from Christ, arising not so much from your need of will as from your need of knowledge, may God the Holy Spirit stir up your desire and never let you rest till you know Christ, till you so hear that your soul shall live! How shall you know? He is the great Teacher, but in the use of means He will teach you. Be content in attending the House of God where Christ is most preached. Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and these are they that testify of Him. Go to the Father of Mercy and plead with Him ere you sleep. Pray to Him thus, "Father, if there is some sin that I do not know to be a sin, that I am indulging in, and that keeps me from Christ, show it to me and enable me to give it up. Or if it is a sin which I do know, but seem to have struggled with in vain, my Father, strengthen me that I may cut off the right arm and pluck out the right eye sooner than cherish those vain delights which bode my everlasting destruction." Plead with Him thus—"O my God, I want to know Your Son; reveal Your Son in me, for so I read You do to Your people. Reveal your Son in me by the Holy Spirit! I am a poor, blind, ignorant sinner, but teach me, for have You not given the Spirit of God on purpose to be the Teacher of the ignorant and the Instructor of the babes?" Plead with the Lord, and plead always with the recollection that you cannot ask because you deserve, but you must ask because Christ deserves! Plead His wounds, His blood, His death, His infinite merit and you shall, before long—I am certain of it—you shall before long, in answer to your cries, receive light from the Word, and in that light you shall see light and you shall understand the things which make for your peace!

I am deeply concerned for some of you, especially for such of you as often listen to my voice, that I may not forever keep on talking into your ears and never reach your hearts. What? Am I to rock your cradle and send you to sleep that you may sleep yourselves into Hell? Is mine to be

the voice that is really to increase your responsibility and not to be the means of bringing you to Jesus? I pray God to avert so dreadful a result to all our ministry, but may you be led this very night—for God’s people have been praying for you—may you be led this very night to confess that you do not understand what you ought to understand and go to the great and wise God to teach and instruct you! And as surely as His Word is the Truth of God, He will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go and bring you to Himself. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Thus says His own Word, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Trust—that is the main matter. To believe is to trust, to rely on, to depend upon—he that depends upon Jesus, trusts Him, believes in Him, is saved! May we be of that blessed number and His shall be the Glory. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 13:1-23.**

Verses 1, 2. *The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside. And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a boat, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.* I think I can see the little ship at a convenient distance from the shore so as to keep off the multitudes of people, in order that the Savior might speak more freely. There He sits with a boat for a pulpit. There were no conventionalities about the Lord Jesus when He was upon the earth—He was willing to speak to the people anywhere from any pulpit whatever!

3. *And He spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow.* [See Sermon #2842, Volume 49—THE SOWER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was probably at that season of the year when the sowers were going forth to sow their seed, so Jesus pointed to them as to a living text. He was always wide-awake to make use of everything that occurred round about Him. “A sower went forth to sow.” For what else should he go forth? Yet some sowers that I know of do not go forth to sow, but to exhibit themselves and to show how well they can do their work. This man aimed at sowing and nothing else. Oh, that all preachers did the same!

4. *And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside.* He could not help that. He was not sent to pick the soil, that would be too much responsibility for him. If we had to preach only to certain characters, we should be taking up all our time in picking out those characters! And probably we would make many mistakes while trying to do it. Our business is to scatter the Good Seed broadcast. We are not to dabble in the Word of God—we are to throw it as far as we can, and to let it fall wherever God pleases. “Some seeds fell by the wayside”—on ground trodden hard by the passers-by.

4. *And the fowls came and devoured them up.* Those fowls are always ready to devour the Good Seed. Wherever there is a congregation met to hear the Word, there are always plenty of devils ready to do their evil work! “The fowls came,” they had not far to fly. The birds know a sower by the very look of him, so they hurry up and come wherever the seed may be cast that they may devour it. O Lord, keep the fowls away or, better still, break up the soil so that the seed may enter and not lie upon the surface!

5. *Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth.* There was a pan of unbroken limestone an inch or two below the soil, but there was no depth of earth where the seeds could grow.

5. *And forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.* They seemed to be converts, but they proved to be worthless. They were enthusiastic, carried away with excitement, but all was soon over with them “because they had no deepness of earth.” Everything was superficial, there was no depth of character, or feeling, or emotion.

6. *And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.* [See Sermon #2844, Volume 49—THE SEED UPON A ROCK—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] They seemed to be alive at the top, but they were really dead below. How many there still are of that sort—they make a bold profession, but it is only for a while—and then they wither away.

7, 8. *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground—*Thank God we do not lose all our efforts! If one in four succeeds, it is great deal for which we ought to praise the Lord. So, Brother, Sister—

**“Sow in the morn your seed,
At eve hold not your hand.
To doubt and fear give you no heed,
Broadcast it over the land.”**

8. *And brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.* There are degrees even in fruitfulness—Christians are not all alike. Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing everywhere! We do not get it, and can scarcely expect it, but let us thank God if we have “some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.”

9-12. *Who has ears to hear, let him hear. And the disciple came and said unto Him, Why do You speak to them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has.* [See Sermon #1488, Volume 25—MORE AND MORE, OR LESS AND LESS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It is so even in common things—the man of intelligence who has a good groundwork of education, picks up something everywhere—but the ignorant man learns nothing anywhere. He only finds out more and more of his own ignorance till there is taken away

from him even that which he had. Oh, that the Lord would give us a good groundwork of saving knowledge so that we might go on learning more and more under the Holy Spirit's teaching!

13-16. *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is grown gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.* It is awful thing when God gives men up to spiritual blindness and dullness and hardness, but it does happen. If you hear the Word and refuse to receive it, you do, to that extent, harden your heart. And if you continue to do so, you will by degrees lose the capacity for understanding the Word. Take heed what you hear! O my dear Hearers, I am afraid that many of you are not aware of the solemn responsibility of hearing the Gospel and of the terrible peril of having your ears made dull and your heart made hard! I am responsible for preaching faithfully to you, but you are equally responsible for hearing what is preached. Let us not waste any opportunity that we have of hearing the Word, but use it wisely and well that we may be able to give a good account of it before God in our fruitfulness.

Now, if the Savior's main design, in the use of parables, had been that men should not understand Him, He could have answered that end better by not speaking at all. But see how mercy blends with justice, and gives them another opportunity of hearing the Word. They might have come to Jesus even as His disciples did, and asked Him questions, and He would have explained the truth to them. If any of you today hear anything which you do not understand, go to the Lord about it in private prayer and He will explain it to you. I tremble lest any of you should hear the Word and not receive it and yet be content! That is the worst state of all for anyone to be in! May God save you from it! But as for you who know the lord, "blessed are your eyes, for they see." Those are blessed eyes that can really see. Eyes that cannot see are a trial, but "blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." It is nothing but the Grace of God that can make our ears spiritually hear. He that made the ear can alone make an open passage from the ear to the heart. If you have received this blessing, be very grateful for it, and bless the God of Grace for giving it to you!

17. *For verily I say unto you, That many Prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.* To you Christian people, there is given a very full revelation of the Truth of God.

You live in the mid-day Glory of the Gospel, but the “Prophets and righteous men” of old lived in the morning twilight. Be the more grateful and bless the Lord with all your hearts.

18, 19. *Hear you, therefore, the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the Wicked One and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received the seed by the wayside.* There are many such Hearers! They just hear the Word and that is all. They are very much like the countryman who said that he liked Sunday, for it was such an easy day—he had nothing to do but go to church, put up his legs and think of nothing. There are far too many hearers of that sort who think of nothing and, therefore, they get no good out of what they hear.

20, 21. *But he that received the seed in the stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and with joy receives it, yet has he not root in himself, but endures for a while: but when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by-and-by he is offended.* He soon ceases even to profess to be a Christian! He jumped into religion and he jumps out again. Revival always produce a large quantity of such people, and yet, if there is one soul truly saved, the revival is a success as far as that one is concerned.

22, 23. *He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he that received seed in the good ground is he that hears the word, and understands it. Knows what it means, thinks it over, takes it in as the good ground takes in the seed and keeps it—*

23. *Which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.* I say again—Oh, that we had a hundredfold return for our sowing! Yet let us not forget to give God thanks if we have sixtyfold or even thirtyfold.

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

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

THE CARPENTER'S SON AND HIS RELATIONS NO. 3312

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JULY 25, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 20, 1866.**

***“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where, then, has this Man all these things?”
Matthew 13:55, 56.***

WHEN our Savior was upon this earth, there were some persons who, having had their eyes Divinely opened, could see His true beauty and who admired His every action and said, “He has done all things well.” But there were others whose eyes were blinded by sin, malice and prejudice who could see nothing good in Him at all. Because He ate and drank as other men did, they said, “Behold a gluttonous Man and a winebibber.” They said that His zeal was only pretence or else madness—and when He cast out evil spirits by His Almighty Power, they said, “He casts out devils through the chief of the devils.” There were some who wondered at His wisdom and His mighty works and who did not know whether to consider Him a Prophet of God or a Divine Being. But there were others who could only see the carpenter’s human son, whose mother’s name was Mary and whose brothers and sisters were all well-known, ordinary people. The language of the text is the language of many who are living today—for while others see in Christ everything to admire—these quibblers see no beauty in Him and put Him on a level with others with whom they are acquainted.

It seems to me that we have here *two views of Christ’s Person*—the estimation of Prejudice and the estimation of Piety. And *two views of Christ’s relations*, in which we also have the estimation of Prejudice and the estimation of Piety.

I. First, we will consider THE TWO VIEWS OF CHRIST’S PERSON—the view of Prejudice and the view of Piety.

Prejudice could not dispute the fact of Christ’s wisdom and mighty works, so it sought to disparage Him by saying, “After all, He is only a carpenter’s son, just the son of an ordinary artisan. Shall a Prophet rise up from among the chips in the carpenter’s shop? Shall we sit at the feet of the Man who is simply a toiler at the carpenter’s bench?” Prejudice

may seem very wise in its own esteem, but *it is really very foolish*. To be prejudiced against a truth because of the lowly origin of Him who proclaims it is most manifest folly! Is a pearl to be rejected because it was found in a shell that is itself of no value? Would not a wise man pick up a diamond from a dunghill if he saw one flashing there? Even if the occupation of a carpenter had been a degrading one, which it certainly was not, yet, if his son has something to say that is worth hearing, is he not a fool who will not listen to it because it is uttered by the carpenter's son? If from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth a stream of Divine Wisdom was poured forth, is it not most flagrant folly to refuse to receive it because He was reputed to be the son of Joseph the carpenter? If He speaks as no other man ever spoke. If His Doctrine is more sublime than that of any other teacher. If the morality which He inculcates is more pure and more heavenly than that of any other leader of men, what matters it that He is the carpenter's son?—

***“He whom man with scorn refuses,
Whom the favored nation hates,
He it is Jehovah chooses,
Him the highest place awaits!
Kings and princes
Shall do homage at His gates.”***

But while Prejudice is thus very foolish, *it is also very frequent*. There are many persons who put an extinguisher on the candle and then try to light it. For instance, in listening to a certain preacher, they make up their mind that he cannot say anything that can be beneficial to them—and then they wonder that they are not edified! It would be a wonder if they were! Those who hear the Word only to cavil at it will probably be left to cavil to their life's end, for while the Spirit of God explains difficulties to the sincere seeker after the Truth of God, those difficulties which men, themselves, make often lead them to make more and more so that they continually plunge deeper and yet deeper in the mire. But what a dreadful thing it is that prejudice makes men even object to the Gospel of Christ! They say that it is so simple, so commonplace that it will not do for them. I have heard some who ought to know better say, when they have heard the simple Gospel preached, “Oh, yes! ‘Believe and live’ is a very proper message to the multitude, but something more profound than that is needed for thinking men!” Meaning themselves, as if they were the only thoughtful people in the world. Well, Sirs, if you are prejudiced against the Gospel because of its simplicity, may God disarm that prejudice and bring you to see that it is its simplicity which is its Glory and which makes it that means of rescuing sinners from the ruin into which their guilt has sunk them!

Prejudice against Christ is also exceedingly sinful. If it really is true that He is the Son of God, it is very shameful that He should not have a hearing because He stooped as low as to become “the carpenter's son.” If the magnificence of His benevolence led Him to empty Himself and to be despised and rejected of men, shall the splendor of His love close my ears

to the message of salvation that He sends to me? That He who was One with His Father in Glory should condescend to lie as a Baby in Bethlehem's manger and to go about among men as the reputed son of the carpenter of Nazareth is cause for reverence, for admiration, for love, for gratitude! Yet some for this very reason are prejudiced against Him! If the Gospel had been suitable only to philosophers and men of learning, what a vast majority of mankind would have been left without any hope of salvation! Shall that Almighty Grace which has made it a Gospel suitable to all classes and conditions of men become a reason why prejudice shall turn its back upon it? Surely it is better to be saved by "the carpenter's Son" than to be lost—better to enter Heaven through Him who was "despised and rejected of men" than to be shut up in Hell through not believing in Him! Better to receive a crown of life from the hand of Him who was crucified on Calvary than to receive the sentence of condemnation from the mouth of the Judge when He sits upon the Great White Throne in all the Glory of His Father and of His holy angels!

If any of you, dear Friends, have a prejudice against any form of Scriptural Truth, I pray you to shake it off. We are all apt to be prejudiced in one way or another, and it needs great Grace to keep us clear of the evil, so let us be on our guard against it. Give the Gospel a fair consideration and very especially and impartially weigh in the scales of sound judgment the Doctrine of the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ. Sit down at the foot of the Cross and study the wounds of Jesus—and do not pour contempt and scorn upon Him until you have found good reason to do so—and that I am sure you never will do. Shake off all prejudice, again I entreat you, for it is a deadly disease which may prove eternally fatal to you.

Now let us turn away from Prejudice and see what Piety thinks concerning Christ. As Piety asks, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" *she admires His condescension*. Piety is not ashamed of Jesus of Nazareth even though she supposes that He worked in the carpenter's shop. On the contrary, she is full of admiration for the Son of God who stooped so low as to be known as the son of Joseph and who, in that capacity, was obedient to His earthly parents and assisted in the manual labor in which the carpenter engaged. Piety does not think any the less of the Savior because He wore the garb of a workingman, but she considers it to be to His honor that He laid aside His honor! And she regards Him as having more Glory when He laid aside His Glory than when He wore it! I long to see my Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven, but I think I would almost as gladly have seen Him in the carpenter's shop. I delight in the thought that I shall see Him on the Throne of God, but I sometimes wish that I could have seen Him on the Cross, for it was there that His love reached its climax as He bore our sins in His own body on the tree!

Piety is all the more pleased with Christ because when He condescended to be a Man, *He joined the working classes*. There are and always will be, and very properly so, different social grades among men, but the

difference between a carpenter and a gentleman is, to my mind, so slight that I cannot perceive it. We are all very much alike when we are sitting in the House of God, and when we are lying upon the bed of sickness—and especially when we are sleeping in the silent tomb. Yet, if our Savior had come to this earth as one of the upper classes of society, I can fancy my lords and ladies saying, “Oh, yes! We have much fellowship with the King of the Jews as we think how He rode through Jerusalem in His gorgeous chariot of State attended by such a brilliant retinue!” But I can imagine how working men might then have said, “He has little or nothing in common with us. He does not know what it is to earn His daily bread by hard manual labor.” But “the carpenter’s son” says, “Oh, yes! I do know that and I understand your ways, and I am more familiar with poverty than many of you are! Most, if not all of you, have a home to go to when your day’s work is done, but I had not where to lay My head, so you are better off than I was.” Jesus of Nazareth can fully sympathize with the poorest of the poor, yet at the same time He is higher than the highest in the land, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords! Those who have the greatest intellectual power may well sit at His feet, for He is Incarnate Wisdom! And the feeblest and poorest may draw near to Him even as they did when He was upon the earth. We who toil mentally and you who toil physically may rejoice that Christ also was a toiler. When I see a notice about sermons to working men, I think to myself, “Well, whoever else is or is not a workingman, I know that I am one and that I work very hard.” It is quite a mistake to suppose that those of us who do not carry burdens on our backs, or follow the plow, or wield an axe do not, therefore, work! The most wearing kind of work is that which has to do with the brain and the mind, so I claim the Savior as having fellowship with me! And you workers who have His name, have Him all the better because He also was a worker! He was no lazy lie-abed, He was not one who slept and dawdled away His time. He toiled at the carpenter’s bench and afterwards He said of His life’s service, “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day.” “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work.”

Piety is grateful to Christ for being “the carpenter’s son” because she recollects that *He is the type of the Kingdom which He governs*. When the carnal eye looks at Christ, it sees only a carpenter—but the spiritual eye can see “the King in His beauty” in the garb of a workingman. He who saws the wood and guides the plane and drives the nails is the Great Creator, without whom was not anything made that was made! What was true of Christ is in a measure true of His Church and of His Gospel, too. The Church of Christ often appears to be merely a company of obscure and insignificant folk, yet that Church is “the bride, the Lamb’s wife,” and that Gospel which is often despised because of its simplicity is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.” The outward show of the spiritual Kingdom is very little even as it was when Christ was known as the son of a carpenter, yet all the while He was the Son of

God from Heaven. I do not know if I can get this Truth of God into the mind of every Christian here, but I should like to do so. The outward form of the Christian Church and the mere letter of Gospel Doctrine may appear to be poor and mean—just so—it is the Carpenter's Church and the Carpenter's Gospel, but "the carpenter's son" was the Son of God, and as He is in His Church we may say of it, "Jehovah-Shammah," "The Lord Is There," and the preaching of the Gospel is no mere repetition of the dull, dead letter, but it is God marching forth in Majesty proclaiming mercy to every sinner who believes in His Son, Jesus Christ! Be you content to remain unknown Christian—this is the Carpenter's Kingdom—the Kingdom of the King in His Glory is yet to be revealed—

***"It does not yet appear
How great we must be made!
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head."***

"Is not this the carpenter's son?" Yes, it is, but there is a Divine splendor concealed beneath that lowly form! Some of the early fathers and old writers used to delight in expressing strange ideas concerning "the carpenter's son." Julian the apostate, as he is called, once asked a certain Christian, "What do you think the carpenter's son is doing now?" "Making coffins for you and for all His enemies," was the prompt reply. If that is not literally what He is doing, we may depend upon it that it will go ill with those who say of Him, "We will not have this Man to reign over us," for we remember the solemn conclusion of the parable of the pounds, "Those Mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring here and slay them before Me." One old writer says, "Christ was a Carpenter and a rare Carpenter, too, for He made a ladder that reaches all the way from earth to Heaven—and up that ladder souls are continually ascending to the palace which He has gone to prepare for them!" That is a quaint way of describing how Christ has bridged the gulf between guilty sinners and their offended God by His atoning Sacrifice! Happy are they who not only admire the ladder, but who trust themselves upon it and so are brought safely home to God in Glory!

II. Now, in the second place, we are to consider THE TWO VIEWS OF CHRIST'S RELATIONS. And again we shall speak of the view of Prejudice and the view of Piety.

These men were not content with asking questions about Christ, Himself, but they also made enquiries concerning His relations. They said, "Is not His mother called Mary?" She was a very excellent woman who was highly honored in being the mother of Jesus, but there seems to be something of disdain or contempt in the question, "Is not His mother called Mary?" Then there were His brothers—very commonplace sort of folk, the questioner seemed to imply. "Why!" said one, "I know all of them! James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, but who are they?" "Well," said another, "I know His sisters, and there is nothing remarkable about them, so there probably is nothing special about Him. Look at His

relations, what are they but just a carpenter's wife and family? It is true that they belong to the tribe of Judah and that they are of the house and lineage of David, but they are not the kind of people to be invited into the upper circles of society! So there is no reason why we should take any notice of the carpenter's son."

Now, that type of prejudice still exists in the world. We do not hear much said nowadays against Christ's natural relations, but it is His *spiritual* relations who now come under the ban of Prejudice. "Yes," men, say, "this evangelical Doctrine certainly has a very singular power to attract the multitude. In the hands of Luther it worked a very remarkable Reformation. It is true that the preaching and writings of Calvin carried this Gospel into the hearts of vast numbers of hearers and readers—and we see the power it had over great masses of men as it was presented to them by Bunyan, Wesley, Whitefield and other popular preachers—yet, after all, what is the type of people that is attracted by such preaching as this?" Prejudice does not stop to answer its own question—it hardly likes to say what it thinks, but what it thinks is something like this.

It thinks, in the first place, that *they are a set of very poor people* and Prejudice considers that to be one of the worst things you can say of them. In the estimation of those who are prejudiced in this fashion, poverty is regarded as almost worse than crime! A man may be guilty of nearly every form of iniquity, but as long as he is rich, nothing is said against him. Yet, if another possesses every virtue, but in addition to that is poor, Prejudice has not a word to say in his favor! We need not be greatly concerned at this, for we remember that our blessed Master said concerning His own ministry, "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." If He was glad to have them in His congregation, we also may rejoice if the poor are found among our hearers and among those who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus!

Prejudice further says, "Well, if these relations of Christ are not all poor, *some of them have had very little education.*" This is a remark which I often hear or read, but I certainly have failed to discover any wonderfully superior education in many of the gentlemen who seem to take delight in denying many of the Truths of the faith. I often think that if they had been better educated, they would not talk so foolishly as they sometimes do when they sneeringly ask, "What do those uneducated preachers know?" Well, we might seem to be fools in glorying if we replied that if we did not know more than they do of the vital Truths of Christianity, we would go to school again and begin to learn the A B C of theology! As for the great thinkers of whom they so continually prate, we remember that Paul wrote, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God has chosen the foolish, things of the world to confound the wise. . . that no flesh should glory in His Presence."

When these prejudiced people have had our answer upon this point, they say that these relations of Christ, meaning thereby those who profess to be His followers, *are very much like other people who make no pro-*

fession of religion. One says, "I know a member of a certain Church who has a very bad temper." Someone else adds, "I know another who does not pay his bills." Well, even if this is true, is it surprising that there are hypocrites in the Church when there was a Judas even among the Apostles? "But," says another, "they are all alike, they are all a set of hypocrites." Yet the most prejudiced slanderer knows that he is telling a lie when he talks thus. If he would but speak the truth, he would be compelled to admit that the Gospel we preach has made harlots chaste, drunks sober and thieves honest—and that it is our great aim to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." He knows all this, but it suits his purpose to shut his eyes to it and only to see, here and there, the imperfection that is incidental to manhood, or the hypocrisy which no foresight can prevent and which only shows that hypocrites will thrust themselves into any place, however holy, except Heaven, itself—and they would enter even there if they could!

This will suffice as to the view of Prejudice concerning Christ's relations. So now let us turn to the view of Piety concerning them. Piety says, in the first place, "*Blessed be the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that He should have a mother, and brothers, and sisters here below.*" That ever the Son of God should have condescended to have brothers and sisters among the sons of men—and that there now sits upon the Throne of God one of a human mother, born, is a subject for unceasing joy! My soul seems to expand as I think of it! How wondrously our poor humanity is exalted! Angels were never so closely linked with Deity as manhood is now. Christ has no mother among the seraphim, no brother among the seraphim, and no sister in all the shining ranks of holy angels! But looking round upon those whom He has redeemed with His precious blood, He says, "Behold, My mother and My brothers and sisters! For whomever shall do the will of My Father which is in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother."

In the next place, instead of finding fault with Christ because of the imperfections of His relations, *Piety sees in their imperfections a further reason for blessing Christ.* She says, "What? O gracious Savior, are Your relations *sinner*s? Have they imperfections and do they make mistakes? Then all hail, blessed Savior, that You are not only related to humanity, but to *sinful* humanity! And though You are Yourself sinless, yet You call sinners Your friends and You are called the Friend of Sinners because you receive them and eat with them!" Yes, in the sense in which Christ Himself spoke of them, His mother and brothers and sisters are still with us—and though they are not all that they ought to be, we love Him all the more because He condescends to permit such people to be in close relationship to Himself!

Piety also says that *she wishes she was quite sure that her own relationship to Christ was as close as this.* "Oh," says the humble and sincere soul, "if I might be but the meanest among those whom Christ calls His

brothers and sisters, I would sooner have that honor than be the wearer of an earthly coronet or crown or possess the greatest wealth of gold or diamonds!" When Piety is assured of her own personal relationship to Christ, instead of being ashamed of Him because of His poor brothers and sisters, she counts it a priceless privilege to be numbered among them! Have you ever read the inscriptions that have been found in the catacombs of Rome? If you have done so, you must have noticed that many of them were evidently the productions of persons who were quite illiterate. Probably many of them were not able to write at all, so they obtained the services of others who were little more educated than they were, themselves, to write their epitaphs. Many of these first followers of Christ were certainly very ignorant so far as human learning was concerned, but do you now feel ashamed to belong to the same sect to which they belonged? Oh, no! If you really love the Lord whom they loved, you feel that it is an honor to be a member of that blessed Christian brotherhood in which many of the members cheerfully laid down their lives rather than give up their connection with Christ their Savior!

Some people seem never to tire of railing at our particular denomination. "Oh, Baptists," they say, "who are they?" But shall I be ashamed to be called a Baptist because some who ought to know better try to pour contempt and scorn upon the name? Oh, no! But the more they are despised, the more closely will I cling to them! When our Lord Jesus Christ asked John the Baptist to baptize Him, He said, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." And with such an eminent example before me, I cannot be wrong if I seek very literally to "follow His steps" whatever disgrace that may involve. A man is not worthy to be connected with a Christian denomination if he is not prepared to take upon himself the reproach of the body to which he belongs—so let none of us be ashamed of being Baptists! And let none of us be ashamed of Jesus, and though His brothers and sisters may be poor and ignorant, let us love and esteem them because of their relationship to Him!

Piety also rejoices that Christ's brothers and sisters are here on earth and that they are poor, for she says, "*I can minister to Christ by helping them.*" Piety feels, concerning the brothers and sisters of Christ, as David felt when he said, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" He was kind to Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake—let us be kind to Christ's brothers and sisters for His sake. Let us ask, "Where can we find any of the household of Jesus that we may show them kindness for His sake!" Christian charity delights to find the poor Believer and to minister to him for Christ's sake. If our names are found enrolled among the brothers and sisters of Christ, we shall surely count it an honor and privilege to do all that we can for the rest of the family, especially for those who are in the greatest need!

Now I close with just two questions. First, dear Friends, *what is your view of Christ?* Is it the view of Prejudice or the view of Piety? Do you say that however lightly Christ may be esteemed by the world, He is precious

to you? Then I trust that you also are among the brothers and sisters of "the carpenter's son" whom He will acknowledge when He comes in His Glory. Those who follow the despised Christ will not be rejected by the reigning Christ!

The other question is, *what is your view of Christ's people?* Is it the view of Prejudice or the view of Piety? Are you willing to cast in your lot with them? Will you join the sect that is everywhere spoken against? Are you ready to be hooted and jeered at for Christ's sake? If you are, I trust that you are among His brothers and sisters who suffer with Him here and who shall reign with Him, by-and-by. "Who is on the Lord's side?" Let that question ring in your ears as you go your way, "Who is on the Lord's side?" If God is your God, serve Him. If Christ is your King, follow Him. Unite yourself with His people and let all men see that you are not ashamed to acknowledge your Lord or those who are His brothers and sisters today. Let not your view of Christ and His relations be the view of Prejudice, but let it be the view of Piety! And may God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 13:24-58.**

Verse 24. *Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.* Jesus never sowed any other kind of seed. The truth which He taught is pure and unadulterated. It is good seed—good and only good, the very best of seed!

25. *But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.* Wherever Christ is active, the enemy is sure to be active, too. If you have a sleeping church, you may have a sleeping devil—but as soon as ever Christ is in the congregation, sowing the good seed, the devil wakes up and by night, when men are off their guard, the bad seed—the mock wheat—here translated, "tares"—is sown among the true wheat.

26. *But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.* The false wheat came up with the true. Perhaps the seed in the one case may have looked like the other even as there is "another gospel which is not another" with which some still trouble us. The only true test is, "By their fruits you shall know them." So, when the seeds had sprung up, there was the blade of true wheat, and "then appeared the tares also."

27. *So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, did not you sow good seed in your field? From where, then, has it tares?* How often we have asked that question! We have seen children trained by the most godly parents, yet they have developed a sad propensity to sin, and we have said, "From where, then, have these tares come?" We have seen

a ministry which has been sound and faithful—and yet in the congregation there have sprung up divers errors which have done a world of mischief—and we have had to sorrowfully ask, “From where, then, have these tares come?”

28, 29. *He said unto them, An enemy has done this. The servants said unto him, Will you, then, that we go and gather them up? But he said, No; lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them.* We are so fallible, we make so many mistakes, that we cannot be trusted to do this uprooting, for we might pull up wheat as well as tares. If there had been briars or thorns growing in that field, those servants might have pulled them up without damage to the corn, just as an openly evil person who breaks the Laws of God openly, may be cut off from the Church without damage. But these tares must be left for the present.

30. *Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather you together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.* There will be an end of this mixture in due time! The hypocrite shall not always stand in the congregation of the righteous. The wheat and the tares shall be separated “in the time of harvest.”

31, 32. *Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.* The Kingdom of Heaven is just like that in this world! Wherever it comes, it comes to grow. And it is just like that in our hearts. Oh, how small is the first sign of Grace in the soul! Perhaps it is only a single thought. The Divine Life may begin with but a wish, or with one painful conviction of error—but if it is the true and living Seed of God, it will grow. And there is no telling how great will be its growth till, in that soul where all was darkness, many Graces, like sweet songbirds, shall come and sing and make joy and gladness there! Oh, that you and I might experimentally know the meaning of the parable of the mustard seed!

33. *Another parable spoke He unto them. The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.* And although leaven is usually the symbol of evil, yet it may be here a fair representation of the Kingdom of Heaven, itself, for it operates mysteriously and secretly, yet powerfully, till it permeates the whole of man's nature. And the Gospel will keep on winning its way till the whole world shall yet be leavened by it—

**“More and more it spreads and grows,
Ever mighty to prevail.”**

34-36. *All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spoke He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the*

world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and His disciples came unto Him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. I again remind you that wherever there is anything that you do not understand, the best way is to consult the Master concerning it. If I read a book in which there is an obscure passage—and I can write to the author and ask him what he means by it—I shall most probably get to understand it. So, the best Expositor of the Word of God is the Spirit of God—therefore appeal to Him whenever you are puzzled with anything that is taught in the Scriptures and say to Him, “Blessed Spirit, will You graciously expound to me this parable, this Doctrine, this experience?” And He will do it and so you shall become wise unto salvation.

37-43. *He answered and said unto them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seeds are the children of the Kingdom; but the tares are the children of the Wicked One; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Who has ears to hear, let him hear. May God give us such ears as can hear His voice, and may we take to heart the solemn teachings of our Lord!*

44-46. *Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; which when a man has found, he hides it and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. It would be a good bargain for anyone to part with all he has in exchange for the Kingdom of Heaven! Yet that great “treasure” is to be had for nothing by everyone who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ!*

47-50. *Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered fish of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. We are to cast the great net of the Gospel into the sea of humanity, but we must not expect that all we catch will prove to be good. There is time of separation coming when “the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just.”*

51. *Jesus said unto them, Have you understood all these things?* [See Sermon #3305, Volume 58—A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] This is a question which constantly needs to be put to all hearers and readers of the Word. “Have you understood all these things?” To be hearers, only, or readers, only, will avail noth-

ing—the Word must be understood, accepted, assimilated—and so shall it make us wise unto salvation.

51. *They said unto Him, Yes, Lord.* They answered very glibly, yet probably not one of them fully understood the seven parables in this chapter. If anyone did so, he would be like the instructed scribe described in the next verse—

52. *Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder which brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.* He who has learned anything concerning the Kingdom of Heaven should teach it to others, bringing forth the Truths of God in pleasing variety, “new and old,” to edify all his Hearers.

53, 54. *And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, He departed from there. And when He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue insomuch that they were astonished, and said, How has this Man this wisdom and these mighty works? They were highly privileged in having Jesus back in their midst, yet they failed to appreciate His teaching! They were astonished at His wisdom, but were unable to perceive the Divine source from which it sprang.*

55-58. *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? How, then, has this Man all these things? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A Prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house. And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.* This was a notable illustration of John's words concerning Christ, “He came unto His own, but His own received Him not.” Let us beware of unbelief lest it should tie the hands of Christ as it did there in His own country!

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

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

ONE OF THE MASTER'S CHOICE SAYINGS NO. 3046

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 27, 1907.

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

*"But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart."
Matthew 14:16.*

OF course the Master was right, but He appeared to speak unreasonably. It seemed self-evident that the people very much needed to depart. They had been all day long hearing the Preacher. The most of them had not broken their fast and they were ready to faint for hunger. The only chance of their being fed was to let them break up into small parties and forage for themselves among the surrounding villages. But our Lord declared that there was no necessity for them to go away from Him, even though they were hungry, famished and in a desert place. Now, if there was no necessity for hungry hearers to go away, much less will it ever be necessary for loving disciples to depart from Him! If these, who were hearers only—and the bulk of them were nothing more, a congregation collected by curiosity and held together by the charm of His eloquence and by the renown of His miracles—if these needed not to depart, much less need they depart who are His own friends and companions, His chosen and beloved. If the crowds needed not through hunger to depart bodily, much less need any of the saints depart spiritually from their Lord. There is no necessity that our communion with Christ should ever be suspended—

*"To walk with Christ from morn till eve,
In Him to breathe, in Him to live—*

is no mere wish, no visionary's prayer—it may be realized—we need not depart from Jesus! There is no need that the spouse of Christ should wander from beneath the banner of His love. Mary may always sit at Jesus' feet. There is no Law which says to holy fellowship, "To here shall you come, but no further. Here shall your communion cease!" There is no set hour when the gate of communion with Christ must inevitably be closed. We may continue to come up from the wilderness, leaning upon the Beloved. We "need not depart." Yet is it so commonly thought to be a matter of course that we should wander from our Lord that I shall ask for strength from Heaven to combat the injurious opinion.

I. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, THERE IS NO PRESENT NECESSITY FOR YOUR DEPARTING FROM CHRIST. At this moment we may truthfully say of all the saints of God, "They need not depart."

There is *nothing in your circumstances* which compels you to cease from following hard after your Lord. You are very poor, you say. But you need not depart from Christ because of penury, for, in the depths of distress the saints have enjoyed the richest Presence of their once houseless

Lord. Your poverty may be pinching you at this very moment—to be relieved from that pinch you need not break away from Jesus, for fellowship with Him may be maintained under the direst extremity of need. Indeed, your need increases your necessity to walk closely with your Lord so that patience may have its perfect work and your soul may be sustained by the mighty consolations which flow out of nearness to Jesus. Need shall not separate the soul from communion with Him who hungered in the wilderness and thirsted on the Cross! You tell me that in order to relieve your necessities, you are compelled to exercise great care and anxiety. But all the cares which are useful and allowable are such as will allow of a continuance of fellowship with Christ! You may care as much as you ought to care—and I need not say how little that is—and yet you need not depart from Him who cares for you. But you tell me that in addition to deep thought, you have to expend much labor in order to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Yes, but you need not depart from Christ for that reason! The carpenter's Son is not ashamed of the sons of toil—He who wore the garment without seam does not despise the peasant's smock or the servant's apron. Labor is no enemy to communion—idleness is a far more likely separator of the soul from Christ. Not to the idlers in Herod's court did Jesus reveal Himself, but to hard-working fishermen by the lake of Galilee. If Satan is never far away from the idle, it is pretty plain that it is no disadvantage to be busy! A toil amounting to slavery may weaken the body and prostrate the spirit, but even when heart and flesh fail, the heart may call the Lord its portion. There is no service beneath the sun so arduous that you need depart from Christ in it! But rather, while the limbs are weary, the spirit should find its rest in drawing nearer to Him who can strengthen the weak and give rest to the laboring and heavy-laden.

Do you tell me that you are rich? Ah, indeed, how often has this made men depart from Christ!—

***“Gold and the Gospel seldom do agree—
Religion always sides with poverty.”***

So said John Bunyan and his saying is true. Too often the glitter of wealth has dazzled men's eyes so that they could not see the beauty of Christ Jesus. But O, you few wealthy saints, you need not depart! The camel can go through the needle's eye for, “with God, all things are possible.” Men have worn coronets on earth and inherited crowns in Heaven! He who was the man after God's own heart swayed a scepter. To grow rich in substance does not make it inevitable that you should become poor in Divine Grace. Do riches bring you many responsibilities and burdens—and are you so much occupied with them that your fellowship with the Lord grows slack? It should not be so. You need not depart from Him. You can bring those responsibilities and the wealth to Jesus and communion with Him will prevent the gold from cankering and the responsibility from involving you in sin. Very often the servant of God who ministers to the Church of Christ finds so much to do in watching over the souls of others—and in caring for the various needs of the flock—that he is in danger of losing his own personal enjoyment of his Lord's Presence. But it need not be so. We can make all our many works subser-

vient to our personal communion with our Lord and, as the bee flies to many flowers and gathers honey from each one, so may we, out of many forms of service, extract a sweet conformity to Him who was always about His Father's business. We need not be "cumbered" either with much serving or with much suffering. Our surroundings are not to be our sovereigns, but our subjects. We are, in all these things, to be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Brothers and Sisters, you need not depart *because of anything in Christ Jesus*. Those whom we love most would not desire us to be always with them and never out of their sight. A guest is very welcome, but the proverb says that after three days he is stale. A mother does not always want her child in her arms! Its face is the epitome of beauty, but at eventide she is glad that those dear blue eyes no longer shine upon her—she is happy to lay her treasure in its cradle basket. We do not always wish for the company of those whom we compassionate—if they will condense their requests and do their errands rapidly, we are best content. And Jesus Christ says to us, His poor dependents, His crying children, "You need not depart." When we are weeping, He will lay us in His bosom and give us rest. When we are famishing, He will entertain us at His royal table till we forget our misery. He is "a Friend that sticks closer than a brother" in this respect, for we need not, in this instance, heed the wise man's caution, "Go not into your brother's house in the day of your calamity," for we may, at all times and seasons, resort to our elder Brother! We may ask Him, "Where do You dwell?" and when we receive His answer, we may go forth and dwell with Him and make His house our home. Do you not remember His words, "Abide in Me"? Not merely "Abide with Me," but, "Abide in Me." The closest contact with Christ may be maintained with the utmost constancy—

***"You need not depart, you may tarry for, yes,
Unchanged is His heart, He invites you to stay!
He does not despise nor grow weary of you,
You're fair in His eyes and most comely to view.
Then wish not to roam, but abide with your Lord
Since He is your home, go no longer abroad!
Lie down on His breast in unbroken repose,
For there you may rest, though surrounded with foes."***

II. Secondly, NO FUTURE NECESSITY WILL EVER ARISE TO COMPEL YOU TO DEPART FROM JESUS. It will always be true, "You need not depart."

You do not know what *your needs* will be and though you are no Prophet, your words will be true if you affirm that no need shall ever necessarily divide you from Jesus because your needs will, instead, bind you to Him. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." "And of His fullness have we all received, and Grace for Grace." We will draw nearer to Him, in time of need, to obtain the Grace we need! We shall never be forced to go elsewhere to find supplies for our spiritual needs! There stands another trader over the way who gladly would have you deal with him—"his Infallible Holiness," as he styles himself—but, ah, if you need Infallibility, you need not wander from Him who is "the Truth!"

And if you desire holiness, you need not withdraw from Him who was the "Holy Child Jesus." To gain all that the superstitious profess to find in Babylon, you need not depart from the Son of David who reigns in Zion! They tell us that we must confess our sins to a priest—we will stay at home and lay bare our hearts to the great High Priest who "sprang out of Judah" and who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." They teach that we must receive absolution from one chosen from among men to forgive sins—we go at once to Him who was raised from the dead "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." They tell us that we should continue in morning and evening prayers—we do so, and offer our "matins" and our "vespers" where no bells call us except the bells upon our High Priest's garments! Our daily office may not be according to "the use of Sarum," but it is according to the use of those who "worship God in spirit and in truth." They cry up their daily sacrifice of the "mass"—but in Him who "offered one Sacrifice for sins forever," we find our All-in-All! His "flesh is meat, indeed," and His "blood drink, indeed." You "need not depart" to pope or priest, church or altar, for you may rest assured that there dwells in the Man, Christ Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, all that your spiritual needs shall need for their supply! And on no occasion—for any needs that can by any possibility arise—need you go down into Egypt for help, or trust yourself to Assyria or Babylon!

You will experience *great trials* as well as great needs. That young man, fresh from the country, has come to town to live in a godless family. And last night he was laughed at when he knelt down to pray. My young Friend, you need not forsake the faith, for other saints have endured more severe ordeals than yours and have still rejoiced in the Lord! Yours are only the trials of cruel mocking—they were stoned and sawn asunder—yet neither persecution, nor nakedness, nor sword divided them from the love of God in Christ Jesus their Lord! Many also are those with whom God, in His Providence, deals severely—all His waves and billows go over them! Through much tribulation they enter the Kingdom of God and everything in the future forebodes multiplied adversities—but still, "they need not depart" from Jesus their Friend! If, like Paul, you should come to a place where two seas meet. If you should experience a double trouble and if neither sun nor moon should give you cheer, yet you need not suspend, but may rather deepen your fellowship with the Man of Sorrows! Christ is with you in the tempest-tossed vessel and you, and those who sail with you, shall yet come to the desired haven. Therefore be of good courage and let not your hearts be troubled. The Son of God will be with you in the furnace heated seven times hotter than normal. He has said, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." This proves to a demonstration that you "need not depart" from Christ in great trials!

You will also encounter *many difficulties* between here and Heaven. Those who paint the road to Glory through rose-colored glasses have

never trodden it. Many are the hills and dales between this Jericho and the city of the Great King! Let who will, be without trials—Christians will have their full share of them! But there shall come no difficulty of any kind, between here and Paradise, which shall necessitate the soul's going anywhere but to her gracious Lord for guidance, for consolation, for strength, or for anything besides! Little know we of the walls to be leaped or the troops to be overcome—but we know full well that we never need part from the Captain of our salvation, or call in other helpers.

Death will probably befall us, but we “need not depart” from Jesus in the hour of our departure out of this world. On the contrary, when the death-dew lies cold on our brow we will sing—

“If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now”—

and we will say with the Apostle Paul, “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Straight on into eternity—and on and on forever—that word, “depart,” never need cross our path. As never in eternity will the great Judge pronounce the sentence, “Depart, you cursed,” upon His saints, so never in His Providence, nor in the severest trial will He render it necessary that the saints should in any sense depart from Him—

***“Never, O time, in your darkest hour
Shall I need depart from Him,
Though round me your blackest tempests lower
And both sun and moon grow dim.
Faster and faster each grief shall bind
My soul to her Lord above
And all the woes that assail my mind
Shall drive me to rest in His love.”***

There is no necessity, then, in the present—and there will be none in the future—for departing from communion with the Lord!

III. Thirdly, “they need not depart.” that is to say, NO FORCE CAN COMPEL THE CHRISTIAN TO DEPART FROM JESUS.

The world can tempt us to depart and, alas, too successfully does it seduce with its fascinating blandishments! Its frowns alarm the cowardly and its smiles delude the unwary, but none need depart. If we have Grace enough to play the man, Madam Bubble cannot lead us astray! “Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.” We need not be taken in the world's traps—there is One who can deliver us from the snare of the fowler! We are not ignorant of the devices of Satan and the temptations of the world—we are not *compelled* to fall from our steadfastness—and if we do, it is our willful fault. There is no necessity for it. Many live above the world—many in as difficult circumstances as ours. There are those in Heaven who have found as hard hand-to-hand fighting in the spiritual life as we do—yet they were not vanquished, nor need we be—for the same strength which was given to them is also available for us!

“But,” says one, “you do not know where I live.” Perhaps not. “You do not know what I have to endure,” cries another. Most true, but I know

where my Lord lived and I have read that He endured “such contradiction of sinners against Himself” that Paul holds Him up as a pattern to all His people! He did not depart from holiness, nor from love to you. “You have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Perseverance to the end is possible to every Believer—no, it is *promised* to us and we may have it for the seeking! You need not depart from Christ, my young Friend—the world cannot drag you from Jesus, though it may entice you. Yield not and you shall stand, for “there has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13).

Satan is a very cunning tempter of the souls of men, but though he would gladly constrain you to depart from your Lord, you need not do his bidding. Satan is strong, but Christ is stronger! His temptations are insinuating, but you are no longer in darkness that you should be deceived by him. You “need not depart.” Even though surprising temptation should assault you unawares, it ought not to find you sleeping. Has not Christ said, “What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch”? You will not be surprised if holy anxiety stands sentinel to your soul. Prayer and watchfulness will warn you of the enemy's approach and, therefore, you need not be driven to forsake your Lord.

Yes, but it may be that in addition to the world and to Satan, you are very conscious of *the terrible depravity of your own heart*. And, indeed, that is the chief ground of fear! The heart is deceitful, prone to wander and ready enough to depart from the living God—but you “need not depart” from the Master because of that. The newborn nature takes up arms against the body of sin and death. The Holy Spirit also dwells within to conquer indwelling sin. Shall not the life which is from above subdue the natural death? Shall not the Spirit of God purge out the old leaven? You “need not depart” from Jesus! It is true that you have a fiery temper, but it must not prevail—there is a cure for that plague. Perhaps we are inclined to levity, but we need not let our frivolous nature reign—Grace can overcome it and will. “Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound.” There is no unconquerable sin! There is no Dagon that shall not be broken in the presence of the Ark of God! There is no temple of the Philistines which shall not fall beneath the might of our greater Samson! We need not, as the result of temperament, or because of any sin that does so easily beset us, depart from Jesus, for Grace is equal to all emergencies.

Do you call to mind that there may be another force employed beside that of the world, or of Satan, or the corruption within, namely, *the lamentable coldness of the Christian Church*? Truly it is to be feared that more have departed from close walking with Christ through the chilliness of inconsistent professors than from almost any other cause! Newborn children of God too often feel the atmosphere of the church to be as freezing as that of an ice-well. Their holy warmth of zeal is frozen and their limbs are stiffened into a rigor of inactivity—so that it is a marvel that they do not die—and die they would were not the spiritual life im-

mortal and eternal! But, Brothers and Sisters, even in the midst of the coldest church we “need not depart” from a near and elevated fellowship with the Lord. The church of Rome is a church defiled with error and debased with superstition, but was there ever a nobler Christian woman in this world than Madame de la Mothe Guyon? She did not depart from Christ, though in the midst of a pestilent atmosphere. Remember, too, the names of Jansenius, Arnold, Pascal, and Fenelon which are an honor to the universal Church of Christ—who ever walked in closer communion with Christ than those holy men did? In the midst of the darkest ages, there have shone forth the brightest stars! John wrote, by Inspiration, “You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” Often am I told, by some Brother in a country village where the minister seems to have gone to sleep 20 years ago and has never awakened since, that he finds it very hard to rejoice in the Lord, for his Sabbaths are a burden instead of a joy. My dear Brother, you need all the more Grace if this is your case! You must have more vitality within if you see so much death without. You “need not depart” from Christ—on the contrary, by becoming an example of living near to Christ, yourself, you may be the means of quickening others, for, thank God, Grace is contagious as well as sin! At any rate, it is certain that though many influences may seduce us, no force can compel us to depart from Jesus—

***“No power in earth or Hell
Can force me to depart—
Christ is my unconquerable strength,
He fortifies my heart!
Fixed in His love I stand,
And none shall drive me thence—
Enclosed I am within the hand
Of Love’s Omnipotence!”***

IV. Regarded from another point, our text may teach us that THERE IS NO IMPOSSIBILITY IN KEEPING CLOSE TO THE BELOVED.

Many Believers think that if they have fellowship every now and then with Jesus, with long intervals between, they are quite as much advanced as they need be and have probably reached as far as human nature is ever likely to go. An affectation of superfine godliness is suspicious but, at the same time, a higher standard of religion than is commonly seen among professors at this time *can be maintained*—and ought to be maintained. We ought to attain to such a walk with God—to so calm and serene a frame—that the light which shines upon our pathway shall be constant and clear. “Enoch walked with God” for hundreds of years. So cannot a man, nowadays, walk with God for 20 years? Enoch lived in the dark age of the world, comparatively, so cannot we, who live under the Gospel dispensation, continuously walk with God? Enoch begat sons and daughters and so had all the cares of a household—yet he walked with God—so cannot we, who have the same cares, yet still, by Divine Grace, be enabled to maintain unbroken communion with Christ? I know the place is high where they stand who consciously abide in Christ, but will you not strive to climb there and bathe your foreheads in the everlasting sunlight of Jehovah’s face? I know that it would require most

jealous walking, but you serve a jealous God and He demands holy jealousy from you! Oh the joy of living in the embrace of Jesus and never departing from it! Oh the bliss of sitting always at His feet, abiding with the Bridegroom and listening to His voice! Surely the gain is worth the exertion and the prize is worthy of the struggle! Let us not, since the attainment is not impossible, murmur at the difficulty, but rather, in faith, let us ask that we may begin tonight to achieve the blessed result and continue to achieve it till we are privileged to see the face of Christ in Heaven! Others have done so—why shouldn't we?

Brothers and Sisters, the way to maintain fellowship with Christ is very simple. If you desire to retain in your mouth all day the flavor of the "wines on the lees well refined," take care that you drink deeply of them by morning devotion. Do not waste those few minutes which you allot to morning prayer! Lay a text on your tongue and, like a wafer made with honey, it shall sweeten your soul till nightfall! During the day, when you can do so, think about your Redeemer—His Person, His work. Pray to Him and ask Him to speak to you. All day long lean on the Beloved. During the day, serve Him and constantly say, "Lord, how can I best serve You in my calling?" Consecrate the kitchen, consecrate the market-room—make every place holy by glorifying the Lord there. Converse much with Him and it will not be impossible for you to abide in Him from the year's beginning to its close! You "need not depart." There is no mental or spiritual impossibility in the maintenance of unbroken communion with Christ if the Holy Spirit is your Helper!

V. Once more, we "need not depart." That is to say, THERE IS NO REASON THAT CAN BE IMAGINED WHICH WOULD RENDER IT A WISE, PROPER AND GOOD THING FOR A CHRISTIAN TO DEPART FROM CHRIST.

Suppose that *the search after happiness* is the great drift of our life, as the old philosophers assert—then we "need not depart" from Jesus to win it, for He is Heaven below! If you desire pleasure, forget not that the pleasures of God which are in Christ—His joy, the joy that fills His great heart—are more than enough to fill *your* heart! I sometimes hear people say, as an excuse for professors going to doubtful places of amusement, "You know, they must have some recreation." Yes, I know, but the recreation which the Christian experienced when he was born-again has so completely made all things new to him, that the vile rubbish called recreation by the world is so dull to him that he might as well try to fill himself with fog as to satisfy his soul with such utter vanity! No, the Christian finds happiness in Christ Jesus—and when he needs pleasure, he does not depart from Jesus.

Perhaps it is said that *we require a little excitement now and then*, for excitement gives a little stimulant to life and is as useful to it as stirring is to a fire. I know it and I trust you may have excitement, for the medicinal power of a measure of exhilaration and excitement is great. But you "need not depart" from Christ to get it, for there is such a thing as the soul's dancing at the sound of His name while all the sanctified passions are lifted up in the ways of the Lord! Holy mirth will sometimes so bubble

up and overflow in the soul, that the man will say with Paul, "Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows." Joy in Christ can rise to ecstasy and soar aloft to bliss! If you desire to wear the highest crown of joy, you "need not depart" from Christ.

"But," it is said, "*we require food for our intellect.* A man needs to develop his intellectual faculties. He must learn that which will enlarge and expand his mind." Certainly, by all means. But, O beloved Brothers and Sisters, you "need not depart" from Christ to get this, for the science of Christ Crucified is the most excellent, comprehensive and sublime of all the sciences! It is the only Infallible science in the circle of knowledge! Moreover, by all true science you will find Christ honored, and not dishonored. And your learning, if it is true learning, will not make you depart from Christ, but lead you to see more of His creating and ruling wisdom. The most profound astronomer admires the Sun of Righteousness! The best-taught geologist has no quarrel with the Rock of Ages! The greatest mathematician marvels at Him who is the sum total of the universe! He who knows the most of the physical, if he knows aright, loves the spiritual and reverences God in Christ Jesus! To imagine that to be wise one needs forsake the Incarnate Wisdom is insanity! No, to reach the highest degree of attainment in true learning, there is no reason for departing from Christ.

"*We must have friends and acquaintances,*" one says. You "need not depart" from Christ to get them. We admit that a young woman does well to enter the marriage state—a young man is safer and better for having a wife—but, my dear young Friends, you need not break Christ's Law and depart from Him in order to find a good husband or a good wife! His rule is that you should not be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers." It is a wise and kind rule and is an assistance rather than a hindrance to a fit marriage. "But," says one, "I do not intend to depart from Christ, though I am about to marry an unconverted person." Rest assured that you are departing from Jesus by that act! I have never yet met with a single case in which marriages of this kind have been blessed of God. I know that young women say, "Do not be too severe, Sir, I shall bring him around." You will certainly fail! You are sinning in marrying under that idea. If you break Christ's Law, you cannot expect Christ's blessing. To be happy in future life with a suitable partner you "need not depart" from Jesus. There is nothing in life you can need that is truly desirable, nothing that can promote your welfare, nothing that is really good for you that can ever make it necessary for you to depart from the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now, if this is true, do not some of us feel very guilty? I could weep to think that I have so often departed from close fellowship with my Lord and Master when I need not have done it. I am cast down and weary—and occasionally cumbered with much serving. I know my faith is in Christ, but I have not the calm, unstaggering faith I desire to have. And I know that with a thousand cares, (and I have ten thousand), I need not for a moment lose serenity and peace of mind if I can reach the place

which, by God's Grace, I will yet reach. Do you not feel ashamed that your family troubles and perhaps your family joys have taken you off from your Savior? Some of you have a great deal of leisure and yet you slide away from Christ. Let us be ashamed together, but let us remember that while this verse stands true—if we have departed from Christ and the enjoyment of His fellowship—we can offer no excuse by saying that we could not help it! We do it willfully, we do it sinfully! It is not to be thrust on the back of circumstances. It cannot be laid on the devil nor blamed to this, nor blamed to that—it is our own fault. We “need not depart!” There never was any need for it and there never will be. May God's Grace descend mightily upon us so that we may henceforth abide in our Lord! May those who know Him not, be led to seek Him by faith even now, and find Him, and then even they shall not need to depart from Him at the last.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:13-36.**

Verse 13. *When Jesus heard of it, He departed from there by a boat into a desert place apart.* It is well for us to get alone with God when He takes Home the best and most faithful of His servants. Neither the Church nor the world could afford to lose such a man as John the Baptist—so it was well for Christ's disciples to retire with Him to a desert place that He might teach them the lesson of that highly-favored martyr's death.

13, 14. *And when the people had heard thereof, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.* He needed quiet, but He could not get it just yet. He was not “moved” with indignation against the crowd that had sought Him out, but He “was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.” Out of the fullness of His heart of love, He condescended to do for the people what they most needed.

15. *And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.* Human compassion might have moved the disciples to say something more kind than that heartless request, “Send the multitude away.” Perhaps they wished to spare themselves the sight of so much distress, but they evidently did not expect the answer that Christ gave them.

16. *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; you give them something to eat.* Christ seemed to say to His disciples, “If you only exercise the power that is within your reach, *with Me in your midst*, you are equal to this emergency—“You give them something to eat.”

17, 18. *And they said unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them to Me.* “They are little enough in your hands, but they will be ample when they get into Mine.” When everything that we have is in the hands of Christ, it is amazing how much He can make

of it. Bring your talent to the Lord Jesus, be it ever so little—sanctify to Him every possibility that lies within your reach—you cannot tell how much He can and will do with it.

19. *And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass.* It must have been a beautiful sight to see those thousands of men, women and children at once obeying His command! There were five loaves and two fishes—probably five small barley cakes and a couple of sardines—so the people might have said, “What is the use of such a multitude sitting down on the grass to partake of such scanty fare as that?” But they did not say that—there was a Divine Power about the very simplest command of Christ which compelled instant obedience! “He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass.”

19. *And He took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to Heaven, He blessed.* This was that “blessing of the Lord” of which Solomon says that “it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” If you get this blessing on your five loaves and two fishes, you may feed five thousand men with them—besides the women and the children!

19, 20. *And broke, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.* Much more than they began with, for it is a Law of the Heavenly Kingdom that he who gives to God shall be no loser—his five loaves and two fishes shall turn to twelve baskets full after thousands have eaten and been satisfied! The more there is of complete consecration to Christ and His blessed service, the more reward will there be in the world to come and, possibly, even here!

21, 22. *And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children. And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.* He always takes the heavier task upon Himself. They may go off by themselves, but He will remain to send the multitudes away. Besides, no one but Christ could have done it—only He who had made them sit down to the feast could make them go to their homes.

23. *And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray.* He had had a long day of preaching, healing and distributing the bread and fish—and now He closed the day with prayer to His Father.

23. *And when the evening was come, He was there alone.* Dr. Watts was right in saying to His Lord—

**“Cold mountains, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of Your prayer.”**

He is not now on the bare mountainside, but He is engaged in the same holy exercise up yonder before His Father's Throne.

24. *But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.* This is the case with the good ship of the Church of Christ today—it is “tossed with waves” and the wind is “contrary.” It is very contrary just now, but then, Christ is still pleading for the ship and all on board. And while He pleads, it can never sink.

25-29. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him, and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. You who are wanting to get to Jesus should make a desperate effort to get to Him—even walk on the water to get to Jesus. Walking on the water might be an idle and evil exhibition, but to walk on the water to go to Jesus is another matter. Try it and the Lord enable you to get to Him!*

30-32. *But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me! And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased. The Greek word implies that the wind was tired, weary, “done up,” as we say. It had had its boisterous time and spent its force—but now it knew its Lord’s voice and, like a tired child, fell asleep.*

33. *Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth You are the Son of God. This seems to have been the first time that the disciples arrived at this conclusion so as to state it so positively. Yet, do you not think that after the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes they might have very fitly said, “Of a truth You are the Son of God”? Sometimes, however, one wonder will strike us more than another and, possibly it was because they were in danger when this second miracle was worked and, therefore, they the more appreciated the coming of Christ to them at midnight. They were in no danger when the multitude were fed. Perhaps they were not themselves hungry. That strikes us most which comes most home to us, as this miracle did.*

34-36. *And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country roundabout and brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.*

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

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

COMPASSION FOR THE MULTITUDE NO. 453

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1862,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And they say unto Him, We have here but five loaves and
two fishes. He said, Bring them here to Me.”
Matthew 14:17, 18.***

As was Christ, my Brethren, when in this world, so are we also. Such, indeed, is our calling of God. As Jesus was “the true light which lights every man that comes into the world,” so He says to His disciples, “You are the light of the world.” How memorable are those words of our Lord—“As You, Father, have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world!” And how weighty are those expressions of the Apostle—“We pray you *in Christ’s place*.” “We then, as *workers together with Him!*”

There is something more than an interesting parallel that I want you to observe. A rich allegory appears to be couched in the simple record of the Evangelists. The history of Christ is in type a history of His Church. A skillful reader would soon think this matter out. You will remember how Christ’s Church was wrapped in swaddling bands at the first, how she was laid in the manger of obscurity, how her life was conspired against by heathen kings. You will remember her Baptism of the Holy Spirit, her trials and her temptations in the wilderness.

The life of Christ afterwards will soon be thought out by you as shadowing forth a picture of the career of the Church. There is scarcely any point in the entire history of Jesus, from the manger at Bethlehem to the garden of Gethsemane, which is not, besides its personal narrative, a typical and pictorial history of His Church. Thus the Lord has been pleased to bequeath to His Church a great example written in His own holy life. As He raised the dead, so is she to do it through His Spirit that dwells in her. As He healed the sick, so is she to carry on a great healing ministry throughout the world.

Or, to come to our text, as Christ fed the hungry, so the Church, wherever she meets with those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, is to bless them in the name of Him who has said, “They shall be filled.” Your business as a Church today, and my business as a member of the Church of Christ, is to feed hungry souls who are perishing for lack of knowledge with the bread of life. The case before us we think will furnish a noble picture of our duty, of our mission, and of what we expect the Master to do for us that we may work mightily for Him.

Let us endeavor first to glance at the whole scene, collecting into harmony the accounts given by the four Evangelists. And afterwards we shall proceed to consider two practical lessons to be deduced from it. This

miracle is recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. There is some little divergence in each, as there naturally would be, for no four spectators could give the same description of any one scene. But what one omits another supplies. A point that will be most interesting to one, had failed to strike another, while a third has been interested in something which the fourth had altogether omitted.

It appears that Christ had sought out a waste region near the town of Bethsaida. Bethsaida was a place which He had frequently visited. Earnestly, on another occasion, did He warn Bethsaida and Chorazin, reminding them that their privileges would rise up in judgment against them to condemn them for their unbelief. He had sought out this waste place for the purpose of retirement, or for the sake of both Himself and His disciples, that they might rest from their weary toils.

The people follow Him, they throng Him all day long. He preaches the Gospel to them, He heals their sick. And it was somewhere in the afternoon that the Master, ever patient and prescient of human wants, calls Philip to Himself. Now, Philip was of Bethsaida and Jesus said to Philip, "From where shall we buy bread that these may eat?" This He said to try Him to see whether his faith was proof against misgiving. Had Philip been a wise disciple he would have replied, "Master, You can feed them."

But he was a weak follower of the mighty Lord. You know he afterwards proved his ignorance by saying, "Lord, show us the Father and it suffices." And he then received a mild rebuke—"Have I been so long a time with you and yet you have not known Me?" On this, Philip shows that he has not yet learned the lesson of faith. He cannot believe in anything he cannot see with the eyes of sense. Puzzled and amazed, he betakes himself to his fellow disciples to talk over the matter. Andrew suggests that there is a lad hard by that has five barley loaves and a few small fishes.

Certainly, Andrew thinks, though they will not be enough, *it is our duty to do our best*. So the loaves and fishes are purchased out of the scanty store that Judas handed out, not perhaps without some grief to his heart, that he should have to look so much after other people. As the day wears on and the sun begins to set, the disciples come to the Master. Though the proposal had been suggested by Him, they seem to think He has forgotten it. So they come to Him and say, "Master, send the multitude away."

They had thought over the problem of how to feed these people and had come to the conclusion that they could not do it. As they could not feed them, the next best thing would be to send them away to provide for themselves. Since they could not supply their necessities, they would endeavor to shut their eyes to their needs. "Master, send them away. Let them go and buy for themselves." The Master promptly replies, "They need not depart. There is no necessity for it—*you give them to eat*."

Indeed, He spoke wisely. Why should hungry men depart from the house of Him who feeds all things, who opens His hands and satisfies the desire of every living thing? "You give them to eat," said He, that He might bring out from them a fair acknowledgment of their poverty. "Master," they said, "we have here but five barley loaves and a few small fishes. What are they among so many?" Lifting up their eyes upon the vast as-

sembled mass they roughly calculate that there must be five thousand men, beside a fair complement of women and of children.

The Master bids them bring those loaves and fishes. He takes them, but before He breaks them, being a God of order, He bids the people sit down in companies. Mark, who is always such a keen observer, and paints, like Hogarth, all the little minutiae of the picture—says they sat down on the green grass, as if it were exceedingly abundant and verdant just there. Then he adds, they sat down by companies, afterwards using a word, which is translated “in ranks” in our version, but the Greek is such as you would use if you spoke of a long range of beds in a flower garden.

They sat down in green beds, as it were, with walks in between them. Mark seems to have got the idea that they were like a number of flowers whom his Master went round to water. When they had all thus sat down, so that the strong might not struggle after the bread and tread it under foot, and that the weak might not be neglected—all placed in their rows—then the Master lifted up His eyes before them all, asked a blessing, broke the bread and gave it to the disciples and also the fishes.

The disciples went round and distributed to each man, to each woman and child—and they did eat. They had been fasting all day long, so I dare say we should not be far wrong if, following the example of a countryman whom I once heard, we laid a marked emphasis on the word “did”—“they *did* eat!” They ate till their hunger was appeased. They ate till they were filled. They ate till they were abundantly satisfied. Then, I could suppose, on the table, or on a spot of the green grass, where Christ had laid out the first bread and fishes, the fragments that lay there had, in the meantime, multiplied.

One does not like the idea of the disciples going round to gather up the odds and ends and crumbs that had fallen from each man—one would hardly think it would have been seemly. But here was bread that was not injured, that had not fallen in the dust or the mire—fragments—and they gathered up more than they had at first. Here, too, we have a wonder. Things had been multiplied by division and had been added to by subtraction. More was left than there had been at the first! No doubt that was done to disarm doubt and to defeat skepticism.

In after days, some of those men might say, “True, we did eat and were satisfied, or it seemed as if we did, but it might have been in a kind of dream.” That bread which was left, the twelve baskets full, furnished something solid for them to look at, so that they might not think it an illusion. They gathered up the twelve baskets full. This seems to be the crowning part of the miracle.

Our Lord Himself, in referring to the miracle in after days, constantly says, “When we fed five thousand with five barley loaves, how many baskets had you? And when we fed four thousand, how many baskets full did you take up?” As if the taking up of the full baskets at the end was the clenching of the nail to drive home the blessed argument that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God who gave His people bread to eat, even as Moses fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness.

Having thus considered the facts, we shall take them as a basis upon which to build, God helping us, two practical lessons. The text and the

miracle itself teach us, first, *our mission and our weakness*. Secondly, *our line of duty and Christ's strength*.

I. We are clearly taught here OUR MISSION AND OUR WEAKNESS. Our mission! Behold before you, disciples of Christ, this very day, thousands of men and women and children, who are hungering for the bread of life. They hunger till they faint. They spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfies not. They fall down famished in your highways, perishing for lack of knowledge. Still worse, when they faint, there are some who pretend to feed them.

Superstition goes about, and offers them stones instead of bread and serpents instead of fish. The Papist and the ceremonialist offer to sell these hungry souls something to gratify them. They try to feed, but it will not satisfy. They do but eat the wind and swallow the whirlwind. The infidel tries to persuade them that they are not hungry, they are only a little nervous. Thus he mocks their appetite. As soon will the body be satisfied with bubbles, or the mouth be filled with shadows, as the soul is satisfied with delusions and inventions of man. They faint. They famish. They are ready to die.

Those who pretend to supply them do but mock and tantalize their needs. Nor can they feed themselves. Their wallets are empty. When Adam fell, he beggared all his posterity—neither man, nor woman, nor child among them is able to satisfy his or her own hunger. The ten thousands of your race in this land—in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America and Australia—not one among them, should they all subscribe together, could find so much as one loaf upon which a single soul might feed.

Barrenness, leanness and sterility have seized upon all the fields of man's tillage. They yield him nothing. He sows, but he reaps not. He plows but obtains no harvest. By the works of the flesh no man living can be justified, and in the devices of human tradition or human reason, no souls can possibly find substantial comfort. See, disciples of Christ, see the great need which is before your eyes. Open the eyes of your understanding. Let your heart move, let your hearts beat with sympathy. Let your souls be alive to pity—do feel for those millions! I beseech you, if you cannot help them, weep over them. Let there be now before your mind's eye a clear and distinct recognition of the many hundreds and thousands who are crying to you, "Feed us, for we famish! Give us bread to eat, or we die!"

I think I hear you reason in your hearts and whisper one to another, "Who are we that we should feed this multitude? Look at their hosts, who can count them? As the stars of Heaven for multitude, so are the seed of Adam. These hungry, craving mouths are almost as numerous as the sands on the sea shore. Why should we feed them?" Even so, remember, this is your mission. Neither should any of you take up and adopt a weakness of faith that was illustrated by Philip's questioning. If ever the world is to be led, it is with Christ through the Church.

Until the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, we are the warriors who must carry the victorious arms of the Cross to the uttermost parts of the earth. We are the almoners of God's free bounty, until the fullness of the Gentiles is gathered in. God

commands all men everywhere to repent. And we are to utter His mandate. Oh, my Brethren, you know how Jesus worked the work of His Father. You know how He went about doing good. But do you know how He said, “Greater works than these shall you do, because I go unto My Father”?

Let the words sink down into your ears. Let the vision rise perpetually before your eyes. See *your* work. Great as it is, dispirited as you may be by the great multitude who crave your help—yet recognize the appeal to your faith. Let the magnitude of the mission drive you more earnestly to the work instead of deterring you from it.

Do I hear you murmur, “The multitudes are great and scant the supply. We have but five loaves and they are made of barley. We have but two fishes and they are little ones. The bread hardly suffices for ourselves. The fishes are so small that they will be more bones than meat. What are these among so many?” “Do I hear you tell us, Sir, that we as a Church are to feed the world—how can we? How few are our talents! We are not rich in substance, we have no wealth with which to supply our missionaries, that we may send them out by hosts to lift up the banner of Christ. We have little talent—there are not many among us who are learned or wise—we have not much eloquence. We feel, though we do not feel enough—

***‘Gladly my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the firebrand from the flame.
But feeble my compassion proves,
And so must weep where most it loves.’***

“Besides,” some of you add, “what can I do individually? Of what use can I be? And what can the few friends who are in earnest do? Why, the world will laugh at such a feeble body of men. They will say, ‘What are these feeble Jews doing?’ We have a mountain before us and we have to level it to a plain—how can we do it? Our strength is not sufficient—we are destitute of power. Oh, had we the great and noble on our side! Had we kings to be the nursing fathers, and queens the nursing mothers of our Church! Had we the rich to give their lavish treasure and the learned to give their wit and the eloquent to give their golden speech—then we *might* succeed!

“But alas! Alas! Silver and gold we have none. And at the Master’s feet we can lay but little—so little that it is utterly insignificant when compared with the world’s pining wants, the whole creation’s piteous laboring groans.” Then I think I hear you heave a sigh and say again, “There is no more that we know of, no more bread that is procurable. We cannot buy for all this multitude.” Brothers and Sisters if we have little gifts ourselves, we cannot buy the eloquence of others. Indeed, it were no use if it were bought. For *oratory purchased* is of no use to any cause. We need for Christ’s cause the free utterance of willing men who “speak through their throats,” and feel from their hearts what they propound with their lips.

Such speak because they cannot help speaking. “Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.” If we have little ability of our own, we cannot buy more of others. The offices of love can never be assigned to the hireling. But I think I hear your disheartened spirits crying, “If we could add mercenary troops to the hosts of God, we might succeed—if we could procure by our

donations more help, more strength for the Lord God of Hosts, then might there be bread in His house and then might the multitudes be fed.”

But two hundred pennyworth would not suffice for the five thousand. And millions would not suffice for the thousand millions of poor benighted men and women. Master, what *can* we do? There are so many—we have not the bread ourselves, and we cannot buy it on their behalf.

And then I hear the groan of one who is growing gray in years, “Oh, I feel it, but it is getting late with me and the world’s necessities are getting stern. The hunger has continued until men are famished. They have been without bread till they are ready to perish and faint by the way. The night comes on, a long and dreary night—who shall work, then? We are ready to go down into our graves. Our shadows are lengthened and our frame is shrunk. We are weak and hang our heads like bulrushes, as men who seek the grave that has long been seeking them.”

Let me tell you, My Brethren and fathers, we who are in our opening youth, we feel that, too. Good God! Our days spin round us now and our weeks seem to be hissing through the air, leaving a track like that of a burning brand. Work as we may, and some of us can say that we lose no time in Christ’s cause, yet we can do nothing. We seem to be like one man alone against an innumerable host, or like a child seeking to remove a mountain with its own puny hands.

Night is getting spent, we are growing sear, our years are flying by, our deaths are coming on. Souls are dying—Hell is filling. All down the cataract of destruction men are being plunged incessantly beyond our sight, beyond our hope. We cannot do it. The more we feel our responsibility, the more our infirmity oppresses us. My Lord, You have called us to a work that is too hard! We cannot do it, Master. We come to Your feet and we say we cannot give food to these multitudes to eat. Mock us not. Command us not to impossibilities.

You have bid us preach the Gospel to every creature under Heaven. We cannot reach them. We are too few. We are too feeble. We are too weak. We are too devoid of talent. Master, we cannot do it! At Your feet we are ready to fall in sheer despair. But hark! I hear the cries of the multitude as they come up in our ears. They say to us, “We are perishing—will you let us perish? We are famishing—will you let us famish? Our fathers have gone down to Hell and our fathers’ fathers have perished for lack of the bread that came down from Heaven and will you let *us* die?”

Across from Africa the multitudes look over the sea to us and they beckon with their fingers—“Will you let *us* perish? Shall we forever be hunting ground for those who delight in chains and bloodshed?” From Asia they lift up the cry—“Will you always leave us? Shall we always be the bond slaves of Juggernaut, Brahma, Servia and Vishnu?” From Australia they cry to us, such as have not already perished. The Aborigines cry, “Shall we never see the light of the Gospel? Shall we never hear the Gospel?” And worse than the Aborigines, the wail of not a few who remember in dreams the services of our sanctuaries, but have forgotten in their labors the observance of our Sabbaths, their cry is piercing, indeed.

Oh, how terrible is the wail—the combined wail that comes up from all the nations under Heaven! *One* man in Paul’s dream, who said, “Come

over and help us!” was enough to oblige him to action. And here are millions not in a dream but in open vision, who all at once say, “Come and help us.” Did we say, just now, we could not? Surely we must recant our words and say, “We must.” Good Master, we must! If we cannot, we must. We feel our weakness, but there is an impulse within us that says we must do it and we cannot stop, we dare not—we were accursed if we did.

The blasts of Hell and the wrath of Heaven would fall upon us if we renounced the task. The world’s only hope—shall we put that out? The lone star that gilds the darkness—shall we quench that? The saviors of men, and shall we fold our arms and let them die? No! By the love we bear for Your name—by the bonds that unite us to You—by everything that is holy before God and humane in the sight of our fellow mortals—by everything that is tender and gentle in the throbbing of our hearts, and the yearning of our hearts—we say we must, though we feel we cannot!

Yet there is a strong tendency in our hearts to shift personal responsibility. “Let us send them away into the villages to buy meat.” We look towards some Bethsaida in the distance and say, “Let them go there and get food.” This is a strong temptation with many Churches. Perhaps, you say, “We have not got all this work to do ourselves—there are other Churches. Let them do their part. In all the suburbs of London there are Chapels. There is the parish Church—cannot they hear the Gospel there? There is the City Missionary going about after them. What need is there that we should visit them? No doubt there are some good men preaching in the street. Why should I do it? Let them go into the villages and get meat.”

Ah, but not so—the Master said to you, “*You* give them to eat.” “*YOU.*” Let this Church feel that it should look upon the world as if it were the only Church and do its utmost as if it had no helper under Heaven but had all the work to do itself. And let the entire body of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ—instead of looking to societies for evangelization, or to commerce, or to governments—remember that she is the sole savior of the world. Christ never was incarnate in kings and in princes. His incarnation today is in the sacramental host of His elect.

If you ask me where is God on earth, I point to the man Christ Jesus. If you ask me where is *Christ* on earth, I point you to His faithful *Church*, called by His Spirit. As Christ was the world’s hope, so is the Church the world’s hope—and she must take up the charge as if there were not another. Instead of sending some to this town and some to that, she must hear her Master say, “You give them to eat.” I do fear, dear Friends, that we are, many of us, getting into a very easy state about perishing men, because we keep out of their way. To stop your ears to the cries of the hungry, or shut your eyes to the wants of the widow and the fatherless, is not the way to relieve famine.

Nor is it the way of doing good in the world, to avoid the haunts of the poor and to leave the dens of desolation and sin. It is ours to touch the leper with our healing finger, not to shrink from his presence. It is ours to go and find out the stripped, and wounded, and helpless of the sons of men, and then to pour in the oil and the wine. Leave the priest and the Levite, if they will, to pass by on the other side. Your Master asks of you, Christian, practical, personal service. And your Christianity is worth noth-

ing unless it makes you heed His word—"You give them to eat"—unless it makes you, as individual members, and as an united body, do God's work for the world's sake and for Jesus Christ's sake.

I will tell *you*, the people of my charge, that the world's salvation is given instrumentally into your hands. As far as your power lies, you are to consider yourselves as the world's hope, and you are to act as such. And what shall I say of you if, instead of accepting this charge from Christ, you shall sit still and do nothing? If, after having built this great house in which you meet, you should disregard others who hear not the Word of Christ—if, being fed with Heaven's food yourselves, you shall be satisfied to let others perish—I tell you that, as a Church, Ichabod shall be written upon your brow!

The garments of this Church shall be rent and her veil shall be torn away from her. She shall be set as a hissing. She shall be made a pillar of salt, like Lot's wife throughout all generations, if she dares to look back, now that the Master has called her to a great and solemn work. He that puts his hand to the plow and looks back is not worthy of the kingdom. I have faith in you, dear Friends, but I have more faith in my God. I have faith in you that you will not turn back but accept the awful charge which devolves upon you of giving light to the world. But if you reject it, I will be a swift witness against you at the Last Great Day—that you knew your Master's will and that you did it not—that you were called to the Master's service and you slunk back again to indolence and sloth.

II. Having thus dwelt upon our mission and enlarged upon our weakness, it is time to turn the topic and come TO OUR LINE OF DUTY AND THE MASTER'S STRENGTH. Our line of duty begins, first of all, in immediate obedience to Christ's first command—"Bring them to Me." "Five loaves, Master, it is all we have; two fishes." "Bring them to Me." In Mark, the words are used—"Go and see." They were to look in their wallets and be quite sure that they had not any more. They were to rummage among all their treasures and bring every crust, every piece of flesh, or bread, to Christ.

"Bring them to Me." "Master, they are barley loaves; only five." "Bring them to me." "There are two fishes. They are only two. They are not worth thinking of. Let us keep them for ourselves." "No, bring them to Me." "But they are such little fishes." "Bring them to Me," He says, "bring them to Me." The Church's first duty is, when she looks to her resources and feels them to be utterly insufficient for her work, still to bring all that she has to Christ.

But how shall she bring them? Why, in many ways. She must bring them to Christ *in consecration*. There is a Brother, yonder, who says, "Well, I have but little money to spare!" "Never mind," says Christ, "let what you have be brought to Me." "Ah," says another, "I have very little time that I can spare in laboring to do good." "Bring it to Me." "Ah," says another, "but I have little ability; my stock of knowledge is very slender; my speech is contemptible." "Bring it to Me." "Oh," says one, "I could only teach in the Sunday school." "Bring it to Me." "Ah," says another, "and I do not know that I could do that. I could but distribute a tract." "Bring it to Me."

Every talent that the Church has is to be brought to Christ and consecrated. And mark this—I speak a strong thing which some will not be able to receive—anything which you have in this world, which you do not consecrate to Christ’s cause, you do rob the Lord of. Every true Christian, when he gave himself to Christ, gave everything he had. Nothing he has is his own—it is all the Master’s. We are not true to the Master’s cause unless it is so. “What? not provide for our families?” Yes, verily, but that is given to God. “Not provide for ourselves?” Yes, verily, so long as you are not covetous.

Remember, it is your Master’s business to provide for *you*. If He provides for you through your own exertions, you are doing your Master’s work and receiving of His bounty, for it is His work to provide for you. But still there must always be a thorough consecration of everything you have to Christ. Where your consecration ends, your honesty with God ends. How often you have made the vow in your hymn! And will you not be true to your covenant with Him?—

***“All that I am and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours.
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
And if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I would give Him all.”***

“Bring them to Me”—not only in consecration but also in *prayer*. I think our Prayer Meetings should be the seasons when the Church brings up all her barley loaves and fishes to Christ. To get them blessed, here we come together, great Master, around the altar. We are weak and feeble, we come to be made strong. We have no power of ourselves, we come that we may receive power from on high. And we wait in the Prayer Meeting, as Your disciples did in the upper room at Jerusalem, till the Spirit is poured out.

It is marvelous how a man with one talent can sometimes do ten times more than a man with ten talents, for he has ten times the Grace. A soldier, after all, is not always useful according to his weapon. Give a fool an Armstrong gun and perhaps he will destroy himself with it. Give a wise man but the poorest piece of firearm and you shall find, with good and steady aim, and bold advance, he shall do more service with his small weapon, than the other with far better arms.

So there are men who seem as if they might be leaders in God’s house, that are laggards, doing nothing—while there are others who are but little in Israel, whom God, through His Grace, makes to be mighty. Bring here, O you servants of the Lord, all that you have kept back, pour all the tithes into His storehouse, that His House may be full. Prove Me now, says the Lord of Hosts, if I do not open the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Let us bring all we have to Christ, likewise in *faith*, laying it all at His feet, believing that His great power can make little means suffice for mighty ends. “Lord, there are only five loaves”—they were five loaves only when we had them in our hands. But now they are in Your hands, they are food for five thousand men. “Lord, there are two fishes”—they were paltry to insignificance while they were ours, but Your touch has ennobled

them and those little fishes shall become food for that vast multitude. Blessed is that man who, feeling that he has truly consecrated all to God, can say, "There is enough. I do not want more talent. I do not need more substance. I would not wish to have more. There is enough for my work. I know it is utterly insufficient in itself, but our sufficiency is of God."

Oh, do not tell me, Sirs, that we, as a denomination, are too feeble to do much good! Do not tell me that the Christianity of England is too weak for the evangelization of the whole world. No such thing—there is enough, there is plenty, if the Master pleases. If there were only six good men living and these six were thoroughly consecrated to God, they would be enough for the world's conversion. It is not the multiplication of your *means*. It is not the complication of your *machinery*. It is not the organization of your *societies*. It is not the qualification of your secretaries for which God cares a whit—it is your consecrated men who are wholly His and only His.

Let them believe that He can make them mighty and they shall be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. I hesitate not to say that there are some pulpits that would be better empty than occupied. There are some congregations to whom it would be far better if they had no preacher at all—for, having a minister who is not ordained of God, and not speaking by faith—they content themselves with things as they are and grow listless. Were the sham taken away, they might cry out for a real ministry. God would bestow on them one taught of the Holy Spirit, who would speak with a tongue of fire, with inward witness and with spiritual energy, resting his confidence in God's promises and His Word.

Oh, dear Friends, we ought to believe that there is enough means if Christ does but bless them, enough to bring in God's chosen ones. "Bring them to Me," once more, in *active service*. That which is dedicated to Christ in solemn covenant and in earnest prayer and in humble faith, must be dedicated in *active service*. Are you *all* at work for Christ? Members of this Church, I speak to you first—it is but incidentally that I address other Believers here. Are you all doing something for Christ? I think there should not be a single member of this Church who is not somehow occupied for the Master.

Shall I except any? Except the weak upon their beds—but they can speak a good word for Him when they are visited! Except the dying upon their couches—but they can bear a blessed testimony to His faithfulness when they are going through the river! Except the dumb—but they can *act* religion, when they cannot speak it! Except the blind—but they can sing His praises! Except the utterly incapacitated—but even *these* can magnify the Lord by their *patience*. We ought, everyone of us, if we are Christ's, to be serving Him.

Am I a son, and have I no duty to my father? Am I a husband and have I no duties of kindness to the wife? Am I a servant and shall I be idle, careless and disobedient? Is the Christian's the only name that is merely nominal? Is this a barren title? Is this a medal to be worn? Is this a kind of cross which Christians shall take when they have done no deeds of arms, no valorous conflicts for Christ? Is the Christian only a thing and not a living reality? The Lord have mercy upon such Christians!

NOW, dear Friends, if you want any inducements to lead you to bring all that you have to Christ, let me urge this. In bringing it to Him, put your talent into *His* hands, whose hands were pierced for you. You give to Him who is your dearest Friend. You give to Him who spared not the blood of His heart that He might redeem you. Do you not love Him? Is it not an honor to be permitted to show your love to so notable and noble a Personage? We have heard of women that have worked, and all but starved themselves, to bring food for their children. And as they put the precious morsels into the little ones' mouths, they felt their toil to be nothing, because they were giving it to those they loved. And so with the Believer—we should feel that he most blesses himself when he blesses Christ. And, indeed, when the Christian does anything for Jesus, it more blesses him that gives than Him that receives.

Besides, when you give to Him, you have another inducement—that you are thus giving to the multitudes. I know people think, when they are doing something for the Church, that they are pleasing the minister. Or pleasing the deacons. Oh, dear Friends, it is not so! What interest have I in all the world but the love of poor souls? I pray that God, who reads the heart, shall say at the Day of Judgment that there lives not one who desires more disinterestedly the salvation of this world than the minister who addresses you now! And I trust I can speak the same of my Brethren in Christ, who long to see the world brought in.

Look at that hungry world and when you give the bread, let those eyes that stare upon you, let those who eat so abundantly, thank you and let that be a sufficient recompense for what you have done. There is a man, I think, present now, who I remember, some two or three winters ago, came to me to join the Church. And when I sat down in the room to talk to him, I saw by the look of the poor man's face he wanted bread natural as well as bread spiritual. So I said, "Before I talk to you, I should like to see you a little refreshed." And we fetched him something to eat. I looked at him for a minute, for I saw his eyes glisten and I left the room, for fear he should not eat so much as if I were there.

This, though I can tell you, when I saw the great pleasure with which he ate, it would have been sufficient compensation to me if that little had cost ten thousand pounds. And when you see the poor sinner lay hold of Christ so greedily and yet so joyfully—hen you see his gleaming eyes and the tears as they run down his cheeks—you will say, I am too well paid to have done good to such a poor heart as this. Lord, it is enough, I have fed these hungry souls.

Once again, bring your loaves and fishes to Christ instead of following Christ to get loaves and fishes. Is it no inducement that you should, yourself, be the distributor? When we were children and our father cut off a small piece from the joint and sent it to a sick woman over the road, do we not remember how Thomas, Mary, and Ann used to quarrel for turns to take the basin over with the slice of meat? We always liked to knock at the good women's door and say, "Please, we have brought something for your dinner today." Children are always glad if there is something to give away. If you put a penny into their hands, to give to a poor blind man, how cheerfully they run! Just such a feeling as that the Christian has, when

out of his talent, which he has consecrated to God, he does something for the world. He is going about among the ranks and feeding them, and he has joy in the deed.

Then to close this point. "Bring them to Me and you shall have as much left as you had when you brought them." They took up of the fragments more than ever they gave. Christ will never let any man die in His debt. What you have done unto Him is abundantly repaid, if not in temporals, yet in spirituals. The fragments shall fill the baskets that are so liberally emptied. You shall find that while watering others you are yourself watered. The joy you impart shall be mutual. To do good is to get good, and to distribute to others for Christ is the surest way of enriching one's self.

The rest of the Believer's duty I will briefly sum up. When you have brought your talents to Christ and have a conscientiousness of your great mission, your next duty is to look up. Thank God for what you have got—look up! Say—"There is nothing in what I do. There is nothing in my prayers, my preaching, my goings, my doings, except You bless the whole. Lord, bless it!" Then, when you have blessed, break. Remember the multiplication never came till after the division and the addition did not begin till the subtraction took place.

So, then, begin to break, do good, and communicate. Go abroad and actively serve the Master, and when you have thus broken and have thus distributed to others, mind that you only distribute from Christ's own hand. You are to put your talents and abilities into Christ's hand. He gives the blessing on it. Then He gives it back to you—afterwards, you give it to the people. If I give you bread from this pulpit to eat, that is my own—it will be of no use to you. But if, having gotten it in my study, I put it in the hand of Christ, and come up here and Christ hands it back to me and I give it to you, you shall be fed to the full.

This is Christ's way of blessing men. He does not give the blessing first to the world—it is to His disciples and then the disciples to the multitude. We get in private what we distribute in public. We have access to God as His chosen favorites. We come near to Him. He gives to us, we give to others.

Dear Friends, I began by setting before you a great and high mission. First, I made you say, "We cannot." Then I tried to make you say, "We must." And now I want to end by making you say "We can." Yes! Christ is with us, and we can! God is for us and we can! The Holy Spirit is in us and we can! God the Holy Spirit calls us, Jesus Christ the Son of God cheers us, God the Father smiles upon us. We can! We must! We will! The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

But have we believed in Christ ourselves? If not, we can do nothing. Come to Jesus first, then work for Jesus. Give Him your own heart first, then give Him all that you have. So shall He accept your offering and bless your soul for His name's sake.

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THE PREPARATORY PRAYERS OF CHRIST NO. 3178

A SERMON
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“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.”
Luke 3:21, 22.

“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”
Luke 6:12, 13.

“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”
Luke 9:28, 29.

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.”
Matthew 14:23-25.

“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead were laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me.”
John 11:41, 42.

“And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.”
Luke 22:31, 32.

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.”
Luke 23:46.

THERE is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a Man of much prayer. He was mighty as a Preach-

er, for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spoke like this Man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible! We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to *preach*, but we are told that, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such amazing fervor that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer and they, therefore, desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a Man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful Man. His words speak to us like the words of One whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of Heaven! He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

Prayer seems to be like a silver thread running through the whole of our Savior's life and we have the record of His prayers on many special occasions. It struck me that it would be both interesting and instructive for us to notice some of the seasons which Jesus spent in prayer. I have selected a few which occurred either before some great work or some great suffering, so our subject will really be the *preparatory prayers of Christ*—the prayers of Christ as He was approaching something which would put a peculiar stress and strain upon His Manhood, either for service or for suffering. And if the consideration of this subject shall lead all of us to learn the practical lesson of praying at all times—and yet to have special seasons for prayer just before any peculiar trial or unusual service—we shall not have met in vain!

I. The first prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER IN PREPARATION FOR HIS BAPTISM. It is in Luke 3:21, 22—"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus, also being baptized, and praying," (it seems to have been a continuous act in which He had been previously occupied), "the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased."

The Baptism of our Lord was the commencement of His manifestation to the sons of men. He was now about to take upon Himself in full all the works of His Messiahship and, consequently, we find Him very specially engaged in prayer. And, Beloved, it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate that when any of us have been converted and are about to make a Scriptural profession of our faith—about to take up the soldier's life under the great Captain of our salvation—about to start out as pilgrims to Zion's city—I say that it seems to me to be peculiarly appropriate for us to spend much time in very special prayer! I would be very sorry to think that anyone would venture to come to be baptized, or to be united with a Christian Church without having made that action a matter of much solemn consideration and earnest prayer. But when the decisive step is

about to be taken, our whole being should be very specially concentrated upon our supplication at the Throne of Grace.

Of course we do not believe in any sacramental efficacy attaching to the observance of the ordinance, but we receive a special blessing in the act, itself, because we are moved to pray even more than usual before it takes place and at the time. At all events, I know that it was so in my own case. It was many years ago, but the remembrance of it is very vivid at this moment and it seems to me as though it only happened yesterday! It was in the month of May and I rose very early in the morning so that I might have a long time in private prayer. Then I had to walk about eight miles, from Newmarket to Isleham, where I was to be baptized in the river. I think that the blessing I received that day resulted largely from that season of solitary supplication and my meditation, as I walked along the country roads and lanes, upon my indebtedness to my Savior and my desire to live to His praise and Glory. Dear young people, take care that you start right in your Christian life by being much in prayer! A profession of faith that does not begin with prayer will end in disgrace. If you come to join the Church, but do not pray to God to uphold you in consistency of life, and to make your profession sincere, the probability is that you are already a hypocrite! Or if that is too uncharitable a suggestion, the probability is that if you are converted, the work has been of a very superficial character and not of that deep and earnest kind of which prayer would be the certain index. So again I say to you that if any of you are thinking of making a profession of your faith in Christ, be sure, then, in preparation for it, you devote a special season to drawing near to God in prayer.

As I read the first text, no doubt you noticed that it was while Christ was praying that, “the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, You are My Beloved Son, in You I am well pleased.” There are three occasions of which we read in Scripture when God bore *audible testimony to Christ*. And on each of these three occasions He was either in the act of prayer or He had been praying but a very short time before. Christ’s prayer is especially mentioned in each instance side by side with the witness of His Father—and if you, beloved Friends, want to have the witness of God either at your Baptism or on any subsequent act of your life—you must obtain it by prayer! The Holy Spirit never sets His seal to a prayerless religion! It has not in it that of which He can approve. It must be truly said of a man, “Behold, he prays,” before the Lord bears such testimony concerning him as He bore concerning Saul of Tarsus, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles.”

So we find that it was while Christ was praying at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit came upon Him, “in a bodily shape like a dove,” to qualify Him for His public service! And it is through prayer that we, also, receive that spiritual enrichment that equips us as co-workers together with God. Without prayer you will remain in a region that is desolate as a desert! But bend your knees in supplication to the Most High and you have reached the land of promise, the country of benediction! “Draw near

to God, and He will draw near to you,” not merely as to His gracious Presence, but as to the powerful and efficacious working of the Holy Spirit! More prayer—more power! The more pleading with God that there is, the more power will there be in pleading with men, for the Holy Spirit will come upon us while we are pleading and so we shall be fitted and qualified to do the work to which we are called of God!

Let us learn, then, from this first instance of our Savior’s preparatory prayer at His Baptism, the necessity of special supplication *on our part in similar circumstances*. If we are making our first public profession of faith in Him, or if we are renewing that profession. If we are moving to another sphere of service, if we are taking office in the Church as deacons or elders, if we are commencing the work of the pastorate. If we are in any way coming out more distinctly before the world as the servants of Christ, let us set apart special seasons for prayer—and so seek a double portion of the Holy Spirit’s blessing to rest upon us!

II. The second instance of the preparatory prayers of Christ which we are to consider is OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO CHOOSING HIS TWELVE APOSTLES. It is recorded in Luke 6:12, 13—“And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. [See Sermon #798, Volume 14—SPECIAL PROTRACTED PRAYER—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And when it was day, He called unto Him, His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles.”

Our Lord was about to extend His ministry. His one tongue, His one voice might have delivered His personal message throughout Palestine, but He was desirous of having far more done than He could individually accomplish in the brief period of His public ministry upon earth. He would therefore have 12 Apostles and afterwards 70 disciples who would go forth in His name and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation. He was infinitely wiser than the wisest of mere men, so why did He not at once select His 12 Apostles? The men had been with Him from the beginning and He knew their characters and their fitness for the work He was about to entrust to them, so He might have said to Himself, “I will have James, John, Peter and the rest of the twelve, and send them forth to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand and to exercise the miraculous powers with which I will endow them.” He might have done this if He had not been the Christ of God—but being the Anointed of the Father, He would not take such an important step as that without long continued prayer. So He went alone to His Father, told Him all that He desired to do and pleaded with Him, not in the brief fashion that we call prayer which usually lasts only a few minutes—but His pleading lasted through an entire night!

What our Lord asked for, or how He prayed, we cannot tell, for it is not revealed to us. But I think we shall not be guilty of vain or unwarranted curiosity if we use our imagination for a minute or two. In doing so, with the utmost reverence, I think I hear Christ crying to His Father whom the right men might be selected as the leaders of the Church of God upon the earth. I think I also hear Him pleading that upon these chosen men a Divine influence might rest, that they might be kept in character, honest

in heart and holy in life—and that they might also be preserved in sound Doctrine and not turn aside to error and falsehood. Then I think I hear Him praying that success might attend their preaching. That they might be guided where to go, where the blessing of God would go with them and that they might find many hearts willing to receive their testimony. And that when their personal ministry should end, they might pass on their commission to others so that as long as there should be a harvest to be reaped for the Lord, there should be laborers to reap it—as long as there should be lost sinners in the world, there would also be earnest, consecrated men and women seeking to pluck the brands from the burning. I will not attempt to describe the mighty wrestling of that night of prayer when, in strong cries and tears, Christ poured out His very soul into His Father’s ear and heart! But it is clear that He would not dispatch a solitary messenger with the glad tidings of the Gospel unless He was assured that His Father’s authority and the Spirit’s power would accompany the servants whom He was about to send forth.

What a lesson there is in all this to us! What Infallible Guidance there is here as to how a missionary society should be conducted! Where there is one committee meeting for business, there ought to be 50 for prayer! Whenever we get a missionary society whose main business it is to pray, we shall have a society whose distinguishing characteristic will be that it is the means of saving a multitude of souls! And to you, my dear young Brothers in the College, I feel moved to say that I believe we shall have a far larger blessing than we have already had when the spirit of prayer in the College is greater than it now is, though I rejoice to know that it is very deep and fervent even now! You, Brothers, have never been lacking in prayerfulness. I thank God that I have never had occasion to complain or to grieve on that account, but still, who knows what blessing might follow a night of prayer at the beginning or at any part of the session—or an all-night wrestling in prayer in the privacy of your own bedrooms? Then, when you go out to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath, you will find that the best preparation for preaching is much praying! I have always found that the meaning of a text can be better learned by prayer than in any other way. Of course we must consult lexicons and commentaries to see the literal meaning of the words and their relation to one another—but when we have done all that, we shall still find that our greatest help will come from prayer! Oh, that every Christian enterprise were commenced with prayer, continued with prayer and crowned with prayer! Then might we, also, expect to see it crowned with God’s blessing!

So once again I remind you that our Savior’s example teaches us that for seasons of special service, we need not only prayers of a brief character, excellent as they are for ordinary occasions, but special protracted wrestling with God like that of Jacob at the Brook Jabbok, so that each one of us can say to the Lord, with holy determination—

***“With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.”***

When such sacred persistence in prayer as this becomes common throughout the whole Church of Christ, Satan’s long usurpation will be coming to an end and we shall be able to say to our Lord, as the 70 dis-

ciples did when they returned to Him with joy, “Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name!”

III. Now, thirdly, let us consider OUR LORD’S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO HIS TRANSFIGURATION. You will find it in Luke 9:28, 29—“And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His Countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” You see that it was *as He prayed that He was transfigured.*

Now, Beloved, do you really desire to reach the highest possible attainments of the Christian life? Do you, in your inmost soul, pine and pant after the choicest joys that can be known by human beings this side of Heaven? Do you aspire to rise to full fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and to be transformed into His image from glory to glory? If so, the way is open to you! It is the way of prayer—only there will you find these priceless blessings! If you fail in prayer, you will assuredly never come to Tabor’s top! There is no hope, dear Friends, of our ever attaining to anything like a transfiguration and being covered with the Light of God so that whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell, unless we are much in prayer!

I believe that we make more real advance in the Divine Life in an hour of prayer than we do in a month of hearing sermons. I do not mean that we are to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but I am sure that without the praying, the hearing is of little worth! We must pray. We must plead with God if we are to really grow spiritually. In prayer, very much of our spiritual digestion is done. When we are hearing the Word, we are very much like the cattle when they are cropping the grass—but when we follow our hearing with meditation and prayer, we do, as it were, lie down in the green pastures—and get the rich nutriment for our souls out of the Truth of God. My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, would you shake off the earthliness that still clings to you? Would you get rid of your doubts and your fears? Would you overcome your worldliness? Would you master all your besetting sins? Would you glow and glisten in the brightness and Glory of the holiness of God? Then be much in prayer, as Jesus was! I am sure that it must be so and that, apart from prayer, you will make no advance in the Divine Life—but that in waiting upon God, you shall renew your spiritual strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint!

IV. I must hasten on lest time should fail us before I have finished. And I must put together two of OUR LORD’S PRAYERS PREPARATORY TO GREAT MIRACLES.

The first, which preceded His stilling of the tempest on the Lake of Gennesaret, is recorded in Matthew 14:23-25—“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.” He had been pleading with His Father for His disciples and

then, when their ship was tossed by the waves, and driven back by the contrary winds, He came down to them from the lofty place where He had been praying for them, making a pathway for Himself across the turbulent waters that He was about to calm. Before He walked upon those tossing billows, He had prayed to His Father. Before He stilled the storm, He had prevailed with God in prayer.

Am I to do any great work for God? Then I must first be mighty upon my knees! Is there a man here who is to be the means of covering the sky with clouds and bringing the rain of God's blessing on the dry and barren Church which so sorely needs reviving and refreshing? Then he must be prepared for that great work as Elijah was when, on the top of Carmel, "He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees," and prayed as only he could pray! We shall never see a little cloud like a man's hand, which shall afterwards cover all the sky with blackness, unless first of all we know how to cry mightily unto the Most High! But when we have done that, then shall we see what we desire. Moses would never have been able to control the children of Israel as he did if he had not first been in communion with his God in the desert, and afterwards in the mountain. So if we are to be men of power, we also must be men of prayer!

The other instance to which I want to refer, showing how our Lord prayed before working a mighty miracle, is when He stood by the grave of Lazarus. You will find the account of it in John 11:41, 42—"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You hear Me always: but because of the people here, I said it, that they may believe that You have sent Me." He did not cry, "Lazarus, come forth," so that the people heard it, and Lazarus heard it, until *first* He had prayed, "My Father, grant that Lazarus may rise from the dead," and had received the assurance that he would do so as soon as he was called by Christ to come forth from the grave.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do you not see that if Christ, who was so strong, needed to pray thus, what need there is for us, who are so weak, to also pray? If He, who was God as well as Man, prayed to His Father before He worked a miracle, how necessary it is for us, who are merely men, to go to the Throne of Grace and plead there with importunate fervency if we are ever to do anything for God! I fear that many of us have been feeble out here in public because we have been feeble out there on the lone mountainside where we ought to have been in fellowship with God. The way to be fitted to work what men will call wonders, is to go to the God of Wonders and implore Him to gird us with His all-sufficient strength so that we may do exploits to His praise and Glory!

V. The next prayer we are to consider is OUR LORD'S PRAYER PREPARATORY TO PETER'S FALL. We have the record of that in Luke 22:31, 32—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren." [See Sermons #2620, Volume 45—CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR PETER; #2034, Volume 34—

PETER'S RESTORATION and #2035, Volume 34—PETER AFTER HIS RESTORATION—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

There is much that is admirable and instructive in this utterance of our Lord. Satan had not then tempted Peter, yet Christ had already pleaded for the Apostle whose peril He clearly foresaw! Some of us would have thought that we were very prompt if we had prayed for a Brother or Sister who had been tempted and who had yielded to the temptation. But our Lord prayed for Peter *before he was tempted*. As soon as Satan had desired to have him in his sieve, that he might sift him as wheat, our Savior knew the thought that was formed in the diabolic mind—and He at once pleaded for His imperiled servant who did not even know the danger that was threatening him! Christ is always beforehand with us. Before the storm comes, He has provided the harbor of refuge. Before the disease attacks us, He has the remedy ready to cure it. His mercy outruns our misery!

What a lesson we ought to learn from this action of Christ! Whenever we see any friend in peril through temptation, let us not begin to talk about him, but let us at once pray for him! Some persons are very fond of hinting and insinuating about what is going to happen to certain people with whom they are acquainted. I pray you, beloved Friends, not to do it! Do not hint that So-and-So is likely to fall, but pray that he may *not* fall. Do not insinuate anything about him to others, but tell the Lord what your anxiety is concerning him.

“But So-and-So has made a lot of money and he is getting very purse-proud.” Well, even if it is so, do not talk about him to others, but pray God to grant that he may not be allowed to become purse-proud. Do not say that he will be, but pray constantly that he may not be—and do not let anyone but the Lord know that you are praying for him.

“Then there is So-and-So. He is so elated with the success he has had that one can scarcely get to speak to him.” Well then, Brother, pray that he may not be elated. Do not say that you are afraid he is growing proud, for that would imply what you would be if you were in his place! Your fear reveals a secret concerning your own nature, for what you judge that he would be is exactly what you would do in similar circumstances! We always measure other people's corn with our own bushel—we do not borrow their bushel. And we can judge ourselves by our judgment of others. Let us cease these censures and judgments—and let us pray for our Brothers and Sisters. If you fear that a minister is somewhat turning aside from the faith, or if you think that his ministry is not so profitable as it used to be, or if you see any other imperfection in him, do not go and talk about it to people in the street, for they cannot set him right—go and tell his Master about him! Pray for him and ask the Lord to make right whatever is wrong. There is a sermon by old Matthew Wilks about our being Epistles of Christ, written not with ink, and not on tablets of stone, but in fleshy tablets of the heart. And he said that ministers are the pens with which God writes on their hearts' hearts—and that pens need sharpening every now and then—but even when they are sharp, they cannot write without ink! So he said that the best service that the people could render to the preacher was to pray the Lord to give them new pens and dip them in the fresh ink that they might write better than

before! Do so, dear Friends—do not blot the page with your censures and unkind remarks, but help the preacher by pleading for him even as Christ prayed for Peter!

VI. Now I must close with our LORD'S PREPARATORY PRAYER JUST BEFORE HIS DEATH. You will find it in Luke 23:46—"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." [See Sermons #2311, Volume 39—OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS and #2644, Volume 45—THE LAST WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS—Read/download both sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

Our Lord Jesus was very specially occupied in prayer as the end of His earthly life drew near. He was about to die as His people's Surety and Substitute. The wrath of God, which was due to them, fell upon Him! Knowing all that was to befall Him, "He set His face steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem" and, in due time, "He endured the Cross, despising the shame." But He did not go to Gethsemane and Golgotha without prayer! Son of God as He was, He would not undergo that terrible ordeal without much supplication. You know how much there is about His praying in the later chapters of John's Gospel. There is especially that great prayer of His for His Church in which He pleaded with amazing fervor for those whom His Father had given Him. Then there was His agonized pleading in Gethsemane when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground." We will not say much about that, but we can well imagine that the bloody sweat was the outward and visible expression of the intense agony of His soul which was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death."

All that Christ did and suffered was full of prayer, so it was but fitting that His last utterance on earth should be the prayerful surrender of His spirit into the hands of His Father. He had already pleaded for His murderers, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." He had promised to grant the request of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your Kingdom." Now nothing remained for Him to do but to say, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost." His life, which had been a life of prayer, was thus closed with prayer—an example well worthy of His people's imitation!

Perhaps I am addressing someone who is conscious that a serious illness is threatening. Well then, dear Friend, prepare for it by prayer! Are you dreading a painful operation? Nothing will help you to bear it so well as pleading with God concerning it! Prayer will help you mentally as well as physically—you will face the ordeal with far less fear if you have laid your care before the Lord and committed yourself—body, soul and spirit—into His hands. If you are expecting, before long, to reach the end of your mortal life either because of your advanced age, or your weak constitution, or the inroads of the deadly consumption—pray much. You need not fear to be baptized in Jordan's swelling flood if you are constantly being baptized in prayer! Think of your Savior in the Garden and on the Cross—and pray even as He did—"Not my will, but yours be done...Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit."

While I have been speaking to Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, there may have been some here who are still unconverted—who have imagined that prayer is the way to Heaven—yet it is not! Prayer is a great and precious help on the road, but Christ, alone, is the Way! And the very first step heavenward is to trust ourselves wholly to Him. Faith in Christ is the all-important matter and if you truly believe in Him, you are saved! But the very first thing that *a saved man does is to pray*—and the very last thing that he does before he gets to Heaven is to pray. Well did Montgomery write—

***“Prayer is the contrite sinner’s voice,
Returning from his ways
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, ‘Behold, he prays!’
Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,
The Christian’s native air!
His watchword at the gates of death
He enters Heaven with prayer!”***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 18:1-14.**

Verse 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* [See Sermon #2519, Volume 43—WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] An old writer says that many of Christ’s parables need a key to unlock them. Here, the key hangs outside the door, for at the very beginning of the parable we are told what Christ meant to teach by it—“that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” And this is the parable.

2. *Saying, There was in a city a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man.* It is a great pity for any city and for any country where the judges do not fear God—where they feel that they have been put into a high office in which they may do just as they please. There were such judges in the olden times even in this land—God grant that we may not see any more like them!

3. *And there was a widow in that city and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary.* She had no friend to plead for her. She had nobody to help her and, therefore, when she was robbed of her little patrimony, she went to the court and asked the judge for justice.

4. *And he would not for a while.* He preferred to be unjust. As he could do as he liked, he liked to do as he should not.

4, 5. *But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.* She seems to have gone to him so often that he grew quite fatigued and pained by her persistence! The Greek words are very expressive, as though she had beaten him in the eyes and so bruised him that he could not endure it any longer. Of course, the poor woman had not done anything of the kind—but the judge thus describes her continual importunity as a wounding of him, as an attacking of him, an assault upon him—for he had, perhaps, a little conscience left. He had, at least, enough honesty to confess that he did not fear God,

nor regard man. There are some of whom that is true, who will not admit it, but this judge admitted it—and though he was but little troubled about it—he said, “that I may not be worried to death by this woman’s continual coming, I will grant her request and avenge her of her adversary.”

6, 7. *And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge says. And shall not God avenge His own elect who cry day and night unto Him, though He bears long with them?* [See Sermon #2836, Volume 6—PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] He is no unjust judge! He is One who is perfectly holy, just, true and who appears in a nearer and dearer Character than that of judge, even as the One who chose His people from eternity! “Shall not God avenge His own elect?” Yes, that He will—only let them persevere in prayer and “cry day and night unto Him.”

8. *I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?* [See Sermon #1963, Volume 33—THE SEARCH FOR FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If anybody can find it, He can, for He is the Creator of it! Yet, when He comes, there will be so little of it in proportion to what He deserves, and so little in proportion to the loving kindness of the Lord, that it will seem as if even He could not find it—although if there were only as much faith as a grain of mustard seed He would be the first to spy it out!

9. *And He spoke this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It seems as if these two things went together—as our esteem of ourselves goes up, our esteem of others goes down—the scales seem to work that way.

10. *Two men went up into the Temple to pray.* [See Sermon #2395, Volume 41—THE BLESSINGS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] It was the place that was specially dedicated for prayer. It was the place where God had promised to meet with suppliants. They did well, in those days, to go up into the Temple to pray to God. Though, in *these days*—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

It is sheer superstition which imagines that one place is better for prayer than another! So long as we can be quiet and still, let us pray wherever we may be.

10, 11. *The one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank You that I am not as other men are—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.* It is possible that this was all true. We have no indication that he was a hypocrite—and if what he said was true—there was something in it for which he might well thank God. It was a great mercy not to be an extortioner, nor unjust, nor an adulterer—but what spoilt his expression of thankfulness was that back-handed blow at the other man who was praying in the same Temple—“or even as this publican.” What had the Pharisee to do with him? He had quite enough to occupy his thoughts if he could only see himself as he really was in God’s sight!

12. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* Observe that there is no prayer in all that the Pharisee said. There was a great deal of self-righteousness and self-congratulation, but nothing else. There was certainly no prayer at all in it!

13. *And the publican, standing afar off*—Just on the edge of the crowd, keeping as far away as he could from the Most Holy Place—

13. *Would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.* [See Sermon #1949, Volume 33—A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] That was *all* prayer—it was a prayer for mercy, it was a prayer in which the suppliant took his right place, for he was, as he said, “a sinner.” He does not describe himself as a penitent sinner, or as a praying sinner, but simply as a sinner. And as a sinner, he goes to God asking for mercy. Our English version does not give the full meaning of the publican’s prayer, it is, “God be propitious to me,” that is, “be gracious to me through the ordained Sacrifice.” And that is one of the points of the prayer that made it so acceptable to God. There is a mention of the Atonement in it. There is a pleading of the sacrificial blood. It was a real prayer and an acceptable prayer—while the Pharisee’s boasting was not a prayer at all.

14. *I tell you, this man*—This publican, sinner as he had been, though he had no broad phylacteries like the Pharisee had, though he may not have washed his hands before he came into the Temple, as, no doubt the Pharisee did—this man, who could not congratulate himself upon his own excellence, “this man”—

14. *Went down to his house justified rather than the other.* He obtained both justification and the peace of mind that comes from it! God smiled upon him and set him at ease concerning his sin. The other man received no justification—he had not sought it and he did not get it. He had a kind of spurious ease of mind when he went into the Temple and he probably carried it away with him! But he certainly was not justified in the sight of God. [See Sermon #2687, Volume 46—TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

14. *For everyone that exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.* God turns things upside down! If we think much of ourselves, He makes us little, and if we make little of ourselves, we shall find that a humble and contrite heart He will not despise! May He teach us so to pray that we may go down to our house justified, as the publican was!

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

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

JESUS NO PHANTOM NO. 957

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 2, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a ghost. And they cried out for fear.”
Matthew 14:26.*

SOME of the richest comforts are lost to us for want of clear perception. What consolation could be greater to the tempest-tossed disciples than to know their Master was present, and to see Him manifestly revealed as Lord of sea as well as land? Yet because they did not discern Him clearly, they missed the incomparable consolation. What is worse, at times the dimness of our perception will even turn the rarest consolation into the source of fear. Jesus is come, and in His coming the Sun of their joy has risen, but they do not perceive it to be Jesus. And thinking it to be a phantom, they are filled with alarm and cry out in dread.

He who was their best Friend, they were as much afraid of as though He had been the arch enemy. Christ walking on the waves should have put all fear to rest, but instead they mistake Him for a ghost appearing amidst the storm, foreboding darker ill. They were filled with dismay by that which ought to have lifted them up with exultation. Oh, the benefit of the heavenly eye salve by which the eyes are cleared! May the Holy Spirit anoint our eyes therewith. Oh, the excellence of faith which, like the telescope, brings Christ near to us, and lets us see Him as He is! Oh, the sweetness of walking near to Christ, and knowing Him with an assured, confident, clear knowledge—for this would give us comforts which now we miss—and at once remove from us distresses which today unnecessarily afflict us.

The subject upon which I wish to speak will be indicated to you if I, first of all, supply you with the outline of it. The first head will be this—it is too common an error to make a phantom of Christ. And, secondly, we are most apt to do this when Jesus is most evidently revealed. And therefore, thirdly, from this come our greatest sorrows. And, fourthly, if we could be cured of this evil, Jesus would rise very much in our esteem and many other blessed results would be sure to follow.

I. IT IS TOO COMMON AN ERROR TO MAKE A PHANTOM OF CHRIST. There are some who make a Christ of a phantom. I mean they take that to be their Savior which is but a delusion. They have dreamed so. They have excited themselves up to a high pitch of presumptuous credulity. They have persuaded themselves into delusive comfort, and they make their excited *feeling* or *fancy* their Christ. They are not saved, but they think they are. Jesus is not known to them. They are unspiritual. They are not His sheep. They are not His disciples, yet they have put something up before

their mind's eye which they think to be Christ, and their ideal of Christ, which is but a phantom, is Christ to them.

A terrible error! May God save us from it and bring us to know the Lord in deed and in Truth by the teaching of His Holy Spirit. For to know Him is life eternal. But an equally and probably a more common error is to make a phantom of Christ. More or less we have all erred in this direction. Let me show you this for reproof and direction. First, how often we have done this in the matter of sin and like cleansing of it! Our sin seems to us, when we are convinced of it, very real. Real, indeed, it is—our offenses against God are no imaginary ones—we have really provoked Him to wrath, and He is angry with us every day.

The stain of sin is not on the surface, merely, the leprosy lies deep within. Sin is a horrible evil, and when our spirits have been able to see the reality and the heinousness of it, they sink within us. But oh, what a glorious thing it is when we can, with equal vividness, see the actual cleansing from sin which Christ confers on all Believers by His precious blood! To see the scarlet and to weep over it is well, but to see that same scarlet vanish in the pure white of the atoning Sacrifice—this is better.

Did you ever get as clear a perception of the second as you have done of the first? It is a great blessing when God makes sin to be experimentally heavy to you so that you feel it. But it is a greater blessing, still, when the atoning blood is quite as vividly realized, and you see the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and the pouring out of the life of the Redeemer upon Calvary, and the agonies unknown by which guilt was fully expiated before the Eternal Throne. My Brethren, when we are under concern of soul, or even after our first conviction—when sin returns heavily upon our spirits—our fears, and terrors, and alarms, are real enough.

No one dares to say to us, then, that we are in a state of nervous excitement about a fiction. Our danger, then, is right before us, as clearly as the flames are before some poor person immured in a burning house—we are sure of the danger, we see it, we perceive it, we feel it in the very core of our nature. But there is salvation provided by the Redeemer! He took our sin upon Himself. He suffered the punishment of it. He has put the sin away. Believing in Him our sin has gone! We have a right to peace, we are fully warranted in standing before God and may ask, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

What we want is not to think of this as a dreamy thing, which may or may not be, but to realize it as a *fact* quite as sure, quite as certain as our distress and the sin which caused it. We are not to look through the storm upon the Savior and view Him as though He were a will-o'-the-wisp, a ghostly thing—while the storm that surrounds us is real—but to see a *real* Savior for *real* sin, and to rejoice in *real* pardon, a pardon which has buried all our sins. A real salvation, a salvation which has set our feet upon a rock beyond the reach of harm.

Brethren, if we came to this point about sin we should have less of the groaning, or if as much of the groaning, we should still have more of the rejoicing. We lament for sin, and we do well. I hope we shall till we reach the gates of Heaven. Sin can never be too much lamented or repented of.

But at the same time we are not to so mourn over sin as to forget that Jesus died, and thereby cancelled all our guilt. No, with every note of lamentation lift up the joyful strain of triumph, for iniquity is gone, Christ has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and he that believes in Him is not condemned, neither can he be, world without end.

The same remarks apply to the matter of our acceptance with God after our pardon. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if I may speak for the rest of you, our shortcomings in Christian duty are often very painfully real to our souls. We cannot preach a sermon, or offer prayer, or give alms, or do any service for our Lord but what we feel, when all is done, that we are unprofitable servants. The faults and imperfections of our service stare us in the face and there is not a day we live but what we are compelled to say that we come very far short of what Christians should be. In fact, we are led sometimes to question whether we can be Christians at all, and very rightly are we anxious as to the truthfulness of our professions.

When we come to the Lord's Table and examine ourselves, we find many causes of disquietude, and much reason for trembling of spirit. Looking through the whole course of our Christian career, shame must cover our faces. We have good need to say, "Not unto us, not unto us be glory." We cannot suppose ourselves able to take *any* glory, our life has been so inglorious, so undeserving, so Hell-deserving. And there are some Christians to whom this state of things is very, very, very, very painfully conspicuous. They are of a desponding turn of mind, much given to looking within, and their inward corruptions and the outward displays thereof cause them continued disquietude and alarm.

My Brethren, there is so much that is good about all this, that who shall condemn it? But at the same time the sacred balance of the soul must be maintained. Are my shortcomings real? Equally real is the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ in which all Believers always stand! Are my prayers imperfect? Yes. But equally perfect and prevalent are the prayers and intercessions of my great Advocate before the Throne! Am I defiled with sin, and therefore worthy to be rejected? Is that true? Equally true is it that in Him is no sin! And His eternal merits have weight with the ever-blessed Father and stand me in as good a place as He, my Representative and Surety, standing before the Throne.

Yes. I am in myself unworthy, but I am accepted in the Beloved. "I am black with sin." "Yes," says the Believer, "it is so." Add, however, the next clause, "but comely." Equally sure it is that we are comely, yes, in God's sight, we are "without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." As Jehovah sees us in Christ Jesus, He beholds no iniquity in us. Christ has put our blemishes away, and made us comely in His comeliness. He sees everything that is lovely in us. Christ has bestowed His own beauty upon us, for He is made this day of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

All we want is in Christ. Our standing is safe in Him, and the love of the Father towards us comes to us without diminution at any time despite our flaws and failures, through the perfection of the Beloved One's acceptance. Now do not cloud this fact. Do not look at the Lord, your right-

eousness, as a phantom. Do not cry out as if you thought His work to be an impalpable something that comforts others, but cannot comfort you. The work of Jesus is the grandest of all facts. O for faith to grasp it, and rely upon it as such!

The principle applies next in the matter of sanctification. Very real and close to our souls, my Brethren, is the flesh. It makes us groan daily, being burdened. Very close to home are our corruptions—these foes of our own household worry us too much to allow us to forget them. Very plain to us also are our temptations—they await us on all sides. And the inward conflict which comes of our fallen nature, and the temptations of Satan and the world—this, too, is very clear. We can no more doubt our conflicts than the wounded soldier doubts the bloodiness of the battle. All these things are evermore before our eyes to our grief.

But I am afraid that here, too, Christ Jesus is often to us as merely an apparition and not as a real Sharer in our spiritual conflicts. Know you not, Beloved, that Jesus Christ is touched with tender sympathy for you in all your temptations? Understand you not that He has prepared provision for you in all your conflicts that you may surely win the day? Expect you not even yet to say, “I have overcome through the blood of the Lamb”? Will you not at this hour shout the anticipatory note of triumph, “Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”? You have corruptions within—this is a fact. But Christ is formed in you the hope of Glory—this is an equal fact.

There is that in you which would destroy you, but there is also that implanted in you which *cannot be destroyed*—this is equally true. You are, in the first Adam, made in the image of the earthy—over this you lament. But in the Second Adam you already begin to bear the image of the heavenly, and you shall perfectly bear it before long. Can you not grasp this? Alas, we do not lay hold of these things, do not get to say, as the Apostle John did, “which we have seen, with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life.”

Too much is this with us a doctrine to be accepted because we are taught it, a matter to be received because some other persons have experienced it, but too little is it a subject of inward living experience. For you and me to know by blessed realization that it is so, that the Holy Spirit sent forth from the Father is *IN US* and *WITH US*, and that Christ will overcome our sin within us by the power of the cleansing water which flowed with the blood from His side, and will as much deliver us from the *power* of sin, as He has already saved us from the *guilt* of sin—this is heavenly experience, indeed.

We must not forget to illustrate this state of mind, also, by the condition of many saints when under trial. How often when the storms are out, and our poor boat is filling, do we realize everything but what we should! We are like the disciples on the Galilean lake. The ship is real—ah, how the timbers creak! The sea is real—how the hungry waves leap up to destroy them! The winds are real—see how the canvas is rent to ribbons, how the mast bends like a bow! Their own discomforts are real—wet to the

skin with the spray—and drenched and cold are they all! Their dangers are real—the ship must certainly go down with all on board!

Everything is real but the Master walking on the waves. And yet, Beloved, there was nothing so real in all that storm as the Master. All else might be a matter of deception to them, but He was real and true. All else did change, and pass away, and subside into calm—but He remained the same. Now observe how often we are in a similar condition. Our wretched circumstances—the bare cupboard, our bodily weakness, the loss of that dear child or parent. All the distresses that await us, the dread of bankruptcy, or poverty—all these seem real. But that word, “I am with you,” appears often in such circumstances to be a matter of belief, certainly, but not a matter of realization.

And that promise, “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”—we dare not deny it, but we are not comforted by it to the degree we should be, because we do not grip it, grasp it, *know* it. The holy children in the fire knew they were in the fire, but they were safe because they knew to an equal certainty that the Son of Man was there with them. And so in the furnace you know that, “no trial for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous.” But know equally well that where Jesus is the trial is blessed, and the affliction has a sweetness in it unknown to anything beside.

I shall only illustrate this in two other points. My dear Brethren, in the matter of death—I do not know whether you can all think of death without a shudder. I am afraid there are not many of us who can. It is very easy to sing, when we are here on Sundays rejoicing with all our Brethren—

**“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye.”**

I am afraid, I am afraid, I am afraid we would rather live than die, after all. A missionary told me the story of an old Negro woman in Jamaica who used to be continually singing, “Angel Gabriel, come and take Aunty Betsy home to Glory.” But when some wicked wag knocked at the door in the dead of night, and told her the angel Gabriel was come for Aunty Betsy, she said, “She lives next door.”

I am afraid it may possibly be so with us—that though we think we wish the waves of Jordan to divide that we may be landed on the other shore—we linger on the bank shivering. It is so. We dread to leave the warm precincts of this house of clay. We cast many “a longing, lingering look behind.” But why is it? It is all because we realize the dying bed, the death sweat, the pangs, the glazing eye—we often realize what never turns out to be reality—but do not realize what are sure to be realities, namely, the angelic watchers at the bedside waiting to act as a convoy to bear our spirits up through tracts unknown of purest ether.

We do not realize the presence of the Savior receiving saints into His bosom that they may rest there until the trumpet of the archangel sounds. We do not really grasp the rising again—

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

If we did, then our songs about dying would be more true and our readiness to depart more abiding. For what is death? It is a pin’s prick at the

worst, often scarcely that—the shutting of our eyes on earth and the opening of them in Heaven! So rapid is the departure of the Believer's soul from the body here to the Presence of the Lord yonder, that death is scarcely anything—it is swallowed up in victory.

O for the realization, then, of Jesus, and death would lose all its sting. And once again, and this is the last illustration I will give on this point—I am afraid that in Christian work we very often fall into the same style of doubt. Here is an enterprise, and straightway if we are wise we realize the difficulties. If we are something more than wise we exaggerate these difficulties and conclude that with our slender means we shall never be able to grapple with them. But ah, why is it that we so seldom think of the living present Savior, who is the Church's Head? Calculate the forces of the Church if you will, but do not forget the most important item of all—the Omnipotence of the Lord her King.

Reckon up, if you will, all the weakness of her pastors, and teachers, and Evangelists and members. But when you have done that, don't think you have calculated all her resources—you have only considered the very fringe of them! The main body and the *strength* of the Church lies in the fullness of the Godhead bodily which dwells in the Person of Jesus Christ. Shall heathendom be real? Shall priest-craft be real? Shall Romanism be real? Shall the corruption of the human heart and the alienation of the human will be real? And shall I not equally realize the Omnipotence of Christ, in the realm of spirit, and the irresistible power of the Holy Spirit, who can turn men from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God?

Let not Christ be a phantom to His Church. In her worst hours, though tossed like a ship in the storm, let her Lord, as He walks the waves, be real to her and she will do and dare right valiantly. And the results will be glorious. Thus much on the first point.

II. Secondly, the worst of it is that WE MAKE CHRIST A PHANTOM MOST WHEN HE IS MOST REALLY CHRIST, most really revealed as the Son of the Highest. Observe, my dear Brethren, when our Lord Jesus Christ walked on the land by the seashore, none of His disciples ever said, "It is a ghost." None of them said, "It is an apparition." Yet they did not see Christ when He walked on the shore, on terra firma. They saw His Manhood, that was all. There was no more to be seen of Christ as He walked there than there is to be seen of any other—simply a Man, no Godhead is there revealed.

But when Christ walked on the waves, there was more of Christ visible than there was on the land. Then they saw His Manhood, but they also saw His Godhead, who could make the liquid waves hold Him up. There was most of Christ to be seen, and yet then they saw the least. Is it not strange where He uncovers most, we see least? Where He reveals Himself most clearly, our unbelieving eye is least able to see? Yet, mark you, Christ is never so truly Christ anywhere as when He works beyond the ordinary course of Nature. He is Christ if He takes a little child upon His knee and blesses it, but more of the Christ is seen when He puts His hand

upon the damsel, and raises her from the dead, or calls Lazarus out of the tomb.

He is the Christ when He speaks a gentle word to a sorrowing heart, but oh, what a Christ He is when He says, "Winds be hushed, and waves be still"! Then is His Glory laid open to faith's strengthened eye. Truly He is most Himself when He is most above all others—when, as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above our thoughts—and His ways above our ways. And, Brethren, we have never seen Christ unless we have seen Him far above all others, and acting beyond the bounds of expectation and reasoning. The Christ is half hidden when He acts as another man.

The whole Christ does not appear in the ordinary run of our affairs. It is in the *extraordinary*, the unusual, the unexpected, that we view the Glory of Christ, and see Him fully. So it is that we refuse most to discern and glorify Him when He is most openly displayed. Let me show you what I mean. Christ, I say, walking on the sea, is most of all Christ there—and yet His disciples do not perceive Him. So in the pardon of very great sin you see the most of Christ. Yet whenever a man has fallen into a great sin, that is, a vile sin in the esteem of others, then he says, "Ah, now I cannot be forgiven this." Why, Man, Jesus is most truly Jesus when He pardons grievous iniquity!

The putting away of your little transgressions, as you have thought them to be—do you think this is all He came for—to redeem such as have a little fallen and a little transgressed? Is He a little Savior for little sinners to be little worshipped? Oh, but here He comes to be Christ in deed and in Truth, when bloody murders, black adulteries, scarlet blasphemies, and crimson filthinesses are all washed away by His blood. Then we see Him as "a Savior and a great one," as One who is "mighty to save."

Why is it that we will not discern Him when He abundantly pardons? Why, my Brethren, do we honor Him as He should be honored, if we only think that the sentimentalism of sin is put away by Him? If we own that the reality, the filthiness, the damnableness of sin is put away by Jesus, and trust Him when our sins seem blackest, foulest, most abhorrent, then we do Him honor and see Him to be the Christ He is.

So again in great distresses of the soul. It pleases God often after conversion to allow the fountains of the great deeps of our corruption to be broken up, and we never felt before as we do then. We had not expected this, and are overwhelmed with surprise to find ourselves such corrupt, such deceitful, such foul things. Then at the same time Satan will invade the heart with fierce temptations and diabolical insinuations, and, alas, our suspicious spirits will imagine that Jesus Himself cannot help us in such a condition!

Oh, but Man, now is the time for the Divine manifestation! Now shall you see the Christ! Do you suppose that the Lord Jesus comes only to speak peace to those who have peace already? Or to give peace to those enduring a trifling disturbance of mind? Man, do you think Jesus a superfluity? Or do you imagine that He is only suited for little occasions? Be ashamed of such insinuations! For He reigns on high above tremendous

storms. He rules the largest waves and the most roaring floods—when all our nature is vexed, when our hopes are gone, and our despair is uppermost—it is amid the tumult of such a tempest that He says, “Peace, be still,” and creates a calm.

Believe in the Christ who can save you when your temptations most threaten to swallow you up. Do not think Him to be only able to save when you are not in extremities, but believe Him to be best seen when your uttermost calamities are near.

I might select many other cases as illustrating this, but I will run over one or two in rapid review. We are, perhaps, enduring an unusually severe trial and need more than usual support. But we fearfully say, “I cannot expect to be supported under *this* affliction.” Ah, your Christ is a phantom, then. If you saw Him, you would know that there is nothing too hard for Him—that the sustenance of a soul, when it is at its lowest famine point—is easy enough work for the Divine Consoler. And you would cast yourself on Him believingly and not act towards Him as you now do. Yes, but you need great supplies for the present time of distress. Your circumstances are trying to the last degree.

Do not, now that you need great supplies, make Christ to be poor and stinting in your esteem. But rather, like Abraham, say, “The Lord will provide.” Abraham, in extremity, when about to slay his son by God’s command, finds that God interposes and the ram is found for a burnt-offering. In your worst poverty Christ will interpose. Jesus will prove Himself to be the Lord of Heaven and earth. You shall see that in Him all fullness dwells. Can you only rely upon Jesus in little and ordinary troubles? I know it is sweet to run to Him in such times, but is He to be only an ordinary, fair-weather Friend to cover you from little showers, and walk with you when a little gale is blowing?

Will He refuse to be with you in stormy weather, or to traverse with you the boisterous sea? O do not so miserably spirit away the Savior! Do not pantomime the Redeemer when you want Him in very deed. You have real poverty, and a real cross, and real difficulties. Now in the mount of the Lord shall it be seen that He is true to His Word, and His name, Jehovah-Jireh, across the darkness of your want shall be written as with letters of fire.

In times of great danger, again, we sometimes gloomily mutter, “Now we shall not be preserved. Christ has kept us up till now, and we quite believe that He would do so if the circumstances of today were no worse than those of times gone by. But *now* we are extremely tempted, now we are violently assailed, now our sorrows multiply—will He help us now?” Dare you say, “*Will* He?” when you know that He cannot change? Dare you say, “*Can* He?” Is anything too hard for the Lord? Are you going to make your Savior into a mere appearance? He is a real Savior—lean on Him. He will bring you safely through—cover yourself with His shield—and keep off the fiery darts from you.

He will not leave you or forsake you. Great deliverances! Ah, we fancy that these will never occur—Jesus will not work these as before, so we wickedly imagine. And if they are worked, we are like Peter, who could not

realize his escape from prison. He knew the saints had prayed for him, but when he was delivered from the prison and found himself in the street of the city, he could not think it was a fact! He “knew not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.”

Often before God has delivered us, we have said, “it cannot be”—our Christ was only a ghost. And when He has delivered us we have said, “I do not understand it, I am overwhelmed with amazement.” The fact being that we do not get such a grip of Christ as to be assured that He is real, present, mighty, gracious. Or if we did, we should receive even His greatest deliverances as natural proofs of His goodness and greatness—such as faith is warranted to expect. “Is it not surprising,” said one, “that God should have heard my prayers, and have been so gracious to me in Providence?” “No,” said an old saint, whose long experience had taught her more of the Lord, “it does not surprise me, it is just like He—it is His way with His people.”

Oh, to feel that great mercy is like He! That it is what we should expect of God—that He should give great deliverances—should walk the waters of our griefs and bid them cease their raging! It is a blessed faith which enables us to recognize Jesus on the waters, and to say, “I know it is Jesus. Nobody but Jesus could act so wondrously. I might not have known Him if I had seen Him working in an ordinary way, or traveling like a common wayfarer. But here amidst extraordinary seasons I expected His help. If I never had seen Him before, I expected to see Him now. And now I do see Him, and I am not amazed, though I *am* delighted. I looked for Him, and knew that when my need of Him was greatest, His coming would be sure.” When faith brightens the eye of hope with the flash of expectation, joy is not far away.

I will only add that if we will but realize Christ, our great successes which will be sure to come over spiritual foes within, and over difficulties without, will again infallibly prove to us His reality. But the probabilities are that we shall think Him not capable of giving us such great successes. And we shall toil on despondingly where we ought to have rejoiced in the Lord. As to our ultimate future we have too often thought it will be hard to die. We have trembled at standing before the Judgment Seat. We have read of the Day of Judgment, and thought, “How shall I bear it?” forgetting that we shall know our Redeemer better in death than before! And in the Resurrection and in the Glory that shall follow we shall see Him more clearly revealed than now. And therefore we ought to think more of Him and lean upon Him in all the great concerns of eternity with a great, a confident, and childlike faith.

III. But I must pass on to the third head. OUR GREATEST SORROWS ARISE FROM OUR TREATING OUR LORD AS UNREAL. It is because of our weakening, vaporizing, and spirting our Lord away, and making Him into a myth so often—instead of gripping Him with a commonsense, practical, firm, realizing faith—that we suffer so much from our troubles. For, Brothers and Sisters, it is a sad cause of trouble to have a phantom Redeemer, a Savior who cannot actually pardon sin when it comes to be *great* sin. A Savior who gives us only a little indefinite hope about our

guilt, but does not literally put it away. This is the seedbed of all manner of evil weeds. I do not wonder if you are vexed with doubts and fears if you have not realized Christ. O that you would all learn to sing with Hart these precious lines—

***“A Man there is, a real Man,
With wounds still gaping wide,
From which rich streams of blood once ran,
In hands, and feet, and side.
(It is no wild fancy of our brains,
No metaphor we speak.
The same dear Man in Heaven now reigns,
That suffered for our sake).
This wondrous Man, of whom we tell,
Is true Almighty God!
He bought our souls from death and Hell,
The price, His own heart’s blood.”***

Beware, my Brethren, of resting content with anything short of faith in an actual, literal, living Mediator—for nothing but reality will be of any use to you in the matter. Of course, with a phantom Savior for real sins, an apparition of a Redeemer for real bondage—you cannot find comfort. Of what use is the appearance of bread and the resemblance of water to famishing pilgrims in the desert? If you have a phantom helper for real woes you are the worse for such help. If your Savior does not actually and practically support you in times of need, and supply your wants and console you under depression, then in what respects are you better off than those who have no helper at all?

Jesus is a Friend, indeed. His Grace, love, and Presence, are no fictions—of all facts they are most sure. If I have to carry a real load, and then have a ghost to assist me, I am in reality unassisted. We want true power, force, and energy, in our Helper, and all that, Faith sees in Jesus, her Lord. But you will readily see how sorrows multiply where Jesus is lightly esteemed.

Besides, to some Christ is not only, as it were, an impalpable spirit, but He is really an indifferent, unfeeling spirit. Jesus to His disciples on the sea seemed as though He would have gone by them and left them to their fate! And we often dream that our gracious Lord is unmindful of us—at any rate, we forget that he is tenderly mindful of our case. It did not strike you when you were so poor last week that Jesus knew it, and was grieved for your affliction? You forgot, dear Brother, when you were trembling as you went into the pulpit, that Jesus knew you trembled, and would uphold you while hearing your testimony. Too seldom do we remember that—

***“In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of Sorrows bears a part.”***

Ah, good Husband, you knew your wife pitied you. You noted well the teardrop when she saw your grief. Ah, dear Child, you knew your mother sorrowed for you. Ah, but if you did but know Christ, you would know this, too—that He never puts you to an unnecessary pain, nor ever tries you with an unneeded trial. There is a needs be for all, and He has sympathy for you in all.

Many a poor sinner even imagines Jesus to be an *angry* spirit, and he cries out for fear. He imagines that Jesus is wrathful and will reject him with indignation. Ah, you do not truly realize my Savior if you think He would ever reject anyone who came to Him. When on earth, what a real Physician of souls He was! He mingled with publicans and sinners. He did not talk about them as people who ought to be looked after, but He actually went after them Himself and suffered one of them to wash His feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hairs of her head. He was likely to touch diseased sinners with His fingers as He healed them.

He was not an amateur Savior. He did not come into this world to save us from suppositions sin and imaginary trouble. There is nothing which is more overlooked, but which ought to be better remarked about our Lord, than His commonsense practicalness. He is utterly devoid of sham and pretense. He is always in the Gospel history as real as the scenes of life around Him. He never strikes you as theatrical and pretentious. May we all feel that He is really a loving Savior, a tender Savior, and a practical Savior to us. May you know Him. May you realize Him—and then your sorrows will either come to an end or be accepted with thanksgiving.

IV. Lastly, IF WE COULD BUT BE CURED OF THIS DESPERATE MISCHIEF, OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WOULD HAVE A HIGHER PLACE IN OUR ESTEEM. AND MANY BENEFICIAL RESULTS WOULD FOLLOW. For, first, did you notice that after the disciples knew it to be Christ, and He came into the ship with them, they said, “Of a Truth you are the Son of God”? If you once realize Christ, you will know Him in His Person as you never will know Him by all I can tell you, or you can read about Him.

You once read about a man. You saw his likeness in the “Illustrated News,” you heard people talk about him. At last you were in his company, and sat down with him. and then you said, “Now I know the man. I did not before.” Oh, if you can realize Christ so as to draw near to Him by faith, you will feel that you now begin to know Him in Truth, and, what is best, you will know Him then with *assurance*.

They said, “Of a Truth you are the Son of God.” You were persuaded that He is God by what you found in Scripture. But when you came to see Him. When He became *real* to you, the doctrine of His Deity needed no arguments to support it. The Truth that Jesus Christ is Lord is then woven into your very being. He is the Son of God to you, if to no one else. What did those mariner disciples do when they saw that it was, indeed, Jesus who trod the wave? It is added, “They worshipped Him.”

You will never worship a phantom, an image, an apparition. Know Jesus to be real, and straightway you prostrate yourself before Him. Blessed God, blessed Son of Man, coming from Heaven for me! Bleeding for me, standing in Glory, pleading for me! I had thought of You and heard of You, but now I see You! What can I do but worship You? It is the grasping of Christ that produces devotion. It is the mistiness of our thoughts about Him that is the root of our undevout frames of mind. God give us a firm hold of Christ, and we shall instinctively adore Him.

They not only worshipped Christ, but they served Him. Their worship was such that whatever He bade them do they did it. And the vessel was

steered where He would until it brought Him to the other side where He wished to go. They who realize Christ are sure to obey Him. I cannot obey that which floats before me like a cloud. But when I see the Man, the God, and know Him to be as real a Person as myself—as much a matter-of-fact existence as my brother—then what He bids me do I do.

My obedience becomes real just in proportion as the Master who commands it becomes real to my soul. Then it is, dear Friends, that we become humbled in spirit. No man realizes Christ without also realizing himself, and being bowed down in self-humiliation. “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you: why I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

But with the humility comes a deep and profound joy and peace. With Christ in the vessel, known to be there, we smile at the storm. Whether it continues or subsides, we are equally peaceful now that we have realized that Christ is with us. I do believe that the actualizing of their Lord is the main thing that Christians want. They require, first and foremost, a real Leader. They want to grasp His reality and feel His actual power. And is it necessary for this that He should come here in Person? I trust not. If He were to appear this morning on this platform, and His servant should hide his head, you would say, “Behold the glorious sight, yonder is our Lord.”

I know your heads would bow to worship, and then you would open your eyes and gaze on Him, and feast your souls with the sight, and then each one would say, “What can I do for Him?” And if the condescending Master gave you each leave to come and spread offerings at the feet of the Crucified, oh, what heaps of treasure would be brought! Each one would feel, “I have not with me what I wish,” but you would say, “Take all I have, my blessed Lord, for You have redeemed me with Your blood.”

Is not He just as dear to you now, though unseen? Is not faith as mighty a faculty as sight? Is it not “the evidence of things not seen”? Is not Wesley’s verse true? —

***“The things unknown to feeble sense,
Unseen by reason’s glimmering ray;
With strong commanding evidence,
Their heavenly origin display.
Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly;
The invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye.”***

Does not faith make Jesus as real to us as our sight would do? It should do so. I pray it may. And then see how true will be your consecration, how abundant will be your service, how ready your thanksgiving, how abounding your offerings!

May God grant you Grace to get into this true position, both you who are saints and you who still are sinners—for in having a real Christ you will have the reality of every good. God give it to you for Jesus’ sake. Amen and Amen.

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PETER WALKING ON THE SEA

NO. 3562

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*“And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying Lord, save me!”
Matthew 14:28-31.*

A FEW reflections will be sure to cross the mind of any thoughtful reader of this narrative.

I. THE MIXED CHARACTER OF THE BELIEVER'S EXPERIENCE is here very palpably suggested to us. Peter was undoubtedly a bold believer in Jesus Christ. He addresses his Master devoutly, calling Him, “Lord”—a name of reverence, the use of which evidences the change that had been worked in his character, and the obedient spirit it had produced. But the misgivings implied in that, “if”—“if it is You”—savors rather of unbelief! And yet we find this hesitancy immediately followed by an expression of such strong confidence that we marvel at the request he uttered, “*Bid me come to You on the water.*” Then cheered by the Lord's prompt answer, “Come,” we find him showing his courage by descending from the vessel, setting foot on the sea and actually walking on the water! Thus did he participate in the wonder which Christ worked and share in the miracle of subduing the elements. His valor, however, soon evaporates. For, “when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid.” *The faith that buoyed him up gave place to a fear that bowed him down.* He who was walking on the liquid wave, one instant, is sinking beneath the surge the next! The gallant cry, “Bid me come to You on the water,” is quickly exchanged for the grievous wail, “Lord, save me!” So great his pluck, so dire his panic! And is this a common experience? Are all God's people thus subject to changes—alternating between calm trust and cowardly fear? Can they be neither one thing or the other—neither altogether believing or totally unbelieving? We think it is even so. We will not say how much frailty of the creature is mixed up with fealty to Christ in the best of men, nor how far the Grace of God may protect us from the guilt of double-dealing in the conduct of our lives. But we do mournfully confess that in our own experience, the good and the evil contend for the

mastery and, sometimes, it seems but the turning of a hair which shall vanquish! Fully assured, though, we are that the new life which has been implanted in us will ultimately gain the victory, but not less fully conscious are we that disasters and defeats are constantly occurring on our path to triumph.

Our trophies are never won without troubles. He that knows anything, it seems to me, of what it is to live by faith, will find throughout his earthly career a continual conflict. He may never fall so low as to doubt his interest in Christ, yet he may sometimes wet his couch with tears and wonder if God has forgotten to be gracious. He may be enabled to hold on his way for years without a slur on his character, yet will he often have to engage in such terrible struggles against inbred sin—and to endure such sore pressure from troubles without—that he is compelled to cry out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” *One day you may be on Tabor’s summit witnessing your Master’s Transfiguration, and another day you may be in the Valley of Humiliation, groaning in spirit, diminished and brought low through oppression, affliction and sorrow! One day you may be as strong as a giant and all things seem possible to you—and another day you may be as weak as a baby and weep for the joys that are fled! You may one day “surname yourself by the name of Israel” and another day call yourself, “the worm Jacob,” fearing lest you should be trodden down by the common ills of life and utterly crushed! Our way to Heaven is uphill and downhill. Our life is made of checkered materials—it is not all of one fabric. Sometimes full of hope, we bound forward with elastic step—soon the sun ceases to shine, the big raindrops fall, the vapors rise and we sit down with folded arms and fixed eyes, wearing a sad, leaden cast! As in our experience, so in our nature, good and evil meet, but cannot blend—they are at constant variance. I mention this well-known fact because it may serve to comfort some of the younger sort who but of late have begun to go on pilgrimage. They fancied that since they were born-again, and enlisted in Christ’s army, they would never afterward have to fight with sin within—though, perhaps, they might be tempted—their soul would never give any consent to it. They boasted when they put on the harness, as though they had taken it off. They sowed today and they expected to reap their harvest tomorrow! They had scarcely got loose from the shore, yet they expected to soon reach the port. When the vessel is a little buffeted and heaved to and fro by contrary winds, they cannot understand it! Beloved, it is so with all of us! Those saints of God who appear to you to be favored with perpetual sunshine could tell you quite another tale. Some whom God highly honors in public, He often deeply humbles in private. He has a way of taking His children behind the door and making them see some of the abominations within them, while at*

the same time He is giving them to see the beauties of Christ and enabling them to feed on Him. Do not think that yours is an extreme case because your spiritual life is one of much contest with sin. So far from being extreme, I believe it is but a specimen of the way in which the Lord deals with all His beloved ones.

There I leave that first observation. *Peter is at one moment confident, another instant he is dismayed.* At one moment he is treading the waves like a miracle worker, and the next instant he is sinking like an ordinary being! And so it is with us—sometimes aloft, and soon crying out of the depths, “Lord, save me!”

And for our second reflection, we observe that—

II. FAITH LOVES VENTURESOME SERVICE.

Peter, when full of faith, said to his Master, “Lord, if it is You, bid me come to You upon the water.” Faith seems to have a secret instinct revealing her military and royal character. In the old wars of Troy we read of one who, being told by a prophet that the war would not be to his honor, sought to escape from the Greek ranks and hid himself among the daughters of the king. But he was discovered by Ulysses, who sent a peddler, or one disguised as such, to sell various wares—and while the maidens at the gate came to buy the various trinkets in which they delighted, there was placed in the basket a trumpet, or a sword, and the young hero, disguised as he was, yet let out his taste and chose the war-like implement. It was his nature to do so—and he was discovered by the choice! Now, amidst ten thousand allurements, faith is quite certain to choose that which appertains to boldness and to venturesomeness. John is full of love, he stays in the vessel. But Peter abounds in faith and he must be doing some high action congruous to the nature of faith and, therefore, he says, “Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water.” *That is the kind of thing for faith to do. Anybody can walk on the land, but faith is a water-walker!* She can do, and act, and work where others fail. Remember it is not said in Scripture that faith will pluck up mustards seeds, or that it will remove molehills. These little things are not the sphere for faith, but it is written, “You shall *say unto this mountain*, Be you moved from here; or this sycamore tree, Be plucked up by the roots.” Faith loves to deal in great things, in marvelous adventures, in projects beyond human power! We are not to come to God and ask Him to do for us what we can do for ourselves. There is no room for the exercise of faith where reason and human strength will suffice. Faith is a vessel expressly built for the deep seas. She is not a coaster, to keep close to the shore—she pushes out where she can neither see the shore nor fathom the depth—for she has a compass on board, and she looks up to the stars which God has fixed for her guidance! She has, too, a

blessed Pilot, so she feels herself secure and all at home in the wild waste of waters, with no human eyes to gaze upon her, and no human hands to help.

“If it is You,” said Peter, “let me come to You on the water.” If you have faith in God and that faith is in active exercise, I am persuaded you will feel an instinct within you prompting you to dare something more than others have ventured to attempt, eager to honor Jesus Christ more than anyone else would think possible, who had little faith or no faith at all! What a blessed instinct it is which impels some of our Brothers, as it frequently has done, to leave their native country and go out to preach the Gospel in regions beyond the sea! Not building upon another man’s foundation, but, like the bold Apostle, seeking to extend the bounds of Immanuel’s Kingdom. How blessed it is when some Brother or Sister finds it in their heart to consecrate more of their substance than is ordinary to the Lord’s work, not grudging what they can spare, but glorying over what they can sacrifice! Yes, and blessed it is when faith kindles to furnace heat and stimulates one to undertake a work for which he, alone, would be incompetent. God preserve such a man! How I rejoice at every mention of our brother Muller at Bristol! What lessons of trust in God’s promise and His Providence has he taught to Christians and Christian Churches! How graciously has Christ made him to walk on the water! How securely has he sped his course these many years as safe on the flowing current of subscriptions as if he were proceeding on the solid bases of a rich endowment! How wonderfully his orphanage has been supported! He walks on waves in very truth! This sole dependence upon the eternal Providence of a faithful God is indispensable to us. I trust we are not entire strangers to it in our measure and degree. *It is no novelty to us to put our foot down on what we thought to be a cloud, and find that God had placed a rock there, to walk right on in the dark, and see the midnight turn to noonday—to rest on the invisible and prove it to be more substantial than the visible—to depend upon the naked promise of the Covenant-Keeping God and reap greater riches than all the treasures that could come from relying on an arm of flesh! Faith then, is a venturesome thing and if any of you have not yet been nerved with courage because you believed, I pray that your faith may grow till you feel compelled to attempt more than of your own unaided strength you can possibly do!*

Brothers and Sisters, undertake something for Christ. Is there a Brother here who ought to preach, but is too timid? I hope his faith will overcome his diffidence. Is there a Sister here who ought to take a class in the school, but she is shy and hesitant? I hope her faith in the Savior will get fresh impetus from her love to souls. “Such trust have we through Christ to Godward.” Oh, that you may all be urged by strong convictions to attempt something in His service! And may you be taught

by the Holy Spirit to set about it wisely! And may you be enabled by that sufficiency which is of God to do it effectually! Though you may often have stumbled, in plain paths, you shall be able to walk on the water in safety when and where Jesus bids you! I say this advisedly, for, venturesome as Peter's faith was, he would not make a move without first having the Master's permission. "If it is You, bid me." We must not fondly imagine that we can do whatever we choose, but we may fairly expect that whenever God allots us a work, He will give us adequate Grace to accomplish it. Peter walking on the sea without Divine Permission would be a presumption to attempt and an impossibility to perform! But Peter, with Christ's assurance, might have walked across the Atlantic, itself, if his faith had not failed!

So it is with you. If your Lord has called you to a work, rely upon Him for the power to achieve it—He will not forsake you! But if it is merely your own whim or caprice which has thrust you into a position for which you are not qualified, you have no right to reckon upon the Divine Aid to speed your false steps! Blessed is he who goes to his Father and asks His counsel, for he shall always find that where God gives us guidance, He will give us Grace!

But—

III. FAITH REALLY DOES WORK WONDERS.

This is our third observation. Peter came down from the vessel. I think I see him bounding over the bulwarks. How strange he must have felt when that water in which he had been so often swimming became as solid marble under his feet! How elated he must have felt—a man with his temperament would naturally feel—when he began to walk and found the water like a sea of glass beneath his tread! It was a marvelous thing to do. Others have made their way through the sea, but Peter walked over it. The laws of gravitation were suspended for his support! Picture the scene. What Jesus was doing, Peter was doing. Faith made Peter to be like his Lord. There were two walking, the one by His own Infinite Power, the other by the power imparted to him—the power of faith!

Remember that faith will make any of us like Christ. "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also," said the Master, "and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." It does often seem impossible in certain conditions to act in a Christ-like spirit, but faith can make you walk the waves of the sea! Your Lord was patient in poverty—faith can make you walk that wave and be patient and contented, too! Christ was loving and gentle under the most fearful and multiplied provocations—faith can give you that same gentleness of spirit and lowliness of mind—you can walk those billows, too! Our Lord, in the midst of prosperity, refused worldly honor. When they sought to make

Him a king, He hid Himself from the temptation. And you in the high places of the earth, tempted by wealth, with flattery poured into your ears, may still walk, as Jesus did, safely through it all if you have but faith in God, faith in the blessed Spirit, faith in Him who is always with you, even to the end of the world! There is nothing Christ did, except the great Atoning work, which His people shall not do in and through Him, by the exercise of their faith! What a blessing it would be if God's people really believed the power that lies in them by the energy of faith! So many of us give up, succumb, lie down as if we were weak—but we are not weak. When we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong! This is no empty fiction, but a certain fact—we are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Let not, therefore, the Believer think that he can only do what another man can do. He is of a nobler race! God dwells in him! Oh, what a glorious thought that is—God dwelling in a man! That wonderful word, “enthusiasm”—so often turned to ridicule and used as a term of reproach—what does it mean but God in a man? Enthusiasm! When God is thoroughly in a man and the man knows it, then he is not cowed or put back by difficulties, or daunted by sneers! He is not so mindful of his feebleness as to excuse himself from effort, or to imagine that he can do nothing. In the confidence of that power which inspires him, he marches boldly on, fully assured that victory awaits him—and for that victory he rests not till he realizes it—it is given to his confidence! So does God requite and reward the man that puts his trust in Him. May we always have enough of faith to be doing wonders. Some poor souls have enough faith to carry them to Heaven. Others have just enough faith to maintain decent character. But he shall be honored of God who has such implicit, heroic and enduring faith that he can dare jeopardize, do exploits and bear sufferings because his Lord is with him! We must attempt some things which look like impossibilities, or we shall never keep up the *esprit* of the true soldiers of the Cross. We pass on to make a fourth remark.

IV. INTO THE SOUL OF THE MOST FAITHFUL AND CONFIDENT DISCIPLE, UNBELIEF GENERALLY FINDS SOME DOOR OR OTHER FOR ENTRANCE.

Peter had looked at the waves and his faith was just strong enough to believe that Jesus could make him walk on the sea, but he had never taken the winds into his calculation! *Had he thought of the winds as well as the waves*, and reposed upon Jesus for the whole, I have no doubt his faith would have held out and not have so fearfully given way. The first two or three steps on the water had exhilarated him and made him feel what wonders he was doing—but there came a rough blast which threatened to overthrow him—and as he could scarcely stand against so rude a wind upon so slippery a floor he began to be afraid. Something occurred

which he had not foreseen and in strange surprise, he yielded to blank unbelief! Thus it often comes to pass with us. We arrange our faith according to our estimate of the perils and perplexities that lie in our path. We even plan the events that will probably happens to us and we feel sure that we can trust God in all these circumstances—but a fresh contingency arises upon which we had never reckoned, a wind which we had not thought of—and forthwith our courage fails, we do not trust God for that! *I wish we had a faith which was free from arithmetic and totally independent of weights and measures*—a faith that trusted God for ten thousand things as readily as for one—that would rest upon God for a century as securely as for a day! I wish we had a faith that would just cast itself, sink or swim, into the sea—believing in God that whether the winds were blowing or not, whether the waves were raging or not—everything is easy to Omnipotence, and nothing can compromise the faithfulness of the Most High. But, alas, my Brothers and Sisters, we are always being startled by some new prodigies! Perhaps we are too fond of calculating changes, predicting probabilities and forestalling the future. Hence comes our chagrin when we are frustrated or disappointed. If we walked on, leaving everything to His Divine Decree and watchful Providence, confiding in our heavenly Father's wisdom and His love, we need never be amazed or bewildered—our faith would be equal to any rumor or riot that might arise!

Just as unbelief introduced into Peter's mind a terror of the wind, and upset him at once, so the devil has ways of finding some point or other upon which to overthrow our faith. I have sometimes been full of joy in the Lord and I have usually noticed that depression of spirits almost invariably follows—and that from some circumstance which at other times would not have caused me the slightest disturbance! Satan knows how to use any trivial thing to spoil the luster of our faith and the placidity of our joy. With what subtlety he will assail you! A difficulty you have been laboring under may have been removed by God's Providence. You may be very grateful and ready to set up your stone of thankfulness, and to praise the name of the Lord. Soon a new difficulty will be suggested. While you are blessing God for all His mercy, all of a sudden some trouble like a squall occurs! It may not be worth mentioning, but it will assume such strange proportions that it covers up all your joys and leaves you a prey to unbelief! How watchful we ought to be against unbelief, for of all sins, this is one of the most heinous! Like Jeroboam, of whom we read that he sinned and made Israel to sin, unbelief is itself a sin and becomes the parent of all sorts of sins. We sometimes talk to one another about our doubts and fears as if they were infirmities to be pitied rather than crimes to be loathed, but we seldom talk to each other about

the delinquencies of our conduct, such as angry tempers, hasty words, harsh judgments, unbecoming levity, or lax conversation. No, we would be ashamed to confess transgressions that are far too common among people professing godliness. Why is it that we do not blush to acknowledge our doubts that mistrust God and our fears that stagger at His promise? Are they not quite as much sins against the commandment of the Lord and the duty of every faithful Christian as drunkenness, or dishonesty, or any offense against the moral law? To doubt the faithfulness of God is atrocious! Who can estimate the amount of virus there is in the sin of unbelief? It would stab at the very heart of God! It would pluck the crown from the head of Jehovah! Let us hate unbelief with all our hearts and watch against it. Remember that it can attack us from any quarter of the compass unless we keep perpetual guard. Those of us who have been boldest in the Lord's battle, and foremost in His service, may yet be overtaken with this sin, succumb to its debasing influence and be left in the rear, shorn of honor and covered with shame!

And now for a fifth reflection—

V. IF AT ANY TIME FAITH SEEMS TO BE OVERTURNED BY AN INVASION OF UNBELIEF, IT THEN SHOWS ITS TRUE CONQUERING CHARACTER.

Peter was soon made to doubt, but with what ease did he begin to pray! I like to think of the spontaneous character of Peter's prayer. He begins to sink and he prays in a minute! He no sooner finds himself going down, than he says, "Lord, save me!" This shows what a living thing his faith was. *It might not always walk the water, but it could always pray, and that is the better thing of the two!* Your faith may not always make you rejoice, but if your faith can always make you trust the precious blood, that is all you need! Your faith may not always take you to the top of the mountain, and bathe your forehead in the sunlight of God's Countenance, but if your faith enables you to keep on the straight road that leads to eternal life, you may bless God for that! To walk on water is not an essential characteristic of faith, but to pray when you begin to sink, is! To do great wonders for Christ is not indispensable to your soul's being saved, but to have the faculty of always turning the heart to Him in time of distress is one of the sure marks of Divine Grace in the soul. I am sure Peter did not intone his prayer on that occasion. I am quite certain that he did not believe in having to search for music to which to set that prayer. It just came up from his heart. And are not these the very best prayers, that well up from the soul, freely flowing forth from the lips because the heart compels the tongue to speak? The heart, knowing its own bitterness, reveals it unto the Most High. Beloved, are you prayerful in such a respect as that? I think it is a blessed plan to set apart time for prayer, and so to take your half-hour, or your hour, as

you may be able, for secret devotion, but better than the set time for prayer is the *spirit* of prayer. While a regular habit of prayer is a great help to piety, the *spirit* of prayer promotes habitual, continual communion with God!

I once asked, down at Wootton-Under-Edge, where Mr. Rowland Hill's study was, and they told me that was a question which they could not answer. "Why, how is that? Did he never study his sermons? Oh, yes, he was always studying his sermons—it did not matter whether he was in the parlor or in the paddock, attending to his correspondence, or looking after the cows, going out into the village to buy goods, or walking in the garden amidst flowers and fruits—he was always studying his sermons, so that he was one of the readiest of preachers! That is one of the best habits that a man can cultivate. So they said it was with his prayers. He was not a man who shut himself up for prayer, but he seemed to be always praying wherever he went! He would be often heard saying true prayers when others fancied his mind must be full of other thoughts. The story that is related of him at Mr. George Clayton's chapel in York Street, you will, most of you, remember, for I have repeated it several times. After he had been preaching, he lingered about the building so long that the pew-opener went to him and told him that it was time to close the place. The old gentleman was found tottering round the pews singing to himself—

***"And when I shall die,
'Receive me,' I'll cry!
For Jesus has loved me, I cannot tell why.
But this thing I find,
We two are so joined,
That He won't be in Glory and leave me behind."***

This peculiar practice of conversing, as it were, with oneself—of repeating texts of Scripture or verses of hymns, the propensity to pray with the heart and lift up the thoughts continually to God—well, it seems to me an indication of spiritual-mindedness above any common level! "Know," says David, "that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself." But how should the man thus set apart behave himself? The Psalmist will tell you, "Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still." Oh, for a mind always active, never stagnant, always tranquil! Oh, for the wings of a dove! Take a pigeon. Put it away in a cage—send it a distance in the country. Keep it there awhile. Then, on a certain day, let it loose—you will soon know where its home is, for it mounts up, flies its circuit, takes its bearings, surveys its course, and then away it pursues its trip through the air till it reaches the dear old dove-cote! Does your soul make its way to the ark, and return to its rest with a like sacred instinct? All through the day you may be taken up with many cares.

The shop or the warehouse, the nursery or the kitchen, may be your cage. There comes a moment when you are let loose and you get free. Where does your soul fly? Flies it off like a dove, to its resting place? When it see the crows on the wing, if anybody asked me what trips they were taking, I could not tell them. But if they would wait till evening I would quickly solve the riddle, for then they would be quite sure to be seeking their nests. Does your heart, in the time of trouble, fly away to God? Does your spirit in the hour of distress seek the Rock of Refuge and speed to the Great Deliverer? Then are you like Peter! You may not always walk on the waves, but you can always say, "Lord, save me!" Can you say that from your very soul, resting on the Savior's mighty arm? Then you have the essence of a faith which will lead you through growth in Grace up to the perfection of Glory!

VI. OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS EQUALLY KIND, BOTH TO STRONG FAITH AND TO LITTLE FAITH.

Strong faith says, "Bid me come to You on the water." Now Christ sometimes refuses to answer prayer after its own kind. The prayer of anger, in which James and John entreated that fire might come down from Heaven to destroy the Samaritans, He rejected. The prayer of ambition, when the two sons of Zebedee craved a place, one on His right hand and the other on the left, in His Kingdom, was denied. But the prayer of faith, though it looked bold and venturesome, our Lord received graciously and answered speedily! "Bid me come to You on the water." "Come," said Jesus. Is strong faith represented here by any of you? *If you ask a great thing of God, you shall have it!* If you have but faith in Jesus, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you, for the desire of the righteous shall be granted. "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." Have you a great plan of usefulness! Have you an intense anxiety for soul-winning! Have you a strong yearning for the evangelization of your district! Believe, fear not to tempt fortune, for all things are possible to him who believes! The hands of Christ are pledged to faith. He will honor the trust you repose in Him. If you will but repose in Him, He cannot, *will not deny you*. True faith is His own work. If He has worked the prayer in you, He will surely answer it. Go forth, then, in this, your might of faith, and the Lord be with you!

But perceive you not how kind He also was to little faith? No sooner does Peter begin to sink and cry, "Save me," than there is manifest good will and quick help in the Savior's movement. "Immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him." Our Lord did not pause to parley. He did not upbraid him, or say, "Peter, you have dishonored Me by your unbelief." He did not accuse him harshly, rebuke him sternly, or punish him severely, leaving him to go down twice, and pulling him up the third time thus inflicting in him the pangs of death without its ex-

treme penalty. Ah, no, the prompt help was ready for the pressing emergency. The sinking one was made to stand. After that He said, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Christ gives liberally and upbraids not—or when He does upbraid, it is always after His large generosity has abated the grievance. He gives the choice portion and then chastens us for our profit. He does not make us wait till we are submerged again and again, but He listens at once to the feeble cry of His sinking servants, and not till after He has delivered them does He expostulate with them. Aesop tells a story of a man who saw a boy drowning, and sat on the shore and lectured him upon the imprudence of venturing beyond his depth. And there are some people who do the same with poor sinking souls! They tell them of what they ought to have done, of what they have not done, and of what they ought now to do, which they cannot do—but they do not stretch out their hand to help them. They observe the burden which is too heavy to be borne, but they lift not a finger to lighten it! Our Lord takes off the burden first, sets His servant on his feet and then gives him a word of counsel or of rebuke. Go to Him, then, Little Faith! Go to Him before you retire to your rest. Tell your Savior of the grief that distracts you, of the woe that overwhelms you. Confess your sins, acknowledge your inability to rescue yourself and cast yourself, now, upon the gracious promise of the loving God! Whether you are strong or weak, my Brother, my Sister, repair to the same place, for Jesus stands at the gate of mercy's house willing to receive all those who come to Him!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:25-27.**

25. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.* Jesus is sure to come. The night wears on and the darkness thickens—the fourth watch of the night draws near, but where is He? Faith says, "He must come." Though He should stay away till almost break of day, He must come. Unbelief asks, "How can He come?" Ah, He will answer for Himself—He can make His own way. "Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." He comes in the teeth of the wind and on the face of the wave! Never fear that He will fail to reach the storm-tossed boat—His love will find the way. Whether it is to a single disciple, or to the Church as a whole, Jesus will appear in His own chosen hour, and His time is sure to be the most timely!

26. *And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit: and they cried out for fear.* Yes, the disciples saw Him—they saw Jesus, their Lord, and derived no comfort from the sight! Poor human nature's sight is a blind thing compared with the vision of a spiritual faith. They saw, but knew not what they saw. What

could it be but a phantom? How could a real man walk on those foaming billows? How could he stand in the teeth of such a hurricane? They were already at their wits' end and the apparition put an end to their courage. We seem to hear their shriek of alarm—"they cried out for fear." We read not that "they were troubled." Before, they were old sailors, and had no dread of natural forces! But a spirit—ah, that was too much of a terror! They were at their worst, now, and yet if they had known it, they were on the verge of their best! It is noteworthy that the nearer Jesus was to them, the greater was their fear. Lack of discernment blinds the soul to its richest consolations. Lord, be near, and let us know You! Let us not have to say with Jacob, "Surely God was in this place and I knew it not!"

27. *But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.* He did not keep them in suspense—"Straightway Jesus spoke unto them." How sweetly sounded that loving and majestic voice! Above the roar of waves and howling of winds, they heard the voice of the Lord! This was His old word, also, "Be of good cheer." The most conclusive reason for courage was His own Presence. "It is I, be not afraid." If Jesus is near, if the spirit of the storm is, after all, the Lord of Love, all room for fear is gone! Can Jesus come to us through the storm? Then we shall weather it and come to Him! He who rules the tempest is not the devil, not chance, not a malicious enemy—but Jesus! This should end all fear.

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

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

PETER'S SHORTEST PRAYER

NO. 3186

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1910.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 2, 1873.**

***“Lord, save me.”
Matthew 14:30.***

I am going to talk about the characteristics of this prayer in the hope that there may be many who have never yet prayed aright, who may make this their own prayer, tonight, so that from many a person here present this cry may silently go up, “Lord, save me.”

Where did Peter pray this prayer? It was not in a place set apart for public worship, or in his usual place for private prayer. He prayed this prayer just as he was sinking in the water! He was in great peril, so he cried out, “Lord, save me.” It is well to assemble with God’s people for prayer if you can, but if you cannot go up to His house, it matters little, for prayer can ascend to Him from anywhere in the world! It is well to have a special spot where you pray at home—probably most of us have a certain chair by which we kneel to pray and we feel that we can talk to God most freely there. At the same time, we must never allow ourselves to become the slaves even of such a good habit as that—we must always remember that if we really want to find the Lord by prayer—

***“Wherever we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground.”***

We may pray to God when engaged in any occupation if it is a lawful one. And if it is not, we have no business to be in it! If there is anything we do over which we cannot pray, we ought never dare to do it again. And if there is any occupation concerning which we have to say, “We could not pray while engaged in it,” it is clear that the occupation is a wrong one.

The habit of daily prayer must be maintained. It is well to have regular hours of devotion and to resort to the same place for prayer, as far as possible. Still, the *spirit* of prayer is better than the *habit* of prayer. It is better to be able to pray at all times than to make it a rule to pray at certain times and seasons. A Christian is more fully grown in Divine Grace when he prays about everything than he would be if he only prayed under certain conditions and circumstances. I always feel that there is something wrong if I go without prayer for even half an hour in the day. I cannot understand how a Christian can go from morning to evening without prayer. I cannot comprehend how he lives and how he fights the battle of life without asking the guardian care of God while the arrows of temptation are flying so thickly around him! I cannot imagine how he can decide what to do in times of perplexity, how he can see his own imper-

fections or the faults of others without feeling constrained to say, all day long, "O Lord, guide me, O Lord, forgive me! O Lord, bless my friend!" I cannot think how he can be continually receiving mercies from the Lord without saying, "God be thanked for this new token of His Grace! Blessed be the name of the Lord for what He is doing for me in His abounding mercy! O Lord, still remember me with the favor that You show unto Your people!" Do not be content, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, unless you can pray everywhere and at all times—and so obey the Apostolic injunction, "Pray without ceasing."

I have already reminded you, dear Friends, that Peter prayed his prayer when he was in circumstances of imminent danger. Beginning to sink, he cried, saying, "Lord, save me!" "But," asks someone, "ought he not to have prayed before?" Of course he ought—but if he had not done so, it was not too late! Do not say concerning any trouble, "Now I am so deeply in it, I cannot go to God about it." Why not? "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" It would have been well if the disciples had prayed before the first rough breath of the tempest began to toss their little boat, yet it was not too late to pray when the vessel seemed as if it must go down. As long as you have a heart to pray, God has an ear to hear. Look at Peter—he is "beginning to sink." The water is up to his knees, it is up to his waist, it is up to his neck, but it is not yet too late for him to cry, "Lord, save me!" And he has no sooner said it, than the hand of Jesus is stretched out to catch him and to guide him to the boat. So, Christian, cry to God though the devil tells you it is no use to cry! Cry to God even if you are beneath the tempter's foot! Say to Satan, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy—when I fall, I shall arise." But do not forget to cry to the Lord! Cry to God for your children even when they are most ungodly, when their ungodliness almost breaks your heart. Cry to God on behalf of those whom you are teaching in the Sunday school, even when you seem to think that their characters are developing in the worst possible form, still pray for them! Never mind though the thing you ask for them should appear to be an impossibility, for God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

I would also say to any unconverted person who is here, under conviction of sin—Dear Friend, if you are beginning to sink, yet still pray. If your sins stare you in the face and threaten to drive you to despair, yet still draw near to God in prayer. Though it seems as if Hell had opened its mouth to swallow you up, yet still cry unto God. "While there's life, there is hope."—

***"While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return"—***

and the vilest sinner who returns shall find that God is both able and willing to save him! Never believe that lie of Satan that prayer will not prevail with God. Only go as the publican did, beating upon your breast and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and rest assured that God is waiting to be gracious to you.

I cannot help feeling that Peter's short, simple prayer was uttered in a most natural tone of voice—"Lord, save me." Let us always pray in just

such a way as the Spirit of God dictates to us and as the deep sorrow and humiliation of our heart naturally suggest to us. Many men who pray in public get into the habit of using certain tones in prayer that are anything but natural. And I am afraid that some even in private fail to pray naturally. Any language that is not natural is bad—the best tone is that which a man uses when he is speaking earnestly, and means what he says—that is the right way to pray. Speak as if you meant it—do not whine it, or cant it, or intone it—but pour it out of your soul in the most simple, natural fashion that you can. Peter was in too great peril to put any fine language into his prayer! He was too conscious of his danger to consider how he might put his words together—he just expressed the strong desire of his soul in the simplest manner possible—“Lord, save me!” And that prayer was heard! And Peter was saved from drowning, just as a sinner will be saved from Hell if he can pray after the same fashion.

I. Now, coming to Peter's prayer, itself, and suggesting that it is a suitable prayer for all who are able to pray at all, my first observation upon it is that IT WAS A VERY BRIEF PRAYER.

There were only three words in it. “Lord, save me.” I believe that the excellence of prayer often consists in its brevity. You must have noticed the extreme brevity of most of the prayers that are preserved in Scripture. One of the longest is the prayer of our Savior recorded by John which would, I suppose, have occupied about five minutes. And there is the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple which may have taken six minutes. Almost all the other prayers in the Bible are very short ones and, probably, in our public services, we pray far longer than all of them put together! This may, perhaps, be excused when there are many petitions to be presented by one person on behalf of a large congregation. But at our Prayer Meetings, where there are many to speak, I am certain that the longer the prayer is, the worse it is. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule. The Spirit of God sometimes inspires a man in such a way that if he would keep on praying all night, we would be glad to join with him in that holy exercise! But, as a general rule, the Spirit of God does no such thing. There are some who pray longest when they have the least to say, and only go on repeating certain pious phrases which become almost meaningless by monotonous reiteration. Remember, dear Friends, when you are praying, whether in public or in private, that you have *not to teach the Lord a system of theology*—He knows far more about that than you do! You have no need to explain to the Lord all the experience that a Christian ought to have, for He knows that far better than you do! And there is no necessity for you always to go round all the various agencies and institutions and mission stations. Tell the Lord what is in your heart in as few words as possible—and so leave time and opportunity for others to do the same.

I wonder if anyone here ever says, “I have no time for prayer.” Dear Friend, dare you leave your house in the morning without bowing the knee before God? Can you venture to close your eyes at night and wear

the image of death, without first commending yourself to the keeping of God during the hours of unconsciousness in sleep? I do not understand how you can live such a careless life as that! But, surely, you did not really mean that you had no time to offer such a prayer as Peter's, "Lord, save me." How much time does that take? Or this—"God be merciful to me a sinner." If you realized your true condition in God's sight, you would find time for prayer somehow or other, for you would feel that you must pray! It never occurred to Peter, as he was beginning to sink, that he had no time for prayer. He felt that he must pray—his sense of danger forced him to cry to Christ, "Lord, save me." And if you feel as you should feel, your sense of need will drive you to prayer and you will never again say, "I have no time for prayer." It is not a matter of *time* so much as a matter of *heart*—if you have the heart to pray, you will find the time.

I would urge you to cultivate the habit of praying briefly all day. I have told you before of the Puritan who, in a debate, was observed to be taking notes. But when they were afterwards examined, it was found that there was nothing on the paper except these words, "More light, Lord! More light, Lord! More light, Lord!" He needed light upon the subject under discussion and, therefore, he asked the Lord for it! That is the way to pray. During the day, you can pray, "Give me more Grace, God. Subdue my temper, Lord. Tell me, O my God, what to do in this case! Lord, direct me. Lord, save me." Pray thus and you will be imitating the good example of brevity in prayer which our text sets before you.

II. Notice next, that brief as Peter's prayer was, IT WAS WONDERFULLY COMPREHENSIVE AND ADAPTED FOR USE ON MANY DIFFERENT OCCASIONS. "Lord, save me."

It covered all the needs of Peter at that time, and he might have continued to use it as long as he lived. When his Master told him that Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat, he might well have prayed, "Lord, save me." When he had denied his Master and had gone out and wept bitterly, it would have been well for him to pray, "Lord, save me." When he was afterwards journeying to and from preaching the Gospel, he could still pray, "Lord, save me." And when, at last, he was led out to be crucified for Christ's sake, he could hardly find a better prayer than this with which to close his life—"Lord, save me."

Now, as Peter found this prayer so suitable for him, I commend it to each one of you. Have you been growing rich lately? Then you will be tempted to become proud and worldly. So pray, "Lord, save me from the evils that so often go with riches. You are giving me this wealth, help me to be a good steward of it and not to make an idol of it." Or are you getting poor? Is your business proving a failure? Are your little savings almost gone? Well, there are perils connected with poverty, so pray, "Lord, save me from becoming envious or discontented. Let me be willing to be poor rather than do anything wrong in order to get money." Do you, dear Friend, feel that you are not living as near to God as you once did? Is the chilling influence of the world having its effect on you? Then pray, "Lord, save me." Have you fallen into some sin which you fear may bring disgrace upon your profession? Well then, before that sin grows greater, cry,

“Lord, save me.” Have you come to a place where your feet have well-near slipped? The precipice is just before you and you feel that if some mightier power than your own does not interpose, you will fall to your serious hurt, if not to your destruction. Then at once breathe the prayer, “Lord, save me.” I can commend this prayer to you when you are upon the stormy sea, but it will be equally suitable to you upon the dry land—“Lord, save me!” I can commend it as suitable to you when you are near the gates of death, but it is just as much adapted to you when you are in vigorous health—“Lord, save me!” And if you can add to the prayer, “And, Lord, save my children, and my kinsfolk, and my neighbors,” it will be even better! Still, for yourself, personally, it is an admirable prayer to carry about with you wherever you go. “Lord, save me.”

III. Peter's prayer had a third excellence, IT WAS VERY DIRECT.

It would not have done for Peter, just then, to have used the many titles which rightly belong to Christ, or to have been asking for a thousand things. But he went straight to the point of his immediate need and cried, “Lord, save me.” When one of our dear friends, who has lately gone to Heaven, was very ill, one of his sons prayed with him. He began in a very proper way, “Almighty Father, Maker of Heaven and earth, our Creator”—but his sick father stopped him and said, “My dear boy, I am a poor sinner and I need God's mercy. Say, ‘Lord, save him.’” He wanted his son to get to the point. And I can sympathize with him! Often, when some of our dear Brothers and Sisters have been praying here, and have been beating about the bush, I have wished that they would come to the point and ask for what they really needed. They have kept on walking round the house, instead of knocking at the door and seeking to enter! Peter's prayer shows us how to go directly to the very heart of the matter. “Lord, save me.”

Many persons fail to receive answers to their prayers because they will not go straight to God and confess the sins that they have committed. There was a member of a Christian Church who had, on one occasion, fallen very shamefully through drink. He was very penitent and he asked his pastor to pray for him—but he would not say what his sin had been. The pastor prayed, and then told the Brother to pray. The poor man said, “Lord, you know that I have erred, and done wrong,” and so on, making a sort of general confession, but that brought him no peace of mind. He felt that he could not go away like that, so he knelt down again, and said, “Lord, you know that I was drunk. It was a shameful sin that I committed, but I am truly grieved for it. O Lord, forgive me, for Jesus' sake!” And before his prayer was finished, he had found peace because he had plainly confessed his sin to God and had not sought to hide it any longer. You remember that David could get no peace until he came to the point and prayed, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, You God of my salvation.” Before that, he had tried to smother his great sin—but there was no rest for his conscience until he had made a full confession of his guilt! And after that he could say, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.” Let our pray-

ers, whether for ourselves or others, and especially our confessions of sin, go straight to the point—and not go beating about the bush. If any of you have been using forms of prayer which have not obtained for you any answers to your supplications, put them all aside, and just go and tell the Lord plainly what you need. Your prayer will then probably be something like this, “O God, I am a lost sinner! I have been careless about Divine things. I have listened to the Gospel, but I have not obeyed it. Lord, forgive me, save me, make me Your child and let me and my household, too, be Yours forever.” That is the way to pray so that God will hear and answer you.

IV. Another characteristic of Peter's prayer was that IT WAS A VERY SOUND DOCTRINAL PRAYER. “Lord, save, me.”

Peter does not appear to have had any idea of saving himself from drowning. He does not seem to have thought that there was sufficient natural buoyancy about him to keep him afloat or that he could swim to the ship. But, “beginning to sink, he cried, ‘Lord, save me.’” One of the hardest tasks in the world is to get a man to give up all confidence in himself and from his heart, pray, “Lord, save me.” Instead of doing that, he says, “O Lord, I do not feel as I ought. I need to feel my need more, I need to feel more joy, I need to feel more holiness.” You see, he is putting feelings in place of faith! He is, as it were, laying down a track along which he wants God to walk instead of walking in the way which God has marked out for all who desire to be saved! Another man is seeking to reform himself and so to make himself fit for Heaven. And he prays in harmony with that idea and, of course, gets no answer. I like to hear such a prayer as this, “O Lord, I cannot save myself and I do not ask You to save me in any way that I prescribe. Lord, save me anyway, only do save me! I am satisfied to be saved by the precious blood of Jesus. I am satisfied to be saved by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. I know I must be born-again if I am ever to enter Heaven—quicken me, O you ever-blessed Spirit! I know I must give up my sins. Lord, I do not want to keep them—save me from them by Your Grace, I humbly entreat You. I know that only You can do this work. I cannot lift even a finger to help You in it, so save me, Lord, for Your great mercy's sake!” This is sound doctrinal Truth of God—salvation all of Grace, not of man, nor by men—“not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” This is salvation according to the eternal purpose of God, by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit, through the substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! When a sinner is willing to accept salvation on God's terms, then the prayer shall ascend acceptably to the Most High! “Lord, save me.”

V. Notice, also, that PETER'S PRAYER WAS A VERY PERSONAL ONE. “Lord, save *me*.”

Peter did not think of anybody else just then—when a soul is under concern about its eternal interests, it had better at first confine its thoughts to itself and pray, “Lord, save *me*.” Yes, and in the Christian's life, there will come times when he had better, for a while, forget all others and simply pray, “Lord, save *me*.” Here we are, a great congregation

gathered together from very various motives and, perhaps, some here who are not yet personally interested in Christ—yet we are vaguely hoping that God will bless somebody in this assembly. But if the Holy Spirit shall begin to work upon some individual heart and conscience, the convicted one will begin to pray, “Lord, save *me*. I hear of many others being brought to Jesus but, Lord, save *me*. My dear sister has been converted and has made a profession of her faith but, Lord, save *me*. I had a godly mother, who has gone Home to Glory—and my dear father is walking in Your fear—let not their son be a castaway. Lord, save me!”

I entreat everyone here to pray this personal prayer, and I beg you who do love the Lord to join me in pleading with Him that it may be so. I see some little girls over there. Will not each one of you, my dear children, pray this prayer? I pray the Holy Spirit to move you to cry, “Lord, save little Annie” or, “Lord, save little Mary.” And may you boys be equally moved to pray, “Lord, save Tom” or, “Lord, save Harry.” Pray for yourself in just that simple way and who knows what blessing may come to you? Then you mothers will surely not let your children pray for themselves while you remain prayerless—will not each one of you pray, “Lord, save me”? And you working men, whom I am so glad to see at a week-night service, do not go away without presenting your own personal petitions! The Apostle Peter had to pray for himself. The most eminent servants of God had to pray for themselves and you must pray for yourselves. If all the saints of God were to pray for you with one united voice as long as you live—you would not be saved unless you, also, cried to God for yourself! Religion is a personal matter. There is no such thing as religion by proxy! You must repent for yourselves and pray for yourselves—and believe for yourselves if you would be saved! May God grant that you may do so!

VI. I want you to notice, next, that PETER’S PRAYER WAS A VERY URGENT ONE. “Lord, save me.”

He did not say, “Lord, save me tomorrow.” Or, “Lord, save me in an hour’s time.” He was “beginning to sink.” The hungry waves had opened their mouths to swallow him and he would soon be gone! He had only time to cry, “Lord, save me,” but he no doubt meant, “Lord, save me *now*, for I am in danger of being drowned. Lord, save me *now*, for if You should delay, I shall sink to the bottom of the sea.” “And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand and caught him,” and so saved him. There are many people who would like Jesus to save them, but when? Ah, that is the point which they have not settled yet. A young man says, “I should like Christ to save me when I grow older, when I have seen a little more of life.” You mean when you have seen a great deal more of death, for that is all you will see in the world—there is no real life except that which is in Christ Jesus! Many a man in middle life has said, “I mean to be a Christian before I die, but not just yet.” He has been too busy to seek the Lord, but death has come to him without any warning and, busy or not, he has had to die quite unprepared.

There is hope for a sinner when he prays, "Lord, my case is urgent, save me now! Sin, like a viper, has fastened itself upon me, Lord, save me now from its deadly venom! I am guilty and already condemned because I have not believed in Jesus. Lord, save me now, save me from condemnation, save me from the damning sin of unbelief! Lord, I know I am now upon the brink of death and I am in danger of Hell as well as of death as long as I am unforgiven. Therefore, be pleased to let the wheels of Your chariot of Mercy hurry and save me even now O Lord!" I have known some who have been so deeply under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that they have knelt down by their bedsides and said, "We will never give sleep to our eyes, or slumber to our eyelids, till we have found the Savior." And before long they have found Him. They have said, "We will wrestle in prayer until our burden of sin is gone." And when they have reached that determination, it has not been long before they have obtained the blessing they desire. When nothing else succeeds, importunity will surely prevail! When you will not take a denial from God, He will not give you a denial! But as long as you are content to be unsaved, you will be unsaved. When you cry with all the urgency of which you are capable, "I must have Jesus or die! I am hungering, thirsting, pining, panting after Him as the hart pants after the water-brooks," it shall not be long before you clasp that priceless treasure to your heart and say, "Jesus is my Savior! I have believed in Him."

VII. Now, lastly, I must remind you that PETER'S PRAYER WAS AN EFFECTUAL ONE. "Lord, save me," and Jesus did save him.

There may be comfort to some here present in the thought that although this was the prayer of a man in trouble, and a man in whom there was a mixture of unbelief and faith, yet it succeeded. Imperfections and infirmities shall not prevent prayer from speeding if it is but sincere and earnest. Jesus said to Peter, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Which shows that he doubted although there was some faith in him, for he believed that Christ could save him from a watery grave. Many of us, also, are strange mixtures, even as Peter was. Repentance and hardness of heart can each occupy a part of our being—and faith may be in our heart, together with a measure of unbelief—even as it was with the man who said to Jesus, "Lord, I believe—help You my unbelief."

Do any of you feel that you need to pray, and yet cannot pray? You would believe in Jesus, but there is another law in your members which keeps you back. You would pray an effectual prayer, like that of Elijah, never staggering at the promise through unbelief but, somehow or other—you cannot tell why—you cannot attain to that prayer. Yet you will not give up praying. You feel that you cannot do that. You still linger at the Mercy Seat even when you cannot prevail with God in prayer. Ah, dear Soul, it is a mercy that God does not judge your prayer by what it is in itself—He judges it from another point of view altogether! Jesus takes it, mends it, adds to it the merit of His own precious blood and then, when He presents it to His Father, it is so changed that you would scarcely recognize it as your petition! You would say, "I can hardly believe that is my prayer, Christ has so greatly altered and improved it." It

has happened to you as it sometimes happens to poor people who are in trouble—as it *did* happen to one whom I knew some time ago. A good woman wanted me to send in a petition to a certain government office concerning her husband, who was dead, and for whose sake she wanted to get some help. She drew up the petition and brought it to me. About one word in ten was spelt correctly and the whole composition was unfit to send. She wanted me to add my name to it and post it for her. I did so, but I first re-wrote the whole petition, keeping the subject matter as she put it, but altering the form and wording of it. That is what our good Lord and Master does for us—only in an infinitely higher sense—He re-writes our petition, sets His own signature to it—and when His Father sees that, He grants the request at once! One drop of Christ's blood upon a prayer must make it prosper!

Go home, therefore, you who are troubled with doubts and fears, you who are vexed by Satan, you who are saddened by the recollection of your own past sins—notwithstanding all this—go to God, and say, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before You,” and ask for His forgiveness, and His forgiveness you shall receive! Keep on praying in such a fashion as this, “Lord, save me for Jesus' sake! Jesus, You are the Savior of sinners. Save me, I beseech You. You are mighty to save. Lord, save me! You are in Heaven pleading for transgressors. Lord, plead for me!” Do not wait till you get home, but pray just where you are sitting, “Lord save me.” May God give Grace to everyone here to pray that prayer from the heart, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 6:5-34.**

Verse 5. *And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. We ought to pray in the synagogue and we may pray at the corners of the streets—but it is wrong to do it to “be seen of men,” that is, to be looking for some present reward in the praises that fall from human lips.*

5-7. *Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But you, when you pray, enter into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place and your Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. They seem to attribute a sort of power to a certain form of words, as if it were a charm—and they repeat it over and over again. Not only do the poor Muslims and heathens “use vain repetitions,” but the members of the Roman Catholic and other churches that I might name do the same thing—words to which they attach but very slight meaning, and into which they put little or no heart—are repeated by them again and again, as if there could be some virtue in the words themselves! Let it not be so with you, Beloved. Pray as long as you like in secret, but do*

not pray long with the idea that God will hear you simply because you are a long while at your devotions.

8. *Be not you, therefore, like them: for your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him.* He does not need to be informed, nor even to be persuaded! Mere words are of no value in His ears. If you must use many words, ask men to lend you their ears, for they may have little else to do with them. God cares not for words only, it is the *thought*, the *desire of the heart* to which He always has regard.

9. *After this manner therefore pray you.* Here is a model prayer for you to copy as far as it is suited to your case—

9-13. *Our Father in Heaven,* [See Sermon #312, Volume 4—THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.* [See Sermon #1778, Volume 30—A HEAVENLY PATTERN FOR OUR EARTHLY LIFE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation,* [See Sermon #1402, Volume 24—“LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION”—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *but deliver us from evil: for Yours is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.* And then, as if there was one part of the prayer that would be sure to arrest the attention of His hearers, namely, that concerning forgiving our debtors, the Savior makes the following remarks—

14, 15. *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Therefore, in order to succeed in prayer, we must have a heart purged from a spirit of revenge and from all unkindness! We must, ourselves, be loving and forgiving, or we cannot expect that God will hear our supplications when we come to crave His forgiveness.

16. *Moreover when you fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast.* They seemed to say to everyone who looked at them, “We have been so engrossed with our devotions that we have not found time even to wash our faces.” But the Savior says to His followers, “Do not imitate those hypocrites! Do not make public your private religious exercises—perform them unto God—not unto men. As for those hypocrites”—

16. *Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.* And a poor reward it is.

17, 18. *But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face; that you appear not unto men to fast, but unto your Father, which is in secret: and your Father, which sees in secret, shall reward you openly.* May God give us that modest, unselfish spirit which lives unto Him and does not want to walk in the sham light of men's esteem! What matters it, after all, what men think of us? The hypocrite proudly boasts if he wins a little praise from his fellows—but what is it except so much wind? If all men should speak well of us, all that we would gain would be this, “Woe

unto you when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

19, 20. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.* Christ here first teaches us how to pray, and then teaches us how to really live. He turns our thoughts from the objective in life which allures and injures so many, but which is, after all, an objective unworthy of our search. And He bids us seek something higher and better—“Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven.”

21. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* It is sure to be so—your heart will follow your treasure. Send it away, therefore, up to the everlasting hills! Lay up treasure in that blessed land before you go there yourself!

22, 23. *The lamp of the body is the eye: if, therefore, your eye is good, your whole body shall be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!* [See Sermon #335, Volume 6—A SINGLE EYE AND SIMPLE FAITH—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If your eye is brooked up with gold dust, or if you are living for self and this world, your whole life will be a dark life—and the whole of your being will dwell in darkness. “But,” says someone, “may I not live for this world and the next, too?” Listen—

24. *No man can serve two masters.* He may serve two individuals, who have conflicting interests but they cannot both be his masters.

24. *For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.* Either the one or the other will be master! They are so opposed to each other, they will never agree to a divided service. “You cannot serve God and mammon.” It is the Lord Jesus Christ who says this, so do not attempt to do what He declares is impossible!

25. *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life*—It should be, “Take no distracting thought for your life”—

25. *What you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment?* You are obliged to leave your life with God. Why not leave with Him all care about your food and your raiment?

26. *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?* Do you believe that after all your earnest labor and your industry, God will permit you to starve, when these creatures, that labor not, are fed?

27-29. *Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? And why do you worry about your raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like one of these.* Christ asks them whether, by worrying, they can add a single cubit to their

lives, for I take his question to mean, whether they could, by any means, make the standard of existence any longer than it was. They could not do so—they could shorten it, and very often worrying has brought men to their graves. Then Christ bade them note how the lilies grow, so that even Solomon could not excel them for beauty!

30-33. *Therefore, if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, worry not, saying, What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, How shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for our heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* [See Sermons #1864, Volume 31—FIRST THINGS FIRST; #2515, Volume 43—SOMETHING WORTH SEEKING and #2973, Volume 52—THOUGHT CONDEMNED, YET COMMANDED—Read/download all the sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] If you want string and brown paper, you need not go into a shop to buy them. But if you buy certain articles, you get string and brown paper in the bargain! So, when you go to God, seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness, these other things, which are but the packing, as it were—the string and the brown paper—are given to you in the bargain. He who gives you the golden treasures of Heaven will not allow you to want for the copper treasures of earth!

34. *Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.* You cannot live in tomorrow, so do not fret about tomorrow! You live in today, so think of today—spend today to God's Glory and leave the care about tomorrow until tomorrow comes.

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

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

THE HISTORY OF LITTLE-FAITH

NO. 1856

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 23, 1885,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand,
and caught him, and said unto him,
O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”
Matthew 14:31.*

THERE is only one word in the original for the phrase, “O you of little faith.” The Lord Jesus virtually addresses Peter by the name of “Little-Faith” in *one* word. I do not suppose that Peter had ever before dreamed of that name as applicable to himself. Possibly he had thought in his heart that his faith was strong even to assurance. When so lately he had seen his Master feed the multitudes with a few loaves and fishes and had helped to gather up 12 baskets of fragments, he felt that his faith was equal to anything. He who could feed so many with so little, could do any kind of wonder! And how could Peter—brave, honest Peter—ever think of doubting his Lord? O Brothers and Sisters, we do not know ourselves! We fancy that we are rich and increased in goods and, lo, in the time of trial we discover that we are naked, poor and miserable!

Those who are strong in faith to their own thinking, may soon be brought into circumstances where their confidence will be grievously shaken. All is not gold that glitters, neither is all faith that speaks bravely. Peter is strong in faith on board the ship, strong in faith even as he walks the waters—but that unexpected gust of wind which came howling down from the mountains took him aback, staggered him—and caused his faith to reel. Then the waters yielded under his feet and, as he began to sink, he discovered his own weakness and had his discovery confirmed by the verdict of his Lord who surnamed him, *Little-Faith*. Let no man think of himself beyond his own experience. Experience is the true gauge and he who boasts of an untried faith is puffed up with vainglory. Stretch not your arm beyond your sleeve lest it be frostbitten! He who glories in himself, deceives himself.

It is not an easy thing to endure the humiliation which must follow upon the collapse of untried confidence. Rest assured, Brothers and Sisters, that between here and Heaven we shall need every ounce of faith that we have—and that whenever we feel too sure of our own strength—we are making sure of that which is frailty itself. Self-confidence is but the froth on the top of the cup—it is not the pure juice of the vine of the Truth of God. When a man begins to be secure in himself, he will court temptation. He will rashly venture upon needless experiments and, in the end,

will need to cry in plaintive accents, "Lord, save me!" Learn, then, on the threshold of the text, that we are not as strong as we think we are and that, when we are most brave and daring, we may not be quite so far removed from fear and trembling as we imagine. Alas, that unbelief should mar even Peter's faith! Let him who thinks that he can walk the waves take heed lest he sink beneath them!

In Peter's character there was an amazing mixture of the strong and the weak—he rose to excellence and sank to littleness. Yet, why should I speak of this as amazing, for we, ourselves, are made of much the same materials? In us, also, are mingled the iron and the clay. The best of men are men at the best! Since the old nature remains, though the new nature is born in us, there is, in our soul, a conflict between holiness and sin, faith and unbelief, strength and weakness. We walk the waters like our Lord and soon we sink like doubting Peter. The Christian man is full often a mystery to himself and, therefore, it is no wonder that he is a mystery to other people. Note how Peter speaks—he cries, "Lord, if it is You"—a speech which, if it is not censurable, is by no means praiseworthy, after his Lord had said, "It is I." Hear him again—"Bid me come unto You on the water." Here is courage almost blazing into rashness! And yet there is a measure of obedient deference, for he will not attempt to come unless he is bid to do so. He will risk his life if he has but his Master's permission! What diverse qualities meet in the same man! He proposes a rash venture and yet is prudent enough to ask his Master's permission.

Look at him walking the waves and admire the strength of his faith! Could *you* do this? Then see him sinking because a fierce blast has blown in his face. Do you marvel at his unbelief? Would you have done better? He that knows himself knows that doubt dogs the heels of confidence. The Canaanite of distrust is still in the land and shows himself, sooner or later, at unexpected turns. Where the fairest flowers of faith, hope and joy bloom, the deadliest serpents of mistrust and suspicion may yet be lurking! Abraham, that father of Believers, yet sinned twice by distrust when he did not acknowledge Sarah to be his wife.

Peter's mixture of unbelief was not to be justified, nor may it be used as an excuse for ourselves. We shall speak of it as a matter of fact, but not as an example, for it was an improper and unreasonable thing. Peter could not answer the Lord's question, "Why did you doubt?" His doubting was without ground or reason. If he believes at all, why does he doubt? The unbelief which makes faith little is to be confessed as a sin and mourned over as such—it would be wrong to regard it as a mere infirmity and invent excuses for it! The truth is that the Christian has no cause for doubting his Lord. The whole course of the Lord's dealing is calculated to inspire confidence. He has done nothing to create a suspicion of His love, or truth, or power. If we never doubt till we have cause for doubting, our life will be rich with faith!

It is concerning little faith and its faults and unreasonableness, that I have to speak at this time—may God grant that all the Little-Faith family may be helped to stronger confidence! May the Holy Spirit bless the word

and enable many a Ruth to pick up those handfuls that are dropped on purpose for the feeble folk who glean in these fields.

I. Our first topic will be LITTLE-FAITH'S HISTORY. It is sketched in the story of Peter. We are, each one, apt to act over again the part which Peter played in this narrative.

Little-Faith is a true disciple, though a faulty one. Not the *littleness* of the faith, but the *faith*, itself, is the gift of God. None but God could make a grain of mustard seed. None but God can give the least particle of living faith. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, however feeble it may be, is a fruit of the Spirit of God and a token of the new birth. I may say of Peter, on this occasion, what the Lord Jesus said of him at another time, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonas: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." Even the faith which can get no further than to touch the hem of Christ's garment is the work of the Spirit of God! Even that faith which cries, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" is, as to its *existence*, though not as to its *infirmity*, the creation of the most High. Therefore let us note that Little-Faith is born in the new Jerusalem and is an Israelite, indeed—hence it has about it that immortal life of which our risen Lord has said, "Because I live, you shall live, also."

Very early in its life, *Little-Faith has great longings*. See it in Peter's case. He is on board ship with his brethren while Jesus is yonder upon the waters. And Peter is so earnest to come to his Lord and be with Him, that he is ready to plunge into the sea to reach Him! Why could he not wait as the others did? His immediate duty was in the ship with his brethren, but his vehement desires carried him above common toiling and rowing. Strong faith exhibits patience where Little-Faith is in a hurry! It was well to have longings for Jesus, but it would have been wiser to have waited while the Lord came walking over the sea to the ship. The quiet, self-possessed Christian has deep longings for his Lord, but he has the assured conviction that his Lord will come to him if he continues faithful to his present duty and, therefore, he waits upon the Lord.

Little-Faith, like Martha, runs to meet Jesus, but Strong-Faith, like Mary, sits still in the house. Little-Faith is feverish after immediate joy. Little-Faith wants to be in Heaven tomorrow. Little-Faith would convert the world before the sun went down and she grows faint because her zeal has not fulfilled her wish! Little-Faith must pluck the promises while they are green—she is not content to wait till they become ripe and mellow. Yet I love her desires and I would to God that all men had them! However mistaken pressing desires for spiritual joy may be, they are things that come not into unrenewed hearts! Those blessed longings after Christ which some of you feel, which make you cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!"—you may thank God for them! Those who have greater faith know that they have found their Lord. They know that He is as the sun which cannot be hid. They feel His warmth and rejoice in His light—yet the keen hunger after Christ which goes with Little-Faith is an admirable thing—and the Lord Himself has blessed it.

I rejoice in the blossom of the apple tree—it is not so valuable as the fruit, but it is exceedingly beautiful. And, even so, the eager longings of a

trembling heart after the Lord Jesus are full of loveliness and fragrance—and are, by no means, to be despised. It is the nature of Little-Faith that it should be of a thirsty and eager temperament and hasty to make a dash for present fellowship with Christ.

Little-Faith was daring. Early in her life she had intense longings and they grew so that Little-Faith was willing to venture everything to have her longings fulfilled. “If it is You, bid me come unto You on the water”—thus does Little-Faith cry to her Lord. These are big words, but they come out of a trembling heart. Men often venture all the more because their capital is so small. Souls who are little in faith are often put upon desperate measures to gain hope. O Beloved, are there not some of you who would give your eyes and ears—your very lives—to see Christ and to taste of His love? You have come up to the Tabernacle, this morning, feeling that if Christ bade you plunge into the sea to find Him, you would think nothing of it. You feel like Rutherford when he said he could swim through seven Hells to get at Christ—and think them nothing if he might but lie at His feet.

Those vehement and burning desires within your spirit for your Lord and Master are sharp but exceedingly blessed things—you need not repress them, even though they urge you to venture everything for Christ’s sake! Love’s ventures for Christ will end in great profit. What shall it damage a man if he loses the whole world but gains his Savior? What loss could there be to a man though had, himself, sank in the sea, so long as his Lord stood there to stretch forth His hand and snatch him from destruction? Little-Faith can yet be a true hero when the Lord says to her, “Come.” It is not the sea she fears—her concern is lest the Lord should frown upon her!

At times Little-Faith accomplishes great wonders. Peter, when his Master said, “come,” went down upon the waters and walked the waves with ease. The Lord puts forth His strength even when we reveal our own weakness of faith! Peter took one step and then another upon the rolling waves, wondering, all the while, how it ever could be. Has not your little faith done this? I remember the first step of faith I took—how I wondered at it—and wondered at myself. Have not you, also, been amazed at yourselves? Do you remember when you believed that God had saved you, seeing you had faith in Christ? Then, though you knew it to be true, you could hardly tell whether you should laugh for joy or cry for fear when you thought upon the possibility of your being saved in Christ Jesus! You dared to believe that you were adopted into the family of God and started back as your heart said, “How can He put *me* among the children?” Do you remember reading of the Doctrine of Election in Holy Scripture and, at last, saying, “Surely, I am one of the chosen! The Lord has loved me with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness has He drawn me”? Was it not a piece of daring to you?

Walking on the water could not have been more venturesome! You stood upright when tempted! You held on, though sore beset by the enemy! You walked towards Jesus, though the way seemed to be on the sea! A high exhilaration raised your spirit. You rose out of yourself, but yet

down deep within there was a latent fear, a half-developed apprehension that your confidence was too good to last, that your joy was presumptuous. In your very heart you were afraid of sinking—and it was no wonder that, by-and-by, your fear became matter of fact.

But now comes in another bit of our history—*Little-Faith is too apt to look away from the Lord*. Peter, as he walked those billows, took his eye off his Master and just then a tremendous wind rushed boisterously in his face—and poor Peter was alarmed. He had thought of the fickleness of the waves, but he had overlooked the fury of the wind! When he spoke to the Lord, he said, “If it is You, bid me come unto You on the water.” And so his faith had reckoned with the *water*, but it had not reckoned upon the force of the *wind*. That mysterious and subtle agent took him by surprise. He had forgotten that he had both winds and waves to contend with—and now the wind comes upon him as a new trial! As the blast came full in Peter’s face, it chilled him to the marrow and chilled his heart, too. He heard the wind, but forgot the Voice which said, “It is I; be not afraid.”

This is the danger of Little-Faith. Little-Faith, at the outset, is scarcely comprehensive enough. It does not take a full view of all the possible dangers and difficulties and so, when that which it has omitted, comes to the front, it is very apt to be sorely troubled. Little-Faith, your hope lies in keeping your little self wholly dependent upon your great Lord! If you begin to measure circumstances, it will go ill with you, poor trembling creature that you are! What have you and I to do with *measuring*? There is One that measures with a span, the whole world, and weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance! With unmeasured faith, let us leave ourselves in the hands of our immeasurable God, so shall our souls be kept in perfect peace, stayed on Him. I walk the waves, yet not I, but Jesus—therefore will I not look to the winds, but to Jesus! Neither will I think of sinking, but see Him standing and hope in Him!

Now, the moment Peter took his eye off his Master and thought of the wind, *Little-Faith began to sink*. You see him going down. He is ready to perish—the proud waters prevail against him—he has no power, whatever, to help himself. I should suppose that Peter, being a fisherman, could swim. Why did he not strike out? Mark this, when a man begins to live by faith, if his faith fails him, even his natural ability fails with his faith. He that could swim with no faith, originally, will not swim when once, by faith, he has begun to walk the waters! Should he fail in his walking, he cannot fall back on his swimming. “Beginning to sink” is a terrible condition! Poor Little-Faith, it never reckoned on this! Deep experiences are all the more dreadful because unlooked for. When Peter left the ship and slid down the side of the boat and touched the sea, his first miraculous footsteps so elated him that he hardly thought it possible that he would, before long, be on the verge of drowning! But now down he goes, like lead in the mighty waters! The billows open wide their great mouths to swallow up poor Little-Faith and down he goes! Is that the condition of any child of God here, this morning? I must confess it has sometimes been mine. There was a step and scarcely a step, between me and death. That which

bore me up appeared to give way and the waters came in even unto my soul.

Let me not finish this history of Little-Faith without saying that *Little-Faith knew how to pray*. Though Peter did not know how to come to Christ on the waters, he knew how to come to Him by prayer. Though his faith was not *what* it ought to be, it was *where* it ought to be, for his cry was only to his Lord. He did not appeal to his brethren in the vessel, but only to his dear Master who stood so firmly on the rolling waves. He did not cry, "John, save me!" but, "Lord, save me." It was a short prayer, but it was a comprehensive one. It expressed his need of salvation. It proved his faith in the Lord's will to save him. It acknowledged Jesus to be his Lord and it tacitly admitted that the Lord could save him, and no one else.

In his prayer, Peter quits all other hope and looks wholly and solely to Jesus, crying, "Lord, save me!" His faith quotes what the Lord had done for others in healing, feeding and saving them—and now he cries, "Lord, save *me!*" He asks Jesus to act as His name implies He would do—he practically says, "Savior, save me." He appeals to his authority—"You are my Lord and You did bid me come. Therefore, as Lord, save Your own servant. Save me." His short cry is full of force. Let us imitate both its shortness and its fullness. Whenever faith is weak, let prayer be strong. When you cannot do anything else but cry, then cry with might and main! If it is less the cry of faith, let it be all the more the cry of agony! "Beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me." Little children are good at crying, if at nothing else—and so is Little-Faith.

When Jacob was greatly afraid, he became bold enough to wrestle at Jabbok. Even Little-Faith has prayer for its vital breath, its native air. Where there is life, there is breath—and where there is faith, there is prayer! O Soul, are you sinking? Then cry, "Lord, save me!" Now, in this little picture, have any of you recognized yourselves? Do you long for Christ? Would you venture all things for His dear sake? Do you trust Him? Have you enjoyed happy moments when, by faith, you have accomplished things impossible to mere sense? Have you sometimes believed and, in that belief, found a bearing up of your spirit that made you more than conqueror? Then, if, at this moment there should be a collapse and your faith should waver, pray unto the Lord! *He stands fast if you do not!* It is your wisdom to cry mightily in this, your time of need, and as surely as the Lord lives, He will come to your rescue.

Among all the carcasses that shall be washed up on the Dead Sea shore, there shall never be found the corpse of Little-Faith. Though Little-Faith has often said, "I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy," no weapon has yet been forged that can strike its heart, or break its bones! He that believes even with a little and a trembling believing, is safe beneath the guardian care of the Eternal God. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His Truth shall be your shield and buckler."

At the end, Little-Faith will grow to full assurance and will come up into the vessel, yes, into Heaven with Christ! Little-Faith shall find its way across the Jordan and stand in its lot in the end of the days. And, per-

haps, among the most rapturous song that shall ever salute the Redeemer's ears will be the song of those who were weak and trembling when they were here below and yet were kept to the end. Therefore have confidence!

II. I come, now, to the second head of my discourse, which is an interesting one—LITTLE-FAITH ACKNOWLEDGED BY THE LORD. In my text you will observe the Savior did not say, "O you of *no* faith," or, "O you of *pretended* faith," but, "O you of *little* faith." There are times when we would give all that we have if we could only have our Master's assurance that we have even a little faith! If He does but acknowledge that it is *faith*, then the root of the matter is in us! I would rather have great faith than little faith, but I would rather have little faith than have great presumption and mistake it for holy confidence. It ought to have comforted Peter, even as it rebuked him, to hear his Lord, who could not make a mistake, acknowledge that he had faith!

In following up this subject, note that little faith is faith, and *little faith is true faith*. A grain of mustard seed has life in it as surely as the tree beneath whose spreading branches the birds of the air find shelter. A spark is as truly fire as the conflagration which burned down a city. Little faith is not such powerful faith as great faith, but it is true faith. O Soul, if you have a ray of light, it came from the sun! If you have a pulse of life, it comes from the heart! If you have any measure of *faith*, it is the work of the Spirit of God! A pearl is a pearl, though it is no bigger than a pin's head. God's signature is as valid when He writes it small, as when He uses capitals!

In Peter's case, *little faith was faith with a very solid reason at the back of it*. O child of God, little as your faith may be, yet if you believe in Christ, you have faith most proper and justifiable. In fact, so strong is the ground of your little faith that the Savior even asks you, "Why did you doubt?" As much as to say, "You have every reason for your faith, but what reason have you for doubting?" Oh, dear Heart, if you come to Christ and cast yourself on Him, you are doing the best and the most right thing that you can do and none can question your conduct! Yes, if you even swoon away upon the dear bosom of the eternal Love, none shall tear you off, none shall separate you, even in your feebleness, from Christ! He has said that he that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. Who, then, can dismiss you from His Presence? You are not presumptuous, you are not going beyond what is permitted you when you trust yourself and your all on Christ, your Lord!

Do it again and do it again, more thoroughly, and you shall never be ashamed of having done it! No, it shall be your glory that you dared to trust your Lord! His promise shall never be outdone by your faith! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it. Ask for more faith and He will give more faith and fulfill greater promises to you! Go from faith to faith and you shall receive blessing upon blessing! There is no limit to your Lord's love—take as much as you like—there is no reason why you should hesitate! Christ acknowledged Little-Faith to be faith with a solid reason at its back when He said, "Why did you doubt?"

Our Lord Jesus acknowledged Little-Faith because, little as it was, *it ventured all for Him*. Peter had thrown himself into the sea to come to his Master and the Lord recognized that fact. He who ventures all for Jesus and on Jesus shall not find it to be a losing speculation. Though you dare not say that you have strong faith, yet you give up the world's pleasures, its sinful gains and its pleasing smiles for Christ—you would not deny Him for all the treasures of Egypt! Well, then, our Lord will acknowledge you as His and bear you harmless in the end. That little faith, which is *real* faith, knows nothing of the timidity which haunts the heart of the hypocrite! Little-Faith fears lest it should not be accepted at the last, but it is not afraid of being persecuted for Christ's sake. No, let me but know that I am His and He is mine—and I will go through fire and water to be with Him!

Little-Faith, in the case of Peter, *was coming to Jesus all the while*. Peter, when he left the ship, left it to come to Jesus and for that purpose only. The first step he took upon the sea was towards Jesus and every other step was towards Jesus. And when he began to sink, he sank that way, leaning towards his Master and crying as he went down, "Lord, save me!" Now, the Lord Jesus always acknowledges a faith which comes towards Him, however lame it may be. If you have a faith which looks to yourself, a curse rests upon it! If you have a faith which looks to priests, it is superstition! If you have a faith which looks to ceremonies, creeds, prayers and feelings, it will fail you when you most need help! But if you have a faith whose eyes are on Jesus, whose longings are for Jesus, whose hopes are all centered in Jesus, whose steps all head to Jesus, then you have a faith upon which Jesus sets His seal and though He calls it, "little," yet He calls it, "faith." Be sure that that which the Lord, Himself, acknowledges to be faith, is faith, even though, for the present, it leaves you damp with the brine from which you are newly plucked!

Once more, the Master acknowledges this faith—for, *before long, Little-Faith came to walk with Jesus on the sea*. I think I have seen a picture of Peter sinking and Christ stooping to save him, but I wish that some eminent artist would paint the two walking together in peace, Peter and his Lord. What joy to think that Little-Faith, once drawn from the deep, stands on those foaming waves side by side with the great saving Lord! Now is Peter conformed to his Lord! Now is the servant clothed with the might of his Master! We have, before, seen the Son of God walking in the fire with the three holy youths, and now we see the obverse of the medal—a saint walking on the water with the Son of Man! Is it not a splendid, reassuring Truth of God, that Little-Faith can grow to act like Christ?

The day shall yet come when the Lord shall have so strengthened Little-Faith that the things that the Lord does, Little-Faith shall do, also, and the Word of God shall be fulfilled, "Greater works than these shall you do because I go unto My Father." You tell me that you cannot rejoice, today, but Jesus will see you, again, and your heart shall rejoice. You cannot go forth to Christian service, for you are lame through spiritual weakness—but the day comes when the lame man shall leap as a hart! The Healer of His people will lay His hand upon you and make you "strong in the Lord

and in the power of His might.” You have a greater consciousness, today, of your *inability* in yourself than you have of your ability in the Lord. But it shall not always be so—the time will come when, in rapt fellowship with Him, by the strength of His Grace, you shall be in this world even as He is—and that glorious life which, in the Person of Christ, trod on the sea as though it were a sea of glass—that same life shall be in *you*, so that you shall overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil!

I feel right glad to have even a little faith! I am truly sorry that it is so little when I know that my Lord deserves all possible confidence, but yet I am glad that it is given to me to believe on His name, for it has brought me near Him and will bring me yet nearer. And it will, by-and-by, bring me to be with Him where He is, and to behold His Glory!

Thus I have shown you that our Lord acknowledged Little-Faith. He did not break the bruised reed, nor disown the infant faith, but He *called it faith*, answered its prayer and made it to stand with Him in fellowship of power!

III. In the third place, I want you to notice LITTLE-FAITH’S DELIVERANCE. Little-Faith began to sink, but it was only a beginning. The sinking did not end in Peter’s drowning, but in his Lord’s *saving*. The text says, “beginning to sink” and truly that is the whole matter. None of God’s people shall go beyond, “beginning to sink.” We may be “ready to perish,” but we shall not actually perish. Our steps may be “almost gone,” but, “almost,” is not, “quite.” A man may be near death, and yet live. He may begin to sink and yet be saved. Friend, it may be that for some time you have been “beginning to sink,” but you have not yet sunk. Not yet are you consumed! Not yet is the Lord’s mercy clean gone forever—not yet has He forgotten to be gracious. Oftentimes, “beginning to sink,” with us, is with Christ, beginning to stretch out His hand! The beginning of a clear sense of our own weakness is often the beginning of the display of the power of God!

Little-Faith received its deliverance *wholly from the Lord*. As I have already said, it was not Peter’s swimming that got him out of his trouble, nor was it any revival of Peter’s faith which did it. The Lord came to the rescue and proved His power to help at a dead lift. So shall it be with you, O trembling heart—in the hour of your extremity, God shall appear for you. The Lord will provide! Out of weakness you shall be made strong, for He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

It was of the Lord and, therefore, it was *immediate*. Will you kindly note the words in the text, “and immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand.” Before He rebuked him for his little faith, He delivered him from his peril! O Little-Faith, you have but to cry out and the Lord will help you! Do not delay your crying and He will not delay His helping. The Lord may let the matter proceed some considerable distance till we think it is all over with us, but, in the nick of time, He will appear for our deliverance. In that dark moment when we read our own death warrant amid the roar of the tempest, the prompt relief of the Lord of Love will arrive! No wings of cherubim can be more swift than the Lord’s right hand when He means to draw His people from great waters.

It is added, “immediately *He stretched forth His hand.*” It was an instructive action on the part of Jesus, that stretching forth of His hand—as if He was raising Himself to the utmost energy and reaching beyond Himself to rescue His servant. A stretched-out hand denotes the exercise of all the power of the person thus acting. In the case of God’s people, it has often been necessary that He should bring them forth with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. Peter had his exodus from the water as Israel from Egypt. Who is to know the might of God’s arm if He does not stretch it out? And why should it be stretched out unless there is a need for it—so that our perils produce the necessity for God to stretch out His hand and thus they turn out to be comfortable means of Grace to us! Our necessities are the doors through which the Lord’s great bounty comes to us. If Little-Faith did not lift up its cry of dismay, the Lord’s hand would not be lifted up for its rescue.

It is added, He, “*caught him.*” Thus the Lord came into personal contact with His servant. Look, He holds him up! The whole weight of Peter is on Christ! If Peter sinks, Jesus must sink, too, for He will not let go of His hold. For the time Peter and Christ are joined, they have only one standing and that standing is all in Christ. O Little-Faith, you feel a closer union to Christ in your hour of danger than ever before! It comes to this, that when Jesus interposes to save Little-Faith, He bends all His strength to the deed and takes hold of the sinking one with a grip so fast and firm that the two must sink or stand together! All the weight of Peter was on Jesus—all the security of Jesus was bestowed on Peter! Little-Faith holds Jesus while Jesus upholds Little-Faith. A half-hoping, half-despairing soul lays hold on Jesus with an iron grip and on such a poor feeble one, the hold of Jesus is equally tight and strong! He will never let the sinking sinner die when once that prayer has been uttered, “Lord, save me!” I hardly know of a more conscious union between a man and Christ than that which is effected when, in sinking times, the grip of the crucified hand is felt as our sole rescue from death!

“Hallelujah, who shall part Christ’s own bride from Christ’s own heart?” Who is he that shall separate the most timid and trembling of all the believing company from that eternal hand which is sworn to deliver? “I give unto My sheep eternal life,” He says, “and they shall never perish.” Nor shall they though the heavens and the earth should pass away. The Lord must and will stretch out His hand and catch the sinking one and grant him the same standing as Himself.

IV. I close with LITTLE-FAITH REBUKED. That comes last. After the poor soul is quite rescued and set on a sure footing, then comes the loving chiding—“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” This is such a gentle rebuking that it almost seems to me that the Master might say as much as this to us when we enter Paradise with Him. It might not be unkind, even there, to say, “Why did you doubt?” When you and I have come up from our dying beds and left all pain, poverty and sorrow far behind, we shall find ourselves in the golden-streeted city and the Well-Beloved with us—and we shall look back on all the way whereby He led us—and then He may lovingly whisper in our ears, “Why did you doubt?”

Look back on your pilgrim way. There is the Slough of Despond dried up! There is Giant Despair's head on a pole! There is Apollyon bound with chains! There is the river whose chill stream so often frightened you, glittering in the eternal light! "Why did you doubt?" You doubted about nothing. You made mountains out of molehills. Where everything was working for you, you said with trembling Jacob, "All these things are against me." Will not our Lord produce a rapture within our spirit while He brings to mind His unchanging love, His immutable Truth, His immovable faithfulness? We shall eternally wonder at our own doubts!

What if our Lord should say, "Did you not come up from the wilderness leaning upon Me as your Beloved? Did I ever fail you? Did I ever give you a cross word? Say, did I ever leave you or forsake you? Why did you doubt?" Then we shall sweetly chide ourselves to think we ever had a moment's distrust of our dear Lord, the Bridegroom of our souls, in whom our faith ought to have been constant as the day!

Notice, dear Friends, with regard to this question, "Why did you doubt?" that it is an *inconsistent* thing for a believing man to doubt His God, or distrust the power of the Lord Jesus. You believe, and if you believe, why doubt? If faith, why *little* faith? If you doubt, why believe? And if you believe, why doubt? Oil and water will not mix! Oh, how could faith and unbelief unite? Yet they are often found together in deadly warfare. "Oh," said a dear Sister in Christ to me the other day, "I cannot doubt my God." Yet she also expressed a fear lest she should be wrong at the last! This was an odd mixture in one who knew the glorious Gospel so well! But then we are all odd in some way or other. In any case, it is not right that we believe and yet disbelieve. Shall a fountain send forth both sweet water and bitter? Be gone you doubts! Oh that they would go at my bidding! What business have you, here, at the festival of faith? Be gone, you harpies that devour the bread of the Lord's Table and defile our dainty things! What right have you to enter the holy abodes of faith?

While doubts are so inconsistent, are they not also most *dishonoring*? Why should we doubt our Lord? Shall it go forth to the world that we cannot trust Christ? Shall it be said that those who are saved by Him, nevertheless say it is hard work to believe Him? Hard to believe Him who has proven His love by the agony and bloody sweat? My Lord, I will sooner doubt my brother, doubt my father, doubt my wife than doubt You! My Lord, I will doubt my eyes, and doubt my ears, and doubt the beating of my heart sooner than doubt You! I will doubt the laws of Nature—I will doubt everything that seems certain! I will doubt the conclusions of mathematics—but You, oh why, why, should I doubt You? No, let us hold on to the love of Jesus and cling to Him, even though He should frown and chasten. Be it ours to trust a scourging God! Yes, say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him"

Once again, how *inexcusable* is this doubting among you who believe! The only excuses worth mentioning are these. Some excuse themselves because they desire to be humble. "I dare not think that these good things are true to *me*. I know that I am altogether unworthy of them and I am afraid of being proud if I take them to myself." Do you not know, dear

Friend, that the biggest pride in all the world is doubting God? And it is the sweetest humility to trust in God as a child trusts its father! It is the lowliest action of the heart to say, "These things are good, exceedingly good, and I am most unworthy—but then the Lord has said that He gives these gracious gifts to the unworthy—and, if He has said it, God forbid that I should question Him." Who am I that I should venture to raise a doubt about the *bona fides* of the Lord Jehovah? I must, I will cease from all such proud questioning and artful doubts and be even as a new born babe, drinking in the unadulterated milk of the Word of God!

I am persuaded that unbelief is sometimes occasioned by ignorance. I pray you, do not let such ignorance remain in you. Be diligent in searching Holy Scripture. If you do not know the Lord, nor know His Providence, nor know the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints, nor know the Covenant of Grace, why, then you may be staggered—but learn those things that you may be established.

I have no doubt that unbelief is caused not only by ignorance, but by forgetfulness. We forget the Lord's past mercies. If the Lord has plucked you, like a brand, out of the fire, cannot He pluck you out of the sea? He that delivered you from the deadly power of sin—cannot He deliver you from every temptation? In fact, the Lord has done more for us, already, than He ever will have to do for us in the future, for He will never have to die, again, upon the bloody Cross and He will never have to offer Himself, again, as an Atonement for our sin! Nine hundred and ninety-nine parts out of a thousand are already ours! We have only to shut our eyes and open them in Heaven and the rest will be ours. Today is our salvation nearer than when we believed. We are almost Home! We are within sight of the white cliffs of the better land! Shall we now tremble? Shall we not begin to rejoice with unspeakable joy? Does not Little-Faith begin to mount into assurance?

You that have not believed in Jesus, I have tried to show the way of salvation by faith in Christ. You that have believed but tremblingly, I have pointed out to you much that ought to comfort you. And to you who can believe with full assurance, I would say, guard that full assurance with great care—it is Heaven below—it is the beginning of Heaven above!

The Lord, the Holy Spirit, be with you all, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 14:13-36.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—191, 739, 733.**

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MR. FEARING COMFORTED

NO. 246

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

***“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”
Matthew 14:31.***

IT seems as if doubt were doomed to be the perpetual companion of faith. As dust attends the chariot wheels so do doubts naturally becloud faith. Some men of little faith are perpetually enshrouded with fears—their faith seems only strong enough to enable them to doubt. If they had no faith at all, then they would not doubt, but having that little, and but so little, they are perpetually involved in distressing surmises, suspicions and fears. Others, who have attained to great strength and stability of faith, are nevertheless, at times, subjects of doubt. He who has a colossal faith will sometimes find that the clouds of fear float over the brow of his confidence. It is not possible, I suppose, so long as man is in this world, that he should be perfect in anything. And surely it seems to be quite impossible that he should be perfect in faith.

Sometimes, indeed, the Lord purposely leaves His children, withdraws the Divine inflowing of His grace and permits them to begin to sink in order that they may understand that faith is not their own work, but is first the gift of God and must always be maintained and kept alive in the heart by the fresh influence of the Holy Spirit. I take it that Peter was a man of great faith. When others doubted, Peter believed. He boldly avowed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, for which faith he received the Master's commendation, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jona—for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven.”

He was of faith so strong, that at Christ's command he could tread the billow and find it like glass beneath his feet—yet even he was permitted in this thing to fall. Faith forsook him, he looked at the winds and the waves and began to sink and the Lord said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” As much as to say, “O Peter, your great faith is My gift and the greatness of it is My work. Think not that you are the author of your own faith. I will leave you and this great faith of yours shall speedily disappear and like another who has no faith, you shall believe the winds and regard the waves, but shall distrust your Master's power and therefore shall you sink.”

I think I shall be quite safe in concluding, this morning, that there are some here who are full of doubting and fearing. Sure I am that all true Christians have their times of anxious questioning. The heart that has never doubted has not yet learned to believe. As the farmers say, "The land that will not grow a thistle, will not grow wheat." And the heart that cannot produce a doubt has not yet understood the meaning of believing. He that never doubted of his state—he may, perhaps he may, too late. Yes, there may be timid ones here, those who are always of little faith—and there may be also great hearts, those who are valiant for truth—who are now enduring seasons of despondency and hours of darkness of heart.

Now in endeavoring to comfort you this morning, I would remark that the text goes upon a very wise principle. If a man believes in anything it is always proper to put to him the question, "Why do you believe? What evidence have you that what you believe is certainly correct?" We believe on *evidence*. Now the most foolish part of many men's doubts, is that they do not *doubt* on evidence. If you should put to them the question, "Why do you doubt?"—they would not be able to answer. Yet mark, if men's doubts are painful, the wisest way to remove them is by simply seeing whether they have a firm basis. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" If you believe a thing, you want evidence and before you doubt a thing you ought to have evidence, too. To believe without evidence is to be credulous and to doubt without evidence is to be foolish. We should have grounds for our doubts as well as a basis for our faith. The text, therefore, goes on a most excellent principle and it deals with all doubting minds by asking them this question, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

I shall endeavor to exhort you on the same plan this morning. I shall divide my sermon into two parts. First, I shall address myself to those of you who are in great trouble with regard to temporal circumstances—you are God's people—but you are sorely tried and you have begun to doubt. I shall then deal with you upon spiritual matters—there are some here who are God's true, quickened and living people, but they are doubting—to them also I shall put the same question, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?"

I. First, then, in TEMPORAL CIRCUMSTANCES. God has not made for His people a smooth path to Heaven. Before they are crowned they must fight. Before they can enter the celestial city they must fulfill a weary pilgrimage. Religion helps us in trouble, but it does not suffer us to escape from it. It is through much tribulation that we inherit the kingdom. Now the Christian, when he is full of faith, passes through affliction with a song in his mouth—he would enter the fiery furnace itself, fearless of the devouring flame, or with Jonah he would descend into the great deeps, unalarmed at the hungry sea. As long as faith maintains its hold, fear is a stranger. But at times, during sundry great and sore troubles, the Chris-

tian begins to fear that surely at last he shall be overcome and shall be left to himself to die and perish in despair.

Now, what is the reason why you doubt? I must come to the plan of the text and put the great question, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?" Here it will be proper for us to enquire—Why did Simon Peter doubt? He doubted for two reasons. First, because he looked too much to second causes and secondly, because he looked too little at the first cause. The answer will suit you, also, my trembling Brothers and Sisters. This is the reason why you doubt—because you are looking too much to the things that are seen and too little to your unseen Friend who is behind your troubles and who shall come forth for your deliverance. See poor Peter in the ship—his Master bids him come.

In a moment he casts himself into the sea and to his own surprise he finds himself walking the billows. He looks down and actually it is the fact. His foot is upon a crested wave and yet he stands erect. He treads again and yet his footing is secure. "Oh," thinks Peter, "this is marvelous." He begins to wonder within his spirit what manner of man Jesus must be who has enabled him to tread the treacherous deep. But just then there comes howling across the sea a terrible blast of wind. It whistles in the ear of Peter and he says within himself, "Ah, here comes an enormous billow driven forward by the blast! Now, surely, I must, I shall be overwhelmed." No sooner does the thought enter his heart than down he goes. And the waves begin to enclose him. So long as he shut his eyes to the billow and to the blast and kept it only open to the Lord who stood there before him, he did not sink. But the moment he shut his eyes on Christ and looked at the stormy wind and treacherous deep, down he went.

He might have traversed the leagues of the Atlantic, he might have crossed the broad Pacific—if he could but have kept his eyes on Christ. Never a billow would have yielded to his tread, but he might have been drowned in a very brook if he began to look at second causes and to forget the Great Head and Master of the Universe who had bid him walk the sea. I say, the very reason of Peter's doubt was that he looked at second causes and not at the first cause.

Now, that is the reason why *you* doubt. Let me just probe you now for a while. You are despondent about temporal affairs. What is the reason why you are in trouble? "Because," you say, "I never was in such a condition before in my life. Wave upon wave of trouble comes upon me. I have lost one friend and then another. It seems as if business had altogether run away from me. Once I had a flood tide and now it is an ebb and my poor ship grates upon the gravel and I find she has not water enough to float her—what will become of me? And, oh, Sir, my enemies have conspired against me in every way to cut me up and destroy me—opposition upon opposition threatens me. My shop must be closed. Bankruptcy stares me in the face and I know not what is to become of me."

Or else your troubles take another shape and you feel that you are called to some eminently arduous service for your Lord and your strength is utterly insignificant compared with the labor before you. If you had great faith it would be as much as you could do to accomplish it. But with your poor little faith you are completely beaten. You cannot see how you can accomplish the matter at all. Now, what is all this but simply looking at second causes? You are looking at your *troubles*, not at the *God* who sent your troubles. You are looking at yourselves, not at the God who dwells within you and who has promised to sustain you. O Soul, it were enough to make the mightiest heart doubt if it should look only at things that are *seen*. He that is nearest to the kingdom of Heaven would have cause to droop and die if he had nothing to look at but that which eye can see and ear can hear. What wonder, then, if you are disconsolate, when you have begun to look at the things which always must be enemies to faith?

But I would remind you that you have forgotten to look to Christ since you have been in this trouble. Let me ask you, have you not thought less of Christ than you ever did? I will not suppose that you have neglected prayer, or have left your Bible unread. But still, have you had any of those sweet thoughts of Christ which once you had? Have you been able to take all your troubles to Him and say—"Lord, You know all things. I trust all in Your hands"? Let me ask you, have you considered that Christ is omnipotent and therefore able to deliver you? That He is faithful and must deliver you, because He has promised to do so? Have you not kept your eyes on His rod and not on His hands?

Have you not looked rather to the crook that smote you, than to the heart that moved that crook? Oh, remember, that you can never find joy and peace while you are looking at the things that are *seen*, the second causes of your trouble. Your only hope, your only refuge and joy must be to look to Him who dwells within the veil. Peter sunk when he looked to outward providences—so must you. He would never have ceased to walk the wave, never would he have begun to sink if he had looked alone to Christ—nor will you if you will look alone to Him.

And here let me now begin to argue with such of you as are the people of God who are in sore trouble lest Christ should leave you to sink. Let me forbid your fears by a few words of consolation. You are now in Peter's condition. You are like Peter. You are Christ's servant. Christ is a good Master. You have never heard that He suffered one of His servants to be drowned when going on His errands. Will He not take care of His own? Shall it be said at last that one of Christ's disciples perished while he was in obedience to Christ. I say He were a bad Master if He should send you on an errand that would involve your destruction. Peter, when he was in the water, was where his Master had called him to be and you in your troubles now, are not only Christ's servant, but you are where Christ has

chosen to put you. Your afflictions, remember, come neither from the east nor from the west, neither does your trouble grow out of the ground.

All your suffering is sent upon you by your God. The medicine which you now drink is compounded in Heaven. Every grain of this bitterness which now fills your mouth was measured by the heavenly physician. There is not an ounce more trouble in your cup than God chose to put there. Your burden was weighed by God before you were called to bear it. The Lord who gave you the mercy has taken it away. The same God who has blessed you with joy is He that has now plowed you with grief. You are where God put you.

Ask yourself this question, then—Can it be possible that Christ would put His own servant into a perilous condition and then leave him there? I have heard of fiends, in fables, tempting men into the sea to drown them. But is Christ a siren? Will He entice His people on to the rocks? Will He tempt them into a place where He shall destroy them? God forbid! If Christ calls you into the fire, He will bring you out of it. And if He bids you walk the sea, He will enable you to tread it in safety. Doubt not, Soul. If you had come there of yourself, then you might fear, but since Christ put you there, He will bring you out again. Let this be the pillar of your confidence—you are His servant, He will not leave you. You are where He put you, He cannot suffer you to perish. Look away, then, from the trouble that surround you, to your Master and to His hand that has planned all these things.

Remember too, who it is that has you where you are. It is no harsh tyrant who has led you into trouble. It is no austere unloving heart who has bid you pass through this difficulty to gratify a capricious whim. Ah, no, He who troubles you is Christ. Remember His bleeding hands. And can you think that the hand which dropped with gore can ever hang down when it should be stretched for your deliverance? Think of the eyes that wept over you on the Cross. And can the eyes that wept for you be blind when you are in grief? Think of the heart that was opened for you. And shall the heart that did bleed its life away to rescue you from death be hard and stolid when you are overwhelmed in sorrow?

It is Christ that stands on yonder billow in the midst of the tempest with you. He is suffering as well as you are. Peter is not the only one walking on the sea. His master is there with him, too. And so is Jesus with you, today, with you in your troubles, suffering with you as He suffered for you. Shall He leave you, He that bought you, He who is married to you, He that has led you thus far, has succored you up to now, He who loves you better than He loves Himself, shall He forsake you? O turn your eyes from the rough billow, listen no longer to the howling tempest, turn your eyes to Him, your loving Lord, your faithful Fiend, and fix your trust on Him, who even now in the midst of the tempest, cries, "It is I, be not afraid."

One other reflection will I offer to such of you as are now in sore trouble on account of temporal matters and it is this—Christ has helped you up to now. Should not this console you? Ah, Peter, why could you fear that you should sink? It was miracle enough that you did not sink at first. What power is it that has held you up till now? Certainly not your own! You had fallen at once to the bottom of the sea, O man, if God had not been your helper. If Jesus had not made you buoyant, Peter, you would soon have been a floating carcass. He who helped you then to walk so long as you could walk, surely He is able to help you all the way until He shall grasp your hand in Paradise to glorify you with Himself. Let any Christian look back to his past life and he will be astonished that he is what he is and where he is.

The whole Christian life is a series of miracles, wonders linked into wonders, in one perpetual chain. Marvel, Believer, that you have been upheld till now. And cannot He that has kept you to this day preserve you to the end? What is yon roaring wave that threatens to overwhelm you—what is it? Why, you have endured greater waves than these in the past! What is yon howling blast? Why, He has saved you when the wind was howling worse than that! He that helped you in six troubles will not forsake you in this. He who has delivered you out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will not, He cannot, forsake you now.

In all this, I have labored to turn your eyes from what you are seeing to that which you *cannot see*, but in which you must *believe*. Oh, if I might but be successful, though feeble my words, yet mighty should be the consolation which should flow from there.

A minister of Christ, who was always in the habit of visiting those whom he knew to be eminent for piety, in order that he might learn from them, called upon an aged Christian who had been distinguished for his holiness. To his great surprise, however, when he sat down by his bedside, the old man said, “Ah, I have lost my way. I did think at one time that I was a child of God, now I find that I have been a stumbling block to others. For these forty years I have deceived the Church and deceived myself and now I discover that I am a lost soul.”

The minister very wisely said to him, “Ah, then I suppose you like the song of the drunkard and you are very fond of the amusements of the world and delight in profanity and sin?” “Ah, no,” said he, “I cannot bear them, I could not endure to sin against God.” “O then,” said the minister, “then it is not at all likely that God will lock you up in Hell with men that you cannot bear here. If now you hate sin, depend on it, God will not shut you up forever with sinners. But, my Brother,” said the minister “tell me what has brought you into such a distressed state of mind?”

“O Sir,” said he, “it was looking away from the God of Providence, to myself. I had managed to save about one hundred pounds and I have been lying here ill now this last six months and I was thinking that my

one hundred pounds would soon be spent and then what should I do? I think I shall have to go to the workhouse, I have no friend to take care of me and I have been thinking about that one hundred pounds of mine. I knew it would soon be gone and then, then, how could the Lord provide for me? I never had either doubt or fear till I began to think about temporal matters.

“The time was when I could leave all that with God. If I had not had one hundred pounds, I should have felt quite sure He would provide for me. But I begin to think, now, that I cannot provide for myself. The moment I think of that, my heart is darkened.” The minister then led him away from all trust in an arm of flesh and told him his dependence for bread and water was not on his one hundred pounds, but on the God who is the possessor of Heaven and earth—that as for his bread being given him and his water being sure—God would take care of that, for in so doing he would only be fulfilling His promise.

The poor man was enabled in the matter of Providence to cast himself entirely upon God and then his doubts and fears subsided and once more he began to walk the sea of trouble and did not sink. O Believer, if you take your business into your own hands, you will soon be in trouble. The old Puritan said, “He that carves for himself will soon cut his fingers,” and I believe it. There never was a man who began to take his own matters out of God’s hands that was not glad enough to give them back again. He that runs before the cloud runs a fool’s errand. If we leave all our matters, temporal as well as spiritual, in the hands of God, we shall lack no good thing, and what is better still, we shall have no care, no trouble, no thought. We shall cast all our burdens upon Him for He cares for us. There is no need for two to care, for God to care and the creature, too. If the Creator cares for us, then the creature may sing all day long with joy and gladness—

***“Mortals cease from toil and sorrow,
God provides for the morrow.”***

II. But now, in the second part of the discourse, I have to speak of SPIRITUAL THINGS. To the Christian, these are the causes of more trouble than all his temporal trials. In the matters of the soul and of eternity many doubts will arise. I shall, however, divide them into two sorts—doubts of our present acceptance and doubts of our final perseverance.

Many there is of God’s people who are much vexed and troubled with doubts about their present acceptance. “Oh,” say they “there was a time when I knew I was a child of God. I was sure that I was Christ’s, my heart would fly up to Heaven at a word. I looked to Christ hanging on the Cross, I fixed all my trust on Him and a sweet, calm and blessed repose filled my spirit—

***“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed;
How sweet their memory still!***

***But they have left an aching void,
The world can never fill.”***

“And now,” says this doubting one, “now I am afraid I never knew the Lord. I think that I have deceived myself and that I have been a hypocrite. Oh that I could but know that I am Christ’s, I would give all I have in the world, if He would but let me know that He is my Beloved and that I am His.”

Now, Soul, I will deal with you as I have been just now treating of Peter. Your doubts arise from looking to second causes and not to Christ. Let us see if this is not the Truth of God. Why do you doubt? Your answer is, “I doubt, because I feel my sin so much. Oh, what sins have I committed! When first I came to Christ I thought I was the chief of sinners. But now I know I am. Day after day I have added to my guilt. And since my pretended conversion,” says this doubting one, “I have been a bigger sinner than ever I was before. I have sinned against light and against knowledge, against grace and mercy and favor. O never was there such a sinner under God’s Heaven out of Hell as I am.” But, Soul, is not this looking to second causes? It is true, you are the chief of sinners—take that for granted, let us not dispute it. Your sins are as evil as you say they are and a great deal more so.

Depend on it, you are worse than you think yourself to be. You think you are bad enough, but you are not so bad in your own estimation as you really are. Your sins seem to you to be like roaring billows, but in God’s sight they are like towering mountains without summit. You seem to yourself to be black in sin—black as the tents of Kedar—in God’s eyes you are blacker still. Set that down, to begin with, that the waves are big and that the winds are howling—I will not dispute that. I ask you, what have you to do with that? Does not the Word of God command you to look to *Christ*? Great as your sins are, Christ is greater than they all.

They are black. But His blood can wash you whiter than snow. I know your sins deserve damnation. But Christ’s merits deserve salvation. It is true, the pit of Hell is your *lawful* portion, but Heaven itself is your *gracious* portion. What? Is Christ less powerful than your sin? That cannot be! To suppose that were to make the *creature* mightier than the Creator! What? Is your guilt more prevalent with God than Christ’s righteousness? Can you think so little of Christ as to imagine that your sins can overwhelm and conquer Him? O Man, your sins are like mountains—but Christ’s love is like Noah’s flood. It prevails twenty cubits and the tops of the mountains are covered. It is looking at sin and not looking to the Savior that has made you doubt. You are looking to the second cause and not to Him who is greater than all.

“No, but,” you reply, “it is not my sin, Sir, that grieves me. It is this—I feel so hardened, I do not feel my sin as I ought. Oh if I could but weep as some weep! If I could but pray as some pray! Then I think I could be

saved. If I could feel some of the terrors that good men have felt, then I think I could believe. But I feel none of these things. My heart seems like a rock of ice, hard as granite and as cold as an iceberg. It will not melt. You may preach, but it is not affected. I may pray, but my heart seems dumb. I may read even the story of Christ's death and yet my soul is not moved by it. Oh surely I cannot be saved!" Ah, this is looking to second causes, again! Have you forgotten that Word which said, "God is greater than our hearts?"

Have you forgotten that? O child of God! Shame on you that you do look for comfort where comfort never can be found. Look to *yourself* for peace? Why, there never can be any in this land of war. Look to your *own heart* for joy? There can be none there, in this barren wilderness of sin. Turn, turn your eyes to Christ—He can cleanse your heart, He can create life and light and truth in the inward parts. He can wash you till you shall be whiter than snow and cleanse your soul and quicken it and make it live and feel and move—so that it shall hear His simplest words and obey His whispered mandate.

O look not now at the second cause. Look at the great first cause. Otherwise I shall put to you again the question, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" "Still," says another, "I could believe, notwithstanding my sin and my hardness of heart. But, do you know, that of late I have lost communion with Christ to such an extent that I cannot help thinking that I must be a castaway? Oh, Sir, there were times when Christ used to visit me and bring me such sweet love tokens. I was like the little ewe lamb in the parable. I did drink out of His cup and feed from His table and lie in His bosom. Often did He take me to His banqueting house, His banner over me was love. What feastings I then had! I would bask in the sunlight of His countenance. It was summer with my soul. But now it is winter and the sun is gone and the banqueting house is closed. No fruits are on the table, no wines are in the bottles of the promise. I come to the sanctuary, but I find no comfort. I turn to the Bible, but I find no solace. I fall on my knees, but even the stream of prayer seems to be a dry brook.

Ah, Soul, but are you not still looking to second causes? These are the most precious of all secondary things, but yet you must not look to *them*, but to *Christ*. Remember, it is not your communing that saves you, but Christ's dying. It is not Christ's comfortable visits to your soul that ensures your salvation. It is Christ's own visit to the house of mourning and to the garden of Gethsemane. I would have you keep your comforts as long as you can. But when they die, believe on your God still. Jonah had a gourd once and when that gourd died he began to mourn. Well might someone have said to him, "Jonah, you have lost your gourd, but you have not lost your God."

And so might we say to you—you have not lost his love. You have lost the light of His countenance, but you have not lost the love of His heart.

You have lost His sweet and gracious communion, but He is the same, still, and He would have you believe His faithfulness and trust Him in the dark and rely upon Him in the stormy wind and tempest. Look to none of these outward things, but look alone to Christ—Christ bleeding—Christ dying—Christ dead. Christ buried—Christ risen—Christ ascended—Christ interceding. This is the thing you are to look to—Christ and Him only. And looking there, you shall be comforted. But look to anything else and you shall begin to sink. Like Peter, the waves shall fail you and you shall have to cry, “Lord, save me, or I perish.”

But, again, to conclude—others of God’s people are afraid that they shall never be able to persevere and hold out to the end. “Oh,” says one, “I know I shall yet fall away and perish, for look!—look what an evil heart of unbelief I have. I cannot live one day without sin. My heart is so treacherous, it is like a bombshell. Let but a spark of temptation fall upon it and it will blow up to my eternal destruction. With such a tinderbox heart as I have, how can I hope to escape, while I walk in the midst of a shower of sparks?” “Oh,” said one, “I feel my nature to be so utterly vile and depraved that I cannot hope to persevere. If I hold on a week or a month it will be a great work. But to hold on all my life until I die—oh, this is impossible.”

Looking to second causes again, are you not? Will you please remember that if you look to creature strength it is utterly impossible that you should persevere in grace, even for ten minutes, much less for ten years! If your perseverance depends upon *yourself* you are a lost man. You may write that down for a certainty. If you have one jot or one tittle to do with your own perseverance in Divine Grace you will never see God’s face at last. Your grace will die out. Your life will be extinguished and you must perish if your salvation depends upon yourself. But remember, you have already been kept these months and these years—what has done that? Why, Divine Grace. And the Divine Grace that has held you on for one year can hold you on for a century, no, for an eternity, if it were necessary. He that has begun can carry on and must carry on, too—otherwise He were false to His promise and would deny Himself.

“Ah, but,” you say, “Sir, I cannot tell with what temptations I am surrounded. I am in a workshop where everybody laughs at me. I am called nicknames because I follow the cause of Christ. I have been able up to now to put up with their rebukes and their jests. But now they are adopting another plan. They try to tempt me away from the House of God and entice me to the theater and to worldly amusements and I feel that, placed as I am, I can never hold on. As well might a spark hope to live in the midst of an ocean as for Divine Grace to live in my heart.” Ah, but, Soul, who has made it to live up to now? What is it that has helped you up till now to say, “No,” to every temptation?

Why, the Lord your Redeemer. You could not have done it so long if it had not been for Him. And He that has helped you to stand so long will never put you to shame. Why, if you are a child of God and you should fall away and perish, what dishonor would be brought on Christ? "Aha!" the devil would say, "here is a child of God and God has turned him out of His family and I have got him in Hell at last. Is this what God does with His children—loves them one day and hates them the next—tells them He forgives them and yet punishes them—accepts them in Christ and yet sends them into Hell?"

Can that be? Shall it be? Never! Not while God is God. "Aha," again, says Satan, "Believers have eternal life given to them. Here is one that had eternal life and this eternal life has died out. It was not eternal. The promise was a lie. It was temporary life. It was not eternal life. Aha," says he, "I have found a flaw in Christ's promise. He gave them only temporary life and called it eternal." And again, the arch-fiend would say, if it were possible for one child of God to perish—"Aha, I have one of the jewels of Christ's crown here." And he would hold it up and defy Christ to His very face and laugh Him to scorn. "This is a jewel that You did purchase with Your own blood. Here is one that You did come into the world to save and yet You could not save him. You did buy him and pay for him and yet I have got him—he was a jewel of Your crown and yet here he is, in the hand of the Black Prince, Your enemy. Aha, King with a damaged crown! You have lost one of your jewels."

Can it be so? No, never, and therefore everyone that believe is as sure of Heaven as if he were there. If you cast yourself simply on Christ, death nor Hell shall ever destroy you. Remember what good old Mr. Berridge said, when he was met by a friend one morning, "How do you do, Mr. Berridge?" "Pretty well, I thank you," said he, "and as sure of Heaven as if I were there. For I have a solid confidence in Christ." What a happy man such a man must be, who knows and feels that to be true! And yet, if you do not feel it, if you are the children of God, I put to you this question, "Why do you doubt?" Is there not good reason to believe? "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?" If you have believed in Christ, saved you are and saved you shall be, if you have committed yourself to His hands. "I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." "Yes," says one, "this is not the fear that troubles me—my only doubt is whether I am a child of God or not."

I finish, therefore, by going over the old ground. Soul, if you would know whether you are a child of God, look not to yourself, but look to Christ. You who are here today, who desire to be saved, but yet fear you never can be, never look to yourselves for any ground of acceptance before God. Not self, but Jesus. Not heart, but Christ. Not man, but man's Creator. O Sinner! Think not that you are to bring anything to Christ to recommend you. Come to Him just as you are. He wants no good works of

yours—no good *feelings* either. Come, just as you are. All that you can want to fit you for Heaven He has bought for you and He will give to you. All these freely you shall have for the asking. Only come and He will not cast you away. But do you say, “Oh, I cannot believe that Christ is able to save such a sinner as I am”? I reply, “O you of little faith, why do you doubt?” He has already saved sinners as great as you are—only try Him, only try Him—

***“Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.”***

Try Him, try Him. And if you find Him false, then tell it everywhere that Christ was untrue. But that shall never be. Go to Him—tell Him you are a wretched, undone soul—without His Sovereign Grace. Ask Him to have mercy on you. Tell Him you are determined, if you do perish, that you will perish at the foot of His Cross. Go and cling to Him, as He hangs bleeding there. Look Him in the face and say, “Jesus, I have no other refuge. If You spurn me, I am lost. But I will never go from You. I will clasp You in life and clasp You in death, as the only Rock of my soul’s salvation.” Depend upon it, you shall not be sent away empty. You must, you shall be accepted, if you will simply believe. Oh, may God enable you, by the Divine influence of His Holy Spirit, to believe. And then we shall not have to put the question, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

I pray God now apply these words to your comfort. They have been very simple and very homely words. But nevertheless, they will suit simple, homely hearts. If God shall bless them, to Him be the glory!

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REASONS FOR DOUBTING CHRIST NO. 2925

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Why did you doubt?”
Matthew 14:31.*

OUR Lord did not begin His dealings with Peter in this emergency by asking him that question. He first stretched out His hand and saved him from his peril and *then* He said to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” When a man is in trouble, help him out, first, and then blame him for having got into it, if you feel it necessary to do so! It is cruel to bring your censure to bear upon sinking Peter. First give him your help, lest he perish in the sea. And when you have done that, you may chide him afterwards for any fault that you perceive in him. This is always the way with our Master. He gives liberally and upbraids not, except when there shall come to be a special reason for our spiritual profit, when a little upbraiding may do us good. Now I am going, first, to use our text and then I am going to alter it. I shall first speak to God’s people, and say, “Why did you doubt, O Christian?” And then put it into another tense altogether, and address it to the unconverted, and say, “Why *do* you doubt, O you who know the Gospel, but have not yet believed it?”

I. LET US USE THE TEXT AND QUESTION GOD’S PEOPLE—“Why did you doubt?” I am probably addressing some Brothers and Sisters—perhaps a great many who have been through a season of profound gloom and in the midst of that gloom there has been the element of spiritual evil. To be gloomy and depressed is not sinful at all, but there may have been in the midst of that, the sin of unbelief. There may have been a doubting of God—a distrust of His Providence—a questioning of His love. Now I come at this time to such a Brother or Sister and say, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Can you answer that question? Shall I help you?

First, I will suppose some reasons which, if they do exist, will justify you in having doubted. And then I will take the reasons you, yourselves assign, one by one. I shall put them to you to know whether the supposition is allowable.

You may doubt *if on former occasions you have found God unfaithful to His promises*. If He has lied to you—if, after having said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” you have found, say on one occasion at least, that He has utterly failed you and forsaken you—then you are perfectly justified in doubting Him in the future and you were justified in doubting Him just now. What do you say to this supposition? I would not ask you to speak what is not true, even for God, Himself, for there is nothing

more detestable in God's sight than for us to attempt to honor Him by a lie. A pious fraud is a most impious blasphemy. No, speak the truth. Has the Lord been a wilderness or a land of darkness to you? Has He said and has He not done it? Can you put your finger upon a single promise and say, "I relied upon this and I found it failed me." He said that they that trusted in Him would never be ashamed nor confounded. Can you say that you did trust Him in some particular event and the failure you experienced made you to be ashamed? Brothers and Sisters, I know what you will say to that supposition. You are grieved almost to hear it made. You rise up with loving indignation and you say, "God is faithful and true! He has not gone back from His promise in any single instance." Then, Brothers and Sisters, I will put it very softly—and I have reasons for doing it very softly—"O you of little faith, if it is so, why did you doubt? If He helped you before, why did you doubt Him in the next trouble? If He fed the five thousand with the loaves and the fishes, why did you think that He could not also make you walk the waters of the sea?"

There is another supposition. You may doubt *if your case is a new one and so superlatively difficult that it is quite certain that God cannot help you in it*. You require something more than Omnipotence and the case is so perplexing that even Omniscience cannot see a way out of it! Now, as I make that supposition, my heart is laughing at the very absurdity of the terms I use, for if we say *Omni-potence*, that is all power. It is not possible that anything could be beyond that. And if we say *Omni-science*, that is all wisdom. It is not even imaginable that anything can surpass that! So I think I had better dismiss this supposition at once. Only it is sometimes put in Scripture by way of question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear." When you answer, "I know that God is able and I know that God is wise to help me," then I must whisper that question again, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

But I will suppose something else, that you may doubt *if God has abolished the promises*. Dear Brother, is it true that the Bible has run out and become like an old almanac that is done with—that God has spoken somewhere in the dark places of the earth and has said that the seed of Jacob may seek His face in vain and that He will not be held to His Covenant or bound to a single promise that He has made—that He has revoked them all? You are astonished that I should even utter such a supposition! Your soul rises indignantly to repel the imagination, for you say, "All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, amen, unto the Glory of God by us." You know and you are assured that He cannot change. He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever," and you are quite certain that He speaks the truth when He says, "My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that has gone out of My lips." "God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent." You are persuaded of all this, my dear Brothers and Sisters, are you not? Then all these promises being true and all confirmed with the sprinkled blood of Christ, I must have your ear yet again while I just whisper into it, "Why, then, did you doubt? Why did you doubt?"

There is only one more supposition and it is the worst of all. You may doubt *if God Himself has entirely changed*—a supposition which has been put by the Psalmist in other language, “Will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?” Now, do you believe for a single moment that God is changed in His love or in the objects of it? Do you think that He has cast away His people whom He did foreknow, that Christ will lose that which He bought with His precious blood? That He will strike off the precious stones of His breastplate the names which from eternity were written there? That He will forget the children of His choice when He said, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you”? And, again, “the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you”? And yet again, “I am God; I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed”? Do you not remember reading the words, “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end”? Well, Brothers and Sisters, since those things are so, I shall have to come back to my old question, and say, “O you of little faith, with an unchanged God to trust to, why did you doubt?”

Now, I cannot think of any other supposition that might make it justifiable to doubt, so now I am going to hear or I will repeat on your behalf—some of the answers to the question which, perhaps, you would give.

First, I hear one say, “I doubted because *my sinful life became unusually clear and distinct to me*. I hope I have been converted, have felt my need of Christ and have put my trust in Him. But I never had such a sight of myself as I had a little while ago. It seemed as if the fountains of the great deep were broken up. I saw that I had sinned foully and fallen far—my best actions I discovered to be polluted and the whole of my life to be marred through and through with an evil spirit and with everything that was contrary to the mind of God. When I saw sin like that, then it was that I doubted.” Yes, dear Brother, I know your feelings and such doubts as yours often—too often—come upon men. But did you not know, was it not told you from the beginning, that your sin was such that you were condemned in the sight of God and accursed by His Law? Did you not know that in spite of your sin, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” even the very chief? Did you not know God willed not the death of any sinner and that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”? Yes, you did know it and, therefore, I can only dismiss that excuse by saying that since you did know that with all your sin, the boundless Atonement was able to meet it—since you did know that with all your blackness, the fountain filled with blood had power to wash it out—“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

“Ah,” you say, “but it was not quite a sight of my past sin—it was because of my sinfulness by nature. I thought after I was converted that I

would not feel any sin within me, or that if I did know its presence by experience, that I would conquer it. Instead of that it has been a fight with me every day and only the other day, when I was exposed to temptation, I was carried right off my feet. When I got alone in my chamber and saw how badly I had acted, I looked into my heart and discovered it to be still full of all manner of evil. And though I hope there is some Grace within me, yet there is so much of the old nature that I know not what to do! That is why I doubt.” Yes, but, my dear Brother or Sister, whichever you may be, did you not know of old that the Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil in you and that where He has begun the good work He will carry it on? Did you not know that the Spirit of God is given to help our infirmities and that He sanctifies us and all the elect people of God—that from day to day He leads us to the fountain for sin and for uncleanness in order to be cleansed from sin and that He brings us the power to overcome sin? Did you not know that Christ is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His Presence with exceeding joy? Yes, you did know that and therefore that meets all difficulty—and I have to say to you again that the excuse will not hold water. “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

“Ah, Sir,” says one, *“you do not know everything. I doubted because I have been in a case such as never happened to anybody before.* I was in a dreadful trouble. O Sir, my trouble was so peculiar that I could not tell it to anybody and I would not have liked to have done so. Wave after wave swept over me. I could not see any way of escape from it at all. It was as extraordinary problem that I am sure that I must be *the* man that has seen affliction peculiarly marked out from all the rest.” Yes, dear Friend, that is very likely. I know a great many that have entertained the same opinion of themselves that you do of yourself—and I have even sometimes put myself down in the category, though you may not think so. But do not you know that it is said, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers Him out of them all”? Did you never read, “In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”? Did you never hear of Gad, of whom it is said that, “a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last”? Have you not read, “They shall surely gather together against you, but not by Me. Whoever shall gather together against you shall fall for your sake. No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” Did you not know that? If you did not, there was the Book which you might have searched to find the promise. And knowing all that, dear Friend, though your case may be peculiar, you should not have given place to doubt at all, for you have a unique Savior! His people are a peculiar people, but He is a peculiarly glorious Deliverer and Captain to them and He will bring all of them safely to the eternal Glory. Therefore, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

I can suppose another person answering on quite another score. He says, “Ah, Sir, I doubted in anticipation of the trouble *because I felt I could not bear the trial.* I felt that I should sink under it if it did happen.

O Sir, I had a fear upon me that if it did occur I should perish.” Yes, I too know that experience. How did it turn out? Did the dreaded ill occur? “No,” you say. Then why did you need to be crossing the bridge before you came to it? “Oh, but it did occur,” you say. Have you perished by it, then, Brother? “No,” you are compelled to answer. “I found such strange assistance given in the time of need and such singular succors just when I was in my deepest temptation. You know, Sir, I had looked for the trouble, but I never expected to find such friends as God raised up and such remarkable helps as He found for me.” Ah, I see, God has given you two eyes and you shut one of them! You had only looked at the dark side—you did not look at the bright side. “Oh, but,” perhaps you say, “I did not think there was any bright side.” No, I know you did not, but God knew that it was there! Has not He said to you of old, many times, “Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you”? That is to say whether there is a bright side to it or not, cast it on the Lord and it will be well with you! “He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” “Trust in the Lord and do good: so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” You may say, in confidence, “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up,” for He has said, “I will never fail you nor forsake you.” Well, you knew of this and so I come back to my question, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”

I could multiply these cases, but I ask each friend who has been doubting to state his own reason to his own heart—he will easily be able to find an answer.

Now, I want your ear just a minute or two in order to see how your doubts and fears look under certain aspects. “Why did you doubt?”

Look at your doubts in the light of your conversion. You remember when you first knew the Lord. You remember those happy days and weeks when you were first converted—it was the time of your spiritual honeymoon. Suppose, at those times, somebody had said to you, “You will doubt the Savior.” You would have said, “Never! Why, the wonders of God’s Grace to me in saving such a lost wretch as I am are so extraordinary that others may doubt, but I never shall.” Well, then, just look at these doubts in that light.

After that you had a severe trial, but now you have got out of the difficulty which troubled you, have you not? You have gained the shore again after your buffeting with the waves. Now I want you to *look at your doubts in the light of your deliverance.* The preacher need scarcely tell how disgusted he has been with himself when he has passed through a trial to think that he could not have left it in the hands of God—he began tinkering with the matter himself and made a failure of it because he tried to meet the need with his own wisdom which was nothing but perfect folly and ignorance! Do you not feel the same? Could not you set yourself up for a scarecrow and laugh at yourself? I am sure you could if the Lord has delivered you.

Once more. *How do you feel about your doubts when you get into Jesus Christ’s bosom*—when your head is where the head of John was and the Lord is looking at you and saying, “I have loved you with an everlasting

love”? Suppose the next thing He said was, “Why did you doubt?” Why, you would look at Him with tears in your eyes and say, “Dear Master, I pray You do not say anything about it, I am so ashamed of my doubt. Oh, let it be forgotten. I never had any cause to distrust You. I grieve to think that I should ever have got into a state where such doubts were possible.”

I will put you in another position. *How do you feel about your doubts when you try to teach other people?* Here is a dear, doubting Sister, or Brother and you are trying to comfort the downcast soul. Do you think about yourself when you needed comfort—when you were down in that very way? It is a dreadful thing for a man, when he is very sad and low-spirited, if some Christian Brother goes and cuts a bit out of the man’s own sermons and sends it to him. I have had that experience myself, sometimes, and, as I have read my own words, I have said, “What a fool I am!” That is wonderfully near the truth when you say it about yourself, Brother. I do not think we have ever hit the nail on the head much more clearly than when we say we are foolish and ignorant—for that is exactly what we are—only with a dash of sin with the folly when we begin to doubt the ever blessed God who ought to be trusted with very implicit confidence, even as a little child trusts to its mother’s love! Never ought a doubt to come into our hearts towards our Savior!

And *how do you think your doubts will look when you get to Heaven and look back at them?* Mrs. Hannah More tells us that she went into a carpet factory and when she looked at the carpet, she could not make out any design and she thought that there had been some mistake. There were long pieces that seemed to have no beauty in them whatever! But the manufacturer said, “Madam, I will take you round to the other side”—then she saw the beauty of the pattern that was being woven into the fabric! Well now, while you and I are here, we are full of doubts because we cannot make the pattern out. We are on the wrong side of the carpet! But when we get to Heaven and see all that God intended and worked for us, I think that even in Heaven we shall call ourselves fools and say, “How could I have judged before my time that splendid design of Providence which was hidden in the Infinite Wisdom and Love of God’s gracious heart? How could I have been dissatisfied with that which was working my lasting good?” Why, then, did you doubt?

Two or three words just to say that I think that I can give the reason why some Christians occasionally doubt. Perhaps their brain is weary. I pity them, but they must not pity themselves too much. Perhaps they have not been living near to God. Perhaps they were getting rather proud and thought that if they walked on the water they must be fine fellows. Perhaps they took their eyes off their Master. I reckon that was what Peter did. He began to look at the winds and the waves and, therefore, he could not be looking at Christ, too. Perhaps they began to walk by sight, instead of by faith—that is enough to make anybody sink! There must have been some cause or other, but, whatever cause it was, it is cause for sorrow, cause for regret, cause for repentance—for the Lord deserves to be implicitly trusted. In answer to His question, “Why did you doubt?”

we give this reply, "Good Lord, forgive Your servants in this thing and lead us in quietness and patience to possess our souls."

Thus much to the people of God.

II. Now LET US SLIGHTLY ALTER THE TEXT AND QUESTION THOSE THAT ARE NOT GOD'S PEOPLE. We will pause a minute and use the text in another tense. The Lord Jesus Christ has been into this world and done a great deal for sinners and, as the result of what He has done, He has bid us go and proclaim everywhere free salvation through His precious blood. He declares that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. Many know all about this. They are well acquainted with the truth of Substitution and the way in which God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly. But they are still full of doubts. They have not believed. Dear Friend, I think I can give you some good reasons for your doubting if I am allowed a little scope for imagination.

And I suppose, first of all, that *you have heard of a number of others that have been to Christ and have believed in Him and yet have perished*. If you have really known such persons, you are perfectly justified in not believing in Christ. You have a brother, I suppose, that trusted Christ and yet died in despair. You have a sister, perhaps, that put all her confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet was not saved. Now, I am absolutely certain that nothing of the kind has ever occurred. I am equally certain that beneath the cover of Heaven, during all time since Adam fell, there has never been a solitary instance of a soul sincerely seeking the mercy of God through Jesus Christ and putting its trust in Him and yet missing eternal salvation! So if you cannot have that reason, why do you continue to doubt?

I will suppose another reason, namely, that *you yourself have been to God with earnest prayer, seeking salvation and trusting in Jesus and yet you have been refused*. Now, I am sure that that is not so—absolutely sure! I remember the instance of a man who did not even believe in God or, at least, he *thought* he did not, but he was awakened to a sense of his danger and he went to God with some such prayer as this—"O God," he said, "if there is a God, convince me of Your Being. Lead me to Yourself, if it is that I have sinned against You and You are angry with me—and I fear it is so. And if You have sent Your Son to be an Atonement for sin, let me know the power of that Atonement." He said that that was all he dared to say at first—but he ended in solid faith and in a renewed heart and life! No matter how far off a man may be from God, if there is a hearty and earnest seeking after Him through Jesus Christ, he will find Him. You have not tried it—I am sure you have not tried it. If you had done so, you would have succeeded. Were it possible that a man had tried simple trust in Christ and were not saved, then, indeed, he might give a reason why he doubts. But you have no such reason.

I cannot think of any other except that you have been informed that the blood of Jesus Christ has lost its power. Have you been assured that the Gospel is abrogated? Have you been given to understand that the New Testament is a dead letter? Have you been persuaded that the gates

of Mercy are shut? Have you been led to believe that the invitations of Grace are no more to be given? “Oh, no,” you say, “our state were wretched, indeed, if that were the case.” Well, then, Brother, Sister, as long as there is blood in the fountain, why do you doubt its power to cleanse you? As long as there is good news for sinners, why do you write bitter things against yourself? As long as a promise stands and there is the invitation, “Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely,” why do you doubt? Surely, if these things are as the Bible declares—that the Lord is ready to have mercy upon the very chief of sinners who come and put their trust in Jesus Christ—you have no cause whatever to not come!

Well, now, I am inclined here to quit your reasons, as I cannot suppose any others that are not conspicuously false. But I can imagine that you suppose that *you have such great and special sins that you cannot think Christ can save you*. Now I undertake to say this from a very wide experience and observation of persons converted to God—that if you will mention any sin that you have committed, I will mention someone who fell into that same sin and who has been saved from it. If you mention the peculiar aggravations connected with your life, I think that even my own observation will enable me to mention some person who, if not exactly in that form, yet in some other equally bad, has gone as far into sin as you have done and yet has been saved, who, though guilty of unmentionable crimes, has yet been washed in the blood of the Lamb and made whiter than snow! O Beloved, we cannot be telling you always of what we know, but we do sometimes delight to think that there are cases in Holy Scripture which we may tell of as much as we like! There is cruel, savage Manasseh! There is blood-thirsty, threat-breathing Saul! There is the woman that was a sinner! And there is the dying thief that rejoiced to find cleansing in the wounds of Christ! And why should *you* not be forgiven? There is no cause for doubt!

“But my point,” says one, “is, Can this be for *me*?” *You believe the Gospel is true, but you doubt whether it is for you*. Well, no, it is not for you if you are not a sinner. If you can say, “I am not guilty,” then farewell to all hope, for Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners! If you are a sinner, surely He came to save such as you are! The blessings of the Gospel Covenant are directed to the lost. “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Can you not get in there? Perhaps you remember Mr. Whitfield’s speech to his brother who had long been in distress of mind, who said at last, across the table, “George, I am lost.” George said, “I am glad to hear it,” and answering his brother’s startled expression, he continued, “because the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” That brief utterance of the Gospel lifted his brother out of despair into a clear and abiding hope in Jesus Christ! Perhaps you have heard of Mr. Whitfield, again, in the Countess of Huntingdon’s house when some great lord complained to her ladyship that Mr. Whitfield had used most extraordinary language in his last sermon—most repulsive to men of taste. Mr. Whitfield said he was there to answer for himself and he asked what the expression was that he had used. “Why,” said the nobleman, “you said that Jesus Christ was willing to receive the devil’s castaways.” “Yes,” he said, “I did say that, and I

mean to say it again. Did Your Ladyship observe that I was called out of the room a few minutes ago because the bell rang?" "Yes," said the Countess. "And when I went to the door," continued Mr. Whitfield, "a poor creature stood there who had been living in a state of sin and had come to such a condition that even those that associated with her before were unwilling to come near her. She had become unfit even for the lowest work to which the devil, himself, could put her—and she found all her old companions had cast her away. She heard me preach in Tottenham Court and use that expression. It exactly fitted her case. She felt that she was one of the castaways of the devil, himself, and so she sought to tell of pardoning Grace and dying love."

You see, then, that Christ can save to the uttermost! Ah, it is so. It is so! If you have gone far into sin, weep over it. Confess it before God with deep repentance, but come to Jesus Christ just as you are and, whoever you may be, there is no room for doubting! The door of the Ark was a big door. There was room for the hare to go through who went in quickly. And room for the snail to go through with his slow pace. But there was plenty of room for the elephant when he came marching along—there was a chamber on purpose for him and fodder on purpose for him. And so, you elephantine sinners, there is a door big enough for you to come into the house of Mercy! There is provision made and a place for you—and without you, the company will not be complete within the Ark of Saving Grace.

May God bless that open declaration of the Gospel to some poor devil's castaway who has got into a corner of the tabernacle tonight! May such be able to find hope in my Master, Jesus Christ.

Well, now, I think I hear another say, "But I have a cause for doubt which has not yet been mentioned." I think I can guess it. *You doubt because you have so many times refused Christ that you say you cannot expect Him to receive you now.* That is the reason, is it not? "I have gone into great sin, Sir," you say, or, "I have been trying to save myself by my self-righteousness and my good works. And I cannot expect Him to receive me now." You think Christ is like the sons of men such as you have known. Once a man went to a stable keeper and asked him what would be the price of a horse and gig for the day. "So much," he answered. The enquirer went round the town to see if he could not get one cheaper and when he found that he could not make a better bargain, he came back and said that he would have the one which he had asked for at the first. "No," said the owner, "you will not. You have been going everywhere else and now you may go where you have been. I do not want your business."

You fancy that Jesus Christ is like that, do you? You have been round to Moses and asked him the expense and you find that you cannot meet the claims of the Law. And you have been round to the pope and asked him the price and you find that ceremonies do not satisfy you. You have tried the Oxford way to Heaven and tried the Roman way to Heaven, but they do not suit you. You cannot get there by them and now you think you dare not come to Christ because you have so long neglected Him.

But you may—He is willing to have you at any price! No, he is willing to have you at *no* price and if you will come at no price, come without money and without price He is still willing and able to receive you, for the Gospel peals out yet these clarion notes, “Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Come and welcome! Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely!” O you who doubt Christ, why do you doubt?

Now I will say no more but this. The way to deal with this state of mind of everlasting doubt and hesitation is to end it—to end it once and for all! Repent, dear Hearer, and may the Spirit of God help you to do so now! Repent of ever having disbelieved the Son of God. Repent of ever having distrusted the blood of Jesus Christ. Repent of ever having doubted the power of the Omnipotent Spirit of God!

I know not to whom this Word will come with power, but, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I command you to leave off doubting Him and to begin to believe in Him at once! Cease your doubts without a moment’s deliberation! You believe Christ Jesus to be God. I know you do. You believe what the Scripture says concerning Him—that He is a Savior able to save. Man, by the living God I charge you not to perpetrate such an insult to Christ as to go on doubting Him! You have the burden of all your sin, but He is a Savior! Trust Him with it, trust Him now! “No,” you say, “I will get home and pray.” Do not wait for that! I wish you to pray when you get home as much as ever you like, but, first of all, believe in Jesus Christ! Trust Him on the spot. “Oh,” says one, “it will be a venture.” Venture, then, Friend—venture! “May I pass in by the gate of mercy?” asks another. Pass through it, whether you may or not, for there never was a soul sent back for coming to Christ by mistake! Never was heard of such a thing as a soul attempting to pass in by the portal of faith and Jesus Christ saying, “Ho, there! What are you doing? You have no right to trust Me. You are not one of My elect. You must go back and you must not dare to trust Me. You are not the kind of man I want.” There was never such a case known and there never will be such a case, for Christ’s own words are, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” That is any, “him,” in all the world that comes to Christ, He never will, He never can cast him or her out! I would make a dash for it, Sinner, if I were you! Sink or swim, neck or nothing, here it is. “I do believe—I must believe—in Jesus Christ and if I perish, I shall still be clinging to His Cross.” You will never perish there! May the Lord of Covenant Mercy draw you to this tonight, or drive you to it. I care not which—so long as you get to it and Christ becomes All-in-All to your souls! Let us pray for that.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 14:14-33.**

Verse 14. *And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and He healed their sick.* Different persons take different views of multitudes according to the state of their minds. Many an officer, when he sees a multitude, considers how long it would take to march them from a certain place. Another man begins

calculating how much food they will all need. Another begins to estimate their wealth, another to calculate what per cent will die in the year. But the Lord Jesus Christ's heart was so full of pity and mercy that the thing for Him to do as He looked upon them was to have compassion upon them. He healed their sick and helped them in their sorrows.

15. *And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves food.* This really meant "Get us out of the difficulty." There was no hope that so many of them could get food in the villages and the disciples as good as said, "We cannot bear to see them starving. Help us to forget it."

16. *But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; you give them to eat.* "You do not know what you can do, seeing I am with you," the Lord answered. "You can feed them all." O Christian Church, never give up the most difficult problem! It may be worked out. The city may be evangelized, crowded as it is! The nations may be brought to Christ, superstitious though they are, for He is with us!

17, 18. *And they said unto Him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. He said, Bring them here to Me.* He will not work without us. Whatever little gift or ability we have must be consecrated. Christ could easily have made loaves and fishes without taking their little stock, but that is not His way of working. "Bring what you have here to Me." Whenever we have a Church that brings all its store to Christ—(when shall we ever see such a Church?)—then He will be pleased to make enough for the multitude!

19-21. *And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass and took the five loaves, and the two fishes and looking up to Heaven, He blessed, and broke it, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.* A wonderful evening that must have been! Just as the sun's slanting rays would fall upon the mighty mass of people, Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, was scattering His beams of mercy over them at the same time! To Him it is nothing to feed five thousand—nothing to do it with five loaves! Where He is present, we may expect wonders, unless, indeed, our unbelief should hamper Him, for sometimes it is too sadly true He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief. O my Soul, chide yourself if you have ever thus hampered the hands of Christ!

22, 23. *And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a boat and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain by Himself to pray.* It was a very busy day that He had had. If you read the narrative for yourself, you will be astonished at the number of miracles which He worked that day—and all of them in addition to the preaching—so he must have been well worn with weariness, but He sought rather, the rest and refreshment of prayer than that of sleep.

23, 24. *And when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the boat was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.* It did not matter, however. For if His disciples are in a storm, so long as Christ is praying for them, all the storms in the world are unable to sink them! They had a good Protector. From the outlook of that hill, His eyes, which could see through the distance, observed and regulated every breath of wind and every wave upon the lake.

25, 26. *And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit! "A phantom!"* Having all the superstition so natural to sailors, they thought that this was something quite supernatural and boded ill to them.

26-28. *And they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, Be of good cheer it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water.* Strange impulse! It showed genuine faith mixed with that imperfection and presumption which was so common a feature in Peter's character. However, his Master admired the confidence.

29, 30. *And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the boat, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!* When he began to be afraid he began to sink. As long as his confidence in his Master lasted, he could walk the waves.

31-33. *And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they were come into the boat, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, of a truth You are the Son of God.* Well might they worship, for they had seen abundant proof of His Deity. They worshipped Him, saying, "of a truth You are the Son of God." They could not have meant by this, "You are a superior person, an excellent character." They would not, if they were Jews, have worshipped a mere man, for of all things you ever saw in this life, you never saw a Jew that would worship any form that was visible to the eye! The captivity of Babylon delivered the Hebrew race from idolatry altogether. They may fall into superstition of another sort, but never into idolatry. Mark that. There has not been since that time a man of Jewish race who would have worshipped Christ if he had not believed Him to be God.

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

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UNREASONABLE REASONS NO. 3247

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 1904.

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

***“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”
Matthew 14:31.***

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text are #246, Volume 5—MR. FEARING COM-FORTED; #1856, Volume 31—THE HISTORY OF LITTLE-FAITH and #2925, Volume 51—REASONS FOR DOUBTING CHRIST—Read/download all three sermons free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

OUR Savior did not ask Peter that question for His own information. He could have told Peter much more about his unbelieving heart than Peter knew! The Savior was well acquainted with those springs from which the unbelief of Peter arose. He asked it, therefore, rather that Peter might make the enquiry of himself—that he might look into the matter and see how groundless his unbelief was—so that on the next occasion he might not fall into the same error. I believe it is sometimes a very great cure for unbelief to look it in the face even while we are under it—and after we have escaped from it, it is still a preventive for the future if we look back upon it and reason concerning it. Remember how David, in the 42nd Psalm, twice asked himself, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” He was persuaded that the questioning of his unbelief would convict him of its folly. It only needs to be looked at closely to lose all its terror, to be robbed of its seeming foundation and to be overcome!

I am afraid that most of us have, some time or other in our lives, been like sinking Peter and have cried, “Lord, save me,” not in tones of faith, but in the language of unbelief. And if so, it will be as good a thing for us as for Peter to hear the Master say to us, tonight, “Why did you doubt? Why did you doubt? Was there any good reason for it? Was there any excuse for it? Did any good come of it? Why did you doubt?” And I hope, too, that after I have spoken to Believers in that way, I may have a word for sinners—only for them I shall have to take liberties with the text and alter it into the present tense, saying to anyone who is desirous of peace in Christ, but who trembles and is afraid, “Why *do* you doubt? Why *do* you doubt? Why *do* you continue in this state of hesitancy and unbelief?”

I. First, then, I have to say TO THE CHILD OF GOD, “*Why did you doubt?*”

Some Christians appear to go from one form of doubt to another. Fears are with them perennial. They are plants that affect the shade—they seldom open their golden cups to drink in the blessed Light of the Divine sun! Even the strongest Believers are, I fear, at times overcome with this disease. As King David, that matchless warrior, once waxed faint—the bravest servants of God sometimes faint even in the day of battle—I will ask them, each one, to look back upon any seasons of doubts or faintings, whether they are numerous or few, and I will then say to each one, “Why did you doubt?”

Did you doubt the promise thinking it was not firm enough? It was a promise to meet your trial—did you distrust it? It was the promise of God—did you think, perhaps, that it was fallible and might be broken? It was a promise sent to you by Inspired Apostles or Prophets, as the case might be—did you still think it was no better than the word of a man and might fall to the ground? You have often placed great reliance upon the promises of those you love—could you not rely upon the promise of God? You have found man’s promise sometimes true when you have trusted it—were you afraid that God’s promise would not be true? Or was it that you had met with so many disappointments trusting in an arm of flesh that you thought the Lord to be altogether such as man is? Did you think that He was a man that He would lie, or the son of man that He would change His mind? Did you forget that Jesus Christ made the promises, Yes and Amen, in Himself to the Glory of God? Was that the reason? If so, how wicked it was to doubt the promise of God! How could you do it?

Did your unbelief assail the promise in itself? Did you think your deliverance a matter of such difficulty that Omnipotence could not accomplish it? Were you in such need that you supposed the stores of Heaven could not supply you? Were you of their mind who said, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” Or of his who exclaimed, “If the Lord would make windows in Heaven, might this thing be?” Did you conceive that anything was too hard for the Lord? That His arm was shortened, that He could not save, that His granaries were empty, that He could not feed you? Did you think that the river of God, which is full of water, was dried up? Did you conceive that the foundations wherein you dwelt were no longer of rock, but of crumbling sand? That your bread would not be given you and that your water would not be sure because God had failed? Beloved, if that thought lay at the bottom of your unbelief, was it not a baseless thing, indeed? What a slander upon God and upon God’s almightiness, to think that He had promised what He could not perform! Whether it was His truthfulness or His power which your unbelief attacked, it was equally a wanton and an unpardonable thing! God will pardon it, I know, but I mean that it was unpardonable to yourself, for surely you must now feel as if you could not forgive yourself for having doubted either the power or the truthfulness of your God!

Where else did the unbelief lie? *Had you something in your own experience which troubled you?* Was there something which you remembered in the past of failure on God's part? I will ask you—though I do not want you to answer to anyone but just to whisper the answer to yourself—Had there been a cause in some dark hour? Had He forsaken you? Had He proved as Ahithophel? Though you had eaten with Him, did He lift up His heel against you? Did He turn a deaf ear to you when you sought Him in the hour of peril? Had He then been false after all? Was there something dark and mysterious to others, which to yourself was made plain by the belief that the Lord had deceived you, that He had utterly failed and changed? Was it so? You repudiate with horror the thought! Then, Beloved, “Why did, you doubt?” Since you already deny that the promise made you doubt, or that the Promiser was One whom you had cause to doubt—since you also must now confess that there was nothing in your experience that could have caused you to doubt because the past had all been a proof of the faithfulness of God, then—“Why did the doubt?”

The child that has always been fed by its father, to whom the father has always been kind, loving and tender, who then doubts without any sort of reason, is surely to be blamed. Dear child, what is wrong with you? Here is a beloved wife, we will say, and for many years she has been the joy of her husband. He has done all for her comfort that she could desire—yes, and often before she has expressed her desire! He has anticipated her needs and made her life very happy in her confidence in him. And now is she going to doubt him? “No,” she says, “I would not do him that injustice. In all my life with him I have had no reason to distrust him. Therefore I cannot wantonly throw away my confidence.” Well, child of God, there was never husband so tender to His spouse as your God has been to you! There was never one on earth, in any relationship, that has proved His faithfulness to another as your Lord, your Bridegroom, has proved His faithfulness to you! If you will never doubt till you have cause to doubt Him, doubting will never trouble your spirit. But you have doubted Him and the question comes cuttingly to you, under such an aspect, “Why did you doubt?”

Was there something about the experience of others that led you into doubt and fear? We will imagine that you met with some older person—someone who had long been a pilgrim on the road to Heaven—who took you aside and holding you as the ancient mariner detained the wedding guest, said to you—“It is a fiction that God is true and you are a dupe if you trust Him, for I have gone on a pilgrimage, and though it was fair setting out, I found it foul along the road. And the promises I relied upon failed me. I came to them as wells in the desert, and found them dry. I looked up to them feeling that they were as sure as the sunshine, but they did not warm me. God had forgotten to be gracious and in His anger He had shut up the heart of His compassion.” Have you met with such a

being? I have seen many of God's people—my experience and observation have been rather wide—but I have never met with one who has come to me to make an *expose* of his God and say, "I have been deceived by Him."

We have seen some of them on their dying beds. Now dying men sometimes let out tales, and tell truths unthought of before. They are not able to keep secrets then. I think I have known some of them, honest men, who at such times, close upon the borders of eternity, could not have lied—they were not accustomed to do so at other times, but then I am sure the truth would have been imperative upon them had it not been so before—and they have declared that not one good thing had failed of all that the Lord God had promised. Their declaration was that they had found Him faithful and true. In six troubles He had been with them, and in seven He had not forsaken them. Well, then, "Why did you doubt?" If there has been no story told you by another, and no information from those who have gone further on the road than you have, which would lead you to distrust your God, why, oh, why, without any reason or cause whatever, "Why did you doubt?"

Did you doubt because you thought the Covenant was an unworthy thing? You know it is "ordered in all things, and sure." You have learned from God's Word that it stands fast like the great mountains and abides like the eternal hills. You are not of these who think that God has entered into Covenant with His dear Son and yet will run back from it. You do not suspect that a Covenant which has been ratified as the Covenant of Grace has been, will ever come to an end. I am sure you do not! Why, then, did you doubt when there is a Covenant, a Divine Covenant, always standing?

Have you forgotten that the Covenant was sealed with an oath? God swore and because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself! Will you look the fact in the face, that to doubt one promise in the Covenant amounts to an accusation of perjury against the Most High? I tremble to think that such guilt may have lain upon my own soul and I desire to be cleansed from this high crime and misdemeanor of doubting my God. For who can imagine that God can lie when He swears that after having lifted His hand to Heaven, and sworn by Himself, He can possibly draw back from a single Word which that oath confirms?

Then, to make assurance doubly sure, there comes in, over and above the oath, the blood! The blood of victims always ratified the Covenant—and the blood of Jesus Christ has ratified the Covenant of Grace. What? Can you not trust the bleeding Son of God? His blood is on the promise and can that promise be a slighted thing, never to be redeemed by a God of Grace? Has He given it and will He make it to become a dead letter and allow His enemies to throw it in His teeth and say, "He spoke, but He did not fulfill! He promised, but He did not perform!"? Rather let us say—

***"The Gospel bears my spirit up,
A faithful and unchanging God***

***Lays the foundation for my hope
In oaths, in promises, and blood.***

“Why did you doubt?” In the sight of the Eternal Covenant, “Why did you doubt?” In the Presence of the Incarnate Son of God bleeding on the Cross to make every promise sure, “Why did you doubt?”

Let me ask you another question. Do you remember that dear hour when Jesus first revealed Himself to you? He led you into the wilderness and there He spoke to your heart and in a *moment* blotted out your sins like a cloud! Then your love to Him was very warm. You went after Him into to wilderness, forsaking all for His dear sake. In the memory of that early love when He was near to you, how can you doubt Him? Since that time He has helped you in all difficulties, borne you up in all dangers and has carried you all the days of old, so why did you doubt Him? You have laid your head upon His bosom, you have broken bread with Him and dipped in the same dish with Him—and you have been as dear to Him as the ewe lamb in Nathan’s parable was to its owner—you have been His darling! You have had chaste fellowship with Him. You have been admitted into the secret place of the Most High. There were times when you could tell others what a dear Savior and a blessed Lord He had been to you. Yes, there were “high days as holidays” to you, when your heart did dance at the sound of His name! Why did you doubt Him? What has He done, or what have you found out about Him that has led you into this state of heart? What has He done, or what have you heard of Him that could have brought you into such a condition that you should doubt the Lord your God?

Now I will suppose some of the answers that might be given to this question of Christ. I hear one say, “*I doubted because I was in peculiar circumstances.*” I hardly think anybody ever was in a condition similar to mine. I felt as if I was made peculiarly the target for the arrows of the Most High. I felt that I was the man that above all others had seen affliction.” Well, but do you think that these things were peculiar to *God*? Remember He had promised that He would deliver you and bring you through! He had said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Did that promise say, “except in a peculiar case”? Is there a caveat put at the end of such gracious words? “There may, however, arise some conditions in which this promise will not stand,” you say. You know it is not so! That promise, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” has five negatives in it in the original text, sweeping away altogether all supposition that He could fail you! How could you say, “Mine was a peculiar case”? Peculiar as it is, Christ has suffered it—

***“In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows had a part.”***

You have not gone where Jesus has not gone! No, the way in which you have gone was first trodden by Him. In all your afflictions He was af-

flicted and, therefore we say to you, “Why did you doubt?” Your trial was peculiar to you, but not to Him!

“Oh, but,” says another, “*I doubted because the difficulty was a new one.* It was so strong! I never before felt such perplexity. I never before experienced such a sensation of dismay!” But then your difficulty was not new to God. Had something happened to you which God had not foreseen? Did you suppose you were in a condition in which God never intended you to be and did not foreknow that you would be? Had you then outstripped His Providence and outrun His love? Have you forgotten how the Psalmist puts it? “If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.” Why, the Lord knew all about your case of old and provided for it! Then, “Why did you doubt?”

“Oh, but,” says one, “*my case was so terribly trying*—it consisted of a *series* of troubles—it involved such dire calamities and dangers.” Still, what reason was there for doubt about that? Have you not heard that God’s way is in the whirlwind, that His path is in the sea and that the clouds are the dust of His feet? If your way is through the desert, did not He lead His people through a great wilderness, wherein there were fiery serpents and terrible drought? Did He not guard them in their desert march? Were you in such a perplexing condition that you were worse off than the children of Israel in the Red Sea or by the brooks of Arnon? Yet the Lord helped them, so why should He not help you? Surely your circumstances must have been a small matter with Him who speaks and it is done—who wills and it is finished!

“Ah, but I *labor under such a sense of personal weakness.*” Just so, dear Brother, but is that a novelty? Did you not know at the beginning that you were weakness, itself, but that the Eternal God faints not, neither is weary? If you had cause to suspect Him of weakness, then there would be a reason for doubting Him—but to find out that *you* were weak was stale news, indeed, for you are weak as water and were always so! Did the Covenant run thus—that you were to fight the battle alone at your own charges and carry yourself to Heaven? Was it not stated in another place that God, Jehovah-Jireh, would preserve His people to the end? “Why did you doubt?” For a man to say, “I doubted because I was weak,” is simply to give an unreasonable reason for perpetually doubting! If I doubt you, my Brother, because of something in myself, that is an absurd thing to do! I can only reasonably doubt you because of some failure in *you!* If I doubt because of some weakness in myself, I put the saddle on the wrong horse! I may be led to doubt and despair about myself—that is right enough, it is clear and logical—but to doubt God because I am weak is fantastic and ridiculous! Oh, be rid of that, I pray you!

“But my doubt,” says one, “arose from another reason. *I lost so many friends, one after another.* They died or they deserted me.” Well, was your faith dependent upon your friends? If so, it is little marvel that your faith failed you! Have you learned that wonderful 62nd Psalm which we call the “only” Psalm because it has the word, “only,” so many times, beginning with it, indeed, though our translation has it, “*Truly* my soul waits upon God”? You know how David there says, “My Soul, wait you *only* upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” If you built your hope on God, alone, and He was the one pillar of your confidence, what if God’s Providence knocked away all those useless buttresses of yours—it could make no difference to the real strength of your faith! If a man trusts in God *and* his friends, he has no secure trust. He is like one that has one foot upon the rock and another on the quicksand. Betwixt two stools, we know what comes, even though the two stools are good ones. To trust in God and to trust in friends is poor trusting! O Beloved, if our faith was what it should be, it would lean only upon the Lord, so that if we had none left to comfort us, we would still be able to say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” There is no reason to doubt God because friends fail us.

“Still I must say,” adds another, “that *I was so tossed to and fro that I could not see my way.*” Oh, that was the reason, was it? I heard it said, the other day, when I needed to know a man’s character and asked whether I could trust him, “Yes, you can trust him as far as you can see him”—and I knew what was meant by that! But is that what you mean about your *God*—that you can trust Him only as far as you can see Him? Oh, shame! Shame! Shame! And yet I am afraid that the rebuke might come home to many of us. We need to see how He will deliver us before we rely upon Him. Now, of all the questions that ought to be banished from the lips of a reasonable man, that should be silenced the soonest when we have to deal with an Almighty God! What have I to do with *how* God will deliver? He will do it somehow and that is enough for me! He will do it in the best manner. He will do it in the wisest manner. He will do it in the manner that will bring the most Glory to His name and, in the end, most profit to His people! Therefore, let us be content to know that it will be so and not ask, “How?” and begin to doubt the Eternal God! “Why did you doubt?”

I will put it in this way, Beloved. *Did any of you ever get any good through doubting?* Did you ever prosper because of it? Did doubt ever calm a sorrow? Did it ever allay a fear? Did that handkerchief ever wipe tears from your eyes? Did you ever find your distrust a staff to lean upon? Did your doubts improve your circumstances? When you have had suspicions of your God, have they ever filled your purse or put bread upon your table? If the rain were about to spoil your crops, did your doubts and fears bring fine weather? If the skies were unpropitious and

you needed rain, did your distrust ever make the clouds burst with showers? Oh, you cannot say that it was ever so!

I will put it another way—*Did your doubts ever glorify God?* Did you ever influence a sinner in the right way by distrusting God? Did you ever bring to Jesus Christ the slightest honor by pouring suspicion on His love? Has it not been all the other way? Do you not think that you often grieve the Holy Spirit by doubting? Do you not think it very likely that Christ has taken it hard that His Beloved should doubt Him? I do not know anything that would cut me to the quick more than to be suspected and not believed by those I love! We may go outside into the market and make a statement—and if strangers are suspicious, we are not surprised—but within the boundary of our own house, if our child or our wife should not be able to trust us, that would be the end to all the joys of the family!

Oh, how Christ's heart must be pierced when those He died for doubt Him! When those He has helped and succored, blessed and caressed, made to sit under His shadow and eat of His fruit, yet, in the day of trial look somewhere else for help—run to broken cisterns that hold no water, and will not come to Him, the Fountain of Living Waters! This is what, in the Old Testament, He calls playing the harlot! And though the term is harsh, yet since it is so constantly used in Scripture, I cannot help referring to it. He calls this sin a lack of spiritual chastity to Himself. It is a departure into a mental adultery when the soul goes gadding abroad to this and that person or thing for comfort—instead of keeping to her Lord. Drink waters out of your own cistern and let your soul be always ravished with His love! Let Him be as the loving hind and as the pleasant roe to you! Do not go after other lovers, for if you do, they will be a mockery to you and drive you back one day with bitter taunts! You will be compelled, at length, to say, "I will go and return unto my first Husband, for then it was better with me than now." Beloved, Jesus deserves our trust—let us give it to Him!

Our doubts and fears have often prevented Him showing us more of Himself. He has said, "I have told you of these earthly things that are in My Kingdom and you believe Me not. How shall you believe Me if I tell you of heavenly things?" Our dear Lord has many things to say to us, but we cannot bear them yet because we are so unbelieving. But if we had more faith and rested like little children upon Him, He would tell us more and show us more! We might have been a long way further on the road if we had not been hindered by unbelief. Of how many places might it not be said, "He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief?" Unbelief seems to hamper Omnipotence, to tie the hands of the Almighty! We do not know what losers we have been by our unbelief. God grant, then, that as we turn this question over, it may breed repentance in our spirits! And as we find how impossible it is to answer it, we may go

and say, "Lord, we have no excuse to make. Only give us more of Your Spirit. We believe; help You our unbelief."

II. Now a few minutes may be spent in speaking, secondly, TO THOSE WHO DESIRE TO BELIEVE IN JESUS, BUT FEEL THAT THEY CANNOT. To such, as I have already said, the question must be slightly altered. I will ask each one of them, "Why do you doubt?"

There once come into this place a young man who is now a minister of the Gospel. And he has told us how he became converted to God. He sat over in the gallery yonder, in great distress of mind because he could not feel his sins enough. On that particular occasion I said, "There is over in the gallery yonder a young man who feels that he is too great a sinner to be saved, therefore he does not believe in Jesus." "Ah," my Friend said, "I thought to myself, 'I wish I was like that young man, I would like to feel the greatness of my sin.'" But then in my sermon I went on to say, "There is another young man in that gallery who would give his eyes to feel as the other one feels. They are a pair of fools," I said—"the one for believing that he is too great a sinner for an Omnipotent Savior to forgive—and the other for imagining that Christ needs his strength of feeling to fit him for salvation, as if Jesus could not save him just as he is."

If one is saying, "*I cannot be saved because of the greatness of my sins,*" you call God a liar, for Jesus said, "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." And there is that grand text, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse us from all sin." "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him," and He is able to save them now. There is no reason for your doubting, for every sin that it is possible for you to commit, it is possible for Christ to forgive!

But the other says, "My trouble is not that I feel I am a great sinner, but that *I do not feel that I am a great sinner.*" The nation has been entertained by some that there is a certain amount of *feeling* required before we are fit for Christ, and a good deal of preaching has gone to show that the sinner is to fit himself for Christ. I have read descriptions of the sinner's fitness that really were true enough about those who were saved, but were most discouraging and unGospel-like if they had reference to them who were not saved! Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost. If you are lost, He has come to save you! It is not merely those who *feel* that they are lost—there are special promises for them—but those who are so lost that they do not even feel it! He even comes to give a sense of being lost to those who have no sense of it. And mark you, if Jesus waited till sinners of themselves felt their need of Him, He would never save one! It is as much His work to make us *feel* our need as it is to *supply* our need! Hart has well put it—

***"True belief and true repentance
Every Grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ, and buy."***

If you cannot come *with* a broken heart, come *for* a broken heart! If you are all bad and there is no good about you, not even a good feeling, yet still the Gospel says to you, and to every creature under Heaven, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” “Still I must feel,” says one. Yes, you *will* feel, and feel as you never felt before if you listen to this message. “Incline your ear, and come unto Me. Hear, and your soul shall live.” Believe in the crucified Savior! Trust yourself with Him, for there is no salvation in any other! Salvation is not in *your feelings*, but in *His work*! Salvation is not in looking at the bites of the serpent, but in looking at the bronze serpent on the pole! Salvation is not in studying your leprosy, but in looking to the great High Priest who puts His hand on you and says, “I will, be you clean.” Salvation is not in poring over your blindness, but in lifting up your face to Him who puts His finger on your sightless eyeballs and says, “See, for I have given you sight.” Salvation is not in trying to untwist the grave clothes, but in obeying that glorious Voice that says, “Lazarus, come forth,” even to one who has already lain three days in his grave! It is not *you* that are to do the saving—it is Christ who is the Savior!

If you have any reason for doubting Christ, then doubt Him. But how can you doubt Him? Is He not able to save? He is the Son of God! Do you believe this? Did He not die, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God”? Do you doubt the efficacy of His death? Can you stand at the foot of the Cross and hear Him cry, “It is finished,” and then say, “That is not enough for me”? Do you think that to be incomplete which He says is finished? And when He has entered into His Father’s Glory and sat down because He has forever completed the work of Atonement, would you bother Him? Would you take Him away from His rest and say, “You have not finished the work—it is still incomplete”? Oh, say not so! If you should entertain such a thought, your unbelief would be reckless, indeed!

To me, (I speak it as in the Lord’s sight), it seems this day as if I *must* trust Jesus and as if, racking my brain, *I cannot think of a reason for doubting the Son of God.* Yet was I once as plentiful in doubts and fears as you are, poor Sinner! I quibbled with Him about this and I quibbled with Him about that! And all the answer He gave me was to show me Himself and to say, “Look unto Me, and be you saved all the ends of the earth.” I needed some ceremony, or some dream, or some strange feeling, or some revelation—I knew not what I needed—but this I know, that I stood quibbling and quibbling, still, till I doubt not I should have quibbled myself into Hell if at last I had not felt too wretched to continue in such a miserable business—and by His Grace, I just allowed myself to faint away into the arms of the Savior and to wake up saved! I gave up my quibbles. I gave up my good works, such as they were, wretched things! I gave up reliance upon feelings and reliance on prayer—and

came to rely only upon Him. And now, at this day, if He cannot save a poor sinner who trusts in Him, alone, I shall be damned! And if there is anything needed to save a soul except the precious blood and perfect righteousness of Jesus, I must be lost! Sinner, you have as much to trust in as I have, for I have not anything! I have not the weight of a grain of dust of merit of my own! I have not a rag! I have not a thread left of anything I can rely upon, except that dear Lord whom God has set forth to be “the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” Why then do you doubt?

Are God’s Words, after all, false? Does He say, “Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,” and does He mean to shut the door in your face when you do come? Does He say, “Whoever will, let Him take the water of life freely,” and when you come, will He say to you, “I refuse you—I did not mean you”? Do you think that God’s invitations are, after all, a hideous mockery at the woes of men? It cannot be! When He says, by the mouth of His servants, “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,” is it true or not? When He says, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved,” is it true or not? When He says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon,” is it true or not? If it is true, Why do you doubt? Will you make God a liar? You will do so if you do not trust His promises!

Once more, O Sinner, to what end and purpose did Jesus come into the world to bleed and die if, after all, there is no forgiveness for sinners, and if those that seek His face will be rejected? When men make a mockery of others, they do not often do it at vast expense. Do you think God has hung His Son upon the tree for mockery? That He has pierced Him with death-smarts—and all to laugh at sinners? “Ah, but I am such a great sinner.” And do you think that Christ came into the world to be a little Savior to little sinners? Is He a physician that can only heal cut fingers? Do you think that? He is the Son of God and sin seems to vanish in His august Presence! When I look at the needs of this city of London and see how many people there are, I am ready to ask, “How shall they all be fed? Where shall there be flocks and herds to supply them?” But if I go to the great markets in the early morning and see the meat and other food there, I change my mind and enquire, “Wherever can there be people enough to eat all these provisions?” So, when I look at a sinner’s sin, I say, “How can this ever be washed away?” But when I look at the Savior’s blood, I seem to say, “Sin is readily enough put away in such a fountain as this!” I change my tone and whereas I thought sin too great to be atoned for, I come to think the Atonement almost too great for human sin, if such might be! I cannot conceive it possible that God will find any

difficulty in forgiving sin after such an Atonement has been made! “Why do you doubt?”

Now I will give you two great reasons for doubting and then I have done.

The first time I can recommend any sinner to doubt the Savior is when he finds a fellow sinner who has been to Jesus, has rested in Him—and yet has perished. Now, set out upon this journey. Ask all God’s people, one by one, and see if God has rejected them. Look at those you knew who were like yourself—perhaps they were drunks, perhaps they were swearers. Now that they have sought the Lord, see whether He has refused them. When you find that He has rejected one, then you will have reason to think that He will reject you! Then you may reasonably doubt.

The other reason is this. Try Him, yourself, and if He rejects you, then you shall have cause for doubting. Go and throw yourself at His door of mercy with this upon your heart, “I will perish here if I must perish.” Go to His Cross and look up, and say, “Savior, Redeemer, Son of God, bleeding and dying—a guilty soul comes here and trusts itself with You.” See if He will spurn you! See if you are not saved! I challenge the whole earth! I challenge all Hell to find a single soul of woman born that ever came and humbly rested on the blood and righteousness of Christ and yet was lost! Such a thing has never been and never shall be while the earth abides!

O poor Soul, then come away—come away to the Savior! I will go with you, for I love to go again and again and again, and be a beggar again at my Lord’s door! Come, let us say together, “Jesus, we have guilt. We have no merit. We have no claim upon You. We deserve to be cast into the lowest Hell. But by Your blood, by Your righteousness, have mercy upon us and save us *now*. We desire to give up all our sins, to leave them behind us and to be obedient to all Your bidding. Save us, dear Savior, save us! Purge us with hyssop and we shall be clean! Wash us and we shall be whiter than snow.”

If that prayer comes from any heart here, the Lord will answer it, indeed! May He bless you! Amen.

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

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

LITTLE FAITH AND GREAT FAITH

NO. 2173

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 16, 1890.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOV. 2, 1890.

*“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”
Matthew 14:31.*

*“O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will.”
Matthew 15:28.*

BETWEEN the very lowest degree of faith and a state of unbelief there is a great gulf. An immeasurable abyss yawns between the man who has even the smallest faith in Christ and the man who has none. One is a living man, though feeble, the other is “dead in trespasses and sins”—the one is a justified man, the other is “condemned already—because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” The weakest Believer is on the road to Heaven. The other, having no faith, is going the downward road and he will find his portion at last among the unbelievers—a terrible portion, indeed!

Although we thus speak of Believers as all of one company, yet there is a great distance between weak faith and strong faith. Thank God it is a distance upon the one safe road—the King’s highway. No gulf divides Little Faith from Great Faith—on the contrary, Little Faith has only to travel along the royal road and he shall overtake his stronger Brother and himself become “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” I want to quicken some of the more tardy travelers along the sacred way. I would have doubts slain and faith revived. I want Mr. Feeble-Mind, and Mistress Much-Afraid, and Miss Despondency and the whole tribe of the little ones to take heart of hope this morning and observe that they have not yet enjoyed all that the Lord has prepared for them!

Although a little faith saves, there is more faith to be had—faith which strengthens, gladdens, honors and makes useful is a most desirable Grace of God. It is written, “He gives more Grace,” and therefore God has more in readiness for us. Little faith may increase exceedingly until it ripens into full assurance with all its mellowness and sweetness. There are three things I am going to attend to. The first is *little faith gently censured*—“O you of little faith, why did you doubt? “In the second place, *little faith tenderly commended*, for it is no small blessing to have any faith at all, even though it has to be called little.

Thirdly, I shall conclude by speaking of *great faith as much more to be commended*. In this last matter I shall dwell upon our Master’s gracious words—“O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will.” I

have read in your hearing two stories in the 14th and 15th chapters of this Gospel according to Matthew. It is memorable that the incidents, illustrating little and great faith, come so closely together. I shall take it for granted that you have the stories of Peter and the Canaanite woman clearly before your minds. Keep your Bibles open while I preach and may the Spirit of God open your hearts to understand them!

I. First, we have LITTLE FAITH GENTLY CENSURED. What shall I say about it, to begin with, but this?—that *it is frequently found where we expected greater things*. This man who is chided for little faith is Peter. Peter, to whom the Lord had communicated a very clear knowledge of Himself. Peter, the foreman of the twelve. Peter, in later days the great preacher of Pentecost. Peter, who has been exalted by some into the primate or pope of the Apostolic Church, though he claimed no such position. This is Peter, who was a true piece of stone from the foundation rock. Peter, to whom the Master gave the keys and to whom He delivered the commission, “Feed My sheep,” and, “Feed My lambs.”

It is Peter to whom Jesus says, “O you of little faith.” And, my dear Brother or Sister, may it not be true that you have obtained great mercy, enjoyed high privileges, received gracious protection and been eminently favored with fellowship with Christ most near and dear? By this time you ought to be strong in faith. But yet you are not so. You will soon be Home—your gray hairs are silvered with the light of Immanuel’s land! You can almost hear the singing of the saints across the narrow stream! At your time of life, so long taught of God, so deeply experienced in the things of Christ, you ought to be fathers in faith, whereas you are still children! You ought to be mothers in Israel and yet you are mere babes!

Is it not so? Why is this sad fact so undeniable? Solomon spoke of the cedar in Lebanon and of the hyssop on the wall—but I have too often seen a hyssop on Lebanon and I have sometimes seen a cedar upon a wall—I mean that I have seen great Grace where there seemed to be nothing to assist it. And I have seen little Grace where everything was advantageous to its growth! These things ought not to be! You and I, who are no children now. You and I, who are no longer coasters, but have launched out into the deep and have had experience in many a storm. You and I, who are no strangers to our Lord now, for the King has often brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us has been love!

We ought to be ashamed if we are still lamenting our little faith. It is an infirmity in which we cannot glory, for unbelief is exceedingly sinful. Well might the Master lift His finger to some who are sitting in these pews this morning and say to us one by one, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Continuing our very gentle censure, we note that *little faith is far too eager for signs*. I do not think that Peter’s faith became suddenly little—it was *always* little—and the sight of the boisterous wind made its littleness apparent. When he said, “Lord, if it is You, bid me come unto You on the water,” his faith was weak. Why did he want to walk on the water? Why did he seek such a wonder? It was because his faith was little.

Strong faith is content without signs, without tokens, without marvels! It believes God’s bare Word and asks for no confirming miracle. Its trust

in Christ is such that it asks for no sign in the heavens above, or in the seas beneath. Little Faith, with her, "If it is You," must have signs and wonders, or she yields to doubt. Joyful meditations, remarkable dreams, singular Providences, choice answers to prayer, special fellowships—Little Faith must be having something out of the common or she collapses! The perpetual cry of Little Faith is, "Show me a token for good." Little Faith is not satisfied with the rainbow which God does set in the cloud, but she would have the whole heavens painted with celestial colors!

She is not satisfied with the usual portion of the saints, but must have more, do more and feel more than the rest of the disciples. Why could not Peter have stayed in the ship like the rest of his Brothers? But no—because his faith was weak he must quit the deck for the deep—he cannot think that it really is his Master walking on the sea unless he walks with Him! How dare he ask to do what His Divine Lord was doing? Let him be content to share his Lord's humiliation—he ventures far when he asks to partake in a miracle of Omnipotence! Am I to doubt unless I can do miracles like those of my Lord? But this is one of the failings of weak faith—it is not content to drink of His cup and be baptized with His Baptism—it would share His power and partake in His Throne.

Weak faith is apt to have too high an opinion of its own power. "Oh," says one, "surely you are wrong. Is it not the error of weak faith to have too *low* an opinion of its own ability?" Brothers and Sisters, no man can have too low an opinion of his own power because he has no power whatever! The Lord Jesus Christ said, "Without Me you can do nothing" and His witness is true. If we have strong faith we shall glory in our powerlessness, because the power of Christ does rest upon us. If we have weak faith, we shall diminish our trust in Jesus and put into our hearts, instead of it, so many measures of confidence in *self*. Just in proportion as faith in our Lord is weakened, our idea of ourselves will be strengthened.

"But I thought," says one, "that a man who had strong self-reliance was a man of great faith." He is the man who has no faith at all, for self-reliance and Christ-reliance will not abide in the same heart! Peter has an idea that he can go upon the water to his Master—he is not so sure of the others—but he is clear about himself. James, John, Andrew and the rest of them are in the ship—it does not occur to Peter that any one of these can tread the waves. But he cries, "Lord, if it is You, bid *me* come unto You on the water." Self-consciousness is no attribute of faith, but it is a nest for doubt. Had he known himself, he might have said, "Lord, bid John come to You on the water. I am unworthy of so high a dignity." But no—being weak in faith, he was strong in his own opinion of himself—and he hurried to the front, as usual! He hastened into a pathway that was quite unfit for his trembling feet to tread and before long found out his error. It is weak faith that allows high ideas of self. Great faith hides self under its mighty wings.

Note another point about weak faith—*it is too much affected by its surroundings*. Peter went on pretty well till he noticed that the wind tossed the waves about tremendously—then he was afraid. Are not many Christians too apt to live by what they feel and see? Do we not often hear a

young beginner say, "I know that I am converted, for I feel so happy"? Well, but a new frock will make many a girl happy, or a few shillings in the pocket will make a youth rejoice. Is this the best evidence that you can bring? Why, if you are very troubled it may be a better sign of conversion than feeling happy! It is well to mourn over *sin* and struggle against it, and try to overcome it—this is a sure mark of Divine Grace—a far surer one than overflowing joy.

Ah, Believer, you will be happy in the highest and best sense if you trust in Jesus! But you will soon lose your happiness if your happiness becomes the ground of your confidence. Happiness is a thing that depends upon how things happen. It is too often hap-ness and nothing more! It is too much a hap-hazard thing. But faith rests in Christ whatever hap may happen—and so it is happy in the happening of sorrow and grief—because it relies wholly upon God. Faith rests upon the Lord's faithful Word and promise, come what may. "Ah," says another, "I feel very low and dull. I am heavy even when I try to pray. I cannot pray as I would like."

And so you doubt your salvation because of that, do you? Does your salvation depend upon the liveliness of your prayers? It is the mark of weak faith that it is all up and then all down. If we live by *feelings*, Brothers and Sisters, we shall live a very wretched life—we shall not dwell in the Father's house, but we shall be as gypsies whose tents are too frail to shut out the weather. God save us from being like the barometer, which at one time is "set fair," but, "set fair" with the barometer does not last long—it is back again to, "rain," and it drops down to, "much rain," before we know where we are! Strong faith knows where its true standing is and, perceiving this to be unchanging, it concludes that its foundation is as good one day as another day—for its standing is in Christ!

As the promise upon which strong faith leans is not a variable quantity, but is always the same, so its rest is the same. Our faithful God will save all those who put their trust in Him and there is the top and the bottom of it—we need not go any further. But poor Little Faith is always looking out to see whether the wind is in the east and if it is so, down she goes! Is the wind quiet? Peter walks on the wave. Does the wind howl? Peter begins to sink. This is weak faith all over. It pins us down to its environment. God help us to rise out of it!

Weak faith, in the next place, is *forgetful of its constant danger* and has not learned to believe in the teeth of it. When Peter was walking on the waves, he was in as much danger as when he began to sink. Practically, he never was in any danger at all, for Jesus, who enabled him to tread the sea, was equally near all the way. When he was standing, he could not have walked another step if the Master had not upheld him. And when he began to sink, his Master was still able to prevent his drowning. Peter's strength is gone but will his Master take away the Divine strength and leave him to perish?

Little Faith frequently makes this mistake—she does not know that she is at all times in extreme danger, wherever she may be, when she looks to herself—and that she is never in any danger, wherever she may be, if she

looks to her Lord! If you get a cloudy view of your confidence and begin to trust, not in Christ pure and simple, but in Christ Jesus as you enjoy Him, in Christ as you are like He, or in Christ and yourself as taught by Him—if you allow any amalgamations in your trust, they will turn out to be adulterations. And when a sense of danger falls upon your mind, you will not know where to turn for the reestablishment of your confidence.

Great Faith takes Jesus, only, as her basis, but Little Faith tries to add thereto. Beloved, Weak Faith tries to make up for lack of confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ with an indistinct confidence in herself, or her works, or prayers, or something else. If Peter had been trusting wholly in Jesus, whether he walked on the billows or sank in the waves, he had done what his Master told him to do and the reason of his safety was not in the least affected by the wind. If his reliance was on Jesus only, the ground of his confidence is never questionable. I pray that we may climb above that weak faith which rises and falls with the passing incidents of this life's story.

Weak Faith, when conscious of her danger, swings as a pendulum to the opposite extreme and *in an instant exaggerates her peril*. One moment Peter walks upon the sea. The next moment he is going to be drowned. It is a curious thing that he never thought of swimming. When the soul trusts Christ it is spoiled for reliance upon self. When once a man has found out the way to walk upon the top of the water, he forgets his skill in swimming in it! Self-confidence goes when confidence in Christ comes in. It was the Lord's will that Peter should know his weakness and should most clearly see that his standing depended upon his faith and that faith found all its strength in the Lord Jesus. Down goes Peter and now it is, "Lord, save me!"

He is at his wits' end. Peter is going to be drowned—drowned with the Master standing by! He will die while Jesus lives. Will he? He will perish when he is doing what Jesus bade him do! Do you think he will? It is evident he has that fear upon him. I have been foolish enough to feel that I should sink under trouble and need. It is folly. Having mixed up our confidence in brighter days—when dark days come, a large part of our confidence is gone and we fear that we shall perish. Have not some of you that believed in the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints, yet said, "I shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy"? You know that Christ has promised to keep you and yet, because you are not quite keeping yourself as you ought to do, you dream that He will *not* keep you! You know that He will never give you up and yet you are almost ready to give it all up yourself, and say, "I shall prove an apostate after all." In this way Little Faith forgets her Lord. She is too bold one day and too timid another, and all because she mixes up her confidences.

Little Faith speaks unreasonably. Notice how our Lord puts it—"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Faith is spiritual common sense. Unbelief is unreasonable. For look, if Christ was worth trusting at all and Peter had proved that he thought He was by throwing himself into the sea, to come to Him—then, if He was worth trusting at all, He was worthy to be trusted to the full! You cannot say of a man, "He is a faithful man, for you

may at times rely upon his word.” That qualifying word, “at times,” is fatal to his character! Unless he is *always* to be relied upon, he is not an honest, truth-speaking man.

And if you say of God’s promises, “I can believe some of them and therefore I expect Him to help me under certain difficulties,” you are accusing the Lord of unfaithfulness. O Sir, you are cutting away the foundation of what little faith you have! Your Lord might ask you, “Why do you believe as much as you do believe? Having gone so far, why do you not go on to the end? The reason which makes you believe as much as you do believe should make you believe to a still greater degree. O you of little faith, why did you doubt? If you have any faith, why do you doubt? If any doubt, why any faith?” The two things are inconsistent with each other. You are not occupying a logical position in being a weak believer in a strong Christ! Why wavering faith in an unwavering promise? Why feeble faith in a mighty Savior? Let your faith take its color from Him on whom it rests and from the Word which you believe—and then you will be standing upon good, solid, reasonable ground which can be justified to conscience and understanding.

One word more about our trembling apprehensions. *Weak faith often gets a wetting.* Although Peter was not drowned, yet you may be sure he was soaked to the skin with the water. If you have strong faith you will often escape a sea of troubles which weak faith will be immersed in. Weak faith is a great fabricator of terrors. I know friends who have a trouble-factory in their back garden where they are always making rods for their own backs. They disbelieve God about this and about that—and therefore they are always fretting and worrying and getting wet through and through with trouble.

I have heard say that home-made clothes very seldom fit and, certainly, home-made troubles are very hard to bear. I have also heard that a home-made suit will last longer than other garments and I believe that home-made troubles stick to us far longer than those which God appoints for us. Shut up that fear factory and make songs instead! If God sends you a trouble, it comes not amiss to you. But who wetted Peter through and through and soaked him in the deep? Who but Peter, himself? Peter, afflicted Peter! If he had possessed strong faith, he might have had a dry coat. His Master prevented the waters destroying him, but He suffered them to make Peter very uncomfortable.

If you have weak faith, you will have broken joys and many discomforts. Thus have I very gently censured Weak Faith. I did not mean to hurt a hair of its head. It is a blessed thing, this little faith—not its littleness, but its faith! If I could kill the weakness and quicken the faith—if the littleness could be removed and the faith could be increased—how glad should I be!

II. Now, LITTLE FAITH SHALL BE TENDERLY COMMENDED. I shall praise it, not because it is little, but because it is faith. Little faith requires to be tenderly handled and then it will be seen to be a precious thing. First of all, *it is true faith.* Faith which begins and ends with Jesus is true faith. The least faith in Jesus is the gift of God and it is “like precious

faith,” though it is not like *strong* faith. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you can do wonders. Though your faith is so little that you have to look for it with all your eyes, yet if it is there, it is of the same nature as the strongest faith.

A three-penny piece is silver, as surely as the crown piece, and it bears the mint-mark quite as certainly. A drop of water is of the same nature as the sea. A spark is fire as assuredly as the flames of Vesuvius. Nobody knows what may come of a spark of faith—behold, it sets a thousand souls on fire! Little faith is true faith for did not our Lord say to this Peter—“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven”? Peter had true faith and yet it was little faith. O my Hearer, “If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God.” If you do feebly cast yourself on Christ’s finished work, your weakness in the act of reliance does not alter the fact that you have fallen into strong hands which will surely save you! Jesus says, “Look unto Me, and be you saved” and though your look is a very unsteady one, and though tears of sorrow dim your eyes so that you can not see Him as He is, yet your looking to Him has saved you. Little Faith is born from above and belongs to the family of the saved. The weakest faith is real faith.

Next, notice that *Little Faith obeys the precept and will not go a step without it*. Little Faith cries, “If it is You, bid me come unto You on the water. And Jesus said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.” If Jesus says, “Come,” Little Faith answers, “Behold, I come!” Though her gait is staggering and her knees are feeble, yet she will go where Jesus calls her whether it is through flood or flame. I know some of the Lord’s children who very seldom have much enjoyment and yet I almost envy them for their tenderness of conscience. Their shrinking from the least contact with sin. Their carefulness to keep the way of the Lord’s Commandments are admirable traits in their character. Gracious walking is, after all, more precious than comfortable feeling.

How can I blame you, poor Little Faith, when I see you afraid to put one foot before the other for fear you should step aside? I had rather see you in all your timidity thus carefully obedient than hear you talking loudly about your great faith and then see you tampering with sin and folly and feeling as if when you have greatly erred it is a matter of no great consequence. Peter’s little faith did not try to walk upon water until Jesus gave the word of permission. Peter asked, “Bid me come.” Oftentimes have I noticed men and women much despondent, greatly fearful and yet they would not do anything for the life of them until they *hear* faith—they are as two lilies waiting for the voice behind them saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” They hesitate till they have consulted the map of the Word. They dare not go at a venture, but they kneel and cry for guidance, for they are afraid of taking even a single step apart from their Master’s will. They have a holy dread of running without warrant from the Lord. Little Faith, if this is your mind and temper, we commend you much!

And, next, *Little Faith struggles to come to Jesus*. Peter did not leave the ship for the mere sake of walking the waters. He ventured on the wave that he might come to Jesus. He sought not a promenade upon the waves, but the Presence and company of his Lord. “When Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.” That was the one point he aimed at—to get to Jesus! Some of you, I know, have but little faith, but you long to get nearer to Jesus. Your daily panting is, “Lord, reveal Yourself to me. Reveal Yourself *in* me and make me more like You.” He who seeks Jesus has his face turned in the right direction. Though your knees knock together and your hands hang down, yet what little headway you *do* make is toward Jesus—you strive to serve Him and to honor Him—is it not so?

Though the winds are contrary, you still pull for the shore. Well, though you are little in faith, yet am I glad you are struggling, despite your feebleness, to reach your Lord! Struggle on, for Jesus comes to meet you and when you do begin to sink through mistrust, He will catch you and set you on your feet again. Therefore, be of good cheer! Little faith deserves commendation again, in that *it does behave grandly for a time*. Though Peter had little faith, yet he walked from one billow to another in rare style. I think I see him after he had left the ship—astonished to find himself standing upon the waters which lay beneath him like solid glass!

Then he takes one step, like a child that begins to walk and, with growing confidence, he takes another. Though the waves roll under his feet, yet he stands firmly upon them for a time. Little Faith can play the man for a while. When Jael took the nail and slew Sisera, the timorous woman became a warrior as she slew the enemy of Israel! Many a time the lame and the feeble, who could not usually lift a hand in the holy war, have felt stimulated and have developed heroism for the time being. Little Faith, like David’s sling, has slain the giant. Like Ehud’s left-handed dagger, Little Faith has worked deliverance. So I commend you, Little Faith, for you have your high days and holidays and you, too, can count your victories worked in the name of Jesus! If it were always with you as it is at times, you would be glorious, indeed! Even now you can move mountains and pluck up trees by the roots.

Little faith, I must commend yet further because *when it finds itself in trouble it betakes itself to prayer*. Peter begins to sink. What does Peter do? Peter prays, “Lord, save me.” Little Faith knows where her strength lies. When she is in trouble, she does not then turn her face to human confidences, or natural forces—she turns immediately to prayer. Little Faith pours out her heart before the Lord! I love to see a man, in the hour of his distress, begin to pray at once—as naturally as frightened birds take to their wings! Some of you run to your neighbors, or hold a council with your own wits—but the profit of this course has never made you rich. Let us try a surer method. Instead of stopping to turn over all the old stock we have, let us go at once to Jesus for new help!

Alas, we do not go to Jesus until we have knocked at every other door and then the mercy is that He does not turn us away from His gate. Peter did not try the natural resort of swimming. He took to praying, “Lord, save

me.” O Little Faith, you are great at pleading in prayer! Perhaps your very weakness drives you more often to your knees. You are not so prevalent in prayer as Great Faith, but you are quite as abundant in it. I see you trembling and faint—then do you cry unto the Lord for strength and He helps you. This cry of yours proves you to be of the spiritual stock, even as it was with one of old, of whom it was said, “Behold, he prays.”

Weak faith has this commendation again, that *it is always safe, because Jesus is near*. Peter was safe on the water because Christ was on the water. Though his faith was weak, he was not saved by the strength of his faith—he was saved by the strength of that gracious hand which was stretched out to catch him when he was sinking in the flood! If you believe in Christ with all your heart. If He is the first and last of your confidence, then, though you are full of trembling and alarm, Jesus will never let you perish. If you are depending upon Him and upon Him alone, it is not possible that He should slight your faith and let you die. God forbid we should so insult our Lord as to suppose He would let a Believer drown, however weak his faith! Since Christ lives, how can we die? Since Christ stands on the waters, how can we sink beneath them? Are we not one with Him?

Another thing I may say in commendation of weak faith and that is that *Jesus Himself acknowledges that it is faith*. He said to Peter, “O you of little *faith*.” He rebuked him because it was little, but He smiled on him because it was faith! I love to feel that the Holy Spirit is the Creator, not of the littleness of our faith, but of our faith, be it ever so little! Our Lord acknowledges the faith which *we* suspect to be little better than unbelief. “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief,” is an admirable prayer for many of us. Christ forgives the unbelief, but He very graciously accepts the faith, despite its weakness. He can spy out faith when, like a lone spark, it is all but smothered under a heap of rubbish.

Once more, I commend little faith because, though it may sometimes sink, *it recovers itself and does its old wonders over again*. Peter is ready to sink, but when his Master has caught him, what do you see? There is not one person now walking on the water—there are two! Christ is there and Peter, too. Peter, my man, you walk on the sea as one born to the manner! Oh, yes, his little faith has learned, by a touch from the Lord, to do what it did at first—he walked the waves at first and now he does it again. Look! He comes up with his Lord into the ship! You that used to have good times and at this hour look back upon them with deep regret, may have the like again!

You that have grown despondent and sad, be of good courage—you shall have your festival days back again and much brighter. “Oh, but I have wasted so much time,” says one, “through this feeble faith of mine.” Well, it is a great pity, but there is a promise which I commend to your faith—“I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten.” The locust has eaten up our harvests—this locust of weakness has devoured our pleasant fruits, yet our Lord Jesus Christ can restore to us those wasted years! He can pack 10 years of usefulness into one! He can put seven days of joy into one day and so make up to us the lost past.

Our Lord can make you forget the shame of your youth and not to remember the reproach of your widowhood any more. Be of good courage, Little Faith! You come of a good family, though you are but a babe as yet. Be of good courage, Little Faith! You may be sick on board the vessel, but the vessel in which you have embarked is safe for all that and you will get to shore as surely as Great Faith will. Put your trust in the Lord and quietly wait for Him and so shall your morning surely come in due time. Thus have I gently censured and kindly commended Little Faith.

III. But now I want to say a few words to finish with and this is the motto of them—GREAT FAITH IS MUCH MORE COMMENDED. *It is sometimes found where we least expected it.* Our Lord beheld it, not in the manly Peter, but in the tender woman who pleaded for her child. She was a woman, but she had faith which put the men to shame. She was a Canaanite woman, of a race concerning which it was said, “Cursed be Canaan,” and yet she had stronger faith than Israelite Peter, who had known the Scriptures from his youth up!

She was a woman who had great discomfort at home, for the devil was there, tormenting her daughter. It is a dreadful thing to have the devil in your husband, or a devil in your daughter, when you go home. Yet many a Christian woman has this to bear. Notwithstanding this grave trial, though there was nothing to comfort her at home, she was a woman of great faith. And why should not we be like she? My Brother, although your condition and circumstances are greatly against your growth in Divine Grace, yet why should not you grow to manhood in Christ? The Lord Jesus can cause you to do so. Though it seems to you that you must be stunted by the chill blast and the cruel soil which environ you, yet the great Farmer can so foster you that you shall become a plant of renown! God can turn disadvantageous circumstances into means of growth. By the holy chemistry of His Grace He can bring good out of evil. I commend great faith with special emphasis when I see it where all its surroundings are hostile to it.

Next, great faith is to be commended because *it perseveres in seeking the Lord.* This woman came to Jesus to have her daughter healed and at first He answered her not a word. Oh, the misery of silent suspense! Next, He speaks coolly of her to His disciples, but she seeks on. She has come for a blessing and she so believes in the Lord, the Son of David, that she will not take, “no,” for an answer! She means to be heard and so she presses her suit with importunity even to the end. Oh for a strong faith, a persevering faith! Brothers and Sisters, have you got it? You men, are you using it? Here is a woman that had it and kept it at work till she won her object. May we have it abundantly!

Great faith also *sees light in the thickest darkness.* I do not think Peter was half so tried as the Canaanite was. What was it that frightened Peter? The wind. What might have frightened her? Why, the harsh words of Jesus Himself! Who is afraid of the wind? Who would not be afraid of a rejecting Christ speaking harsh words? “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.” Why, if our Lord had spoken thus to any one of us we would never have dared to pray again. We would have said,

“No, that harsh sentence shuts me out altogether.” But not so Great Faith. “No,” says she, “He called me a dog. Dogs have a position in society—little dogs are carried by their little masters indoors at dinner time—that they may get a crust or a crumb. And, Lord, I will be a dog and get my crumb—it is only a crumb for You to give it, though it would be everything to me to get it.”

So she pleads with Him as readily as if He had given her a promise instead of a rebuff. Great Faith can see the sun at midnight! Great Faith can reap harvests at mid-winter and find rivers in high places! Great Faith is not dependent upon sunlight—she sees that which is invisible by other light. Great Faith rests upon the certainty that such a thing is so because God has said it and she is satisfied with His bare Word. If she neither sees, nor hears, nor feels anything to corroborate the Divine Testimony, she believes God for His own sake and all is well with her! O Brethren, I hope you will be brought to this condition—that you will believe in God though your feelings give God’s promise the lie and though your circumstances give it the lie. Though all your friends and companions give the Lord the lie, may you come to this—let God be true with every man and every man a liar! We dare not doubt God! We dare not and we will not! His sure promise must stand. Such a faith as this deserves to be commended and our Lord Himself praises it. “O woman, great is your faith”!

Great faith prays and prevails. How she did prevail! Her daughter was made whole and she received a broad grant of whatever she willed. “Be it unto you even as you will.” I wish we had this mighty faith in connection with prayer! One man praying with faith will get more from God than 10 men, or, for that matter, 10,000 men who are unstable and unbelieving. Believe me, there is a way of praying in which you may have what you will of God. You may go up to your closet and ask and have—yes, and come out of your solitude saying, “I have it.” Even though you have it not as a matter of actual enjoyment, yet your faith has grasped it, realized it and believed in it—and so has taken immediate possession.

Did not Luther often, in his worst times, come down from his chamber crying, “Vici,” “I have conquered”? He wrestled with God in prayer and then he felt that all else that he had to wrestle with was nothing—if he had overcome Heaven by prayer, he could overcome earth, death and Hell! Strong Faith does all this and goes on to do more. She has extraordinary reverence for God, but she has a wonderful familiarity with Him. If you were to hear what Strong Faith has sometimes dared to say to God, you would think it profane—and profane it would be from any lips but hers!

But when God indulges her to know the secret of the Lord, which is with them that fear Him—and when He says, “Ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you,” she has a blessed liberty with God which is to be commended and not forbidden! If the Son makes you free in prayer, you shall be free, indeed. Strong faith is ever on the winning side. It wears the keys of Heaven at its belt. The Lord can deny nothing to the pleadings of an unstaggering faith. I commend strong faith, because *Jesus, our Lord, was delighted with it.* What music there was in His words, “O woman, great is your faith”! There was no smile on His face when He said to Peter,

“O you of little faith”—it grieved Him that His follower should have such little faith in Him.

But now it gladdened Him that this poor woman had such splendid faith. He looks at her faith as jewelers do at some famous stone worth more than they can tell. “O woman,” said He, “great is your faith. I am charmed with your faith. I am amazed at your faith. I am delighted with your faith.” Well, Brothers and Sisters, you and I long to do something to please our Redeemer. I know we have often cried, “Oh, what shall I do for my Savior to praise?” Believe Him, then! Believe His promises without doubt. Believe Him greatly. Believe Him unstaggeringly. Believe Him to the fullest and go on in faith till there seems to be nothing further to believe. Believe evermore in Christ Jesus!

How enriched that woman became! She had pleased her Lord and then her Lord pleased her—“Be it unto you even as you will.” She went away the happiest woman under the skies! God had given her her desire and she was overly glad and ever glad. *What benefits we could confer upon others if we had strong faith!* Her daughter was made whole! Mother, if you had more faith, your child would soon be brought to Jesus! Father, if you had more faith, your boy would not be such a plague to you as he now is. Have more faith in your God and when you treat your Father better, your children shall treat *you* better. If you will dishonor your God by doubting Him, do you wonder your children dishonor you by disobeying you?

O preacher, if you had more faith, you would have more converts! Sunday school teacher, if you had more faith, more children would be brought to the Savior out of your class. “Lord, increase our faith”! I hope we are all saying that in our hearts at this moment. I will conclude by asking—Is there not great reason why our faith in Christ should be strong? Is there not every reason why we should have the strongest faith in Him? I told you, the other day, of John Hyatt, when he was dying. Someone said to him, “Mr. Hyatt, can you trust your soul with Christ now?” He said, “I would trust Him with 10,000 souls if I had them.”

We can go even further than that. If all the sins that men had committed since the world was made and time began were laid upon one poor sinner’s head, that sinner would be justified in believing that Christ could take those sins away! Whoever you are and whatever you are, bring your burdens and lay them at His feet, casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you! And from now on may He never have to say to you, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” Oh, may He often exclaim, with joy, of you, “O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will”! May the Holy Spirit bless these simple words of mine to your edification! Amen.

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THE WEEDING OF THE GARDEN

NO. 423

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 8, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But He answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly
Father has not planted, will be uprooted.”
Matthew 15:13.***

JESUS CHRIST had spoken certain truths which were highly objectionable to the Pharisees. Some of His loving disciples were in great fright and they came to Him and said, “Know you not that the Pharisees are offended?” Now, our Savior, instead of making any apology for having offended the Pharisees, took it as a matter of course and replied in a sentence which is well worthy to be called a Proverb—“Every plant, which My heavenly Father has not planted, will be uprooted.”

Now we have, oftentimes, as Mathew Henry very tritely remarks, a number of good and affectionate but very weak hearers. They are always afraid that we shall offend other hearers. Hence, if the Truth be spoken in a plain and pointed manner and seems to come close to home to the conscience they think that surely it ought not to have been spoken—because So-and-So and So-and-So and So-and-So took offense at it. Truly, my Brethren, we are not all slow to answer in this matter. If we never offended, it would be proof positive that we did not *preach the Gospel*.

They who can please man will find it quite another thing to have pleased God. Do you suppose that men will love those who faithfully rebuke them? If you make the sinner’s heart groan and waken his conscience, do you think he will pay you court and thank you for it? No, not so. In fact, this ought to be one aim of our ministry—not to offend—but to test men and make them offended with themselves so that their hearts may be exposed to their own inspection. Their being offended will make known of what sort they are.

A ministry that never uproots will never water. A ministry that does not put down will never build up. He who knows not how to pluck up the plants which God has not planted scarcely understands how to be a worker of God in His vineyard. Our ministry ought always to be killing as well as healing one—a ministry which kills all false hopes, blights all wrong confidences and weeds out all foolish trusts—while at the same time it trains up the feeblest shoot of real hope and tends comfort and encouragement even to the weakest of the sincere followers of Christ.

Do not, then, be needlessly alarmed about our ministry. Just give us plenty of elbow room to strike right and left. Let not our friends encumber us. Whether they are friends or foes, when we have to strike for God and His Truth, we cannot spare whoever may stand in our way. To our own Master we stand or fall but to no one else in Heaven or on earth.

Well now. Our Savior was thus led from the remark of His disciples to utter this memorable Proverbial saying. If we understand it right, it applies to every doctrine and to every false system of religion. Whatever *God has not planted* will be uprooted. As for heretical teachers—let them alone—they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind they shall both fall into the ditch. Many good people are greatly concerned about the growth of papacy in England. They fear the day will come when papacy shall have quenched the light of Gospel grace. I trust, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you will not get nervous upon that point. It is of little consequence what men are if they are not saved—if they are not brought to know the Lord.

I do not know that it is a very important item what kind of religion they have if they have not got the true one. They may receive the awful doom of unbelievers in Christ and enemies to the Gospel, as Romanists or Mohammedan. Or like too many in this land being merely professing Christians who deceive themselves and others, they may incur the same wrath of God and inherit the same condemnation. But do not think for a moment that the harlot of the seven hills will ever prevail against the bride of Christ. Not she.

The Lord will, by-and-by, when her iniquity is full, utterly destroy her. Only be sure in your heart that God has not planted it and you may be equally sure that He will pluck it up. Prophets may plant it with their pretended revelations, martyrs may water it with their blood, confessor after confessor may defend it with his learning and with his courage—time may endear it, literature may protect it—and kings may keep guard about it, but He that rules in the heavens and cares nothing for human might shall certainly grasp its trunk and, pulling it up, even though it is strong as a cedar, shall hurl it into the fire because He has not planted it.

Yes, every hoary system of superstition, every ancient form of idolatry, every venerable species of will-worship, shall be as certainly overturned, as God is true. Leave them alone. Be not over-anxious. He shall come by-and-by who shall cry, “Overturn, overturn, overturn.” And He shall pluck up by the roots everything which His own hand has not planted. The advice of the Jewish orator was very sensible, when he said concerning certain men, “Refrain from these men and let them alone, for if this counsel or this work is of men, it will come to nothing. But if it is of God you cannot overthrow it.”

When you see a new enterprise, some Brethren very enthusiastically attempting something you cannot quite approve of, do not stand in their way. Let them have a fair trial. There is One at the helm who understands how to manage better than we do. Let them alone. If God has not the work in hand, it will come to nothing and if it should be God's work then surely it will stand. I am so constantly referred to for advice from all parts of the country that I am very often in the position of the Delphic oracle—not wishing to give wrong advice and therefore hardly able to give any.

Among others, some time ago I had an inquiry from a Brother as to whether he ought to preach or not. His minister told him he ought not and yet he felt he must. So I thought I would be safe and I said to him just this—"My Brother, if God has opened your mouth the devil cannot shut it. But if the devil has opened it, I pray the Lord to shut it directly." I was quite certain to be safe there. He took it as an encouragement to preach on. I think we may say the like with regard to all modern enterprises. Whenever a Brother comes with something new that is to revive the Church and to do good, we may say, "Well, if God has opened your mouth, I will not help Satan to shut it. But if Satan has opened your mouth, may God shut it. But it is not mine to do that work. I must leave it to Him. To your own Master you shall stand or fall."

But, while I have no doubt that this is the drift of the text and what the Savior specially aimed at, beyond a doubt we may read this sentence as having reference to our own souls. And here may the Spirit of God give to us a deep solemnity of spirit that we may be led to ask ourselves and honestly to answer the inquiry whether we are plants of God's right hand planting or not. May God the Holy Spirit have personal dealings with many of our souls tonight and may this be a heart-searching and reinvigorating hour!

First, I shall have something to say about those *plants that God has not planted*. Secondly, we will consider a little about *their being uprooted*. And then we will come to the *examination as to whether we are plants that God has planted*.

I. The Greek word not only signifies *plants*—for you know we are in the habit of calling a thing a plant which grows in the woods—but the Greek word has nicer discrimination. As Tyndal very well remarks, it is not merely a plant, but a root that has been designed to be put into the ground and taken care of. We must not only be comparable to dying plants. We must be comparable to those which come under the gardener's care, which are planted in the soil, tended by his skill and looked upon with interest as being his own.

Now there are many professors who are like wild plants—they were never planted by any servant of God, much less by God Himself. They are

thorns and briars. They bring forth wild fruits that are noxious, bitter, poisonous, acrid and deadly to the taste. They grow in abundance. This London is like some wild field that is covered with its ferns and shrubs and even with something worse than these—wild plants that spring up spontaneously. Now, these will have to be uprooted. When the day comes for God to clear His commons there will be a blaze indeed, when He shall say, “Gather them together in bundles to burn. But gather the wheat into My garner.”

The drunkard, the swearer, the adulterer. Those who live by cheating and robbing their neighbors. Those who never darken the walls of God’s sanctuary. Those to whom Sunday is the busiest day in the week—those who are without God and without hope and without Christ—these we may call self-sown plants. Uncared for, untutored—and they must be uprooted—for He will say, “Gather out of My kingdom all things that offend and they that do iniquity.” There are other plants, however, that have evidently been planted by *some* hand. Some have been planted by *the minister’s hand*. There are the signs and marks about them that some pruning-knife has been at work. You know to what I refer.

We all of us have some converts. God has His thousands I hope, in this place. But I have some of my own here that I could do better without. A man’s converts are always a disgrace to him. It is only those that God converts that will last. When we go fresh into a place there is always a number of people who hear with a degree of profit and who are affected by us. But let that minister be taken away and they go back again. One wave washes them up on the shore and the return wave sucks them back again into the great deeps.

Why, see how it was with this congregation in years gone by when they were smaller and fewer in number. When my worthy predecessor, Mr. James Smith, preached the Word there was a number of those who professed conversion. And what became of many when he went away? God alone knows—save that we found some of them no better than they should be. And if I should die, there would be some of you that would do the same. Take away the leader and the soldier slinks back into his quarters. He has no objection to follow his captain while he sees him. But the man being the captain—if the standard-bearer falls—then he flees himself out of the conflict and is seen no more.

I do not know who planted you—but if you are only planted by *man*—though he were the best man that ever lived you will be uprooted. If your conversion is only human, if you are only brought to God by mere moral session and have never been operated upon by the holy, Divine, supernatural energy of the Holy Spirit you will go back like the dog to his vomit and like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

There are some, too, that were not planted by ministers—they were *planted by their fathers and mothers*. They have got a kind of *family religion*. Well, I like to see the child follow his parent when the parent walks in the footsteps of Christ. It is a blessed thing when the old oak falls off to see half-a-dozen saplings sprung up round the spot where he stood. But we must recollect that we have nothing to do with hereditary godliness for hereditary godliness is not worth a straw. We must be *personally saved*. We cannot be saved in our father's loins. What if the blood of martyrs be in my veins tonight and if I traced back my pedigree, as I might do through a hue of preachers of the Word—what matters it if I myself make shipwreck concerning faith and be a castaway?

It shall be but the sorer condemnation for a child of the saints to perish as an heir of wrath. Ah, there are many of you who have fathers and mothers in the Church who look for your everlasting welfare with anxious desire. I pray you do not imagine that your father's religion will save you! We will not baptize you if you should have that thought in your head. Till you have got religion of your own we have nothing to do with you. Not until you have a personal faith dare we give you a baptism. We would not have you make a profession by proxy, nor would we have profession made for you while you are an unconscious babe.

True religion is personal to every man—it is a matter of his own consciousness. He must in his own soul be lost or be saved. The battle of life can be fought in no battlefield but in our own personal consciousness and he that attempts to shift the work or to shift the responsibility to another goes on a fool's errand. And he will surely fail in it. If you have not been planted thus, you will be uprooted. And oh, how many there are of even professors of religion who are self-planted. By their own good deeds and their own efforts and their own strivings and their own praying they hope to be saved.

And having an experience which was not worked in them but which they borrowed from books, they have come—and oftentimes have they deceived the minister and been added to the Church. Ah, souls! You may paint yourselves as you will but unless you have the genuine matter you will never be able to pass the Judgment Seat of God. You may gild and varnish, but He will say, "Take it away," and like the painted face of Jezebel which the dogs did eat, despite the paint--so shall you yourselves be utterly devoured—despite the fair picture that you made.

There may be some such in this Church. Human judgment cannot discover them. May the candle of the Lord search them out tonight! Soul, a homespun religion and a homemade godliness will fail us. We must have that which is the workmanship of God by the Holy Spirit. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And, "Except a man be

born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

Take care, you self-planted trees lest when the Master comes by He shall say, “How came that plant there? I never put it in the garden. Pluck it up.” And He shall throw it over the wall of the garden, just as the gardeners throw away their rubbish which is afterwards gathered up and burned in the fire.

Before I leave this point, I want to say two or three things. I speak in humble language, so that I may be understood—for in these solemn matters any soaring after fine language is but mocking the souls of men. Let me just notice that some of those plants that God never did plant are very *beautiful*. If you go into the fields there are many plants that grow there that are quite as lovely as those in the garden. Look at the foxglove and the dog rose. Look at many of the blossoms we pass by as insignificant—they are really beautiful. But they are not plants that have ever been *planted*.

Now, how many we have in our congregations that are really beautiful yet they are none of God’s planting—men and women whose character is upright, whose manners are amiable, whose life is irreproachable. They are not immoral, they neither cheat nor lie. They are exemplary—their disposition is kind, tender-hearted and affectionate. Yes, but my dear Hearer, there must be something more than this, for Jesus says, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.” Though it is a lovely plant, though it seem to be a fair flower externally, yet since the root of it has sucked its nourishment out of the wild wastes of sin, whether of infidelity or of lawlessness it is evil in the eye of God—and it must be plucked up.

Further, how many there are of our wild wood plants *that even bring forth fruit*. The schoolboy in the country can tell us that the wood is an orchard and that often he has had many a luscious meal from those wild fruits that grew there. Yet, mark you—though the birds may come and satisfy their hunger from those wild fruits and though the seeds may be in the winter the sparrow’s garner and the linnet’s storehouse—yet they are not planted. They do not come under the description of the text—plants that have been *planted*. So, too, there may be some of you who really do some good in the world. Without you a mother’s wants might not be provided for. From your table many of the poor are fed.

Oh, this is good, this is good! I would that all of you did more of it, but I pray you remember that this is not enough. There must be God’s planting in you or else the fruits you bring forth will be selfish fruits. You will be like Israel who was denounced as being an empty vine, because, he brought forth fruit unto himself. Charity is good. Noble Charity, be you

honored among men! But there must be *faith* and if we have no faith in Christ—though we give our bodies to be burned and bestow our goods to feed the poor—yet where Christ is we can never go.

And I would hint just once more that many of those wild plants have *very strong roots*. If you were to go and try to dig them up you would have a task before you not easily accomplished. Look at the wild dock—did you seek to pull it up? Piece after piece it breaks away and you have to send some sharp instrument deep into the soil before you can root it out. And even then, if there is but a piece left, it springs up and thrives again. Oh how many there are who have as much tenacity of life in their false confidence as there is in the dock—in its root!

Some of you cannot shake. “I never have a doubt,” said one, “I never had a doubt or a misgiving.” You remember Robert Hall said, “Allow me to doubt *for you*, Sir,” because he knew the man to be an fornicator. And so we have some—they are not in trouble as other men—neither are they plagued like other men. They speak with an air of satisfaction—their language sounds like assurance—but it is presumption. It looks like confidence in Christ but it is confidence in themselves. And such will strike their roots very deep and they will be very strong indeed, so that you cannot shake them.

Yet, alas for them! They are not plants of the Lord’s right-hand planting and therefore the sentence is passed. And before long it shall be executed without pity—“they will be uprooted.”

II. And now, very briefly indeed, upon my second point—for time will fail us if we dwell long upon it—THEIR UPROOTING.

This uprooting sometimes comes in this life. Perhaps they are tempted and they foully fall. Or persecution comes and they desert the standard by which they swore to stand or die. Or if not, they come to die and then death comes and takes hold of their profession and strikes it to and fro like some great giant who is able to rend up an oak by its roots. Perhaps for weeks the man holds his confidence and says, “It is well with me! It is well with me!”

And we have known some plants with the roots so deep that Death himself could not tear them up. They have died deceived. They have perished with a false hope and they have gone into the next world dreaming of Heaven and expecting to see the face of God. But oh their mistake! “Where am I?” said the soul, “this is not Heaven.” And the mask was pulled off and the man saw himself all loathsome and leprous and he said, “I thought I was fair and lovely.” Some rude hand plucked off his garment and he saw his running sores and ulcers and he said, “I thought I was soundly healed.”

And he heard the voice of conscience saying, “You hypocrite! God never had a work in your soul—you did deceive yourself. You did mislead yourself into a pretended hope and now where are you? The songs of the sanctuary changed for the wailings of Hell. Your sittings at the Lord’s Table and in dolorous feastings at the table of devils. Cast out, lost, banished—because God never planted you—therefore are you plucked up.”

III. This leads me to my final task—the WORK OF SELF-EXAMINATION.

Dear Friends, let not any aged, confirmed Christians here stand back from self-examination. Minister—you, too! O my own soul and you, deacon, elder, aged professor—let each man among us put himself into the scale. Am I or am I not a plant of the Lord’s right-hand planting? Well then, first and foremost, if I am a plant of the Lord’s planting, *there was a time when I had to be taken out of the place where I once grew.*

Can I remember a time when He dug about me and dug me up till the roots of my heart began to bleed? A time when my soul was loosened from the earth and the soil which it had loved? And though I did cling tenaciously to it, yet was I drawn out by superior power, taken out of the kingdom of darkness and separated from the earthiness of my own works and self-righteousness. Can I remember that? Yes, blessed be God, some of us can say, “I can.” “One thing I know, whereas I was once blind now I see.” “Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.”

These must be a *change*. No matter how moral you may have been, there must be a change. There must be a change, too, which you can feel yourself even though others cannot see it. And when such a change does not amount—I will not merely say to the change in a sick man when he gets well, but to the change in a dead man when he comes to life—if there is no such change as this we must fear that we are not plants of the Lord’s planting.

Again—if I have been planted by God I do most thoroughly and unfeignedly mourn that I ever was anything but what I am. And I do most heartily pant to be made like Christ and to be conformed unto His image. If you have any love in your heart towards sin so as willingly to choose it—take care that you deceive not yourself as to the love of God being in you. He that is saved hates sin and loathes it—and though he commits sin, it is by infirmity. And even when his will gives consent unto the sin, yet it gives a still deeper and more confident assent unto the Law. And after it has sinned it mourns and bemoans itself exceedingly on account of sin.

If you saw a fish in a tree you would know it was not in its element. And if you see a Christian in sin you will be able to discover that he is not in his element. If sin is a pleasure to you, if you can sail down its stream and rejoice in it, can drink its draughts and make merry with those that

make merry therein—then deceive not yourself—for you are not a plant of the Lord’s right-hand planting.

Again—if you are such as God has made you, then you have learned your utter helplessness and emptiness apart from Christ as your righteousness. And the Spirit of God as your strength. Have you anything of your own to boast of?—He never planted you. Have you done anything that you can bring before God and claim as your own?—He has had no dealings with you. About this we are quite sure, for here the Lord makes clean work. Self-righteousness must not merely be wounded in the leg. It must have its brains dashed out. And he that still clings to himself and his strength and his works has to begin anew—for he has not yet begun in God’s way.

Another essential mark of the plants of God’s planting is that they are all planted in one soil and, strange to say, all on a Rock. They whom God have planted put their trust in Jesus *only*. They have not the shadow or a shade of a suspicion of an idea of a hope anywhere but in Christ. They say of Christ’s wounds, “They are the clefts of the Rock in which we hide ourselves.” They say of Christ’s blood, “This has cleansed our sins.” They say of Christ Himself, “He is our Law.” They say of His presence, “It is our delight.” They say of His Gospel, “It is our joy.” They say of His Heaven, “It is our sure and everlasting reward.”

I would that we had longer time—I knew not that the time was speeding at so great a rate. I would we had longer time to be testing and trying ourselves in this matter. But Scripture is so explicit as to what a believer is and what he is not that I need not enlarge. I would rather stir up your hearts to make sure work here. Professor, what if you should be deceived? If you should be, do not say, “But.” I tell you again—it is possible—for others have been deceived. I beseech you, suppose it possible.

O that you may say in your soul, “Well, if it is possible, if I am deceived, yet I am a sinner—and as a sinner I will go to Christ afresh tonight—if I am not a saint, I am a sinner. And ‘this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief,’ so I will go to Him again.” But if you refuse to say this, I will put the “if” again. Jonathan Edwards remarks that in the great revival in New England there were sinners of all sorts converted, except unconverted professors. And, says he, “these unconverted professors are in the most dangerous state in which men can be.”

Well, take that warning to yourselves. Some of you say, “But I am not a professor.” Ah, but you are always here and people consider you such. Though you are not baptized and do not join the Church, yet your constantly coming here identifies you with us and they consider that you made a profession. And so you do after a sort. Mark this—if you are still

unconverted and keep on attending the means of grace year after year—you are getting into a more dangerous state. It is not often we hear of men being converted when they have been hearing the Word twenty or thirty years without its having taken effect.

Do then, I pray you, try yourselves. Make sure work for eternity. Build with stone and not with plaster. Build on the Rock and not on the sand. “I counsel you that you buy of Me gold tried in the fire,” says the Spirit. Oh, let not your faith be a mere spasm, the mere action of a moment. O that you may have the faith of God’s elect which is of the operation of God the Holy Spirit! Do you say, “How is this to be had? How can I be saved?” Soul, I have a free Gospel to preach to you. A full Christ to empty sinners. A precious Christ for lawless outcasts. A rich Christ to beggarly and starving souls.

“Whosoever will,” says Jesus, “let him come and take of the water of life freely.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” He that trusts Christ is a plant of God’s right-hand planting. O that you would trust Jesus now! I know there is something which holds you back and you say, “I am not fit.” He wants no fitness. Come as you are. Any man is fit to be washed that is black with sin. Any man is fit to be made whole that is sick. Any man is fit to be relieved that is poor. Ah, you have got the fitness in your unfitness—for your unfitness is all the fitness that He wants!

“But may I come?” you say. May you? Yes, if you need the Savior, you may come. Just as you may go to the fountain which stands in the street and sends forth its sparkling streams, that he who is thirsty may drink, so may you come now. “The greater the wretch,” said Rowland Hill in his hymn—“the more welcome here.” Christ loves to save big sinners. Black sinners. Double-dyed sinners. Crimson-dyed sinners—Jesus Christ delights to wash. Oh, is there such an one here tonight? Is there a heart here that longs to have Christ to be his All in All?

Soul, if you are longing for Christ, He is longing for you. Let the match be made tonight since you are both agreed. Since you are agreed to have Christ and He wills to have you—here—strike hands tonight and take Him “to have and to hold, for better for worse, for life and for death.” Yes, for all eternity! What do you say? “Oh, I am not worthy.” “Ah,” says He, “you are black with sin but you are comely in Me if you are but willing to come to Me now.” Has the Holy Spirit made you willing to come to Christ? In Christ’s name, come. He bids you come. From Heaven He speaks to you tonight through His ambassador, “Come and welcome, Sinner, come!”

The door is opened and the Master stands outside and He says, “My oxen and My fatlings are killed. Come to the supper!” Trust Jesus, Sinner! Down with you, down with you, flat on your face before Him! Trust Him with your soul just as it is! Away with your “but” and “of” and with your

“tomorrow” and “perhaps,” and your carnal reasoning! Now, with an empty hand, take a full Christ. Now, with empty, hungry mouths receive the living Food, “for He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him!”

One may grow hoarse in calling after poor souls but they will never come unless our heavenly Father comes after them by His Spirit. But He often does come when the Word is preached with faithfulness and affection, God is in the Word—God wrestling with the souls of men and going after the souls of men and fetching in souls, as our Church-books testify every week.

Oh, I am loath to leave off tonight. Let me plead with you another moment! Poor Heart! Do you go away and say, “There is nothing for me”? How can this be? How can it be? Even if the text condemns you, still the Gospel is preached to you. Christ Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” There is something for you—you that cannot see the preacher down yonder in the lobbies—there is something for you. In your ears the Word sounds. “Lo, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters and he that has no money come, buy and eat. You all, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Trust Christ, Sinner and your soul is saved. A plant of the Father’s right-hand planting is that soul who has come to put his trust in Jesus. And the devil himself shall not be able to pluck you up.

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THE HEART—A DEN OF EVIL

NO. 732

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 27, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,
fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”*
Matthew 15:19.

WE cannot too often insist upon it that religion is a matter of the heart. It is the besetting sin of man to forget that God is a Spirit and that worship rendered to God must be of a *spiritual* kind. Idolatry is the full carrying out of this mischievous propensity. Instead of adoring the Great Invisible and giving Him the love of the heart, man sets up a block of wood or stone, and, burning incense and performing genuflections before it, he cries, “This is my god.” Where this idolatry does not assume the very grossest form it takes another which is equally as objectionable in the sight of God. Man pleads that he cannot worship God with his heart unless his memory is assisted by some outward object, and then he smuggles in his idol and gratifies his depraved nature with will worship and outward formalism.

God requires *soul* worship and men give him body worship! He asks for the heart and they present Him with their lips. He demands their thoughts and their minds, and they give Him banners, and vestments, and candles. Where man is hunted by very shame from outward superstitions, he betakes himself to *anything* sooner than yield his heart's love to his Maker, submit his intellect to the great Creator's teaching, or render all his faculties to the service of the Most High. No matter how painful may be the mortification, rigid the penance, severe the abstinence—no matter how much may be taken from his purse or the wine vat, or the store—he will be content to suffer anything sooner than bow before the Most High with a true confession of sin, and trust in the appointed Savior with sincere childlike faith.

In this age, as much as in past times, the watchmen of our Israel must insist upon the spirituality of worship, for the old paganism lives among us—altered in form but unchanged in spirit. We spoke of idolatry as being buried at Athens and consigned to its tomb at Rome, but it lives in the Puseyism of the present hour! Men are naturally idolaters and it is nothing but idolatry which nowadays, in the toyshops of the Tractarian, is polluting the simplicity of our worship by thrusting their childish symbols and emblems before the sublime Truth that God is to be worshipped in spirit, and only to be approached through the atoning sacrifice of His only begotten Son.

This morning I trust I shall not be guilty of attracting your attention for a single moment to anything that is external, however gaudy or however simple. It is to the human *heart* that I ask you now to turn your eyes. It is to your *own* hearts, my Hearers, you that are converted and you that are

not! It is to a consideration of your own inner natures that I entreat you now to turn your serious thoughts. My text is a looking glass in which every man may see himself. He may see not his face which he can see anywhere—but his heart, his moral nature, his innermost self. Here sin is in many a heart laid bare, turned inside out, anatomized and depicted by One who cannot lie and cannot be deceived.

We shall come to the text at once, and observe, first, the humiliating doctrine which it teaches. Then we shall occupy the rest of your time by mentioning the kindred doctrines of which it reminds us.

I. FIRST NOTICE THE HUMILIATING TRUTH which the Savior here sets forth. He tells us that out of the heart all sorts of moral evils proceed. He selects not the milder forms of sin but the grosser shades—adulteries, murders, blasphemies—these are words of no common import—and stand for sins of no common dye. The accusation laid against human nature here is one of the most solemn that could possibly be put into words. The Savior has not minced matters in any degree nor chosen smooth forms of speech. He has selected the grossest shapes of human sin and He has said that *all* these come out of the human *heart*.

There have been men who have asserted that sins are merely *accidents* of man's position. But the Savior says they come out of his *heart*. Some have affirmed that they are mistakes of his *judgment*—that the social system bears so harshly at certain points that men can scarcely do otherwise than offend—for their judgment misleads them. The Savior, however, traces these offenses not to the *head* and its mistaken judgments, but to the *heart* and its unholy affections. He plainly tells us that the part of human nature which yields such poisonous fruit is not a bough which may be sawn off, a limb which may be cut away—but the very core and substance of the man—his heart.

He, in effect, tells us that lust does not come out of the eyes merely, but from the inmost nature of a depraved being. Murder comes not, in the first place, from the hasty hand but from a wild ungovernable heart. He declares that theft is not the mere result of a hasty temptation, but is the outflow of a covetous desire which dwells in the being of which disorganized affections are the real source. All the mischief mentioned in our text come out of man's essential self—that is what I understand the Savior to mean by the heart.

The heart is the *true* man. It is the very citadel of the City of Mansoul. It is the fountain and reservoir of manhood and all the rest of man may be compared to the many pipes which run from the fountain through the streets of a city. The Savior puts His finger on the mainspring of the machine of manhood, and cries, "*Here is the evil!*" Like a great physician, He lays His hands upon the very core of human nature and exclaims, "*Here is the disease.*" The leprosy of sin is not as to its primary seat in the head, nor the hand, nor the foot—but in the very heart. The poison is in the center, and consequently all the outlying members share in the poison.

By the heart we usually understand the affections, and doubtless the affections of man are the sources of his crimes. It is because man does not love his Maker with all his heart, and soul, and strength—but loves himself—that he therefore breaks his Maker's Laws to please himself. It is be-

cause man does not love that which is right, and good, and true, but because he delights in that which is false and evil, that his actions become defiled. It comes to the same thing, you see, whether you interpret the word “heart” to mean the central core of the man, or to signify the affections. You come to the same result that it is the man’s vital *self* which is wrong. It is manhood’s real *essence* which is vitiated.

Manhood in its most vital essence is corrupt through and through. To use the words of the infinite Jehovah Himself, “Every imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth.” “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.” “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Observe with humiliation those foul streams which the Savior declares flow from the heart of man! He speaks of evil thoughts. Some make little of thoughts of evil, but God does not so judge. He judges an action not so much by the *outward* motions of the matter of the body by which the action is performed, as by the *inward* motion of the inner man by which that motion was instigated and dictated.

Evil *thoughts* have in them the absolute essence of sin quite as surely as evil *acts*, for when we come to trace an action to its essential evil we have to look to the motive which dictates it—which motive brings us at once into the region of thought. So that evil thoughts, instead of being less evidently sinful than actions, are most clearly the very nest in which the principle and soul of sin is to be found.

Men sometimes say, “We shall not be hanged for our thoughts.” But it will be well for them to know that except they *repent* of them, they certainly will be *damned* for their thoughts! And even if those thoughts of theirs never shaped themselves into *actions*, yet their guilt would remain! If the men were shut up in cells so that they could not commit that which their nature instigated them to do, yet, as before the Lord, seeing they would have been such sinners outwardly if they could have been, their hearts are judged to be no better than the hearts of those who found opportunity to sin and used it.

A vicious horse is none the better tempered because the kicking straps prevent his dashing the carriage to atoms. And so a man is none the better, really, because the restraints of custom and Providence may prevent his carrying out that which he would prefer. Poor fallen human nature behind the bars of Laws, and in the cage of fear of punishment is none the less a fearful creature. Should its master unlock the door we should soon see what it would *be* and *do*. Evil thoughts flow out of the heart. Such as evil thoughts of God, evil thoughts of man. Thoughts about evil, doting imaginations, and foul desires, the rolling of evil under the tongue as a sweet morsel, and such like. Many a man who has not committed an outward act of sensual lust has nevertheless thought it over and relished it, and so perpetrated it in his soul.

Many a man who had not the courage to be a thief in very deed has nevertheless been a thief a thousand times over in his heart. And he who dared not blaspheme God with his lips has cursed God in his heart ten thousand times. These evil thoughts are signs of what is in the heart. They would not bubble up within us if they were not first there. They could not come into the mind if they were not essential to the soul.

Our Lord next speaks of murders, by which He means, according to John's interpretation of it, every form of unjustifiable *anger*. Those ebullitions of evil temper in which we wish people were dead, or otherwise injured, and would gladly punish them if we could, are in the same class as *murders*. Murders, themselves, arise from the evil passions of the human heart. If the fire were not there, temptation could not fan it to a flame. Is it not because men love themselves better than their neighbors that they commit murder? It is clear to everyone that it must be so. Therefore it is the failure of the affections to work accurately which leads men to the commission of this terrible deed. An evil nature sits by the fireside and murders men in thought, and hurls daggers at them in the heart in words, because it is evil, self-loving, and vile!

The inventory next mentions acts of unchastity. Men would never fall into evil lusts if it were not that they are dear to their hearts. Because these things are sweet to the heart, therefore men follow them. If the ox drinks water, it is because the ox thirsts. And if man goes after vice, it is because his soul longs after it. Those who never indulged in these actions may yet have meditated upon them—and in such a case the heart has committed uncleanness before God. So also the injuring of others by theft is from the heart. Is it not, again, because we love ourselves better than God, and better than others, that we are tempted to covet and led from covetousness to acts of dishonesty? And when it comes to the bearing of false witness, what is this, again, but an intense lie of one's own proper being, and a lack of love to our neighbors and our God?

When the list closes with blasphemy, what is this but the heart setting itself up higher than God and then seeking to tread God beneath its feet by the use of opprobrious and wicked epithets concerning Him? The heart is at the bottom of it all. There would be no murder, no fornication—there could be no blasphemy if the heart were pure and right. If God were loved first and foremost, these offenses could not occur! But the heart is mischievous and therefore these things exist. The Savior does not stop to prove that these things come out of the heart—He asserts it—and asserts it because it is self-evident. When you see a thing coming forth, you are clear it was there first.

Last summer I noticed hornets continually flying from a number of decayed logs in my garden. I saw them constantly flying in and out, and I did not think myself at all unreasonable in concluding that there was a hornet's nest there. I suppose that was the inference which everybody would have drawn. If we see the hornets of sin flying out of a man, we suppose at once that there is sin within him. Look at yonder spring—it is bubbling up with cool and fresh water—do you not conclude that somewhere or other there is a reservoir of this water from which it rises? If you did not conclude so, you would be so unreasonable that you might be the common butt of laughter.

And when we know that all sorts of evil thoughts and murders, and lustful desires come from men's hearts, it is not at all a difficult conclusion that they must be *in* men. And inasmuch as all men, more or less, fall into these displays of sin, we conclude that there is in all men a great storehouse of sin—a secret fountain of sin—a mass of inward evil from

which outward evil proceeds. If this needed any sustaining at all I might offer these few observations, namely, that nobody ever needs any training to commit sin. Albeit there may be schools of virtue—there is certainly no necessity to open a school for vice! Your child will have evil thoughts without your sending him to a diabolical infant school. Lads who have never seen the act of theft, or children who have been brought up in the midst of honesty will be found guilty of little thefts early enough in life.

Lying and false witness, which is one form of lying, is so common that perhaps to find a tongue which never did bear false witness would be to find a tongue that never spoke! Is this caused by education or by nature? It is so common a thing that even where the ear has heard nothing but the most rigid truth, children learn to lie and men learn to lie and commonly do lie and love to tell an evil tale against their fellow men whether it is true or not—bearing false witness with an eagerness which is perfectly shocking! Is this a matter of education, or is it a depraved heart?

Some men will willfully invent a slanderous lie knowing that they need not take any special care of their offspring, for they may lay it in the street and the first passerby will take it up and nurse it—and the lie will be carried in triumph round the world! Whereas a piece of truth which would have done honor to a good man's character will be left to be forgotten till God shall remember it at the Day of Judgment. You never need educate any man into *sin*. As soon as ever the young crocodile has left its shell, it begins to act just like its parent, and bites at the stick which broke the shell. The serpent is scarcely born before it rears itself and begins to hiss. The young tiger may be nurtured in your parlor, but it will develop, before long, the same thirst for blood as if it were in the forest.

So is it with man! He sins as naturally as the young lion seeks blood or the young serpent stores up venom. Sin is in his very nature that taints his inmost soul. What is worse, it is certain that men sin under all conceivable circumstances. You have heard much romance about unsophisticated nature. It used to be a theory that the untutored savage saw God in every cloud and heard Him in the wind. But when travelers go to see these model, untutored savages, what miserable specimens of humanity they are! The very philosophers who once set them up as being models, change their minds and tell us that they are a connecting link between man and the ape.

This is what unsophisticated nature becomes. The ragtags of conventionalism are taken away. The tricks of commerce are removed—and the child of nature is brought up naked—and a very pretty child he is! Let those who admire him live with him and see if the very brutes do not shame him! The character of the uncivilized man is generally such that it were impossible for us to describe it in your hearing, so degraded and so debased is savage man. Is he any better, however, if he is highly educated? I suppose there was no nation of antiquity more highly educated than the Greeks. And yet if history is credited, the private characters of her best philosophers such as Socrates and Solon were stained with vices revolting to the mind!

In modern times there has been ample proof that neither ignorance nor learning are an effectual check to sin. The fool learns sin without his

books and the scholar learns it none the less with all his lore. One of the most educated nations of modern times is the Hindu, and what is the moral character of the Hindu? Those who have been among the Hindus never dare to tell all that they have seen, and missionaries inform us in a whisper that what they have seen in the temples where the Hindus meet for worship, and where surely the better parts of their nature ought to be seen in the presence of their gods, is so utterly obscene that it is degrading to the mind to know that such a thing exists.

“Yes,” you say, “some races are vicious both when trained under a certain civilization and when left uncivilized. But how about Christian civilization?” Why, the so-called Christians are scarcely any better! A man with religion is not any better than a man without it unless that religion changes his *heart* and makes a new man of him. The heart under a Christian’s coat is as vile as that under a Bushman’s sheepskin unless Divine Grace has renewed it! If you take a child and tutor him in all the outward observances of our own holy faith—if you shall see that in everything he is brought up after the straightest sect that your judgment shall select—yet unless the Holy Spirit shall come and give him a new heart and a right spirit his heart will find out ways of showing its sin!

No, it has been notorious that some who were brought up with Puritanical rigidity have been the most vicious in after life, and those who have not been so have become what is almost as detestable—hypocritical pretenders to a religion to whose real power they are strangers. “You must be born again,” is a Truth of God which is as true in the Hottentot’s kraal as it is in the midst of this congregation! And as true in the home of piety as it is in the haunt of vice. The old nature everywhere—wash it, cleanse it, bind it, curb it, or bridle it—is still the old fallen nature and cannot understand spiritual things!

You may take the man and treat him as they did the demoniac of old. You may bind him with chains. You may seek to tame him down. But when the old evil spirit comes up again he snaps the bonds of morality and rushes away to one form of sin or another—either to the outward excess of his carnal passions—or else to the equally vicious excess of hypocrisy, formalism and self-conceit. These things may surely strengthen this Truth of God. Man sins in every place, in every shape. And yet more—he sins after he knows the mischief of sin! As the moth flies into the candle after singeing its wings, so man will fly into sin after he knows the bitterness of it. If he reforms as to one sin he takes up another till he does no better for himself than Dr. Watts’s fever patient, of whom he says—

**“It is a poor relief we gain,
To shift the place and keep the pain.”**

They do so. They give up, perhaps, drunkenness. What then? Why then they become self-righteous. If you can drive a man from *outward* vice, how far have you improved him if he lives in *inward* sin? You have benefited him as far as the sight of *man* is concerned, but not before God. There was a man killed on Holborn Hill this week and I have heard that there was little or no external appearance of injury upon his body. He had been crushed between an omnibus and a cart, and all the wounds were internal. But he died just as surely as if he had been beaten black and blue, or cut in a thousand pieces. So a man may die of *internal* sin—it does not

appear outwardly for certain reasons—but he will die of it just the same if it is within.

Many man has died from internal bleeding, and yet there has been no wound whatever to be seen by the eyes. You, my dear Hearer, may go to Hell as well dressed in the garnishing of morality as in the rags of immorality! Unless the very center of your soul and the core of your being is made obedient to the living God, He will not accept you, for He looks not only to your outward actions, but to your *heart's* secret loyalty or treachery towards Himself. Man sins, moreover—to close this very fearful impeachment against manhood—man sins not as the result of mistaken intellect, but as the result of his *heart* being *vile*.

When a man sins by mistake. When he does not know it to be sin. When he sins thinking that he is doing right—as soon as he gets to know his error he forsakes the sin with horror, and flies to God with repentance. But this is never done by men *naturally*. The natural heart of man, if it finds out sin to be sin, very frequently feels all the more delight in it just as the Apostle Paul says he had not known lust unless the Law had said, “You shall not covet.” Our corrupt nature *loves* forbidden fruit! Some people would not care to work on Sunday unless they had been commanded to rest. Many would never care to go to the Crystal Palace on any day in the week, but they crave to go on Sunday simply because it is forbidden.

Some fellows are lazy enough on Monday and make a saint's day of it. And yet Sunday rest they oppose with all their might. It is strange that what God makes *common*, man wants to make *special*, and what God makes *special*, man wants to make *common*! As soon as ever a child is told he must not do such a thing, although he had never thought of doing it before, he wants to do it now. That is the nature of us. “When the Commandment came,” says the Apostle, “sin revived, and I died.” This is not the Law's fault, but ours. Cool water thrown upon unslaked lime produces a burning heat—it is not the fault of the water that the heat is produced—the lime, alone, is to blame. So the very command of God, “You shall not do this,” or “You shall not do that,” leads man into sin, and so it proves the innate and thorough viciousness of the nature of man.

“I do not like it,” says one. “I do not like to hear human nature spoken so evil of.” And do you suppose I like to speak of it in this way? It is no more pleasing to me than to you. “Well, but,” says one, “I believe in the *dignity* of human nature.” Believe in it, my dear Man, and try and prove it if you can! Nobody will be more glad than I shall be to see any true dignity in *anybody*. But why do we speak like this? Why, because our solemn conviction is that we speak the Truth of God! We thus speak because we believe the Word of God teaches it. And, moreover, we know by sorrowful experience that if the charge is not true of others, it is certainly true of us.

We have been preserved from known *outward* sin, but we have to mourn over the terrible evils of our heart. And being willing to endorse the indictment, and personally to plead guilty, we are the more confident in bringing it forward and saying, “This is the case with the whole race of man, without a single exception! We must all stand guilty before God.” Not one heart by nature is right with God—Jew and Gentile are all under sin—

“We are all gone out of the way, we are altogether become unprofitable: there is none that does good, no not one.”

II. We shall now turn aside to notice THE TRUTHS WHICH ARE CONNECTED WITH THIS HUMBLING FACT. First observe that receiving our Lord’s testimony concerning our hearts—that they have become dens of evil, that out of them comes evil thoughts, fornication, theft, and so on—we are driven to believe in the doctrine of the Fall. If we are in this state, it is *inconceivable* that God should have made us so! A pure and holy Being must have been the creator of pure and holy beings.

As Job says, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” We may reverse the question and say, “How could an unclean thing come out of a clean thing?” The Holy God must be the Parent of *holy* children, and when God made manhood He must have made it perfect, otherwise He did not act according to His own Nature. It remains a marvelous riddle how man is what he is till you turn to this Book. And when you read the story of the Fall, the riddle is all unriddled! Then we see how that first parent of ours, who stood for us as our representative, sinned, and by that sin tainted the whole race, so that we, being born of him, are born in his image and in his likeness. And he being a rebel we are born rebels. He being a traitor we are born traitors, too.

“Behold,” says David, “I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” *There* is the root of the matter! It is not by God’s making that we are sinful—it is by Adam’s *unmaking* of us and *ruining* of us that we come to be what we are—inheritors of original sin and corruption. If it shall be asked, How is this great mystery still further to be explained and the justice of it proved? We answer, that these are things too deep and too high for us—that we think we can see the justice of it and we have sometimes admired the mercy of it, too—but, nevertheless, we are not accustomed to dispute facts we cannot understand. But we *believe* them if God reveals them—and since it is revealed that by one man’s transgression many were made sinners, we believe it, and raise no further question.

We must leave the fact as a fact, feeling that it is a great deep. You ask an explanation of this, and refuse to believe till you understand. We are obliged to refer you to all other things in Nature which at the bottom must be matters of faith rather than of reason. There are ten thousand mysteries in Nature which you know are there, but which you cannot understand. You cannot even tell me what electricity is, nor what is the attraction of gravitation. There are these forces, for you see their effects, but how the forces first began you know not.

And here is a great force which is in mankind—the force of evil—and you see its effects everywhere, but how it came there you could not have told unless God had said it came there through inheritance from your parents as the result of the fall of Adam! And there you must leave it and bow your heads. Only let this be remembered—if you would prefer every one of you to have stood or fallen for *yourselves*, it is more than probable you would have fallen—and if you had fallen, you would have fallen forever! The devils, angels as they once were, stood every one upon his own

footing. When, therefore, the angels fell and became devils, they could never be saved—they were left forever to perish!

But because we fell in *another* and did not fall, in the first place, in our own persons, it became possible to restore us by the merits of *Another*. And we have been restored in the Person of the Lord Jesus, so that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus is delivered from the fall of Adam and saved through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ! The way by which we are ruined was such a way that there was a possibility of our being rescued from it. But had we been ruined by our *own* actual sin at the commencement, it is probable our ruin would have been like that of those evil spirits for whom are reserved chains of fire and the blackness of darkness forever! This doctrine, then, of the evil character of man, necessitates the belief in the Fall.

In the next place, this doctrine shows the need of a *new* nature. There is a young man here who says, “I mean to lead a perfectly pure and holy life. I resolve to serve God.” Now should we dissuade such a man from the attempt? By no means! It has been sometimes said that we speak against morality. Never, never a word against it! But we have spoken against the attempt being made to produce *purity* from *impurity*! And we have said that such a nature as ours needs renewing *before* it will be holy. If it shall be said that we speak against navigation because we say that leaky vessels are not fit to put to sea, we are content that fools should so judge us! On the contrary, we hold that we are speaking for the true art of navigation when we say to the man with his water-logged vessel, “You must find another ship if you would navigate a boisterous ocean.”

Young man, you wish to be holy and pure? Then remember that if your heart is full of theft, murder, adultery, and so on, it will always be seeking to come forth from you in word and act—and your utmost endeavors will not be able utterly to restrain the outcoming of that which is there—according to Christ’s word. You had better, then, instead of beginning in *your own* strength, stop awhile and count the cost. What if you could get a new heart and a right spirit? What if that nature of yours could be changed? What if the Divine One who made Adam perfect should make you anew? What if He should drop into you a new spark of life of a higher order than that which now possesses you?

Then you would have a nature as inclined to *holiness* as your present nature tends to sin! Then you would, by force of a new nature, follow after that which is right, as you now naturally follow after that which is evil. “Oh,” you say, “is this possible?” Possible? It is the Gospel of our salvation! We tell you that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! And the process of salvation consists, in part, of the implantation of a *new nature*. By trusting in Jesus you come to love Him. And the love of Him, by the power of the Divine Spirit, becomes a master passion—a new *heart* by which you war with your old passions, trample them under foot, and subdue them!

As soon as you clearly see in your soul, by the Holy Spirit, that Jesus loved you and gave Himself for you, your heart sings—

**“Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss.
My former pride I call my shame,**

And nail my glory to His Cross.”

Then you have a new Object for your love! Instead of loving *self*, you love God in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ. And that new love becomes to you the heart which overcomes the old corruption, and prompts you to walk in holiness and in the fear of God all your days. Oh, young Man, go not forth to this warfare till you have considered the charges! As good men as you have sought to fight with sin and have found its arm too strong for them! Come to the Cross and ask the Savior who fought, Himself, with temptation and overcame it! Ask Him to cleanse you from your past sins in His precious blood! Ask Him to let His Divine Spirit, who is the great Regenerator, enter into you and make you a new creature! And when you are a new creature *then* there shall be the new *longings*, the new *hopes*, the new *fears* which shall enable you to follow a new course to the glory of God.

If your heart is evil, you must get a new heart or you cannot be holy. Do you not see how necessary it is that we should be regenerate or made new creatures, because such a heart as ours cannot possibly enter into Heaven? If the *natural* heart is a great barracks of evil—a sort of Thebes with a hundred gates from which black warriors of sin are continually streaming—how can such an abomination as that ever pass through the pearly gates and be where God is, before the Eternal Throne? O Sirs, these hearts of ours—these depraved affections must be slain! They must be crucified with Christ! They must be conquered, put down, stamped out, or how can we be where Jesus is? Who can do this but the Holy Spirit?

He can do it, He can do it now! He can put into you a new heart which will begin fighting with this old heart at once! And which will go on fighting with it as long as you live—contending, struggling, wrestling—till at last it will drive the old loves out! Your affections will no more be set on self and on evil things, but you will become as pure as God is pure, because God Himself has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. Then you shall enter Heaven! Then you shall dwell with angels! Then you shall see *God* because you have been made perfectly like God by the work of the Holy Spirit!

Reverence and esteem, dear Hearers, that blessed Spirit who can make new creatures of us! Pray to Him that the old man may die in us. That it may be crucified daily. That the old nature may be buried in the tomb of the Savior and that a new heart and right spirit in us may continually gather strength and force till they shall come to their ultimate perfection and we shall enter into our rest.

There is another doctrine which receives also very great strength from this Truth of God. If man's heart is nothing but a source of blackness and sin, admire the Divine Grace of God! What should have led the Lord to save such creatures as we have described if they are, indeed, such creatures? What but Sovereign Grace could look on such wretches? Those who give glory to human merit always try to puff up human nature by speaking in its praise, but we who believe human nature to be utterly fallen and debased—we admire the wonderful kindness and matchless goodness of God—that He should ever have set His love upon such unworthy creatures!

Paul is in admiration of it when he says, “His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins.” A heart full of evil thoughts, and yet He loved me! A heart full of fornication and adultery, and yet He loved me! A heart full of murder, and yet He loved me! A heart that could bear false witness, a heart that could blaspheme, and yet He loved us! O Brothers and Sisters, if we could see ourselves as God saw us in the Fall we should wonder how the eyes of Infinite Purity could have borne with us! How the heart of Infinite Love could have set itself upon us!

You were not loved because of your *goodness*! You were not chosen because of anything in you that was lovely and amiable! You were loved because He would love you! You were chosen because He would do it for His name’s sake—

**“He saw you ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved you notwithstanding all.
He saved you from your lost estate,
His loving kindness, oh how great!”**

Why, Beloved, it must be Sovereign Grace from top to bottom! Grace must be the Alpha. Grace must be the Omega. If this is the true state of the case I do not wonder that so many kick against the doctrine of Election and the kindred doctrines of Grace when they have such a high opinion of themselves! But if God would make them see their own hearts then they would cry out, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

And then they would understand that if ever a man is saved, it is not by his own doing or his own willing, but by Divine Grace alone. It is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy, for He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. The Sovereignty of God would become an easy doctrine to believe if we felt the depravity of our own hearts! If we saw ourselves as in the glass of Scripture and abhorred ourselves in dust and ashes, then instead of having any claims upon God we should say, “Let Him do as seems Him good,” and make our appeal not to His justice but to His unfathomable *mercy*, crying, “According to the multitude of Your loving kindnesses and Your tender mercies blot out my iniquities.”

Yet once again—how this doctrine illustrates the doctrine of the Atonement! Brethren, sin defiles us most horribly! Its act defiles our character, but its *essence* has ruined our nature! It appears from Christ’s statement that we are defiled internally as well as outwardly—that sin is not only an eruption, as it were, upon the skin—but it is in the center of our nature. Behold, then, the need of the precious blood and admire its wonderful potency! The blood of God’s own dear Son which streamed on Calvary’s accursed tree cleanses us in our inner man. O matchless blood! O marvelous purification! Come here, Sinner—though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool. And though your heart itself is even more scarlet than your actions, He can cleanse your heart as well as your life!

Christ can cleanse the fountain and the stream, too. He can remove the external leprosy and heal the internal leprosy, also. Both root and branch He bears away. O Souls, admire and wonder! Bow down with tears streaming from your eyes, and then look up with gladness to the Son of God made flesh, crucified for sinners! For whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Come, you black-hearted! Come, you

defiled and ruined sons of Adam! Come, you that are perishing at the gates of Hell shut out from hope! Come, you who like the men of Zebulun and Naphtali sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death!

Come and trust Christ, and He will send His Spirit upon you and give you new hearts and right spirits! From all your iniquities will He cleanse you! He will be the *new* Creator, for He sits on the Throne this day, and He says, “Behold, I make all things new.” Oh that Jesus may make some new who are here this morning! I have laid the axe at the root of the tree—and every tree that is here must be cut down and cast into the fire unless Christ changes the nature of that tree—and makes it bring forth fruit unto righteousness. I have tried to show that man is utterly ruined in himself. That he has become like the ruins of Babylon where dwell hideous dragons and all manner of loathsome creatures.

I will even liken him to the troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt—where Satan dwells as a leviathan—and with him creeping things innumerable, things obscene and horrible. I have tried, as far as I could, to preach the old unfashionable Truth of God, and I expect to be hated for so doing it! But now, over all, there comes the proclamation of *mercy*—that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself—not imputing their iniquities! And whoever believes in Him shall be delivered from the mischief of the Fall and lifted to dwell where God is—in perfect purity and happiness!

What a wonder is this choice mercy, that a den of dragons should become a temple of the Holy Spirit! What a wonder that the heart, through which blasphemy raged, should become a soul in which Divine Grace reigns! That the profane mouth should become the organ of holy song! Oh what a thousand wonders, that that black heap of human nature—that dunghill of the heart—should yet be made pure as alabaster! That it should become glittering in holy light, and bright with Heaven, shining like pure gold, like transparent glass—and that the Holy Spirit Himself should agree to dwell where the devil dwelt!

“Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?” What wonder! Once they were the temples of lust, of anger, of evil speaking, of blasphemy! And yet they can be, and I trust now are, the temples of the Holy Spirit! Oh marvelous! Marvelous! Let us bless God, and ask that we may realize in ourselves this wondrous miracle to the praise and glory of His Grace, where He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

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“Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came from that same region, and cried out to Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman great is your faith: be it to you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”
Matthew 15:21-28.

WE learn from this chapter, dear Friends, that our Master was tired of battling with hypocrites and formalists and, therefore, withdrew Himself from them. They had come to Him with their foolish charges that His disciples did not observe the traditions of the elders and they made a great fuss about meats, drinks, washing of hands and all sorts of trifles. The Savior spoke very effectively to them—what if I say that He fired His great gun once and for all and silenced them? He told them that the real defilement which rendered men unclean before God was not a matter of externals, but it concerned the *heart*—and that it was not that which entered into a man by way of meats and drinks which defiled him—but that which came out of him in his words and actions which were the result of the impure desires within his heart.

Having thus, as it were, annihilated their flimsy arguments, or scattered them to the four winds of Heaven, the Master went right away from the quibblers. Do you not feel, sometimes, as if you would like to act in the same way? If you are true Believers. If you have learned to worship God in spirit and in truth, do you not get weary with the endless wrangles about rituals, outward ceremonies and the special and particular way in which Divine Worship should be performed? Do you not feel as if there were something better for you to do than to be always fighting about these secondary matters?

Besides this, the atmosphere that was round about these hypocrites and formalists was so heavy, so laden with noxious fog, so unfit for a spiritually-minded person to breathe, that the Lord wanted to get right

away from it to some quiet place where He might rest and, as it were, recover Himself from the sense of oppression and weariness which had come over Him in such company. So He proceeded far from His usual haunts to the very verge of His diocese—to the edge of heathendom—“Jesus went out from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.” Mark tells us that He “entered into a house and would have no man know it.” He did not go there to preach. He went into that far-off region that He might rest, unknown and in quiet for a brief season—and then go back to Galilee and, once more, preach the Gospel to those who might gather to hear Him.

Let us, from this narrative, learn to avoid making much of little insignificant things, lest by so doing we drive Christ away from us! Let us beware of giving heed to the traditions of men and putting them in the place of the Commandments of God lest Christ takes Himself to some other place and so the candlestick is taken out of our midst and we are left in the dark.

I would have you notice, dear Friends, that even when Jesus Christ goes away weary, He still has designs of love toward the people. He is not merely turning with disgust away from Scribes and Pharisees, but He is going to meet one whom His far-seeing eyes have beheld—a lonely, sorrowful woman who is coming to meet Him. Eternal decrees have appointed that at a certain spot this needy one shall meet Him and He knows that it is so. And, therefore, He is on His way to the borders of Tyre and Sidon to accomplish the purpose of almighty Grace! See how much the Savior thought of a single soul! To His heart it was worthwhile to walk many weary miles even to bless *one*. We are ambitious to bring hundreds to Christ and we are quite right if we desire it only for His Glory. Let us even enlarge our longing, but we shall never bring many to the Savior until we first feel overjoyed at the thought of bringing even one! We have not yet sufficiently learned the value of an immortal soul if we do not feel that we would be willing to live, say 70 years, to be the means of saving *one soul* and be willing to compass the whole globe—preaching in every city, town and village—if we might only be rewarded at the last with just *one* convert! Evidently our Lord Jesus realized intensely the value of one lost sheep and He left the 99 that He might go and find this solitary sad soul and bring her to Himself—

“Oh, come let us go and find them!”

Let us always be on the watch and be willing to be drifted by Providence anywhere if, in that drifting, we may come across some shipwrecked soul who may hail us—and we may effect its rescue and take it home to the Port of Peace.

I want to try to set forth the case of this woman, not going fully into the whole story—for I have preached upon this narrative many times—but especially dwelling upon the one point that this woman had great faith in Jesus Christ, an intense persuasion that He was able to heal her daughter and, moreover, that He had a most loving heart and was willing to work the cure she craved. She was determined that whatever might be her disadvantages, she would press her suit with the Son of David until she obtained from Him the blessing for which she was asking. There may

be someone to whom I am now speaking who is at a great disadvantage with regard to salvation, but, dear Friend, if you can believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is both able and willing to save you, I want to encourage you to press your suit with Him and never to cease your pleading until you get the desire of your heart—and He sends you away saying, “Be it to you even as you will.”

I. First, then, concerning this woman, notice that SHE WAS ALTOGETHER AN OUTSIDER.

She was not a Jewess, she did not belong to God’s chosen people, she was not one to whom Christ came to preach, for He said that He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. She was what we sometimes call, “*a rank outsider.*” To herself or her fathers, no Covenant promise had ever been given, no Prophet had ever spoken, no Gospel message had ever been delivered. So far from being within the Church, she was not even within the congregation! She had no connection whatever with the whole Gospel system—except such a connection as Infinite Grace was pleased to make.

I delight to think that every now and then persons come into this congregation who were not born and brought up in the midst of godly surroundings—for whom no mother has ever prayed, to whom no father has ever spoken a loving word concerning Christ—persons who were never regular occupants of seats in the House of Prayer and, perhaps, have only a very few times in their lives ever entered such edifices, who have not read the Bible and have not been in the habit of bowing the knee in prayer. Perhaps they have never breathed a prayer except in an hour of extreme sickness, or in some time of great alarm, as in the midst of a storm at sea. Well, this woman was a type of persons in this condition. She was no Israelite—she was a Canaanite woman and the Canaanites were condemned to die—they were to be exterminated out of the country! She was one of the handful who remained of the aboriginal tribes that were not slain by the sword of Justice, but had lived on, as it were, stealing their lives from the edge of the sword. She was one of a condemned race, a people who, though spared from execution, continued to worship false gods and who did much harm to Israel by introducing the worship of Baal among them. You remember the mischief worked by that Sidonian queen, proud Jezebel, who tried to stamp out the worship of Jehovah and to set up, instead thereof, her idol gods.

This woman who came to Christ was a descendant of those heathen tribes that inhabited the northern part of the country which God had given to Israel, yet she was the one who, almost beyond any other woman, *exhibited a mighty faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* I wonder whether I am addressing any who are, apparently, as far off from every religious hope as this poor Canaanite was, who, nevertheless, shall feel within their hearts faith in Him who is the Son of David and the Son of God—faith in the Christ who, from the highest Heaven, descended far that He might tread this guilty earth and bow His shoulders to bear His people’s guilt that He might lift them from the deeps of Hell up to the heights of the happiness of God? I should not be at all surprised if this should prove to be the case, for God has often found His best servants

among His worst enemies! Some of the brightest diamonds in Christ's crown have been dug out of the darkest mines. Oh, that it might be so, that while I am preaching, someone who is far off from God might hear the great silver trumpet blow and might say in his heart, "I will go to Jesus with my cries and tears, for I believe Him to be the Son of God, mighty to save—and if mercy is to be had I will find it, though I deserve it not, but am far off from Him. I will press toward Him, I will break through every obstacle and barrier till I come to Him and obtain salvation at His hands."

That is our first point, this woman was altogether an outsider, and I hope our meditation on it may cheer some far-off one and induce him or her, also, to come to Jesus for salvation.

II. In the second place, this woman was not only far from all outward religious privileges, but SHE HAD A VERY DREADFUL CASE TO PLEAD.

She came to Christ to plead for her daughter who was "grievously vexed with a devil." Now, if one comes to Christ to ask Him to cure blindness, or sickness of any ordinary kind, it is a very simple case compared with this woman's. "Lord, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil; a demon has come and made her body to be the place of his abode. O Lord, Son of David, interfere in this horrible case! The devil's hand is in it and only You can cast him out." I know that there are some—it may be that they have stolen into this Tabernacle, perhaps driven in by the rain—whose case is so bad that they have to conclude that *the devil himself had a hand in it*. When they come before Christ, it is no common sin they have to confess, no ordinary soul-ruin they have to set before Him—it seems as if there has arisen from the infernal Pit some demon who has made them to be the special objects of his attack. The devil is in you, is he? Nevertheless, bring your case before Christ! If there were *seven* devils within you, instead of only one, remember her out of whom He cast seven devils—yes, and if it were a *legion*—if a whole band of demons had taken possession of you, remember the Gadarene demoniac out of whom Christ cast a legion of devils!

I know that you are ready to say, "My case is so horrible that I could not relate it." Do not relate it, except to Christ. "Oh, but my sin is so great that I could not tell you!" Do not tell me! I have heard enough, of late, about horrible sin and I do not need to hear any more about it—tell it to Jesus, tell it in His ear and though you are compelled to feel that in that sin there is something more sinful than usual, something extraordinary and out of the common, yet, I pray you, have faith in Jesus Christ that if you can but get at Him, He can deliver even *you* out of all this mischief, all this ruin and all this filth. Though the devil, himself, is in you, yet, if you believe in Jesus Christ and you come and trust Him, you shall be saved—

**"He is able, He is willing!
Doubt no more."**

Oh, that some poor heart, driven almost to despair, might nevertheless cry, "I do believe! I will believe in the dying, living Savior and I will never rest until I receive from His lips my sentence of pardon—and from the touch of His hands obtain that eternal life which shall deliver me from

the wrath to come.” You may well be encouraged by the case of this woman who became a great Believer although she began far off from God—and in her desperate sorrow the devil himself had a large share.

III. Further, when this woman came to Christ, she found that HE WAS SHUT UP AWAY FROM HER.

That fact does not appear in Matthew’s account, but, as I have reminded you, it is recorded in Mark’s Gospel. When our Lord Jesus Christ went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, He, “entered into a house, and would have no man know it.” It is quite clear that He needed rest. He had traveled, as it were, *incognito*, for He did not want to be known and He had gone into a house and shut the door. Then Mark adds, “But He could not be hid, for a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him and came and fell at His feet.” It did seem a dreadful thing to think that Christ could heal her daughter and she believed that He was willing to do it, yet there He was, inside the house, shut away from her. And Peter said, “You really cannot see Him.” And even John said, “Do not trouble the Master, for He is very weary and must rest.” And practical James said, “My good woman, this is a matter that must rest with us and we cannot have the Master interrupted just now.” They all conspired to keep her away, for He would have no man know where He was. He had asked them to guard the door a little while, to let Him be in quiet. He needed to recover from the sickness of heart that He felt at the remembrance of those carping Pharisees, so He must be a alone little while. Those who work for Christ know how much they sometimes need to be left alone, yet it was very discouraging to the woman to find that the door was shut when Christ was in the house.

Now, dear Sirs, are there any of you here who have great faith in what the Lord Jesus Christ would do for you if you could but come to Him? He well deserves that you should have, for there is none like He, able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him. He is willing to forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy and He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” But, perhaps, with all your faith, it has seemed to you as if the door was shut against you. I used to feel that if my brother found peace with God, I could understand it. And if my sisters rejoiced in the salvation of Christ, I was very glad and could well believe that—but I thought that for *myself* there was no door of hope, no promise that could be intended for me. It is often quite easy to believe for other people. The difficulty is in believing for yourself—and sometimes this is the form of the devil’s temptation—“The Savior is not accessible to *you*. He does not mean, even, to *speak* to you, your case is such that you are shut out from His mercy.” If Satan lies to you like that, I trust that you will say, like this woman, “Well, if the door is shut, I mean to go in, all the same. The Son of David is hiding, is He? But *He* cannot be hid.”

I like what someone calls, “this woman’s glorious impudence.” The angels, when they come before their Lord, are full of holy reverence and veil their faces with their wings. I doubt not that this woman also had her fears, but at that particular time she exercised a Grace that was more to the purpose. Forgetting all her fears, she said, “He cannot be hid. I must see Him, and I will. My child at home is tossed and torn with a demon,

thrown into the fire and into the water, and I am full of agony on her account. A mother's heart is in me and I cannot rest until I have seen this great Physician. He can heal my child and I believe He will—I *must* get to Him." So she forces her way past the bodyguard of Apostles and gets within the door and falls at Christ's feet! And there she lies and cries, "O Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil!"

I wish that each of you would act like that poor woman did and say, "Oh, if the door of mercy is shut against me, yet I must still try to open it! Whatever the barrier is in my way, it will have to yield, for I must be saved. I cannot be lost, I cannot be content to sit down and perish in my sins! I must get to Jesus Christ and cry to Him for pardon, and I am resolved that I will do so. With holy impudence, as it may seem to others, I am determined that I will approach Him and cast myself at His dear feet."

I like the splendor of this woman's faith. She is a Canaanite whose case has the devil mixed up with it and from whom Christ conceals Himself—yet she must and will somehow get to Him! Now, what happens next?

IV. The woman's faith was so great that our Lord delighted to see it and He wanted to see how far it would go, so He put it to a further test. Therefore, next, when she cried to Christ, HE REFUSED HER ANY ANSWER.

She had broken in upon His privacy. She had daringly invaded the apartment where He sought to be in quiet and she lay at His feet and prayed a sweetly-appropriate prayer. She expressed her faith in His Divinity, calling Him, "Lord," and her faith in His blessed royal Humanity, calling Him the "Son of David," after she had said, "Have mercy on me," asking only for mercy. It was the only plea she used, "Mercy, Lord, mercy! Son of David, mercy!" Yet this was, at first, all the answer she received—"He answered not a word." As Augustine says, "The Word spoke not a word," and that was so unlike Him. He who was always so ready with responses to the cry of grief had no response for her! As if He were made of stone, He scarcely gave her a glance! And when she looked up to those lips which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, they dropped not a syllable on her. Oh, what would she not give if He would but speak? He could heal her daughter with a *word*, yet not a word did He utter! An awful silence filled the room as she waited for Him to speak. But she did not give up in despair—that is the point—she still had faith in Him and when there was nothing for her ears to hear, there was still something for her heart to believe.

Perhaps I am addressing some poor lost one who has been praying. You have been crying to Christ for mercy as best you could. You have implored Him, "Lord," You have called Him, "Son of David," You have lain at His feet, you have wept, you have implored, you have entreated mercy, crying, "Lord, have mercy upon me." Yet He has answered you not a word. You have been to hear the Gospel, but you seem to be worse, rather than better, for hearing it. You have spoken to a Christian friend

about your fears, but he has not been able to remove them and, all the while you have prayed and prayed again and yet again!

I will tell you what happened to me long ago. When I was convinced of sin, I began to pray. After my own fashion, in deep distress, and from my very heart I prayed many a time, yet I received no answer and scarcely a ray of hope had found its way into my soul. I heard my mother say, as she was talking to us children about our souls, that she did not believe there was living a single man who dared to declare that he had truly sought the Savior and that the Savior had refused him. She said she did not think that even in Hell there was one who would be bold enough to accuse the Savior of having refused him when he sought Him with prayer and in faith. I did not say so to her, but I thought within my heart, "I am one who has really and sincerely sought for salvation through Jesus Christ and I have not found it." And I made up my mind that I would tell others that Christ did *not* hear prayer and that one *might* seek Him with all his heart and yet not find Him.

Friends, I have never told that untruth to anyone yet, for before I had an opportunity of declaring what I thought was true, I had found Him, myself! I discovered that, after all, it was *I who was deaf* to His voice and not He who was too far off to answer me! I heard that blessed text, "Look to Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," and at once I looked to Him and I found peace through the blood of the Cross! So will you, dear Friend, as soon as you look to Him by faith. If you have prayed, keep on praying! If you have cried apparently in vain, still cry to Him!

Remember that *there is no other door at which you can knock*, therefore you had better continue to knock at this one! If you were on a wild prairie at night and had lost your way and, at last, you saw a light in a window and you came to a lone house and knocked there, but no one came to the door at first, you would say to yourself, "Well, I must knock again, because there is probably not another house within 20 miles. I may be eaten by wolves before I find another, so I will just knock, and knock, and knock, and knock again till I gain admission." Keep on knocking, dear Friend—there is Somebody hearing you—depend upon it! And though He may seem slow in coming, He is sure if He is slow. He is just trying you a little to see if you really are in earnest. You have heard of run-away knocks at our doors—there is a loud rap and the poor servants go to answer it but there is nobody there, for the mischievous boys have run away. Well, the Master is seeing whether you are going to play with Him with run-away knocks!

If you are a genuine seeker of entertainment in His great house of mercy, you will stand and say, "I will still knock, and perish knocking if I must, but I will never go away from this spot! Jesus Christ can save me. He alone can save me. I believe that He will save me and I will never cease to pray while my heart beats and my tongue moves. If I have to die praying, I will die so, but I will never cease from it till I get an answer of peace." Oh, that God would bless this message to some who have been discouraged by having to wait long for answers to their prayers!

V. This woman had a further discouragement, for JESUS REFUSED THE PRAYER OF HIS OWN APOSTLES. They began to help her in prayer,

as she was not, herself, heard. They took some sort of pity on her and went to the Master and said to Him, "Please, Lord, send her away; she makes such a noise, crying after us." Not out of pity to her, so much as from love of quiet for themselves, they became intercessors for her with the Lord Jesus Christ. Probably I am speaking to someone who says, "Sir, all you have said is true about me and I have prayed up to now in vain. But I have asked a Christian friend to pray for me. The other Monday night, I penciled a little note and put it on the table in the Tabernacle, and they prayed for me at the Prayer Meeting. I have asked you, dear Sir, to pray for me, and I hope you have, but no good has come of it. I am in the same state of sorrow and misery after all the prayers that have been presented on my behalf." Yes, dear Friend, and do you remember what happened in the case before us? The disciples soon gave up the task. They prayed their little bit of prayer and they did not get the answer they wanted, so they left—but the woman did not—*she had more perseverance in her than the Apostles had*. The Master answered them and then they stopped and said no more—but that did not stop *her*! They might all cease praying, but she would not cease.

Now, suppose the prayers of a whole Church have failed with regard to you? Still pray on! Yes, if all the saints who live on earth had joined in one common intercession and had all cried to God for you—and they had received no favorable answer about you and, therefore, had ceased praying—still you should not cease crying to the Lord. Go on praying, for He will yet hear you, even in such a case as that—if you can have the splendid faith to be a forlorn hope, and go alone, and only pray the more because others cease to pray for you. Like this woman, worship the Lord and say, "Lord, help me." Though your prayer grows shorter because you are getting weary, if it grows very intense and you still keep on pleading, it cannot be long before a prayer-hearing Savior will give you the desire of your heart! I like this point in the woman, although the Apostles had ceased praying, she had not.

VI. Next, notice that in answer to the Apostles, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST GAVE HER A VERY HEAVY REBUKE. He said, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

That seemed to exclude her altogether, yet still she persevered—and I want to draw a parallel between her case and yours. Dear Friend, possibly someone has whispered in your ear, "Suppose you are not one of the elect." Well, that was very much what our Lord's expression meant to her. She was not one of the chosen people and she had heard Christ say, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Notice that this woman does not battle with that Truth of God at all. She does not raise any question about it. She wisely waives it and she just goes on praying, "Lord, help me! Lord, have mercy upon me!" I invite you, dear Friend, to do the same. You are not, at present, in a state of mind to understand the glorious doctrine of election. You have, now, the dark side of it turned towards you and, I suppose, it will be so with you until you exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—when you will be able to see it from another point of view. But, anyhow, there is Christ able to save you and He never yet rejected a sinner who came to Him! Therefore come

along with you. As to that difficulty about your election, forget it. If you ask me to set up a ladder and to climb to Heaven and turn over those leaves, folded and sealed, of God's great Book of Life, I cannot do it—neither can you! But I can again remind you that He has said, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." He has bid me go and "preach the Gospel to every creature," and you are a creature, so I preach it to you on the strength of being commanded to preach it to you! I invite you to say, "Of the house of Israel, or not of the house of Israel, O Son of David, have mercy on me!" Whether you seem to be sheep or goat, still cry, "Son of David, have mercy on me! I will never leave You, nor cease to pray to You till You shall grant my petition."

This is the kind of faith that Jesus Christ delights in! He was hearing this woman's prayer all the while and He was resolved to answer it. His heart was getting rest out of her faith—it was such a blessed change for Him from those hypocritical Pharisees with all their rubbish about washing pots and cups! It was such a delight to Him to see this woman believing in Him in real earnest. Faith is the food on which Christ feeds, it is the wine He drinks! This is the cluster that fills the chalice He holds in His hand! These are the apples that are delicious to His taste. He loves being trusted and if the biggest sinner out of Hell will trust Him, that trust is sweetest of all to Christ! O you Canaanite woman, you with whom the devil has had to do, you who have not been heard in your prayers up till now—if you can have the courageous faith to not take, "No," for an answer, but to press on and believe that the Son of David must and will accept you, you shall be accepted! It is but a little while and He will say, "Be it to you even as you will."

VII. Lastly, SHE KEPT ON PLEADING UNTIL SHE PREVAILED. The disciples had given up praying, as I have shown you, and the woman had received a severe rebuff from Christ, yet she continued her prayer. Look, she worships Christ, adores Him, crying, "Lord, help me!" Even when she has done that, she gets only this for an answer, "It is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs"—the word really means, "the little dogs." Oh, but that was a hard saying, was it not? It was a good nut with a sweet kernel—and she knew how to crack it—but it had a very hard shell. There are many who would have turned away after such an answer as that, but this Syrophenician was a grand woman and Christ knew it. She had splendid faith and He prized it, otherwise He would not have tried it so! He knew that she could bear even this test, so He called her a "dog."

Notice that *she kept on with her pleading* whether she was a dog or no dog! Instead of turning back when called a dog, she just pressed forward all the more. She did not raise any question and say, "Now, Lord, that is really too bad. I may be a wretched woman, but I am not a *dog*." No, after Christ had called her a dog, she took the title to herself and found no fault with it and, dear Friends, whatever the Bible calls you, accept it! Do not quarrel with it, for it is quite true. God's Word was not sent to flatter human nature, but to give a faithful description of it. Then, believe it, accept it. Say, "Well, Lord, you call me a 'dog.' It is quite true, I am only a dog."

Look how this woman turns this title round! She seems to say, "Lord, I am a dog, but, then, *I am Your dog and even dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*" By this it is implied that she meant, "Lord, I am Your dog and I am happy to be Your dog. I would sooner be Your dog than be the devil's darling. But, Lord, You call me a 'little dog.' Well, the little dogs are those that are allowed to come indoors and to come near their masters, so I am permitted to come near You. And being under the table, if a crumb falls, the little dog gets it. Lord, let me have the crumbs! You give a loaded table to Your sheep of whom You speak so much—the house of Israel—there is bread enough and to spare for them! You can give me this crumb that I crave and there will be quite as much left as the children can eat." I like to hear this woman talk in this fashion. As one says, "the children of Israel, that Christ had been with, had turned into dogs; but here is a dog of a Canaanite and she has turned into a child." I am sorry to say that there are some who seemed to be children of the Kingdom who turn into dogs and leave Christ. But there are many poor dogs with no privileges that are made willing, by Sovereign Grace, in the day of Christ's power, and the dogs are turned into His children!

Now, whatever you really are, poor Sinner, confess that you are just that! And whatever hard word Christ gives you, say, "It is true, Lord." And then come with the hard words and with your broken heart, and just lie at His feet and say, "Lord, still hear me, and grant me this great blessing, for it will be but a crumb to You. Dogs get crumbs—let me get Grace." That was a grand utterance of faith! I wish that some to whom I am now speaking would exercise such faith in Jesus Christ. Speak after this fashion, "Though all men shall tell me that I shall be lost, I will not believe them. There is a Savior and I mean to have Him as mine. Though all men shall tell me that Christ cannot save me, I will not believe it, for Christ can save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him and I cannot have gone beyond the uttermost, so I will believe that He is able to save me."

Do I speak to anyone who says, "But you do not know how I am discouraged?" Well, then, I put this question to you—"Are you a Canaanite?" No, you are not of that accursed race, you are of the same race as the most of us, many of whom have been saved. Yet remember that Canaanite as this woman was, *she* believed in Christ! Then why should not you? Have you prayed as she did, distinctly, definitely and received no answer? Well, if you have, your discouragement is not greater than hers was. But listen. Did the Lord Jesus Christ *ever* say that He was not sent to you? Did He *ever*, anywhere in Scripture, indicate that His commission excluded *you*? He *did* seem to say that to this woman, yet she could bear even *that* discouragement—and you have never had as heavy a cross as that to carry!

Next, did the Lord Jesus Christ ever call you a dog? Tell me anywhere in Scripture where He calls *you*, "dog." But if He did, this woman overcame that difficulty and so should you. O dear Soul, if there should stand between you and Christ all the legions of the infernal Lake of Fire, you might venture through them all in the name of Christ! If there did lie

between my soul and Christ, seven hells, I would swim through them that I might get at Him! He must be able to save me! It cannot be possible that I should have gone beyond the power which is Omnipotent, or that I have sinned beyond the virtue of the blood of the Son of God! It cannot be that I should have sins that should be mightier than Almighty Mercy! Write me down as the blackest of the black and vilest of the vile—what then? So much the more Glory to the Grace of God when He shall save such a sinner as I am! Therefore I will come and trust Him!

O blessed and gracious Spirit, sweetly compel some to believe in Jesus! You deserve, O Lord Jesus, that we believe You up to the hilt! That we believe You to the uttermost, for You are more than our faith can ever make You to be. Help us to believe You. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” This is the Gospel! Accept it and you shall find it true. God grant it! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 15:18-31.**

Verses 18-21. *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* He went right away, not because He was afraid to speak the Truth, but because, having done so, He did not care to remain in the company of those who were round about Him. He would rather go even to the verge of heathendom than live in the midst of Pharisaic hypocrisy—“Jesus went out from there and departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.”

22. *And, behold*—There is something here that is worth beholding, so the Holy Spirit draws attention to it, just as we sometimes print, N.B., nota bene—mark well—“behold”—

22. *A woman of Canaan came from that same region.* Possibly she did not know that Christ had come, but, anyhow, when Christ comes, sinners come. He journeyed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and this woman met Him.

22, 23. *And cried out to Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.* Perhaps they meant, “Give her the blessing and let her go. You are seeking quiet, here, and she will not let you, nor us, either, have any. “Send her away.” They made a great mistake when they said, “She cries after us.” It was Christ to whom she cried, not His disciples!

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* “My ministerial commission is only to the Jews.” As a Savior, He comes to save sinners out of all nations, but as the Messiah, His special mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

25. *Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me.* “Then she came and worshipped Him.” If Jesus Christ was not really and truly

God, He was a base imposter to allow this woman to worship Him! She had called Him, "Lord," once before, and He did not rebuke her, and now she not only calls Him, "Lord," but she *worships* Him. She was doing quite right, for He is none other than very God of very God! "Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me."

26. *But He answered and said, It is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* Or, "to little dogs," for the word is in that form in the Greek.

27. *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.* It was well for her that the Master had used that diminutive form of the word, for the bigger dogs in the East were not permitted in the house, but the little dogs were admitted to play with the children. She seemed to snatch at that idea as she cried, "Truth, Lord: yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table," as though the greatest possible blessing to her was but a crumb to Him and but a crumb compared with the bread which He was putting upon the table of Israel. The greater blessing which He was giving to the children might prompt Him to give a crumb to her.

28. *Then Jesus answered and said to her, O woman, great is your faith: be it to you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Oh, the triumph of faith! God grant it to us! Yet this woman may surely shame many of us—we have not half her discouragements and we have not half her confidence in Christ!

29. *And Jesus departed from there.* He is always on the move, for He has always something else to do. As soon as His deed of Grace is done in one part, He hastens to another. "And Jesus departed from there."—

29-31. *And came near to the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came to Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.* This was Israel's table, indeed, and when you see these many mighty cures that Christ worked, you can easily justify the speech of the Syrophenician woman, and agree with her that what she sought was only a *crumb* compared with the bountiful feast of fat things that was prepared for the favored nation!

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

PRAYER—ITS DISCOURAGEMENTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS

NO. 2841

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 26, 1903.**

***DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON A THURSDAY EVENING, IN THE SUMMER OF 1861.***

***“But He answered her not a word.”
Matthew 15:23.***

WITH Christians it is not a matter of question as to whether God hears prayer or not. There is no fact in mathematics which has been more fully demonstrated than this fact in experience that God hears prayer. About some other things in Christianity, young Believers may have a question, but about the Lord's answering prayer, even they cannot entertain a doubt while, to the old and advanced Believer who has tested the power of the Mercy Seat and proved it thousands of times, it is a matter about which he never allows a question, for he knows that as surely as that he, himself, exists, and that God lives in Heaven, the prayers of puny but believing man have power to move the almighty arm of God!

Probably, in the course of the past week, some of us have met with as many as a dozen special answers to prayer. Skeptics spend their sneers in vain upon us. Facts are blessed, as well as stubborn things. Men may say that it is not possible that the cries and petitions of man can move the heart of God. They may question it, they may raise doubts about it, but doubts upon this matter never enter our minds—they never touch our inner consciousness, for we know that answers to prayer are a fact—and until we can doubt that we are men, until we can doubt that we breathe the air or live on food, until we can doubt that which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands—we cannot doubt that God IS, “and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

Of course, our confidence that God answers prayer is not an argument to another man. He who has not tried it cannot have proved it for himself. But to those who have tried prayer and proved it, we insist upon it that it amounts to a demonstration as clear as logic itself can make it, when, having called upon God, not merely once or twice, but thousands of times throughout their lives, they have invariably met with the same result, namely, a gracious answer from Him who really does and will hear prayer! Yet there is, sometimes, a strange thing which puzzles the earnest Believer. There are times when it seems as if his prayers were not heard, for certainly it is not answered, or, at least, not answered as he expected. There are seasons, even with God's true children—

***“When at His feet they groan,
Yet take their needs away.”***

They present their petition before the Lord, yet their request does not seem to be complied with, then and there. To those who know that this is no strange thing which has happened to them, it is not a matter which staggers their faith, for they can say, with Ralph Erskine, that—

***“They’re heard when answered soon or late—
Yes, heard when they no answer get.
Are kindly answered when refused,
And treated well when harshly used.”***

They understand that God’s delays are not denials and that His denials to particular requests are only intended to let us know that He will give us something richer and better than we have asked. If He does not pay your prayers in silver, He will pay them in gold! And if your prayers are long in coming back, they shall be like a richly-laden ship which is all the longer on its way because of its costly freight and which shall amply repay for the time spent on the voyage by the richness of the cargo it brings from the far country!

Yet I must again remind you that to some, and especially to young seekers, it is a staggering experience when, having long cried to Jesus, He answers them not a word. When, having prayed to Him, they have seen no smile upon His face and have heard no word of comfort from those lips of His which drop like honeycombs to others, but seem to be as dry wells to them. I am going to discuss this matter, now, as God the Holy Spirit may enable me, and I pray that He may make it comforting to many a distracted spirit. May some be graciously brought up out of the deep darkness of their prison and be caused to rejoice in the liberty with which Christ makes His people free!

I shall speak of the text, first, in reference to *those who have been praying for themselves*. And, secondly, in regard to *those who have been praying for others*.

I. First, then, I am going to describe the case of SOME WHO HAVE BEEN PRAYING FOR THEMSELVES, but to whom, as yet, Christ has answered not a word.

I can describe the case of these people experimentally, for I have felt the same. As some of you know, I passed through five years of agony during which my young spirit was crushed almost to despair. During those five years, if ever a child prayed to God, I did. And if ever a lad groaned out of a longing spirit to Jehovah in Heaven, I did. You may remember that part of John Bunyan’s “Grace Abounding” where he speaks of the exercises of his soul and especially of his terror because his prayers seemed to reverberate from a brazen Heaven and not to pierce the skies. Such, too, was my experience. I am sure that I was sincere in my prayers and in my groans that could not be uttered—yet there were no answers to my supplications. I can speak, therefore, I trust, with all the more power because I can speak sympathetically of something which I have known and felt!

Poor Soul, you have been praying for these last few months and your complaint is that you have not had one gracious answer to your peti-

tions, or one precious promise applied with power to your soul! Let me remind you that the poor woman, of whom our text speaks, was in a similar condition. Indeed, not only did she not receive a promise, but she received a rebuff from Christ! Instead of a gracious invitation to come unto Him, she had almost a command to go from Him. When He did speak to her, He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Yours, then, is not a singular case. You must not sit down in despair because no promise has come home to your soul. Still continue to cry unto the Lord. Still be constantly in prayer to Him. He will, He must hear you, by-and-by, and you shall have your heart's desire.

"Yes," you say, "but not only have I not had a promise, but I have not had any comforting sign whatever! The more I pray, the worse I feel—and the more I groan, the more it seems that I may groan. If my prayers are arrows, they are arrows that fall downwards and return into my own heart instead of flying up to God. I must pray, I cannot help it—my soul would burst if it did not express itself in words—yet my prayer does me little or no good. I rise from my knees more distressed than ever and I come out of my closet, not as a man released from prison, but as he that passes from one dungeon to another! The Lord has refused to listen to my supplication—He has forgotten to be gracious—in anger He has shut up the heart of His compassion."

Perhaps you even go further than this and say, "I feel as if my prayer will never be answered. Something within me tells me that I may pray, but that after all, I shall perish—that there may be mercy for all others in the world, but not for me. I may lift the knocker of Mercy's gate, but the sound shall be only like that of a hammer upon my coffin—there shall be no music of hope as I rap at the golden gate! I know that God hears prayer, but not the prayer of the wicked—that is an abomination unto the Lord. Such, I fear, is *my* prayer and, therefore, He will not hear me." Ah, poor Soul! Let me remind you that there is nothing that is so deluding as *feelings*. Christians cannot live by feelings, nor can you. Let me further tell you that these feelings are the work of Satan—they are not right feelings. What right have you to set up your feelings against the Word of Christ? He has expressly said, "For everyone that asks, receives, and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened." It is not a question whether a man who truly prays shall be saved! He *is* saved, though he may not know it! He has the germs of salvation in his prayers! "Behold, he prays," means, "Behold, he lives! Behold, he is accepted! Behold, Heaven opens its gates for him!" He prays—Jehovah hears, mercy answers—the man is blessed. I pray you, then, let not your feelings fly in the teeth of God's promises, but hope on, for, though your case is very sad, it is not a strange one—there is hope for you.

Having thus described your case, let me now warn you of a danger. There is a danger to which all those are exposed who have prayed for any length of time without consciously receiving an answer from God—and that is either to get despairing thoughts of themselves or else hard thoughts of Christ. That poor Canaanite was a brave woman. She came of an accursed race, but certainly there was a special blessing resting

upon her. If you or I had been there when Christ spoke to her so harshly, I wonder whether we would have taken His remarks as well as she did. Do you remember times when Christ has been silent to you? If so, you can imagine what her feelings must have been when, “He answered her not a word.” Some of you who have quick tempers, would have said, if that had been your experience, “Is this the Messiah of whom we have heard so much and who is said to be so ready to relieve the distressed? Here we have been crying to Him in tones that seemed piercing enough to make a heart of adamant melt for us, yet He has not designed to answer us. He seems to be stone deaf, or, if He hears us, He does not condescend to give us any reply! Is this the kind and tender spirit of which we have heard so much?”

And when at last He spoke and said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs,” some would have said, “If He would not grant us our request, He need not have used insulting epithets to us. Dogs, indeed! What means He by that term? He means that we do not belong to the favored race of Israel and a fine thing it would be for us if we did! Are they not oppressed under the Roman yoke and cast off like withered branches?” The Canaanite woman might have said, “Why does He call me a *dog*? Am I not a woman and an honest woman, too, and one who does not deserve such a title as that? I wish I had never asked for mercy at His hands. To get such an insult as to have the name of ‘dog’ thrown at me is too bad and I will not endure it!”

That may be a strong way of putting the matter, but you and I have probably put it in just that way. Have we not thought because Christ has not answered our prayers, that there was a mistake about His graciousness? That He was not the Christ that some said He was? That He did not mean His invitation when He said, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”? That He desired to tantalize poor souls, making them pray and cry to Him while He meant to be deaf to their requests? Have you not had harsh thoughts of Christ like those? If you have, I pray you to put them all away from you and not to fall into this snare of Satan! Jesus is still the good Christ! Though He may seem to be stony-hearted, He is not so in reality—He is always tender, He has a heart of compassion. Slander Him not, then, but be of good courage and still cry to Him!

Possibly, Satan says to you, “Your prayer is not of the right sort and, therefore, you never will be heard.” Yes, but that Canaanite woman’s prayer to Christ was of the right sort, yet “He answered her not a word.” Notice what her prayer was—“Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David.” She gave Him the right name. She might have said, “Son of Abraham.” That would have signified that He was the One in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. That was the Covenant which the Lord made with Abraham. But this woman said, “Son of David.” The Covenant made with David related not only to blessing and increase, but also to a kingdom—so this woman seemed to say to Christ, “Man of Sorrows though You are, You are of royal blood. Your visage is more marred than that of any man and You wear not a diadem, yet are You King.” She did,

as it were, pay Him the homage which Pilate unwittingly paid Him when he placed over His head the inscription, “This is Jesus the King of the Jews.” “Son of David”—she knew how to address Him.

Then notice how she pleaded with Him. She appealed not to His justice, but to His mercy, to the love of His tender and compassionate heart—“Have mercy on me.” This was the plea of the publican, the prayer by which He was justified—“God be merciful to me a sinner.” There was nothing wrong in this woman’s prayer to Christ, yet, “He answered her not a word.” So then, poor Heart, your prayers, also, may be right and proper, and yet not be answered. If they are not answered, faint not, but continue to pray. The Lord will yet reply to your petition! He will open the windows of Heaven and shower down His mercy upon you, and you shall receive it with a gladsome heart.

Now, having reminded you of your danger, let me call to your recollection the grounds of your comfort. What had this woman to comfort her? Well, first, she had Jesus Christ’s face. He said to her, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” Now, my idea of the Savior is that He could not utter that harsh sentence without, somehow or other, letting the woman see, by the very expression of His Countenance, that He was keeping something back—and that there was love yet in store for her. You know that your children can soon detect the meaning of what you say to them, for they can read your face as well as your words. So can poor beggars and so could this poor woman who was begging of Christ so hard for her child. “Yes,” she seemed to say, “Your lips may utter harsh words, but Your loving eyes flash not the fire that should go with such severe sentences. I see a tear lifting up Your eyelids even now. I believe the language of Your face—that marred face—marred with sympathy for others’ sorrows, marred with the cares and burdens of others which have weighed You down! Your face will not let me believe that Your heart is harsh.” So, Sinner, for your comfort, let me beseech you to look into the face of Jesus Christ! Do you believe that He, the Son of Mary, the Man of Sorrows, grief’s acquaintance—can reject you? O Christ, when I picture You before my eyes—especially when I see Your face caked with bloody sweat in Gethsemane and listen to Your agonized groans in the Garden—I cannot and I will not believe that You can ever reject a suppliant who cries to You, “Be merciful to me!”

Or, if that shall not be enough to cheer you, remember that this poor woman had something more to comfort her, for she had heard the story of Christ’s good deeds. She had been told, even in Tyre, what He had done in Capernaum. And she had heard, though far away, what He had done in Chorazin, so she believed that He who had done such good deeds to others, could not be harsh to her. So, Sinner, let me tell you of the good deeds that Christ has done to others! I could bring you hundreds, or even thousands, who could truly say with the Psalmist, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” Speak with your eyes, my Brothers and Sisters, and bear witness to the fact which I now testify—has not God heard your prayers, though you were sinners even as others, as vile by nature and as hopeless by depravity? Did He not bring us up out of

the horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set our feet upon a rock, and establish our goings? Sinner, He who did this for us will and must do the same for you if you plead for mercy through the precious blood of His dear Son!

But you have one comfort which this poor woman never had—she could not be told that Christ had died for her! Sinner, you who are seeking Christ, say not that He is harsh and that He will not hear you. Come with me and, by faith, look upon Him on the Cross. Can you behold His crown of thorns with its lancets piercing His blessed brow, and the tears streaming down His cheeks already crimsoned with His bloody sweat? Can you see His hands and feet as pierced by the nails—they become fountains of blood! There He hangs, naked, despised and rejected of men. Yet He endured all this agony that He might save sinners! Then, how can you think so wickedly of Him as to suppose that He, who once died, the Just for the unjust, now that He lives again, has an adamant heart and not of compassion? No, by His wounds, I beseech you to trust Him! By His bloody sweat, I implore you to continue your supplication to Him! By His torn side, I urge you to wrestle with Him yet again, for He will hear you, His mercy shall come unto you and you shall rejoice in it!

Lend me your ears while I give you a word of counsel as to what you ought to do. It is the Spirit of God who has taught you to pray. *He* has made you feel your need of a Savior! It is He who has compelled you to fall on your knees and to cry for mercy. Now remember that it is your duty, as well as your privilege, to obey the voice of the Holy Spirit. What does that voice say to you? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” That is to say, even though your prayers are not answered, in the teeth of every hard thought and every harsh word, trust Christ with your soul! If you do that, you are saved then and there. The way of salvation is not, “Pray, and be saved,” but, “BELIEVE, and be saved.” Christ said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” Remember that your main business is not with answers to prayer, but with your answer to God’s call to you—and His call to you, poor conscience-stricken, awakened Sinner, is, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” Come, then, to Christ just as you are and so you shall find that answer to your prayers which has been so long delayed! Still keep on wrestling with God until your prayers are answered. Jericho’s walls did not fall down the first day the hosts of Israel went round them, but they compassed the city seven days and, on the seventh day, the walls fell flat to the ground! Elijah, on the top of Carmel, did not bring the rain the first time he prayed, but he said to his servant, “Go again seven times.” And there have been many other instances in which God has delayed the blessing, but has given it at the last!

I have thus preached, as God has enabled me, to poor seeking souls. O Spirit of God, apply the Word and bring sinners to Christ that they may find mercy in His wounds!

II. Now, for a few minutes, let us turn to the case of THOSE BELIEVERS WHO HAVE LONG BEEN PRAYING FOR OTHERS WITHOUT APPARENT RESULT.

There is a father here who has been pleading with God for his daughter. And though years of supplication have passed away, she is still unconverted and as hardened as ever. There is a mother here who has laid her children upon her bosom, in prayer, as once she did for nourishment when they were but babes—and yet, though she cries day and night for them, they are not saved. My dear Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you never to give up praying for your children, or your other relatives because, although God may not answer you for a while, you shall certainly have the desire of your heart. Let me just give you one or two instances in which the power of prayer has been distinctly proven.

There was a young man who, because of his love for sin and his wish to be easy in it, became an infidel. As I have often said, infidelity is far more a matter of the heart than of the head. I am persuaded that men think there is no God because they wish there were none. They find it hard to believe in God and to go on in sin, so they try to get an easy conscience by denying His existence. This young man was not only an infidel, but he was a very earnest one, and he used to distribute certain newspapers brought out by the infidel press. His employer was just as earnest a Christian as the young man was an infidel, and he used to constantly burn those papers whenever he could get hold of them! But the young man just as perseveringly procured others and tried to hand them out among the apprentices and journeymen, that he might advance his own views. He was always a bold blasphemer and a desperate sinner. He cared little what others thought of him and he was, at least, honest in his iniquities.

One day, in a joke, he said to one of his companions, "I'll tell you what I will do. I'll show you that there is nothing in any of the Methodist cant and hypocrisy the very first time there is a Prayer Meeting at such-and-such a Chapel. I'll go and offer myself to the minister to be prayed for by the members and I shall get some fun out of them." He went and, with all the impudence and coolness possible, told the minister that he was a poor troubled soul who wished to find peace, and that he would be very glad if the Brothers and Sisters would pray for him. He did not know what he was doing, for, whether it was that the very deed awoke his slumbering conscience, or whether the Spirit of God was pleased to show the Sovereignty of His Grace at that moment, I cannot tell, but, as soon as one or two humble individuals had prayed for this young man, with tears in their eyes, he was down on his knees *with tears in his own eyes*, praying for himself! No, not only did he then pray, but he never ceased to pray—and he is still praying, for he could not live without prayer! He found it no matter of fun, after all. He intended to tempt God and to vex His people, but in that very act of sin he was arrested and converted! Do you think, then, if prayer only asked for in sport prevailed with God, that He will not hear your earnest cries for your own offspring! O Christians,

be fervent in your supplications, for God will surely hear you and your children shall be saved!

Another instance. There lived, in the village of Berwick St. John, in Wiltshire, a godly woman who had an ungodly husband. He not only hated good things, but he hated her for her goodness, for he turned her out of doors, on a Sabbath night, because she had gone to the Meeting House. She, like a prudent woman, never told her neighbors, but walked the fields alone that she might not be noticed by others and that her husband's shame might not be discovered. She was sometimes driven to the greatest straits and to a sadness which seemed as if it would bring her to a premature grave. She resolved to pray for her husband, one hour a day, for a year. She did so and, at the end of the year, he was as bad as before, if not worse. Then she thought she would try another six months—her faith was weak and she was going to give her husband up, then, if her prayers were not heard. This was wrong, for we must not limit the Holy One of Israel. But it so happened that, ere the six months were over, her husband came home once, in the middle of the day, looking dejected and downcast. Like a true and tender wife, she asked what was the matter with him, but he could not tell her. He went upstairs, he did not want his dinner and he did not return to his work that afternoon, for God was at work with him.

When his wife got him to speak, he said, "O wife, I can't pray!" "Do you want to pray?" she asked. And he replied, "Oh, I must pray! I do not know how it was, but, about twelve o'clock today, such a strange feeling came over me. I feel that I am a lost man, for I cannot pray—will you pray for me?" You may guess what her feelings were when asked by that obdurate wretch to pray for him! She did pray. Then they prayed together and their united prayers were answered! The next Sabbath they were both in God's House and, in a few more Sabbaths, they were side by side at the Lord's Table. The godly woman's prayers were heard at last—and God again proved that He has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek you Me in vain."

Yet another instance. There was a captain, whose name I will not give in full just now. I will call him Mitchell, for that will suffice. This captain was a godly man and he once went to sea, leaving his wife at home expecting soon to give birth to their first-born child. While he was at sea, one day, a time of deep solemnity came over him, in the course of which, he penned a prayer. This prayer was for his wife and for his yet unborn child. He put the prayer into the oak chest in which he kept his papers. He never came home again, for he died at sea. His chest was brought home to his wife—she did not open it to look at his papers, but she thought they might be of use to her son when he grew up. That son lived and, at the age of sixteen, he joined a regiment at Boston. In that regiment, he became exceedingly debauched, profane, blasphemous and sinful in every way.

At the age of fifty-four, while he was living in sin with a wicked woman, it struck him that he would like to look through the contents of the old chest which his father had left. He opened it, and, at the bottom,

found, tied up with red tape, a paper, on the outside of which was written, “The prayer of Mitchell K_____ for his wife and child.” He opened it and read it. It was a most fervent plea with God that the man’s wife and child might belong to Christ written 54 years back—and before that child was born! He shut it up and put it where it was before, and said that he would not look into “that cursed old chest” again. But that did not matter, for the prayer had got into his heart and he could not lock his heart up in that chest. He became thoroughly miserable and the wretched woman, with whom he lived, asked him what was the matter with him. He told her what he had read in that paper and she said she hoped he would not become a hypocrite. All the jokes and frivolities of his companions could not take out the dart which God had sent into his heart and, before long, by true repentance and by living faith, that man was in Christ—a saved soul, married honorably to the woman with whom he had lived in sin—and walking in uprightness, serving his father’s God as the result of a prayer which had lain in an old chest for 54 years—but which God’s eyes had seen all the while, and which, at last, He had answered when the set time had come!

Be of good courage, all you who are pleading for your children, for God will yet answer your supplications! As one of the old divines says, “Prayer is the rope which hangs down on earth, and there is a bell in Heaven which it rings and which God hears.” Pull that rope again tonight, praying father and mother! Make the great bell in Heaven ring again and again, and let its notes be, “Save my children! Save my husband! Save my wife! Save my brother! Let my sister live before You.” Your prayers shall be heard and God shall yet grant your requests! The instances I have given you are authenticated and I could give you more which have come under my own notice, but time fails and I have said enough upon that matter.

Let me just preach the Gospel at the close plainly and simply, and then I have done. The Gospel is this—Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, dead and buried. The third day He rose again from the dead and ascended into Heaven. He came into the world to die for sinners. He hung upon the Cross and bled for sinners. All whom He died for will be saved—He died for sinners and sinners will be saved. Your only question is, are you in the true Scriptural sense of the term a confessed and acknowledged sinner? If so, Jesus died for you. On my doorstep the other night, when I reached home after preaching, stood a man. I asked him what he wanted, and he fell on his knees and cried, “I want to know what I must do to be saved.” I thought the man was mad to be there at that time of night on such an errand, but he cried out concerning his sin, told me I did not know his guilt, that he had been near committing suicide and that he dared not go home to rest till he was told the way of salvation.

“Well,” I said, “I will tell you.” But I could not make it plain to his poor darkened understanding until I told him a story which I have often told concerning an event which happened to me some time ago. One evening when sitting to see enquirers, there came an Irishman upstairs. “Well,

Pat,” I said. “How’s your reverence?” said he. “Don’t call me ‘reverence,’ “I said,” because I am no reverence at all! But how is it you have not gone to your priest?” Said he, “I have come here to ask you a question and if you can answer it, that will do.” “Well, what is the question?” “Why, you said, last Sunday, that God would forgive sin. What I want to know is how that can be, for I have been such a great sinner that if He doesn’t punish me, He ought.” Well, I thought I had got a sinner to deal with, and one who spoke from his heart what he felt. I said, “God pardons sinners for the sake of Jesus. “But,” he replied, “I do not know what you mean.” I told him that Jesus Christ died and that for the sake of that, God pardoned sinners. Still he could not comprehend, and he said, “I want to know how God can be just—He ought to punish sin and yet He does not! How can that be?”

“Well,” I said, “suppose you had been committing a murder and the judge were to say you must be hanged.” “I would deserve it,” said he. “Well, how is Pat to be got off and yet the sentence to be carried out?” “Faith!” he said, “that’s what I don’t exactly see.” “Well,” I continued, “suppose I go to the Queen and say, ‘Please, your Majesty, I am very fond of this poor Irishman. I admit he ought to be hanged, but I want him to live—will you be so good as to have *me* hanged instead?” “Well, she couldn’t say, ‘Yes,’ Pat. But suppose she did and suppose I went to prison and were hanged instead of you, the murderer—would the Queen be unjust in letting you go afterwards?” “Faith!” he said, “I shouldn’t ask that—how could she meddle with me afterwards? Because I should say that gentleman was hung for me, and sure enough I was free. But,” he added, “I don’t see what that has to do with the matter.”

“Why just this,” said I, “Jesus Christ loved sinners so much that rather than they should perish He was content to die, Himself, instead of them. And now, since Christ died for sinners, can you not see how God can be just in letting sinners go free?” “Oh, yes,” he said, “I see it now! But then, how am I to know that Christ died for *me*, so that I cannot be punished? You say there are some people that Christ died for, so that God could not punish them—then how am I to know whether I belong to them?” “Why, by this—are you a sinner? Because if you are not in the matter of compliment, but if you are really so and feel it, then Christ died in your place and you cannot die because God will never enforce the sentence twice. He will not ask payment, first, at the bleeding Surety’s hands and then at ours.” I think I see that man putting his hands together, and saying, “There! That’s Bible. I know that’s true. That must be true—no man could have made that up. That’s wonderful! I know it’s God’s Bible, for it just fits me. I am a poor sinner and God has pardoned me.”

And he went on his way rejoicing. Now, doesn’t that fit you, too? What would you give tonight if you could believe that Jesus Christ was punished instead of you, so that all your sins shall never be mentioned anymore, but all be forgiven because God punished Christ Jesus instead of you? I repeat, the only way you can tell is by answering this question—Are you a sinner? “Well, we are all sinners,” says one. No, no—you are all

sinners, but you are not all the sort of sinners that I mean. Some people say they are sinners but they don't mean it. They are like the beggars in London *apparently* full of sores. Many a man we see in the streets with his leg tied up and seeming desperately lame, will take off the bandage when he gets to his lodging house—and will dance before he goes to bed at night! Another man standing against the wall says he is stone blind—but he will see to count his money when he gets home after begging all day! There are plenty of people of that sort. Now, if I invited the lame and the blind, do you think I should receive those who were only shamming? No, I would only have those who were really lame and blind! So Christ died only for those who are real sinners.

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

Verse 1. *And you has He quickened.* Is it so? Can anyone lay his hand on your shoulder and say right into your ear, “You has He quickened”? If so, why this deadness of spirit? Why this worldliness? Why these wanderings? “You has He quickened.”

1, 2. *Who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world.* You were dead to all that was good, but you were alive enough to that which was evil! It seems, from this passage, that dead men walk, yet not in the way of God, but, “according to the course of this world.”

2, 3. *According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of all disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in the past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.* We were not in the least better, by nature, than the very worst of men! And if we were any better in practice, it was only because we were restrained by Providence and by Grace from going into gross sin as others did. Look unto the hole of the pit from which you were dug and see how humble was your origin. If you are proud of your fine feathers, as the peacock is, remember his black legs! See from where you came and recollect the sin from which you were delivered! Bless God for your deliverance and be humble as you think of the Grace that has caused you to differ from others.

4, 5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ, (by Grace you are saved).* This is a wondrous Truth of God, that God loves the sinner even while he is dead in sin. This love is not caused by any goodness in him, for he is dead—he is wrapped up in the cerements of his sins. There is nothing lovable about him, yet God, “for His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together with Christ.”

6-8. *And has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace and of kindness toward us through Christ*

Jesus. For by Grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. That great Truth was put in the 5th verse, in a parenthesis. Why did Paul write it twice? Because we cannot too often be reminded that we were saved by Grace. It is a Truth which we so soon forget that we have need to have it rung in our ears as by a peal of bells, “By Grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.”

9. *Not of works, lest any man should boast.* God cannot endure boasting and one great objective of the plan of salvation by Grace is to extinguish boasting, to shut it out! It is intolerable to God, He cannot endure it.

10. *For we are His workmanship.* If we have anything good in us, it was all made by Him.

10-12. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that you, being in times past, Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* That is a true description of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers who were certainly heathen of the heathen, the wildest and most savage of men when Paul wrote this Epistle! And yet, by Sovereign Grace, we have been brought to the very forefront of the nations of the earth and we are no longer without God, nor yet without hope, nor yet without Christ. Neither are we now strangers to the covenants of promise, nor aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

13-22. *But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinance; for to make in Himself of two, one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the Cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* Happy are the people who enjoy these high privileges!

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

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

THE SAVIOR'S SILENCE

NO. 3268

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1911.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 9, 1864.

*"But He answered her not a word."
Matthew 15:23.*

THE diary of a physician, one would think, must necessarily be deeply interesting. What a variety of cases must come under the doctor's observation in the course of one year! And some of these must be very strange cases indeed. The details of their cures, if one could understand them, and if the doctor would only translate his hard Latin terms, might be of the greatest interest.

But you need not wish to read them, for you have here, in this Gospel according to Matthew, the diary of the greatest of all Physicians—Jesus Christ—who healed all manner of diseases and who met with cases of the most peculiar and eccentric kind. Our gracious Master always walked the hospital, for the whole world was that to Him and wherever He went, His supreme business here below was by touch, or look, or word to bestow healing on the soul and body. His cures were gratis—this was something to be admired, but He also journeyed to His patients! It is generous when the physician treats freely those who came crowding to his door, but our Master—the Beloved Physician—traveled to the utmost end of His all-embracing circuit that He might meet and bless all who dwelt therein. There were some who lived just over the edge and verge—just beyond the people to whom He was specially sent—and when He touched the borders of Tyre and Sidon, the Syro-Phoenician woman came and shared in the healing reserved for the Jews! This is great comfort for some of us. However sick we may be, it is Jesus Christ's [Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2841, Volume 49—PRAYER—ITS DISCOURAGEMENTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] great office to heal—it is His honor to lay hold of the sorely wounded and helpless and restore health to them. And if by reason of infirmity we cannot come to Him, He is ready to come to us! And if we will not come by reason of impenitence, such is the force of His love that He comes unasked. Oh, Jesus Christ, Master, able to heal a soul impotent or willing, and to work fresh cures by Your amazing power, come to this great crowd—far mightier than ever gathered round Bethesda's porch—and let Your healing Presence remain with us tonight!

Let us now come closely to the case before us. It is quite familiar to most of us. It was that of a poor woman whose daughter was plagued and who had come to ask Christ to heal her. In a few pathetic words she uttered her passionate desire. Our Lord was usually ready to answer at

once—His generous heart overflowed with sympathy and was eager to gratify the longing soul—but on this occasion, “He answered her not a word.” He went on with His preaching and other works and this needy, distracted woman was apparently ignored—“He answered her not a word.” That is our topic for tonight.

We shall first, then, have a word to say on, *The silence of the Savior*. Then we shall notice in the second place, that *Though He was silent, He was not unkind*. And then to finish with, in the third place, that *Though the answer was delayed, this good woman was not discouraged, and not denied*. Let us think, then, on—

I. THE SAVIOR'S SILENCE. Generally, our Lord was like the father in the parable, eagerly on the look-out for the returning sinner, but here He seems distant, reserved—and when appealed to, silent! Usually the tear was waiting to weep in sympathy with those that wept, but now His eyes are strangely dry and His soul seemed not to be stirred by the mother's earnest entreaty. Generally, there was no need to ask—He looks upon distress and like the Good Samaritan is moved with pity and hastens to help! But here He is sought with tears, entreated with piteous perseverance, yet “He answered her not a word.”

This is more remarkable as we remind ourselves that this woman had a distinct sense of need. There is no vagueness or cloud as to her desire. She utters most precisely the yearning of her heart. She knew what she longed for, and that intensely, and yet—yet she had no immediate answer! Is not this the case with many of you? You need a Savior, have cried to Him for months. That little room can witness the prayers and tears. And since no answer has come, you have said, “It is because I do not feel my need enough.” But that may not be the real reason at all. Repentance is necessary, but much which is called by that name is not true repentance. Terrors of conscience are not repentance—though they may lead to it. And though you may never have been filled with alarm, yet if you are sorry for sin, hate sin and would be rid of it, root and branch, your repentance is genuine. The thing to be enquired of is not quantity but *quality*. For even deep repentance is not an absolute essential to salvation—

**“All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him.”**

Your repentance may be true and your sense of need, deep, and yet you may have to wait, and wait, and still wait before His peace floods your soul.

Besides this, this poor woman *knew where to come for help*. She looked at the right door. She asked for “mercy, mercy.” This was her one plea! And if we come to God with any other, we know not who we are seeking, and to whom we are speaking. This woman was deeply humbled with a sense of unworthiness, but she turned even that into an argument for the Savior's pity, for the mercy of God. I know there are some who fear that because they have not heard, “Your sins are forgiven you,” that they have not come to Christ aright. No! This woman came aright and yet for the present she is kept without a word. If we come to Christ at all, we do come aright. I have often said, “There is no true coming which can be

wrong." "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him." So if God draws, He cannot draw the wrong way. Looking for the mercy of Christ, trusting the merits of His sacrificial death, then you have come and come aright to the door of mercy! And yet you may for a time not have a word to comfort you.

Yet again, this woman *had some clear idea of our Lord's Character*. She calls Him, "Lord." Her first appeal is, "Have mercy." Her second, "Help me." But in both it is to the Lord she appeals. She had some idea of His Deity, His Omnipotence, even more than some of His disciples. Nor need this surprise us. A deep sense of need often reveals to us Christ's All-Sufficiency. And yet with all this insight into our Lord, "He answered her not a word." So you may know the Master, sit at the foot of His Cross and view the flowing of the precious blood. Your eyes may be familiar with His marred visage, your faith may have beheld Him exalted on high, and you may have no doubt as to the might of His Deity, the sympathy of His Manhood and yet though saved, may have no joy of salvation! Doubtless you shall never see death, but as yet you have no exhilaration of life.

This woman, too, *had a humble but determined faith*. Our Lord admired and extolled this, for He said, "Oh, woman, great is your faith!" She had faith before her wishes were granted—and we may have faith that saves and yet have no sweet assurance. There are, I believe, multitudes who have trusted Christ, who are described by the Prophet Isaiah as, "walking in darkness, and seeing no light." Many there are who, believing, have eternal life, but have not yet entered into the peace and joy that are its fruits. They are saved. They have their title-deeds, but they do not read them clearly. Heaven is theirs, but their eyesight is imperfect and so, "the mansion in the skies" is still in the land of far distances. Christ may have heard you in His heart, without having answered you in your ear! He may have filed your prayer in Heaven, but for some reason He may permit you for a time to struggle without comfort and without light.

Yet once again, notwithstanding all this, she was *a soul Christ meant to bless*. There was never a question in His heart whether He would heal her daughter. He had ordained to give her what she sought—had never for an instant meant to deny it! It had always been stored for her on high. He willed once and for all that she should go away in peace. And so, wearisome nights may have been appointed for you, strong crying and tears—but keep on, for if God has given you genuine faith, He must give you eternal salvation unless He breaks His promises—which He can never do! He must save them who come unto Him through Jesus Christ! Your business is with His command and when you have obeyed, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, then, even if you weep in the dark, your tears will be for your spiritual strengthening!

This was my own case for nearly five years. If ever a soul did pray with anguish, I know I did. I could never rest. God had put the desire after His son into my heart, and I could never rest satisfied until I had heard the Father whisper, "You are Mine." Some drops of mercy fell, but the next day they were all dried up. Sometimes I seized hold of a promise, but it

appeared to melt away in my hands. Though but a child I turned over His Word, seeking for something to suit my case, but nothing would come until God's appointed day had struck—and then the darkness vanished and light came and I rejoiced in Jesus and the light which only He can give! Many who are ordained unto eternal life, are yet held back, as John Bunyan was, for many a day and even years in doubt and perplexity and trouble! "He answered her not a word." In the second place we see that—

II. THOUGH THE SAVIOR WAS SILENT, HE WAS NOT UNKIND. He had good reasons for refusing to give her a word. Here is one. It is His delight *to put faith to the test*. Great kings have always had exploits performed before them for their pleasure. And in order to prove faith's mighty power, the Lord God even sends it upon strange errands. He delights to see the daring it can display when relying on His power. He said to it when but a stripling, "Go and cut off the giant's head!" And faith did it. He said, "Go and conquer the city and destroy it, and rush rejoicing over the ruined walls." And faith did it. Again He said, "Go, and for My sake enter the burning fiery furnace"—and faith did it and came out unscathed. "Go to the lions' den," said the king—and faith went and shut the lions' mouths! And our Lord, finding faith incarnate in this poor woman, puts it to the test. Her faith now has to struggle with the King, Himself! Be not alarmed! Jesus said, "It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." And she answered, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table." And so the King tests faith and puts the crown upon its head as He answers, "Oh, woman, great is your faith!" So with some of you—seeking Jesus, but not yet finding Him. He knows your faith but He delays comfort to let men see what that faith will do! And when that is done, He will disperse the clouds and fill your soul with rejoicing! I have no doubt the Savior did this, not for His pleasure, but for her profit. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in the youth of his faith. The Spartans would never have been a nation of conquerors if they had not been trained in the school of hardness in their childhood. They had to smart, struggle and sometimes feel the pangs of hunger, that in the day of battle they should never retreat from the strongest foe. So we may have sore temptations to meet before reaching Heaven and He is hardening us. As the florist takes the plants from the hothouse into the open air to harden them, so the Lord removes us from the light and warmth of His loving Countenance and hardens us so that frosts shall not wither us if they come, by-and-by.

The Savior, too, may have had an eye *to the onlookers*. Towards us who this day are the onlookers upon the fine exhibition of this woman's faith, surely He had a gracious purpose. Surely He did it that there might be a well of comfort and instruction to troubled souls in ages past, in this age, and in ages yet to come! Who knows? This woman was kept for a time in suspense, for your comfort, poor woman, for you, young man, with your poor despairing soul. "There," He seems to say, "in this one case I will set an example to all who do not at once get comfort, that they may see that their faith shall yet prevail. If they still believe and continue

to plead until I come, then shall the answer be peace." Jesus was not unkind, even in His silence. The last point for our reverent study is this—

III. THOUGH THE ANSWER WAS DELAYED, THIS WOMAN WAS NOT DISCOURAGED NOR DENIED.

When she could not get a word, she did not go away and sulk, as some professed penitents do, but gathered more boldness. She appears to have come nearer to the Lord, for we read in the 25th verse, "then she came and worshipped Him." As if standing in the outer circle, she now pushed through the crowd and *came nearer*—but not irreverently—she came to *worship*. Herein she reads us all a lesson. If we have had no answer to our pleading, do not give up, but go nearer to Christ! Make it more solemnly the resolve of your soul that you have real dealings with Him. Some persons rest satisfied with saying a number of phrases beginning one way, and ending with, "Amen." I do not like to rise from my knees until I have had assured dealings with the Master. There are fifty words to the air, but it is the one word with the Master which effects our soul's purpose! Lay hold upon the Cross. Put your fingers by faith into the print of the nails. Thrust your hand in His side and realize that He is really there! And this shall be your way of obtaining true comfort. Nor was this all. When she thus came nearer, *she cried more earnestly*. The disciples said, "Send her away, for she cries after us." But her cry came to Him with a plaintive pathos in her words. She wept. She cried such a cry as a mother wails out over her dying child! It seemed to hold in it these words, "I must have this blessing! Give it to me or I die, You Son of David! I am not one who speaks with the lips, only—my heart cries to You! Hear a woman's heart that breaks unless You speak the comfortable words to her."

Ah, cold prayers will never open the gates of Heaven—you must go and knock, and knock, and knock, and knock again if you would make swing open the celestial portals! You must use the golden knocker not with a languid tap, but with the loud stroke of one who must get entrance, for the cold street of the everlasting storm is already falling and if shut out, there will be "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." Remember how powerfully the Savior, Himself, exhorted to this in His parable of the importunate friend who needed bread for his friend who came to him after a journey, and who never rested until he secured it from his neighbor, though he roused him out of bed at midnight to obtain it! Homely is the picture, but notable is the meaning and lesson of it. You must knock, and knock, and knock, and redouble your blows—take Heaven by storm—for as our Lord declared, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence," so be numbered with the violent who "take it by force." The longer you are made to wait, the more earnestly must you pray—and your prayers will yet prevail!

But I want us particularly to notice that the *longer she prayed, the shorter became the prayer*. You may generally measure the worth of prayer by this rule—the longer the worse, the shorter the better. She began, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David. My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." That is a good prayer, but the next is

shorter. "Lord, help me!" It is just those prayers that win the day! It would be well if we remembered to let our words be few when we come before the Most High. When we get intensely and solemnly earnest before God, we generally have more thoughts than words, more intensity than sentences. Some may say, "I cannot pray at all," but if God has given you desire for His mercy, you can surely pray, "Lord, help me!" That is not too long for memory or for time. "Lord, help me!" You can pray that before going to work in the morning, pray it at night, however late you may return. Some say the Lord's prayer, but I beg you not to do so if unconverted. How can you say, "Our Father," unless you are saved and belong to the family of God? What right have you to call Him, "Father," unless you have passed from death unto life? Use it when the Spirit of adoption is yours, but not until then! This is an infinitely better prayer for you, "Lord, help me!" It makes no profession but of helplessness. It confesses, "I cannot help myself. I am most unworthy and most needy. Lord, help me to repent! Break my heart for me. Help me to believe! To keep me from sin. To serve You and to be like Jesus Christ Himself." I cannot suggest a prayer shorter or more full of meaning.

It was not, however, the prayer, but her *faith* that captured the heart and commanded the blessing of the Lord! She would not let go her hold of Him and she would not take, "No," even out of His own mouth! She knew He must be true. Now, Sinner, Christ has said, "He that believes on Me is not condemned." If you believe in Christ you are not condemned. And though the delays to your prayers may seem to say you are condemned, believe it is seeming only, and that He must and will keep His promise to save every sinner that trusts Him! Do not let even your conscience fill you with fear. Would to God you would say, "I will believe that Jesus Christ died for me. I will cast myself upon Him. I am black—I believe that He will wash me. I am foul and evil, but I will believe in Him to create me anew. I have nothing, but I take Christ to be my All-in-All. Here, tonight, I trust Him, just as I am. I trust Him to bring me where He is—to dwell with Him forever."

If God enables you to do this, depend upon it, your eternal life is sure! God help you thus to pray and believe, and before long you shall go your way and, "according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you." The Lord dismiss you with His blessing for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 15; PSALM 42.**

Verse 1. *Then the scribes and Pharisees who were of Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying—* Our Lord had been busily engaged in healing the sick, and now these pettifoggers came round about Him to try and worry Him. They were a kind of mosquito swarm to Christ—had He not been a perfect Man they might have worried Him.

2. *Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.* "Why do Your disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?" Generally a good man is held respon-

sible for the acts of his followers. If they cannot find fault with Christ, they will find fault with His disciples, who must have been men of admirable character when even scribes and Pharisees had no worse charge to bring than the following—"For they wash not their hands when they eat bread." The Savior must have been gentle, indeed, to bear with such people as these! It would have given us the fidgets to have such folks round about us. Here He is, healing the sick, curing the lepers, feeding the hungry—and these people are talking about washing their hands! Oh, how many religious people there are that are occupying their time about nothing of vital importance at all, questions of washing their hands or something of that kind.

3. *But He answered and said unto them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?* He did not deign to answer their question, but posed them with another.

4-6. *For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and mother: and he that curses father or mother, let him die the death. But you say, Whoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift to God, by whatever you might be profited by me; and honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.* They actually taught that a man might escape the happy duty of succoring his father and mother, surely the first duty of a son, by saying, "I have dedicated so much of my goods to the Temple and the worship of God that I cannot afford it." There are not many in these days that talk that way—they generally cannot afford to dedicate anything to the Temple because they are keeping their father and mother! They go the other way but one way or another, men will, if possible escape from moral or religious duty. Now God loves not that we should bring one duty to Him smeared with the blood of another, and for a man to give his money to the Temple which he ought to have given to his father and mother was a violation of the strict Law of God, and could not possibly be acceptable to Him. Thus they made void the Law of God by their traditions!

7-9. *You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people draws near unto Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they worship Me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.* Christ spoke very plainly to them. There is no dealing with hypocrites with kid gloves—these nettles must be boldly grasped and the Savior did so! Brothers and Sisters, stick to the Scriptures in Doctrine and in precept—what have you to do with modern thought, the imaginations of men, the vain thoughts of crazy brains? Hold to God's thoughts, which are as high above men's thoughts as the heavens are above the earth! One Word of God is worth a whole world full of the thoughts of men—and time shall yet show us that it is so. We have but to wait and we shall see that the thoughts of man are vanity, but the Word of God abides forever. "And He called the multitude"—one of the finest ways of rebuking the Pharisees and scribes—He seemed to turn His back on the gentlemen who knew so much!

10, 11. *And He called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear and understand: that which goes into the mouth defiles not a man; but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* Religion stands not in meats and drinks and divers washings or anything external—it lies in the heart! It is that which comes out of the heart that is the true index of the character, not that which is done externally.

12, 13. *Then came His disciples and said unto Him, Know You that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.* They stand like a grove of trees—men take shelter under their great knowledge, but God never planted them and, therefore, they shall be plucked up. And He did pluck them up without ceremony.

14. *Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* So you need not trouble to shove them in—just leave them alone, it will come to an end. There are some forms of error which Christ may denounce, but which His disciples had better leave alone—there is a ditch ready and waiting for them somewhere or other.

15-20. *Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do you not yet understand, that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is cast out into the draft? But these things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man.* By-and-by in the Chapter we shall see thousands of people eating with unwashed hands who would not have eaten at all if it had been requisite, for them to wash their hands first, for they were in a desert place! Not but what it is well even to wash the hands and every other part of the flesh. It should be true of every Christian, “Having your bodies washed with pure water,” cleanliness should always go with godliness. But this was a mere ceremonial rite, a washing of the hands whether they needed it or not for form's sake, and the Savior pours contempt upon it!

21, 22. *Then Jesus left there, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* He made a long journey to go and meet one woman! An instance of how far you and I ought to be willing to go to save a soul. “And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts.” She came a little way but He had come a long way. Perhaps some sinner has come here today. Ah, Christ has come too! The woman “cried unto Him.” Sinners and the Savior will meet, for the sinners are seeking Him and they will perhaps meet sooner than they expect. Perhaps she meant to have gone a long journey, but He met her and she cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David.” She knew His Deity—“O Lord.” She knew His Humanity—“The Son of David.” She knew His royalty, “The Son of David.” She had but

one prayer, "Have mercy on me." That prayer suits me very well, too, today—is it too humble for you? I pity you then. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David." And yet her prayer was not for herself. "Have mercy on me, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Many a mother feels that the greatest mercy to herself would be salvation for her child. How we are wrapped up in these who are the offspring of our body! How we desire their salvation! How careful we should be if they are saved! How should we pray for the children of others, that God would have mercy on mothers by healing daughters! "But He answered her not a word." You may pray, and pray acceptably, and yet not get an immediate answer.

23. *But He answered her not a word. And His disciple came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.* She makes too much noise. Oh, the poor disciples! "She cries after us." That she did not—she cried after the Master, not after them! Oh, the big disciples, how large they are, and how easily troubled. "She cries after us."

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* My mission as a Prophet is to Israel, not to the Gentiles just now.

25-27. *Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered, and said, It is not right to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.* Splendid faith, to make it out that to heal her daughter would be, after all, to Christ nothing but to give her a lot of crumbs! She thought so much of Him—He was so great in her estimation that as much as she valued the healing of her daughter, she reckoned it to be to His Royal Majesty only as a bit of dog's food. Oh, splendid faith!

28. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* Write, Sir, out a blank check! She may fill it in just as she likes—there is no limit to what God will give an unlimited faith! If we limit our faith, then we limit the Holy One of Israel. "And Jesus departed from there." He had done His business. He is always on the move and never loiters.

29, 30. *And Jesus departed from there and came near unto the Sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed and many others, and cast them down at Jesus feet; and He healed them.* What an assemblage and in the middle of a great hospital! What a sight for Him to see all these sick people carried like so many burdens and then laid down at His feet! Cannot we today, each one, bring somebody? Think of somebody, some friend of yours that is yet unsaved. Take him on your back, no, carry him in your bosom and bring him by faith and lay him down at Jesus' feet just now. Who shall it be? Think about it!

31-34. *Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to*

see: and they gloried the God of Israel. Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said, I have compassion on the multitude because they continue with Me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint on the way. And His disciples said unto Him, Where shall we get so much bread in the wilderness to feed so great a multitude? And Jesus said unto them, How many loaves have you? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And I daresay they thought, "We shall need all these ourselves!" It was noble on their part that they were willing to give away all they had—every bit of it, little fish and loaves and all—none too much for the company, and yet they parted with all at the Master's bidding.

35. *And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.* I think I see Him rising from the place where He sat, and saying, "Now you have been standing up and you are all hungry, sit down all of you." What a sight to see them all dropping into their places. According to Mark they fell into order by rank, by hundreds and by fifties. What a Commander-in-Chief Christ is! When He makes a banquet it is not a scramble, it is always orderly, and when there is anything very disorderly it is generally because Christ is not there—if He is there, everything seems to fit into its place.

36. *And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and broke them, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.* "They did all eat and were filled." I remember a country Brother putting it, "And they *did* all eat," which I think is very likely—they were very hungry, they *did* all eat—and were filled! They were ravenous, but they were not stinted.

37, 39. *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken food that was left, seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. And He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.* And if the women and children bore any proportion to most congregations, they would make a larger number than the men! And then comes the finish, "And He sent away the multitude." You and I, if we had done this, would have let them stay for an hour while somebody proposed and somebody else seconded a vote of thanks for this good dinner that they had had, but not He! He fed them and then He sent the multitude away and took ship and came into the coasts of Magdala. May we learn Our Lord's blessed absence of self-seeking!

Psalm 42. Verse 1. *As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.* Hunted, hot, weary, thirsty. It must drink or die. You see the poor creature with the big tears in its eyes, with the sweat distilling from it, moving to and fro as it pants in its longing for the water, "even so does our soul long after God." I must have my God! I must die if I have not God. It is the refrain of our hymn, "Give me Christ, or else I die." It is not verbal. It is the soul that is panting. And when you grow very weary with the world and very heavy of heart—yes, and when without any trouble you are led to see the emptiness of all carnal joys—then is the time when this panting comes.

2. *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?* Not sacraments, not sermons, but God! Not books, not even prayers, but God! Three times He puts it, “for God”—“for the living God”—“that I may come and appear before God.” We could not pant after an idol or an image, but we do thirst after a living God that He would come to our living souls. We feel as if we could not live without the living God. Is it so with you? You shall have your desire! If for a while He delays, He must come at the cry of His children.

3. *My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?* That is a very stinging question and the enemy knows that and he takes care to put it often to the Christian. “Where is your God.” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” That was the bitterest bitter in Christ’s cup. When our adversaries think that we are altogether left, and to cry, “Where is your God?” it is not amazing that we begin to weep until our tears become the salt meat of every meal. “My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?”

4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me.* You could not help it. It is not the best thing in the world. Meditation is always good, but it needs to be done in a wise way, else we may meditate ourselves into still deeper griefs. “I pour out my soul in me.”

4. *For I had gone with the multitude.* Here were memories which made him sorrowful, but yet made him hopeful.

4. *I went with them to the House of God.* Time was when I had many with me, when I did not stand alone—when they were glad of my company and I of theirs. I did not go the wrong way, but I went with them to the House of God. And the House of God is all the more delightful because of the many that go to it—

**“At once they sing, at once they pray
They hear of Heaven and learn the way.”**

4. *With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.* And I felt it to be a true holiday. There are some that turn holy days into holidays. Blessed are they that turn holidays into holy days! It is, indeed, a great solace for the heart to enjoy Christian fellowship, and to go with the many to the worship of God. But if he cannot—if his pathway is to be a lonely one, then let him still trust in God though I should not wonder that he has his grief.

5. *Why are you cast down, O my Soul, and why are you disquieted in me?* As old Master Trapp says, “David tries to talk David out of the dumps—and he does well.” Here were two Davids—David that was down and David that was up, and David draws David up! So you, too, if you are a little low tonight, should let your better, godlier self talk to yourself!

5. *Hope you in God.* If you cannot do anything else, yet hope. The New Zealanders call hope “the swimming thought,” because when everything else is drowned, up comes hope at the top of the wave! You cannot drown hope.

5. *For I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance.* Snatch from the altars of the future fire-brands with which to kindle the altar of

today! "I shall yet praise Him." I am not always going to be low. I have hung the harp upon the willows, but I have not broken its strings. I shall take it down again. "I shall yet praise Him for the help of His Countenance." If He does but look upon us—if He does but have pity upon us—let us be content with that and abide His time.

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me.* Is it not a blessed thing that even when he is down, he says, "Oh, my God"? He gets hold of his God! He has lost his company, but he has not lost his God! See—"my soul—"my God." His God is as much his as his soul is his! He puts them together—"my God"—"my soul."

6. *Therefore will I remember You from the land of Jordan, and from the heights of Hermon, from the Hill Mizar.* Were these places where he was then wandering? He would remember God wherever he was. He would remember happier days—seasons long past when he did walk in fellowship with God. So let us remember how He kept His tryst with us in former days of sorrow—how He manifested Himself unto us as He does not to the world! He will do the same now. Let us be of good courage.

7. *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me.* They are God's waves and God's billows, so he will not mind them. Our Father rules the stormiest deeps and the noisiest depths of the soul only speak as He permits them. Be of good cheer!

8, 9. *Yet the LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God my Rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?* He had tried his "whys" on himself. Now he comes with his "whys" to his God, and God will answer him. Our Father permits His children to plead with Him. You are permitted to say, "O God, show me why You contend with me." And He will be pleased to let you see the reason, or, if not, to give you faith enough to be satisfied without a reason.

10. *As with a sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is your God?* Rather monotonous this. "Where is your God?" is all they can say. They are rather short of wit when they must always hang on to the same old taunt. If ever you hear of a new heresy, it is only an old heresy with a new soul put to it!

11. *Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

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

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

HOW TO MEET THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION NO. 1797

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 31, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost
sheep of the house of Israel.
Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me.”
Matthew 15:24, 25.*

You that know the loving heart of our Lord Jesus are quite sure that He would never needlessly discourage a soul in coming to Him. Yet in this case, “He answered her not a word.” Is Jesus dumb when misery entreats a word from Him? The Friend of Man is usually all attraction, encouragement, drawing and welcoming—yet the eager woman cries in vain to Him for her tormented daughter! We are not disquieted about this. We know our Lord too well to suspect Him of a lack of love. He is not sporting with a wounded bird. He is in no fit of bitterness. He would not even *seem* to discourage any heart that beat within a human bosom unless there had been some great necessity for it, some gracious end to be served.

Nobody will have the impudence to accuse our Divine Lord of undue harshness to a soul that sought His help. The world might suspect some of His ministers of being hard and cold, like yon pulpits of marble which have, in these chill times, been exalted among the people. They might think some of us more touchy than tender, for are not some of us great stone creatures almost without feeling and not easily to be approached? People may suspect that *we* are scant in affection, or that *we* lack earnestness—they may even hint that *we* are too great sticklers for orthodoxy, or that we are so distrustful of our fellow men that we naturally love to try them with things harsh and forbidding in order to keep them a good mile off at the least! I know they think us sorry fathers, more ready with the rod than with our cheering sympathies—and for this they have far too much justification. I would it were not so.

You may suppose hard things of *us*, who are His servants. The supposition may be true. It may be slanderous—but you cannot suppose anything of the kind concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—He is so evidently loving, gracious and cordial that you could not have the heart to *suspect Him!* If Jesus has ever received *you*, you have had, in that fact, unquestionable proof of His tenderness and you are, and will be, henceforth, confident in His compassion. You are sure that the “bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench,” for He neither broke nor quenched *you*. Yet He *did* discourage this woman. Not only the disciples did so, but the Master did so, too. Therefore, I say that there must have

been a secret need for so doing—there must have been a motive for her good which moved the tender Lord to answer her with words so harshly—and with speech so dispiriting.

I believe that we, dear Friends, the humble imitators of the Lord Jesus Christ, are bound to encourage all in whom there is any hope. Whenever we see a wandering soul turning its face homewards, we should be ready to lend a hand to direct its tottering footsteps. Still, if we imitate our Lord, we may be led to say sore things which, like the faithful wounds of a friend, are as sharp as they are salutary. Love's lips do not always drop honey! Flattery charms with her dulcet periods, but a wise affection full often uses tones most harsh and cutting. There is a tendency among certain goody-goody people to comfort too much and to keep back important Truths of God for fear they should be misunderstood. Glorious doctrines which made our fathers strong are left in the shade for fear they should become stumbling blocks to unsettled minds! We are coming to be rather overdone with the *Gospel prepared for infant*'—they are putting the flour through so many sieves that there will not be an ounce of bone-making material left in it!

If it were always wise to comfort and encourage, the Master would have kept to that line of things. But, since He did not do so, I assume—and I think that none will dare to contradict me—that men require something else beside encouragement. Do we not read that “all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”? There are Truths which ought not to be kept back because they may not encourage, for their use is to reprove and correct. There are Truths which, at certain seasons, ought to be told, even though the temporary effect may be to dampen the ardor or to dull the hope of the sinner who is coming to Christ. Like our Master, we must always long after the salvation of sinners and, like He, we must go about it wisely. We must exhibit great fatherly tenderness toward sinners and be very gentle, even as a shepherd is with the lambs—but that very love, that very tenderness will lead the well-instructed teacher to utter many things which the disciple had rather not hear!

Our shepherdry deals not only with the green pastures, but also with the place of the sheep-washing and the shearing. We have not only to console, but to correct—ours is the edification which deals frequently with pulling down dilapidated bits of wall in order to the security of the whole fabric—and, therefore, we occasionally seem to be destroyers where we are really builders, together with God! Our Lord knew that plain speech upon a certain Truth would weed out His disciples. Did He, therefore, preserve a discreet silence? Not He! In due time He delivered His soul and we read, “from that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.”

We now come to consider why the Savior spoke to this woman in this way. Why did He announce to her a fact which could not possibly assist or strengthen her faith? We may learn the answer as we proceed. Our Lord Jesus virtually discouraged the Syrophenician woman with the *Doctrine of Election*. I grant you that there is a difference between the election of the

nation of Israel and the election of *individuals*—but into that we are not going, tonight. The point is this—it was the Doctrine of Election which the Savior threw in this poor woman’s way. He said to her, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” This was enough to dampen her spirit, surely, and yet the Savior put it before her then and there.

Why? I think He did so, first, at that time, *that it might come from Him rather than from the disciples*. If you feel it necessary that a person should be somewhat sharply rebuked, you conclude to do it yourself. You say to yourself, “If I send that message by the best friend I have, he will blunder over it; he will make it more cutting than I meant it to be and he will miss the point. He will inflict more pain than I intended. Therefore *I* will communicate the unacceptable statement myself.” And have you not often felt it to be a matter of real urgency to get before all others? Yes, you who have the care of hearts and minds know that there are times when you need to do all the speaking and would like to block every other telephone in the world! You know the person and the effect which statements are likely to have upon him and, therefore, you would gladly monopolize his ears for a season.

The Savior knew that, by-and-by, this woman would hear that the mission of the Christ was only to Israel—and she might hear it in such a way as would much more depress her spirit than if He, personally, told it to her Himself. So He Himself said to her, “I am not sent to Tyre and Sidon. I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” That is to say, Christ’s mission as a Prophet, while He was here in the flesh, was to Israel—and to Israel He usually restricted His labors throughout His life. He told her that Himself, I think, lest she should hear it at second hand. It will be wise for us, when we find poor souls hopefully coming to Christ, to manifest thought and prudence—and introduce them to the deeper Truths of our theology—because they will hear of them one way or another. And they had better hear of them, first, from loving, tender-hearted Christians, than from hard, careless, loveless spirits whose delight is found in mere terms and phrases.

You cannot keep these young people in a conservatory! Why should you wish to do so? It is poor policy to try and conceal the Truth of God! It has a little of a Jesuitical look about it. Why should this particular Truth be concealed? Are we ashamed of it? If so, let us revise our creed, but, in the name of common honesty let us hide nothing which we believe! The more Light of God the better! The more fully the Truth of God is made known, the more surely will good come of it! For one, I bless God that I knew the Doctrines of Grace from my youth—they have been the staff of my manhood—and I believe they will be the glory of my old age! So far from being ashamed of the Election of Grace, it commands the enthusiasm of my whole being!

Again, I think that He brought that Truth before her mind, just then, because *she might hear of it otherwise, when she was in a worse condition for the receiving of it*. Now, this woman was desperately set on getting a blessing from Christ. Her whole heart was awake, her spirit was on fire—her whole nature was eager for the blessing. If she could stand repression at any time in her life, it was just then. “How do you know?” you ask. I

know it by a kind of instinct. The story opens for me a window into the woman's soul. I am persuaded that the Master would not have applied anything that looked like a discouraging Truth of God to her unless He had perceived that she was quite able to bear it and, perhaps, better able to bear it *then* than upon some future day. I think there is great wisdom in communicating Truth to people at a fit time. Did not the Lord, Himself, say, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now"? Just at that time His disciples were unfit to hear those many Truths and, therefore, the oracle of love was silent for a while. At another time the Savior abounded toward them, as He does toward us, in all wisdom and prudence—and then He made known to them the mystery of His will after a fuller measure.

The Lord does not teach us all Truth at once, but by degrees He admits us into the chambers of His hidden treasure. You know how a surgeon, when he has operated upon a blinded eye, says to his patient, "Your sight is completely restored, but during the next few days I must ask you to sit in a darkened room. I shall ask you to receive light slowly, that you may retain it surely." Infinite is the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in gradually enlightening souls! The Lord does not, all at once, let the sinner know the full extent of his sin, nor does He give him a full idea of the punishment due to it. Nor, I think, does He give him, at the beginning, all the knowledge he will have of the complete pardon of his sin and of the innumerable joys which come to pardoned sinners through Jesus Christ their Savior. Little by little, as we must feed newly-born children, not with meat, but with milk—little by little, as you teach the younger scholars in the school. Precept must be upon precept, line upon line—here a little and there a little. His mission to the house of Israel was one of the Truths which the Savior saw this poor Canaanite woman would have to learn and, therefore, He communicated it to her when she had faith enough to press over all discouragement and obtain the blessing upon which her heart was set. These two things should prove instructive.

Now I go on to deal with souls who are somewhat in this woman's case. I shall notice *the discouraging word which has come to them of late*, which is somewhat similar to that which came to her. And then I shall ask them to *imitate the commendable act of this woman* in connection with her discouragement, for though she seemed to be repulsed, she, nevertheless, came to Christ and worshipped Him. Before concluding, I wish to mention *a few helpful considerations* to any who may be troubled by that great doctrine which I mentioned just now. Come, Holy Comforter, and fill our hearts with heavenly cheer from this glad hour!

I. First, then, THE DISCOURAGING WORD THAT CAME TO THIS WOMAN. It was, as I have said, a certain form of the Doctrine of Election—the unquestioned Truth that God designed to bless the seed of Israel by the personal labors and testimonies of His Son Jesus—and that these blessings were not, at that time, sent to the people of Tyre and Sidon.

The Doctrine of Election has been made into a great bugbear by its unscrupulous opponents and its injudicious friends. I have read some very wonderful sermons *against* this doctrine in which the first thing that was evident was that the person speaking was totally ignorant of his subject! A

little *knowledge* would have made our author hesitate and deliberate and, therefore, it was like Saul's armor to him—he had rather proceed in his naked folly! The usual way of composing a sermon against a Doctrine of Grace is this—first exaggerate and belie the doctrine and then argue against it. If you state the sublime Truth as it is found in the Bible, why, you cannot say much against it! But if you collect a number of silly expressions from hot-headed partisans and denounce these, your task will be easier. Dress up the doctrine like a man and then burn it! What a wonderful deal has been done by men in burning figures of their own stuffing!

Nobody ever believed the Doctrine of Election as I have heard it stated by Arminian controversialists. I venture to say that nobody out of Bedlam ever did believe that which has been imputed to us. Is it remarkable that we are as eager to denounce the dogmas imputed to us as ever our opponents can be? Why do they earnestly set themselves to confute what no one defends? They might as well spare themselves the trouble! Our friends abhor the doctrine as it is stated by themselves—and we are much of their mind—though the doctrine, itself, as we would state it, is dear to us as life itself! They suppose that we never preach the Gospel freely to sinners—which thing we never fail to do with a freeness which none can excel! Can they tell us how we can improve in Gospel preaching? We should rejoice to learn!

They say that if we preach the Gospel freely, we are inconsistent, to which charge we are at no pains whatever to reply. So long as we believe that we are consistent with Scripture, it never enters into our heads to need to be consistent with ourselves! To hold all revealed Truths of God is our desire—but to compress them all into a symmetrical creed is beyond our expectation! We are such poor fallible creatures, that if we were *once* to fabricate a system which would be entirely *logical*, we would feel sure that we must have admitted portions of theory and masses of mere guess-work into the singular fabric. In theology we live by faith, not by logic. We *believe* and are safe! But the moment we begin to speculate, we are like Peter sinking in the waves. If we will keep simply to what the Word of God says, we shall find in it Truths *apparently* in conflict, but *always* in agreement! On every subject there is a Truth which is set over against another Truth—the one is as true as the other! The one does not take away from the other, nor raise a question upon the other—and the one ought to be stated as well as the other—and the two set side by side. The two relative Truths make up the great road of practical truth along which our Lord travels to bless the sons of men.

Some like to run on one rail. I confess a partiality to the two and I should not like to make an excursion, tomorrow, on a railway from which one of the rails had been taken. It must be sorrowfully admitted that the Doctrine of Election has discouraged many who were seeking the Savior, but the truth is that *it ought not to do so*. Viewed aright, it is a royal herald arrayed in silk and gold, freely announcing to the unworthy that the King receives sinners, according to the good pleasure of His will! How it has *encouraged* some of us! What marrow and fatness it is to us, now that we have found the Lord! We feed upon it as upon a Divine portion which sus-

tains, satisfies and satiates the soul! When I first came to Christ, I was perfectly satisfied to be as one of the dogs under the table—but I would not be satisfied to be so *now*, since the Lord has called me to a higher place! Now that I have become one of His children, I am as Lazarus was, of whom we read, “but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him.” The blessed Doctrine of Election is, to my soul, as wines on the lees well refined! It is a better, deeper and more glorious fact of Divine Love than I ever hoped to realize! “He asked for water and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.” We asked for pardon, but He gave us *justification*! We asked for a little mercy, but the Lord gave us boundless Grace, yes, Grace upon Grace, saying—“I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” If a sinner really knew the doctrine of the choice of Grace, he would not run away from it, but he would be inclined to run into its arms!

Yet to many it does seem to be as that black side of the cloud which the Lord turned upon the Egyptians and, therefore, I am going to notice the discouragement as Christ put it before this woman. He said to her, first, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” “I am sent,” He seemed to say, “to the Jews. I am sent to the house of Israel, but I am not sent to you.” That great Truth of God, she would have been sure to find out sooner or later, and if she had found it out *later*, she might have feared that the cure of her daughter would be taken away from her because it had been received contrary to the mission of the Messiah. Jesus lets her know this hard Truth at once, so that it may not worry her afterwards. When she *did* obtain the cure of her daughter, He would have her know that it was given openly and aboveboard—and not by a blunder of pity, or an oversight of charity. She was to be, once and for all, assured that the Lord Jesus had not forgotten Himself—that He knew all about the limitation of His commission during His mortal life and that in overstepping it, He knew what He was doing, and had not been wafted beyond Himself by the impetuosity of His spirit.

Now, there is such a thing as *the choice of God*. The Lord has a people who are redeemed from among men. The Lord Jesus has a people of whom He has said, “Yours they were, and You gave them to Me.” Some are ordained unto eternal life and, therefore, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Does this fact discourage you? I do not see why it should. Why should *you* not be among that number? “But suppose that I am not?” asks one. Why do you not suppose that you *are*? You do not know anything about it—therefore why suppose at all? To give up supposing would be a far more sensible thing than to brew for yourself a deadly potion of despair out of the worthless husks of mere supposition! I have enough to do to bear up under facts, without overloading myself with *conjectures*. What God has not revealed, we are not bound to know. Indeed, it would seem better for us to be in ignorance where the Lord grants no information. The Lord has chosen a people to be saved and I am glad to think that He has done so, for none can prove that I am not of the number!

If there are some whom God will save, then I know, also, who they are, for He tells me that they are such as repent of sin, confess it, forsake it and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! These same things

would my soul desire to do—and when I do so, I know that I am of the chosen number and shall be saved! What is there in this to discourage a soul? Yet it *does* discourage some. When people are in the dark, they are afraid of anything, everything! Nothing!! “There were they in great fear, where no fear was.” Once get a person into a low and nervous state, and the fall of a leaf suggests an avalanche! The least shadow of a cloud foretells the total extinction of the orb of day and a drop of rain is the commencement of the final conflagration! “Odd expression,” you say. Yet it is not so singular and outrageous as many of the inferences drawn by a resolute despondency. Alas, for these troubled ones—they feel that they cannot be saved because there is an Israel whom God has chosen to be saved!

Our Lord put before this woman something worse than the positive fact of the choice of Israel. He declared *the negative side of the sacred choice*. He said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” It is very little that you and I, who are ministers of the Gospel, have to do with preaching about what Christ is *not* sent to do. Here I fear that unrenewed minds, armed with a pitiless logic, have sinned grievously against the love of God. The Truth of God treated *Scripturally* is a holy medicine, but treated after the manner of the schools, it may sour into a deadly poison! Poor penitent Hearts, there is *nothing* in the Divine decree to shut out one of you from hope! “The Lord has not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; He has not said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain.” Nevertheless, the Savior did distinctly turn the blackest side of the doctrine to the woman, and said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

What was worse, in her case, was that she knew that this election, as far as Christ had stated it, *must exclude her*, for He told her that He was not sent except to the house of Israel and she well knew that she did not belong to that house. She was a Canaanite woman, a native of Tyre and Sidon and, therefore, distinctly shut out—and *Jesus Himself had told her* so. That must have made the sentence fall like a death-knell on her ears! If the servants tell us such a thing as that, we can forget it, but if the Master says, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” then the matter ends in blank despair. The poor Canaanite woman might have very logically ended her pleadings, saying, “What more can be done? I cannot go against the word from Christ’s own lips.” Yet she did not so, but, like a true heroine, she pressed her suit even to the joyful end.

You see her cause for discouragement was much worse than yours can ever be, for you do not *know* that you are shut out—there is nothing in your race or city which excludes you. Moreover, Christ has never told you that you are shut out. I do not think that any minister has ever told you so, but if you *have* ever gathered from any ministry under Heaven that there is no hope for you, you have no right to come to such a conclusion! In my soul’s intent, I have never desired the discouragement of a single soul among you all. Far rather would I *die* that you might live! But if you have copied out bitter words and have come to wretched conclusions, then I would urge you to be as sensible and as brave as this woman was, who, when she had not gathered it from *ministers*, but had received it

from *Christ, Himself*, that He was not sent to such as she was, yet nevertheless persevered, pressed forward and came to Him and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me."

Some may say to me this evening—"Why talk about this difficulty at all?" I talk about it because it exists. It frets and worries many minds. Many are troubled and the servants of God must deal with their trouble. Gladly enough would I let these fears alone if they would let my people alone! The stern fact of predestination meets most men somewhere or other—even in the paths of philosophy it is not escaped! And when it comes darkly over truly gracious souls, much of its power for mischief will lie in the ignorance of the person assailed. If we were better instructed, we would probably find no mystery where all is now mystery! Men forget that the ordination of God deals with everything—not only with the spiritual, but quite as certainly with the natural world. Yet they never allow it to interfere with their labor for bread, their struggle for wealth, or their race for fame!

Why should they dissociate the matter of salvation from the 10,000 affairs which are encompassed in the same ring? Why will men act, in other matters, according to common sense, but upon this matter make mole-hills into mountains? They fancy that the will of God settles one or two matters and leaves all the rest loose! They dream that it takes away free agency and responsibility—and makes men into machines. They cannot understand that Divine plan which interferes with no will of *man* and yet secures the will of *God*—nor can they see how everything proceeds by the free agency of the creatures as much as if there were no God—and yet God rules over all. I wish that this subject did not vex men, but it is idle to wish. It has vexed them from the beginning and will vex them even to the end. As we cannot alter facts, we must deal with them.

Dear troubled Souls, Jesus would have you come to Him without fear! He invites you to trust in Him, yes, more—He *commands* you to believe on His name! Nothing He has thought, or ordained, or purposed, or predestinated has any tendency to drive you from Him. Whatever predestination may, or may not, be, this one thing is sure—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." Everything beckons towards His Cross and Himself. Come, and let nothing hinder you even for a single hour!

II. Now, observe THE COMMENDABLE ACT OF THIS WOMAN. In considering what she did, we shall come to the practical part of the subject. And I notice that she did not attempt, for a single moment, to deny what Jesus had said. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and she did not reply, "Lord, that is not true." She did not question *anything* which Jesus asserted—that would have been gross presumption on her part. She did not quibble, or object, or raise opposition. She accepted what Jesus said without any argument whatever. She did not attempt to say that it was unjust that the Christ of God should come only to the house of Israel. She did not assert, as some have shamelessly done, that God should deal with one as with another, or else He would be a respecter of persons. All that kind of thing, which we have heard so often, was far from her mind!

She was silent and submissive as to the Savior's speech. She did not even argue that surely, in her solitary instance, she might be permitted to break through the regulation. She did not argue at all. She left the Truth of God, which to her was dark, in the keeping of Him whose name is light. She sees the black cloud, but she passes through it, feeling that it cannot be anything more than a cloud—and so she comes to the Savior's feet and cries, "Lord, help me. I do not understand this. I am all in a fog and all in a muddle. Lord, help me! Lord, I do not ask to *understand*, but I *do* cry for *help*. Enable me to believe and to receive the blessing, let the dark Truth say what it may."

Many persons are so weak in judgment that if they have to do battle with a difficulty before they can be saved, they will perish in the attempt. Oh, poor Heart, do not battle with a difficulty at all! Leave it alone! If it is a great Truth *for men* and you are nothing but *a babe*, and hardly that, do not choke yourself with man's meat. If a great mystery meddles with you, then fly to Jesus Christ for relief from it—with this prayer in your mouth—"Lord, help me. I am in a difficulty. Help my understanding. I am despondent—help my heart. But especially, I am full of iniquity—help my poor and sorrowful case and do for me what I cannot do for myself. Save my soul and deliver me."

Now, then, we have seen what she did *not* do, and in this she is admirable. Now let us see what the woman actually did. She came to Jesus. Read the words, "Then came she and *worshipped* Him." First, *she came to Jesus* and did not go round about. She came not to Peter, or James, or John—she came to Jesus. She did not stand still and cry, as she had done before, from a distance, but crying unto *Him*, she came to Jesus, drew near to Him, grasped Him. I do not doubt she fell at His feet as though she would have held Him. She came to Jesus. Now, from everything beneath the heavens, poor Soul, fly to the living, personal Christ! There is such a One now living as Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, whose delight it is to deal with the sicknesses, infirmities and diseases of men. Do not, I pray you, stop in doctrines, or in precepts, or in ministers, or in services—but come straight away to Christ—the living, personal Savior, anointed of the Lord. Your hope lies in Him!

"Which way shall I go?" you ask. If it were a matter of *physical* coming, I know that if the road were long and dreary, you would start upon it, tonight, without delay. But it is a *mental* coming. You are to come to Jesus, not with feet and legs, but with mind and heart! Remember that there is such a Person. Consider Him. Think of Him. Believe Him. Reverence Him, for He is the Son of the Highest. Trust Him, for He is "mighty to save." This is coming to Him. Since He is a Savior, let Him fulfill His office upon you. You greatly need saving—give Him the opportunity of showing what He is able to do. Say within your soul, "I am the chief of sinners—lost, ruined, and undone. Behold, I come to Him! If I perish, I will perish trusting in Him." It cannot be that a soul can die relying upon Jesus—sooner shall Heaven and earth pass away than Jesus fail to save the soul that trusts in Him!

The woman came to Jesus immediately after He uttered His words of discouragement. We read in the text, "*Then* came she." "Then came she

and worshipped Him.” What, *then*—when He seemed to drive her away—then? Why, He had just told her that He was not sent to her. “*Then* came she.” He had just uttered a most mysterious and discouraging Truth of God, but, “*Then* came she.” That kind of faith which comes to Christ only on a summer’s day among the lilies of the field is not of much use! Flowers and butterflies and all things which come of the calm and the bright are soon gone—we need a hope which can survive the frost! That is the sort of faith which comes to Jesus in the middle of winter, when the cold devours and the fierce blast prowls among the snowdrifts. That is the faith which saves the soul—the faith which ventures to the Savior in spite of all weathers.

Saving faith learns to credit contradictions, to laugh at impossibilities and to say, “It cannot be, but yet it will be.” Our poor friend who was buffeted by our Lord’s words was secretly upheld by the sight of His Person. What can a word be compared with a person—compared with such a Person as that of Jesus, the Sinner’s Friend? She believes *Him* rather than His way of speaking! He says that He is not sent, but there He is! He says that He is not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel—and yet *there He is!* He has come here where there are none of the house of Israel! She seems to say to herself, “Whether He was sent or not, here He is. He has come among Tyrians and Sidonians—and I have come to Him! Therefore He is not kept from me by His commission. I do not understand His language, but I do understand the look of His face. I do understand His manner. I do understand the winsomeness of His blessed Person. I can see that compassion dwells in the Son of David. I am sure that He has all power given to Him to heal my daughter—and here He is. I do not know about His commission, but I do know Him and I shall still plead with Him.” So she came to Jesus, then and there, and why shouldn’t *you?*

Now, Soul, is this the darkest night that ever was for you? Come to Jesus *now!* Are you quite sure that your case is hopeless? Quite certain that your doom is sealed? Have you written out your own death warrant? Have you made a covenant with death and a league with Hell? Do you feel sure that you will be damned before the morning light breaks on you? Then come to Jesus Christ now! “*Then* came she.” That is the thing—to come to Christ when He has a drawn sword in His hand, as Bunyan puts it—to come to Christ when He frowns—to come to Christ when everything says, “keep back.” “*Then* came she.” Brave woman! By His Grace I will even do the same.

But now notice *how* she came. “*Then* came she and *worshipped Him.*” My heart greatly rejoices! I wish I could picture the scene. She did not stop to work out the difficult question with which He posed to her—she looked at Him and she came to Him and when she got near to Him, she did the best thing she could—she worshipped Him! Down she went on her face before Him! And when she looked up, it was with a look of reverent awe and childlike confidence! Blessed be His name—if we cannot *understand* Him, we can worship Him!

Now, you have been thinking about yourself, and the more you do this, the more you will despond and despair. No possible comfort can come to you by that road. If I were you, I would give up that task and begin to

think about Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of men. “Oh, but I am such a sinner!” Yes, and He is such a Savior! “Sir, I am so black with evil!” But He is able to make us whiter than snow! “Alas, I greatly deserve His curse!” Yes, but He was “made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.” By death the Lord has put that curse away. Behold Him, then, upon the Cross removing human sin, and see if you cannot copy the woman’s example—“Then came she and worshipped Him.” Now, try, poor timorous spirit—try and worship! This is a homage which a humble heart can render in acceptable style.

A self-conceited heart will do *anything* sooner than worship. Pride, self and rebellion cannot worship—but humble hearts are happy in the deed! Oh, that you would now bow with me before the Lamb of God! Worship Him *now!* “Blessed Son of God! Blessed Son of God! That ever You should become Man for men and die in the sinner’s place! Oh, Your love! Your wondrous love! And You have gone up into Glory now. You sit at the right hand of God and *there* I worship You as my Lord and my God! If I may not call You my Savior, yet You shall be my God! If I may not rejoice in You, at least I will worship You.” This is holy talk! It has a perfume about it which the Lord loves! That way faith will come to you. That way life and peace and rest will come to you. This trembling Canaanite “came to Him and worshipped Him”—follow her and share her blessedness!

Then, notice *her prayer*. One has well observed that if you were on a rotten piece of ice and you could not get to the shore, or feared that you could not, one of the very best ways would be to go down on all fours and try to crawl along as gingerly as you could—and try to get off the ice and somehow onto the shore. This woman so proceeds. She seems to fall flat upon that awful Truth of God which she cannot understand! She adores and worships and reverences Him that spoke it—and thus she spreads out her weakness upon every possible resting place—and comes safely to shore. “Lord,” she says, “help me. Oh, do not put me back, but help me! Lord, do not leave me, but help me! Whatever You have to say to me, say it, and I will worship You while You say it—

**“Though You slay me, I will trust,
Praise You even from the dust,”**

but, Lord, help me!”

My dear Hearer, do that, and do it now! No doctrine will trouble you long—I am sure it will not. On the contrary, you will enquire why you ever let it trouble you. Do you ever let predestination trouble you in the matter of your daily business? Tomorrow you hope to make a few shillings at your daily calling, but it may be that you will not—you may lose some. Why do you not say to yourself, “It may be that the Providence of God has arranged that I shall not earn anything to-morrow; therefore I shall stay at home and do nothing”? Why, you are not such a fool! You will take down your shop shutters, display your goods and do your best—or you will go out to your calling and look for your usual wage. Let the Providence of God do what it may, your business is to do what you can! So is it with a poor seeking soul—that soul’s business is to let the Lord do what He wills, but meanwhile to cry, “Lord, help me!” Wholly submissive, but heartily adoring, lie at Jesus’ feet and believe that this Divine Savior must and will

save every soul that hangs upon Him. This is the way of wisdom; follow it! God help you to do so, and to do so at once.

I do not think that I need to say anything more by way of comforting you, for that may well suffice, if the Lord shall incline your heart to seek His face at once. Remember this, however, that there never was a soul, yet, that came to Christ and Christ cast it away! Remember, again, that there *never can be* such a soul, for He has said, “Him that comes to Me, I will by no means cast out.” Remember, again, that every soul that ever came to Christ came because the *Father drew him*—and that every soul that came, found out, afterwards, that there was an election of Grace that encompassed him—and that He was in it! Even this poor woman turned out to be one that Christ was sent to bless! Although, as a general matter of fact, in His lifetime He came to the seed of Israel, just as the Prophets came to Israel, yet there always appeared an exception about the Prophets and, therefore, it was no marvel that there should be exceptions in the case of their Lord.

Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, but unto none of them was the Prophet sent, save to a woman of Sarepta, who belonged to the very city out of which this woman came! Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha, yet none of them was healed save Naaman the Syrian. Naaman did not belong to the favored race at all, but was a far-off stranger—and yet he received the blessing of healing from the Lord God of Israel! The election of God as to these temporal things seemed to exclude all but the seed of Israel—but it was only in *seeming*—there were always some strangers in the chosen line. And so that particular form of election which consisted in our Lord’s personal ministry being only to the Jews did not cause the exclusion of this poor believing woman. To her, Jesus Christ had manifestly come in the chosen line, for *there He was!* He was outside His own boundary! He had come to her!

Now, at this moment, whatever you may think about this doctrine or that, *Jesus Christ has come to you.* I have preached to you His Truth and you have heard it! Yes, and you have felt something of its power. Yield to it, I beseech you. If you yield to it and come to Him and trust Him, then rejoice that the lines of electing love have encompassed you! You are His! You could not and would not have come to Him in prayer and simple faith if it had not been so! Your coming to Him proves that His eternal love of old went after you! Go home, O woman of a sorrowful spirit, and be no more sad! The Lord bless you all, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 15:10-39.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—326, 499, 603.**

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

A PRAYER FOR EVERYBODY NO. 2597

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT CHRIST CHURCH, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD,
(during the renovation of the Tabernacle),
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1883.

*“Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!”
Matthew 15:25.*

OUR text tells us of a case of real distress and it shows us how a woman prayed when in agony. It is a good thing, when young people begin to write, especially if they think of writing for the press, if they will, before they send away their manuscript, take their pen and strike out every superfluous word. Even as a general rule, for conversation or for correspondence, every word that we can do without is better omitted. As it is difficult to travel if we are encumbered with a great quantity of luggage, so is it difficult to make our meaning clear when it is crushed beneath the weight of too many words. Take your pen, then, young author. Sit down quickly and strike out all the merely ornamental words that you have written. And when you have got rid of them, you will probably have some respectable sentences left.

This woman had no need to omit any of her words, for she was not in a state of mind to utter a sentence that could be pruned of a single word. She was in such a condition that every word that came out of her mouth was like hot shot poured out of her heart. I had almost said that every letter, as well as every syllable and every word she uttered, was coined in blood. She speaks, at any rate, burning language, at blood heat, and the words, as they drop into my ears, come with a kind of overpowering force, so great is their intensity. “Lord, help me!” There is not a syllable to spare! The words are all short, simple, living, burning—from the first one to the last.

I like this kind of pleading and I commend it to you who are accustomed to pain and sufferings, or who have to do with this rough world, as many of you have. You find that in your time of distress, you have to throw away a great many merely ornamental things and you only keep what is real, solid, and substantial. Here is a woman who must deal in realities, for she has at home a real daughter, really tormented by a real devil. But she believes that before her there is a real Savior and she intends not to let Him slip away through any lack of intensity on her part! She follows Him with clamorous cries! If she is repulsed, she still pursues Him, and when, at last, He gives her what looks like a wry word,

she will not believe it! But she adores Him, she worships Him and she cries out of the depths of her soul, "Lord, help me!" I want to speak especially about her prayer. We have begun with it and we will end with it. But before I get to the prayer, there are two or three other things I need to hold up for your admiration.

I. First, let us ADMIRE THIS WOMAN'S IMPORTUNITY.

I do not hesitate to say, although I am speaking in a large assembly, that there is not one person here who ever did experience such rebuffs or meet with such difficulties as this woman did. There may be some who would have a right to stand up, and say, "Ah, Sir, you do not know my experience—my coming to Christ was very difficult." I do not know your experience, my dear Friend, but I feel sure of this—your experience *cannot* be compared with hers, for, in her coming to Christ, she had to surmount greater difficulties than you ever knew—and greater difficulties than any of you are realizing now, even though you should be almost driven to despair by the obstacles in your pathway. This poor woman had three special difficulties.

The first was, that *the Lord Jesus Christ did not answer her cries*. "He answered her not a word." He was, Himself, the Word, and yet He did not give her the word she needed! Jesus is the blessed Spokesman of the Eternal, by whom God breaks the infinite silences and speaks to man. Yet, "He answered her not a word." He was in the habit of answering prayer, yet He gave her not a single word of response to her petition. He had never been known to turn away a sincere suppliant without a kind reply, yet He gave her not one word! But even then, though she had not a word from Christ to hang her hopes upon—not a promise, not a single word of invitation or encouragement—she still clung to Christ and would not let Him go until He blessed her.

There is not one of you, dear Friends, who can say that our Lord Jesus Christ has not spoken to you, for here is a Book full of His words—a Book, mark you, not a line of which this poor woman had ever seen! She lived in a region where the Old Testament was altogether unknown and the New Testament was not then written. But you have the Words of Christ in your homes! They lie upon the pew-ledge in front of you. You can carry them in your pockets where yet you go. A two-penny Testament can be had by everybody, so it cannot be said that Jesus Christ has not given you a Word. Then how often have you had good Words from Christ through the preacher of the Gospel! How often has He let fall handfuls on purpose for you, poor troubled Soul! You have had sweet Words, gracious Words—

***"Wonderful Words of Life"*—**

and plenty of them, too. Therefore I say that there is one point in which this woman's difficulties far exceeded yours! And as she pressed on until she gained the desire of her heart, will not you do likewise? Do you not remember how the men of Nineveh hung on to nothing but this—"Who

can tell?" It was a very poor little nail that they clung to—"Who can tell?" Yet they did cling to it and they found mercy!

There have been some who have found comfort in what God has *not* said—"I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain." So will you not find comfort in what He *has* said? Especially may you be cheered and blessed by such words as these—"Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "I will pardon them whom I reserve." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Now, between "not a Word," and all these Words, what a difference there is, and so, what a difference there is between you and this poor woman! How much you have to help you! Come, then, to Jesus, come even *now*, pleading the promise, and you shall not go away without the blessing!

Next, this woman had another great difficulty, and that was that *all the disciples were against her*. They said to Jesus, "Send her away, for she cries after us. She disturbs us; we cannot hear Your exposition. We cannot be heard, ourselves, which is also very important. 'Send her away, send her away.' She has such a harsh voice. She does not speak our language. She talks in the tongue of Tyre or Sidon, and we do not like it. She is so troublesome! She is first bawling out after John and next she is calling after Peter—there is no keeping her quiet! 'Send her away, send her away.'" Now, although this must have been a very secondary thing compared with Christ's silence, yet it may have bred in her heart great discouragement and she may have felt in her spirit that she could not long hold out. Yet she did hold out until the blessing came!

Now, I venture to say that there is no one here *who is seeking the Savior who* has had Christ's disciples against Him. O dear Heart, there are *many* in this house tonight who are not against you! They would do anything they could for you, to cheer you and bring you to the Savior! I know some who, when this service is over, will very likely waylay you in the aisles! They are always looking out to find persons who may be under concern of soul, to see whether they can utter a word of encouragement to them. They will not say, "Send her away!" They will want you to stay a little while and will talk to you very earnestly about your soul—and try to point out to you the way into life and peace. I am sure that you have not the difficulty that this poor woman had. If you had, I would still exhort you to imitate her importunity, but, as you have not, let her importunity shame you if you are in the least degree backward! And come you at once boldly to the Savior and say, "I must now find the mercy that I need! I cannot go away until I find it." God grant that many of you may make that good resolution!

There was, however, a third discouragement which must have been greater than the other two, and that was that when the Savior did speak, He said, "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" It

was as much as saying, "I am not sent to this woman of Tyre and Sidon. I can do nothing for her within the bounds of My commission." And yet, when the woman heard that sentence, instead of being daunted by it, she came to Christ and worshipped Him, and said, "Lord, help me!" I may be addressing someone who has been thinking over the Doctrine of Election—a doctrine which ought not to give trouble to anybody, but it often does. It may be that you have said in your heart, "What if I should not be elect? What if the blessed things of the Covenant of Grace should not be for me?" I beseech you, do not be persuaded by Satan to stop there, but go to Jesus just as this woman did! She seemed to say to herself, "Whether this Christ of God is sent to a Tyre and Sidon woman or not, I shall go and worship Him, and cry, 'Lord, help me!'" She heard that Christ was not sent to that country, but she seemed to say, "If You are not sent, Lord, yet I am still here. If You are not sent to me, perhaps I am sent to You. She felt that there must be some way of getting over the difficulty. She believed that, by some kind of ingenuity, even if she could not tell how, the difficulty could be removed! This glorious, loving Savior, into whose radiant face she looked, could not repulse her—she felt that He could not!

And, dear Friends, I can no more believe that Christ will repulse a sinner than I can look up to the sun and believe that it will ever freeze me! It cannot be—it is too bright, too full of warmth to turn me into ice—and I cannot look into the Savior's face and believe that He will ever cast away a poor soul that comes to Him! So, somehow or other, this poor woman seemed to feel, "I cannot get over the difficulty, but I will go round it." That is always a wise method. For my own part, I have often learned what a joy it is to cast anchor under the lee of a great impassable thing that I cannot understand. I like, if I am traveling, to see the river open up and to find my boat gliding gently along between the surrounding hills. But if, all of a sudden, I find that the channel is entirely blocked up, I am just as comfortable if the sailor lets down the anchor and we spend the night under the lee of some big, towering rock! Why not? It is very well to understand things, but I do not know that we are much the better for understanding anything! Understanding sometimes puffs us up, but we are always benefited by believing. So, my Friend, when you come hard and fast against something which you cannot get over, do not try to get over it, but just pull up, right there, and say, "If it is so, let it be so, but, anyway, God is gracious, Christ is merciful and I am going to cast myself at the crucified Savior's feet and trust in Him."

Now this woman, notwithstanding this terrible discouragement, after actually hearing the Savior say, "I am not sent to you," yet nevertheless persevered with her appeal. None of you have ever heard Him say that you are not among the elect. Why should you not be elect as well as anybody else? None of you have ever climbed to Heaven and found that your names were not written in the roll of God's chosen—and you never will climb there to read it at all! All such things are hidden from your sight.

Your business is to cling to Christ's dear feet and never let Him go until He grants you the desire of your heart. That is my first remark—admire this woman's importunity.

II. Now for a few minutes I invite you, dear Friends, to ADMIRE HER RESORT TO THE LORD HIMSELF. "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!"

She is to be admired, first, *because she turned away from the disciples*. I could not help smiling as I read, just now, what the disciples said, "Send her away, for she cries after us." Poor soul, she never cried after *them*—she knew better than to do that! It was their own self-importance that made them think so. If she had begun to cry after *them*, their black looks would soon have stopped her from doing so. But she did not make such a mistake as that. "Oh, no," she seemed to say, "it is not after you that I am crying. Neither Peter, nor James, nor John can give me the help I need." So is it with us—we are not crying after the saints, as some poor souls are doing, hoping that saints, long since dead and buried, who have done with this mortal life, may make intercession for them before the Throne of God! No, we are not crying after them. If any of you are, I pray you cease that folly and cry to the Master! And let this be your cry, "Lord, help me!" Not, "Peter, help me," nor, "Mary, help me," but, "Jesus, help me!" "Lord, help me!" He can do it, but the saints cannot. They were poor sinners who had to be saved by Grace like the rest of us—and they are now singing to the praise of the God of Grace, but they have no Grace to give to us! Mind, dear Friends, that you never think of going to them, but go straight to the Master, as this poor woman did! "Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me!"

She went *away, also, from all prescribed paths*. The Savior seemed to say to her that there was no way for her to come. He did but seem to tell her that the road at present was intended especially for the house of Israel and He had come to bless them beyond all others. But the woman seems to say, "If there is not a road open, I must make one. I will go over hedge and ditch, but I must find my Savior." Her heart was so strongly resolved upon coming to Christ that whether she came in the orthodox way or not, she must come! Oh, how I wish that some poor sinner here might be so stirred up with the same desire that he would say, "I must somehow find the Lord Jesus. If I have heard one minister and God has not blessed him to me, I will hear another. And if hearing the Gospel is not blessed to me, I will sit up at night and read the Scriptures. And if the Bible is not blessed to me, I will go on my knees and cry to God for mercy and I will never cease crying to Him till the mercy comes. For, somehow or somewhere, I must get it! I must find God in Christ Jesus, that I may obtain the salvation of my soul."

Yet once more, dear Friends, I admire this woman, and I hold her up as a model for your imitation, because she resorted to Christ. Away from the disciples and from all prescribed paths, she *went to HIM*. Yes, that is the beauty of it! "Then came she and *worshipped HIM*." She fell at His

feet and her prayer was, "Lord, help me!" She did not prescribe how she should be helped, for she believed in His wisdom. She did not dictate to Him what He should do, for she believed in His judgment and prudence. All she said was, "Lord, help me!" She did not think that her case was beyond His power, for she believed in His almightiness, so she prayed, "Lord, help me!" She did not think her case could be beyond His pity, so she pleaded, "Lord, help me. True, I am only a Gentile dog but, Lord, help me. I am a Syrophenician woman but, Lord, help me. I have a poor daughter possessed of a devil but, Lord, help me." She pleads thus with Christ and it is amazing what such pleading can accomplish! Do not come here and merely repeat certain prayers! Do not go home to your closet simply to say prayers as if to nobody or to everybody, but get absolutely at the feet of Jesus and plead with Him, saying, "Lord, I will not let You go until You bless me," for that is the kind of prayer that opens the gates of Heaven, the prayer to which nothing can be denied!

III. Before I come to the closing portion of my discourse, I ask you to ADMIRE THIS WOMAN'S APPROPRIATION OF HER DAUGHTER'S CASE TO HERSELF.

I urge you who seek the conversion of others to follow her example. Notice, she did not pray, "Lord, help my daughter," but, "Lord, help *me!*" At first, she pleaded for her daughter and mentioned the circumstances of her case, but as she grew more intense and fervent in her supplication, there seemed to be no division between the mother and the daughter! The mother had absorbed the daughter—the great heart of the pleading one seemed to contain the one pleaded for with all her agony—"Lord, help me!" Do you catch the idea? When you are pleading with God for your Sunday school class, it is not simply, Mary, and Jane, and Sarah that you pray for, but you have incorporated all those girls into *yourself* and, therefore, you plead, "Lord, help me!" And you, my Brother, need to get to this point if you are really to prevail for your scholars, that you will not be asking for John, and Thomas, and William, alone, but you have so identified yourself with them, that if they are lost, it almost seems as if you are lost! And if they are saved, it will be another Heaven to you for each one of them to be in Heaven!

You know that when Elisha restored the Shunammite's dead son, "he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child." Then, as it were, they became one, and then it was that the new life came through the Prophet into the dead child. And this is the way to pray for our scholars and our hearers. I am sure that if a minister wants conversions, he must identify himself with his people! There are people, nowadays, who make a difficulty about Moses praying for Israel, "If You will forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written." And they raise questions about Paul being willing to be separated from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Oh, but there is no diffi-

culty in the matter if you once get to feel such an intense love for the souls of men that you would, as it were, pawn your own salvation and count it little if you might but bring the people to the Savior's feet!

A man who has never felt that willingness does not yet know the true throb of a pastor's heart—he has not been ordained to be a shepherd if he would not lay down his life for the flock, if it were necessary. When you get to that point, then the blessing will come. “Lord, help me—*me*, for, in my own proper self, I am one with these people for whom my prayer is put up.”

IV. Now, lastly—yet it is the chief part of the subject—I want YOU TO ADMIRE THIS WOMAN'S PRAYER, ITSELF.

I began my discourse by pointing out to you its sententiousness, its freedom from superfluities. Now, again I bid you admire it for the same reason. Notice that *it asks everything in one little phrase*—“Lord, help me!” It seems to me to be a very comprehensive prayer, for although it uses but one very small verb, that verb means a great deal more than, at first sight, it appears to mean. When the woman said, “Lord, help me,” she did not mean what we generally mean by help. That is, “Lord, do something for me and I will do the rest.” She could not do *anything* towards the casting out of the devil from her child so, by that word, “help,” she meant, “Lord, do it all,” for that is the kind of help Christ gives! Have you ever heard of the poor half-witted being who, nevertheless, had sense enough to understand the Gospel? Someone said to him, “Well, Johnny, how were you saved?” “Oh,” he answered, “Jesus Christ did His part, and I did all the rest.” “And pray tell, Johnny, what did you do?” “Well,” he said, “Jesus Christ saved me and I did all I could to prevent it.” And that is about all “the rest” that any of us ever do! We do not really help in the matter of our salvation, for we cannot—it is Christ's work from first to last—and Divine Grace must have all the praise for it. Blessed be that Sovereign Grace of God!

But that word, “help,” meant just this—“Lord, will You do all that is needed? I am in a dreadful fix. I cannot cure my poor child and I cannot pray aright about her. You have almost shut my mouth by that last word, ‘I am not sent,’ yet, ‘Lord, help me!’ Teach me what to ask for! Teach me how to ask for it! Teach me what to think of next! Teach me what to do next. Never was a poor creature in such a plight as I am, Lord. Get me out of it! Save my poor daughter.” It was asking everything in a phrase which did not, at first sight, seem to mean much—“Lord, help me!”

And, if you notice, *the prayer was one which brought Christ and the poor woman together*—“Lord” and “me.” And here is the link—“Lord, help me!” Some of you poor creatures want to get to Christ by doing something for Him! You have undertaken a very heavy task—you will never get to Him that way. The only way is for Him to stoop down and do something for you—then you shall go into partnership and have fellowship with one another. And if you agree to this arrangement, He will find eve-

rything that is needed and you shall have it all given to you, gratis! Those must be the terms—that He, from first to last, must do all, and be all, and have all the glory! If you will agree to that condition, the company may be started at once—and what a blessed company it shall be! The Lord and yourself linked together by that little word, “help”—“Lord, help me!” If you are to succeed as this woman did, you must imitate her perseverance even in spite of Christ’s apparent refusal to help her.

This is a lesson which is taught us in many other parts of the Word of God. She that wins her suit with the unjust judge is the importunate widow who will not be refused. He that gets the loaves at midnight is the man who continues knocking till his friend awakens *himself* and gives him all he asks. O Beloved, plead thus with God! Plead earnestly, plead for your salvation as you would for your life! Lift up the cry—

**“Gracious Lord, incline Your ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear!
Hear my never-ceasing cry,
Give me Christ, or else I die!
Wealth and honor I disdain,
Earthly comforts all are vain.
These can never satisfy,
Give me Christ, or else I die!”**

And you shall surely have Christ, for He never finally refuses to listen to such pleading as that.

Lastly, dear Friends, I commend this prayer to you because it *such a handy prayer*. You can use it when you are in a hurry, you can use it when you are frightened, you can use it when you have not time to bow your knees. You can use it in the pulpit if you are going to preach, you can use it when you are opening your shop, you can use it when you are rising in the morning. It is such a handy prayer that I hardly know any position in which you could not pray it—“Lord, help me!” Often, when you are brought to some great emergency, you may use it and feel as if it were the best prayer that was ever composed. Do you suffer much? Do you sometimes fall back upon the pillows feeling that you cannot bear any more? Does it not seem natural, then, for you to pray, “Lord, help me”? Do you often lie awake at night? Have you counted the clock round in your seasons of suffering? Oh, then, I know that you will feel that this is a good prayer to offer in the middle of the night—“Lord, help me!” Do you wake up in the morning just as weary as when you went to bed? Are you gradually losing strength? Are you slowly wasting away? Do they tell you that you will soon be gone? Oh, then, as the clock ticks, I think it may remind you of this prayer, “Lord, help me! Lord, help me! Lord, help me!” It is a sick woman’s prayer—a sick child’s prayer—a sick man’s prayer. It will suit any of you at such times.

Or are some of you losing a great deal of money just now? Is business very bad? Are you out of a job? Have you walked up and down the streets and worn your shoes out, and yet found nothing to do? I think this prayer will suit you at this moment and all day tomorrow, “Lord, help

me! Lord, help me!”—for He can, you know. The keys of Providence are not taken out of His hand yet. He knows how to deliver the righteous out of all their troubles. Go to Him with this prayer, “Lord, help me!”

Are any of you very much tempted from without by surroundings that are peculiarly dangerous? Are you tempted by Satan? Are any of you exposed, just now, to some very special trial? Have your feet almost gone? Have your steps well-near slipped? Now here is a prayer that will hold you up and keep you from falling—“Lord, help me! Lord, help me!”

“No,” says someone, “you have not touched my case yet” Perhaps you are going to a new job, or you are just undertaking fresh duties and you wonder how you will be able to fill the sphere which was occupied so well by the one who went before you? Well, do not enter upon that new sphere without this prayer, “Lord, help me!” If you pray that prayer from your heart, you will be encouraged—you shall play the man and do well for God and for His Truth. Possibly you are already in a situation where you are under great strain. Where, perhaps, your physical strength is overtaxed and your mind is depressed by the wear and tear of a cruel servitude. Well, if you cannot get out of it, pray the Lord to help you in it, and let this be your constant cry, “Lord, help me! Lord, help me!” It is wonderful how He can aid and direct His people!

And you, young Brother against the door, you came just inside, hoping to get a message that will guide you in your present difficulty. Here is that message! Go home and pray about it. Cry to God about it and you shall have direction. And let this be your cry, “Lord, help me! Lord, help me!” And He will help you. Is there a dear little girl here who wants to find Christ? I give her this short prayer to pray tonight, “Lord, help me!” Is there a gray-headed man here, leaning upon his staff, who has not yet found the Savior? Then, as you sit in that aisle, cry, “Son of David, Jesus Christ the Lord, do help and save me!” And He will! This prayer will do to live with. This prayer will do to die with! It is a prayer for those who usually worship in this place. It is a prayer for the people in the streets all around. It is a prayer for everybody and a prayer for every place wherever you may be—“Lord, help me!”

Blessed be His name, the Lord will answer this prayer! He has helped His people! He is still Israel’s Helper! He will be their Helper even to the end! Therefore put your trust in Him and go forward with confidence into the future. And may His gracious Presence be with you forevermore! Amen.

EXPOSITION: MATTHEW 15:10-31.

Verses 10, 11. *And He called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.* True religion does not consist in meats and drinks, in feasting or in fasting. It is not that

which goes into us, but that which comes out of us which is the main matter.

12. *Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Know You that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?* They thought a very great deal of the opinion of the Pharisees and they were greatly concerned because their Master had offended them. These Pharisees set themselves up as the judges of everything that was correct and proper in religion! Yet Christ offended them by His plain speaking.

13. *But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted up.* The Truth of God is often intended to root up. I have no doubt that our Lord said many things which had no other intention than the discovery of these deceitful men to themselves and others, that their baneful influence might be destroyed. Our Savior was a true iconoclast, a great image-smasher, and these men, who were the chief icons or images of the day, had to be broken down. He therefore put the Truth of God in the very form that would offend them!

14. *Let them alone: they are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.* Our Lord did not soften or tone down His previous language, but He revealed the true character of the false guides by whom so many were deluded.

15. *Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Explain unto us this parable.* “We do not understand it. What is its meaning?”

16, 17. *And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do not you yet understand that whatever enters in at the mouth goes into the belly, and is eliminated?* And so there is an end of it.

18. *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart and they defile the man.* The main matter to be considered is the heart, not the mouth and other parts of the body. Note how our Lord, by this great Truth, puts the axe to much that looks very fair and good, and cuts it down as worthless! If we serve God with the heart, there is the core of true religion! But if not, we may have as many ceremonial washings as there are hours in the day and days in the year, and we may be careful to avoid this article of diet and to feed on that, to wear this garment and not to wear that, and to observe this day and not that—but all this outward religion will be of no use whatever—if our *heart* is not savingly affected by the Grace of God.

19-21. *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man. Then Jesus went from there and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* He did not like the Pharisees well enough to stay among them. His own word concerning them was, “Let them alone,” and He did very severely let them alone—“Jesus went from there and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.” He must not go into Tyre and Sidon, for His commission for the present was confined to Palestine, the chosen land. Do not regret this, dear Friends. To have extended our Savior’s work over a greater area

would not have been, really, to increase it. And it was very important that during the very short active lifetime of our Savior—a little more than three years—He should confine His operations to a comparatively small district, so as to produce a permanent result, there, which would afterwards radiate over the whole world. So our Savior, who knew what was best for men, confined Himself within a very narrow sphere.

And, my Brothers and Sisters, I am not sure that we are always wise when we desire a great sphere. I have myself sometimes envied the man with about five hundred people to watch over, who could see them all, know them all, and enter into sympathy with them all—and so could do his work well. But, with so large a number as I have under my charge, what can one man do? And you, my Brothers, may increase the quantity of your acreage, and yet grow no larger crops. You may think that you will succeed better on a wider scale, but if you do not do so well in the greater field, it might have been wiser to narrow your boundaries rather than to widen them. However, if our Lord might not go into Tyre and Sidon, He went as near to them as He could—“Jesus departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.” And if you, dear Friends, think there is a limit to your sphere of usefulness, always go as near as you can to the limit—go up to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon!

22. *And, behold.* For it is a great wonder that such a person should have come to Jesus. “And, behold”—

22, 23. *A woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word.* This was another marvel—a silent Savior—silent when it would have been so natural for Him to speak a kind and gracious word. “He answered her not a word.”

23. *And His disciples came and sought Him, saying, Send her away, for she cries after us.* “‘She cries after us,’ and it is very important that *we* should not be troubled.” We disciples are apt to think so, especially if we get a little lifted up, and come to be Apostles. “Send her away, for she cries after us.” She knew better than to cry after the disciples! It was the Master whose help she needed. Some sinners are a great nuisance, they make so much noise in seeking Christ, and what a mercy it is that they do so! Oh, to have such troublesome people about us all day long and all night long, too! It would be worth while to be vexed in this style. But the disciples said to Jesus, “Send her away for she cries after us.”

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* “Therefore, I cannot attend to her.”

25, 26. *Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me! But He answered and said, It is not meet—* “It is not comely, it is not fit.”

26. *To take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.* The original means, “the little dogs that play with the children; they lie under the table, and pick up the crumbs that their masters’ (the children’s masters) let fall.” The woman caught at that expression at once.

27. *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. "I may be only a dog, and these Jews round about You are Your children, but I have gotten in among them and I am looking for a crumb or two as it falls from their table." This was grand faith on her part and it was speedily rewarded!*

28-31. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And Jesus departed from there and came near unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. The Savior appears to have gone on this journey on purpose to bless this woman and her daughter and, having worked the miracle, He went where great multitudes came to Him, bringing their sick folk to be healed. And the result was, "They glorified the God of Israel." There may be some poor soul here in as great distress as this woman was. If so, may that one get a blessing and then may the blessing spread through all the neighborhood till multitudes are saved!*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 492, 551

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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THE LITTLE DOGS

NO. 1309

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 6, 1876,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”
Matthew 15:26, 27.***

***“But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.”
Mark 7:27, 28.***

I TAKE the two records of Matthew and Mark that we may have the whole matter before us. May the Holy Spirit bless our meditations. The brightest jewels are often found in the darkest places. Christ had not found such faith, no, not in Israel, as he discovered in this poor Canaanite woman. The borders and fringes of the land were more fruitful than the center, where the farming had been more abundant! In the headlands of the field, where the farmer does not expect to grow much beyond weeds, the Lord Jesus found the richest ear of corn that as yet had filled His sheaf. Let those of us who reap after Him be encouraged to expect the same experience. Never let us speak of any district as too depraved to yield us converts, nor of any class of persons as too fallen to become Believers. Let us go, even, to the borders of Tyre and Sidon, though the land is under a curse, for even *there* we shall discover some elect one, ordained to be a jewel for the Redeemer’s crown!

Our heavenly Father has children everywhere! In spiritual things it is found that the best plants often grow in the most barren soil. Solomon spoke of trees and discoursed concerning the hyssop on the wall and the cedar in Lebanon. So is it in the natural world—the great trees are found on great mountains and the minor plants in places adapted for their tiny roots. But it is not so among the plants of the Lord’s right hand planting, for there we have seen the cedar grow upon the wall—great saints in places where it has apparently impossible for them to exist! And we have seen hyssops growing upon Lebanon—a questionable, insignificant piety where there have been innumerable advantages! The Lord is able to make strong faith exist with little knowledge, little present enjoyment and little encouragement. And strong faith in such conditions triumphs and conquers and doubly glorifies the Grace of God!

Such was this Canaanite woman, a cedar growing where soil was scant. She was a woman of amazing faith, though she could have heard but little of Him in whom she believed and, perhaps, had never seen Him at all un-

til the day when she fell at His feet and said, "Lord, help me!" Our Lord had a very quick eye for spying faith. If the jewel was lying in the mire, His eyes caught its glitter. If there was a choice ear of wheat among the thorns, He failed not to perceive it. Faith has a strong attraction for the Lord Jesus! At the sight of it, "the king is held in the galleries," and cries, "you have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck." The Lord Jesus was charmed with the fair jewel of this woman's faith and watching it and delighting in it, He resolved to turn it round and set it in other lights, that the various facets of this priceless diamond might, each one, flash its brilliance and delight His soul!

Therefore He tried her faith by His silence and by His discouraging replies, that He might see its strength. But He was, all the while, delighting in it and secretly *sustaining* it. And when He had sufficiently tried it, He brought it forth as gold, and set His own royal mark upon it in these memorable words, "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will." I am hopeful, this morning, that perhaps some poor soul in this place under very discouraging circumstances may, nevertheless, be led to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a strong and persevering faith. And though as yet it enjoys no peace and has seen no gracious answer to prayer, I trust that its struggling faith may be strengthened, this morning, by the example of the Canaanite woman.

I gather from the story of her appeal to the Lord Jesus and her success, four facts. The first is, *faith's mouth cannot be closed*. The second is, *faith never disputes with God*. Thirdly, I perceive that *faith argues mightily* and fourthly, that *faith wins her suit*.

I. THE MOUTH OF FAITH CAN NEVER BE CLOSED, for if ever the faith of a woman was tried so as to make her cease from prayer, it was that of this daughter of Tyre. She had difficulty after difficulty to encounter and yet she could not be put off from pleading for her little daughter because she believed in Jesus as the great Messiah, able to heal all manner of diseases—and she meant to pray to Him until He yielded to her importunity—for she was confident that He could chase the demon from her child.

Observe that *the mouth of faith cannot be closed even on account of the closed ear and the closed mouth of Christ*. He answered her never a word. She spoke very piteously—she came and threw herself at His feet—her child's case was very urgent. Her motherly heart was very tender and her cries were very piercing. And yet He answered her not a word! As if He were deaf and dumb, He passed her by. Yet she was not staggered. She believed in Him and even He, Himself, could not make her doubt Him, let Him try silence even if He would. It is hard to believe when prayer seems to be a failure. I would to God that some poor seeker here might believe that Jesus Christ is able and willing to save and so fully believe it that his unanswered prayers shall not be able to make him doubt!

Even if you should pray in vain by the month together, do not allow a doubt about the Lord Jesus and His power to save to cross your mind. What if you cannot, yet, grasp the peace which faith must ultimately bring you? What if you have no certainty of forgiveness of your sin? What if no

gleams of joy should visit your spirit? Still believe Him who cannot lie! "Though He slay me," said Job, "yet will I trust in Him." That was splendid faith! It would be a great deal for some if they could say, "Though He smite me, yet will I trust Him," but Job said, "Though He *slay* me." If Jesus puts on the garb of an executioner and comes out against me as though He would destroy me, yet will I believe Him to be full of love! He is still good and gracious. I cannot doubt it and, therefore, at His feet I will lie down and look up, expecting Grace at His hands! Oh for such faith as this! O Soul, if you have it, you are a saved man, as sure as you are alive! If even the Lord's apparent refusal to bless you cannot close your mouth, your faith is of a noble sort and salvation is yours!

In the next place, *her faith could not be silenced by the conduct of the disciples*. They did not treat her well, but yet, perhaps, not altogether badly. They were not like their Master—they frequently repulsed those who would come to Him. Her noise annoyed them. She kept to them with boundless perseverance and, therefore, they said, "Send her away, for she cries *after us*." Poor soul, she never cried after *them*, it was after their Master! Sometimes disciples become very important in their own eyes and think that the pushing and crowding to hear the Gospel is caused by the people's eagerness to hear them, whereas nobody would care for their poor talk if it were not for the Gospel message which they are charged to deliver! Give us any other theme and the multitude would soon melt away!

Though weary of the woman's importunate cries, they acted somewhat kindly towards her, for they were evidently desirous that she should obtain the gift she sought, or else our Lord's reply would not have been appropriate, "I am not sent, save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not her daughter's healing that they cared for, but they consulted their own comfort, for they were anxious to be rid of her. "Send her away," they said, "for she cries after us." Still, though they did not treat her as men should treat a woman, as disciples should treat a seeker, as Christians should treat *everybody*, yet for all that, her mouth was not stopped!

Peter, I have no doubt, looked in a very scowling manner and, perhaps, even John became a little impatient, for he had a quick temper by nature. Andrew and Philip and the rest of them considered her very impertinent and presumptuous, but she thought of her little daughter at home and of the horrible miseries to which the demon subjected her, and so she pressed up to the Savior's feet and said, "Lord, help me." Cold, hard words and unkind, unsympathetic behavior could not prevent her pleading with Him in whom she believed. Ah, poor Sinner, perhaps you are saying, "I am longing to be saved, but such-and-such a good Christian man has dealt very bitterly with me. He has doubted my sincerity, questioned the reality of my repentance and caused me the deepest sorrow. It seems as if he did not wish me to be saved." Ah, dear Friend, this is very trying, but if you have true faith in the Master you will not mind us disciples—neither the gentlest of us, nor the most rough of us—just urge on your suit with your Lord till He deigns to give you an answer of peace.

Her mouth, again, was not closed by exclusive doctrine which appeared to confine the blessing to a favored few! The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am not sent save to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and though properly understood there is nothing very severe in it, yet the sentence must have fallen on the woman's heart like a talent of lead. "Alas," she might have thought, "then He is not sent to me! Vainly do I seek for that which He reserves for the Jews." Now, the Doctrine of Election, which is assuredly taught in Scripture, ought not to hinder any soul from coming to Christ, for, if properly understood, it would rather encourage than discourage! And yet, often, to the uninstructed ear the Doctrine of the Divine Choice of a people from before the foundation of world acts with very depressing effect.

We have known poor seekers mournfully say, "Perhaps there is no mercy for me. I may be among those for whom no purpose of mercy has been formed." They have been tempted to cease from prayer for fear they should not have been predestinated unto eternal life! Ah, dear Soul, if you have the faith of God's elect in you, you will not be kept back by any self-condemning inferences drawn from the secret things of God! You will believe in that which has been clearly revealed, and you will be assured that this cannot contradict the secret decrees of Heaven. What? Though our Lord was only sent to the house of Israel, yet there is a house of Israel not after the flesh but after the *spirit* and, therefore, the Syrophenician woman was included even where she thought she was shut out—and you may, also, be comprehended within those lines of gracious destiny which now distress you. At any rate, say to yourself, "In the election of Grace others are included who were as sinful as I have been, why should not I? Others have been included who were as full of distress as I have been on account of sin and why should not I be, also?" Reasoning thus, you will press forward, in hope believing against hope, suffering no plausible deduction from the doctrine of Scripture to prevent your believing in the appointed Redeemer.

The mouth of faith, in this case, was not even closed by a sense of admitted unworthiness. Christ spoke of *dogs*—He meant that the Gentiles were to Israel as the dogs—she did not at all dispute it but yielded the point by saying, "Truth, Lord." She felt she was only worthy to be compared to a dog! I have no doubt her sense of unworthiness was very deep. She did not expect to win the blessing she sought on account of any merit of her own—she depended upon the goodness of Christ's heart, not on the goodness of her cause—and upon the excellence of His power rather than upon the prevalence of her plea. Yet, conscious as she was that she was only a poor Gentile dog, her prayers were not hindered! She cried, notwithstanding all, "Lord, help me."

O Sinner, if you feel yourself to be the worst sinner out of Hell, still pray, believably pray for mercy! If your sense of unworthiness is enough to drive you to self-destruction, yet I beseech you, out of the depths, out of the dungeon of self-loathing, still cry unto God, for your salvation rests in no measure or degree upon yourself or upon anything that you are or

have been or can be! You need to be saved *from* yourself, not *by* yourself! It is yours to be empty, that Jesus may fill you! It is yours to confess your filthiness, that He may wash you! It is yours to be less than nothing, that Jesus may be everything to you! Suffer not the number, blackness, frequency, or heinousness of your transgressions to silence your prayers, and though you are a dog—yes, not worthy to be set with the dogs of the Lord's flock—yet open your mouth in believing prayer!

There was, besides this, a general tone and spirit in what the Lord Jesus said which tended to depress the woman's hope and restrain her prayer, yet *she was not kept back by the darkest and most depressing influences*. "It is not meet," said the Lord Jesus, "it is not becoming, it is not proper, it is hardly lawful to take children's bread and throw it to dogs." Perhaps she did not quite see all that He might have meant, but what she *did* see was enough to pour cold water upon the flames of her hope, yet her faith was not quenched! It was a faith of that immortal kind which nothing can kill, for her mind was made up that whatever Jesus meant, or *did* not mean, she would not cease to trust Him! She would continue to urge her suit with Him.

There are a great many things in and around the Gospel which men see as in a haze and, being misunderstood, they rather repel than attract seeking souls. But be they what they may, we must resolve to come to Jesus at all risks. "If I perish, I perish." Beside the great stumbling stone of election, there are Truths of God and facts which seekers magnify and misconstrue till they see a thousand difficulties. They are troubled about Christian experience, about being born again, about inbred sin and all sorts of things. In fact, a thousand lions are in the way when the soul attempts to come to Jesus! But he who gives Christ the faith which He deserves, says, "I fear none of these things. Lord, help me, and I will still confide in You. I will approach You. I will press through obstacles to You and throw myself at Your dear feet, knowing that him that comes to You, You will in no wise cast out."

II. FAITH NEVER DISPUTES WITH THE LORD. Faith worships. You notice how Matthew says, "Then came she and worshipped Him." Faith also begs and prays. You observe how Mark says, "She besought Him." She cried, "Lord, help me," after having said, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David." Faith pleads, but never disputes, not even against the hardest thing that Jesus says. If faith disputed—I am uttering a mistake—she would not be faith, for that which disputes is *unbelief*! Faith in God implies agreement with what God says and, consequently, it excludes the idea of doubt. Genuine faith believes anything and everything the Lord says whether discouraging or encouraging. She never has a, "but," or an, "if." Or even a, "yet," to put in, but she stands to it, "You have said it, Lord and, therefore, it is true! You have ordained it, Lord and, therefore, it is right." She never goes beyond that.

Observe in our text that *faith assents to all the Lord says*. She said, "Truth, Lord." What had He said? "You are comparable to a dog!" "Truth, Lord. Truth, Lord, so I am." "It would not be meet that the children should

be robbed of bread in order to feed dogs.” “Truth Lord, it would not be fitting, and I would not have one of Your children deprived of Grace for *me*.” “It is not your time yet,” said Jesus, “the children must *first* be fed, children at the meal times and dogs after dinner. This is Israel’s time and the Gentiles may follow after. But not yet.”

She virtually replies, “I know it, Lord, and agree.” She does not raise a question or dispute the justice of the Lord’s dispensing His own Grace according to His sovereign good pleasure. She fails not, as some do who quibble at Divine Sovereignty. It would have proven that she had little or no faith if she had done that. She disputes not as to the Lord’s set time and order. Jesus said, “Let the children first be filled,” and she does not dispute the time, as many do, who will not have it that *now* is the accepted time, but are as much for postponing as this woman was for antedating the day of Grace!

She entered into no argument against its being improper to take the Covenant bread from the children and give it to the uncircumcised heathen. She never wished Israel to be robbed for *her*. Dog as she was, she would not have any purpose of God nor any propriety of the Divine household shifted and changed for her. She assented to all the Lord’s appointments. *That* is the faith which saves the soul, which agrees with the mind of God even if it seem adverse to herself—which believes the revealed declarations of God whether they appear to be pleasant or terrible—and assents to God’s Word whether it is like a balm to its wound or like a sword to cut and slay. If the Word of God is true, O man, do not fight against it, but bow before it! It is not the way to a living faith in Jesus Christ, nor to obtain peace with God, to take up arms against anything which God declares. In yielding lies safety. Say, “Truth, Lord,” and you shall find salvation!

Note that she not only assented to all that the Lord said, but *she worshipped Him in it*. “Truth,” she said, “but yet You are my Lord. You call me, ‘dog,’ but You are my Lord for all that. You account me unworthy to receive Your bounties, but You are my Lord, and I still acknowledge You as such.” She is of the mind of Job—“Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?” She is willing to take the evil and say, “Whether the Lord gives, or whether He refuses, blessed be His name! He is still my Lord.” Oh, this is grand faith, which has thrown aside the argumentative spirit and not only assents to the Lord’s will, but worships Him in it!

“Let it be what it may, O Lord, even if Your Truth condemns me, yet You are still Lord, and I confess Your Deity, confess Your excellence, acknowledge Your crown rights and submit myself to You. Do with me what You will.” And, you observe, when she said, “Truth, Lord,” *she did not go on to suggest that any alteration should be made for her*. “Lord,” she said, “You have classed me among the dogs.” She does not say, “Put me among the children,” but she only asks to be treated as a dog is! “The dogs eat the crumbs,” she says. She does not want a purpose altered nor an ordinance changed, nor a decree removed—“Let it be as it is. If it is Your will,

Lord, it is *my* will”— she spies a gleam of hope, where, if she had not possessed faith, she would have seen only the blackness of despair! May we have such a faith as hers and never enter into controversy with God.

III. Now I come to an interesting part of our subject, namely, that FAITH ARGUES, though it does not dispute. “Truth, Lord,” she said, “yet the dogs eat the crumbs.” This woman’s argument was correct and strictly logical throughout. It was an argument based upon the Lord’s own premises and, you know, if you are reasoning with a man, you cannot do better than take his own statements and argue upon them. She does not proceed to lay down new premises, or dispute the old ones by saying, “I am no dog.” But she says, “Yes, I am a dog.” She accepts that statement of the Lord, and uses it as a blessed *argumentum ad hominem*, such as was never excelled in this world! She took the words out of His own mouth and vanquished Him with them, even as Jacob overcame the Angel!

There is so much force in the women’s argument that I quite despair, this morning, of being able to set it all forth to you. I would, however, remark that the translators have greatly injured the text by putting in the word, “yet,” for there is no, “yet,” in the Greek! It is quite another word. Jesus said, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs.” “No,” she said, “it would not be meet to do this, because the dogs are provided for, for the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” “It would be very improper to give them the children’s bread, because they have bread of their own.” “Truth, Lord, I admit it would be improper to give the dogs the children’s bread, because they have *already* their share when they eat the crumbs which fall from the children’s table. That is all they need, and all I desire. I do not ask You to give me the children’s bread, I only ask for the dog’s crumbs.”

Let us see the force of her reasoning, which will appear in many ways. The first is this. *She argued with Christ from her hopeful position.* “I am a dog,” she said, “but, Lord, You have come all the way to Sidon. Here You are close on the borders of my country and, therefore, I am not like a dog out in the street—I am a dog under the table.” Mark tells us that she said, “The dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs.” She as good as says, “Lord, You see my position—I was a dog in the street, afar off from You—but now You have come and preached on our borders and I have been privileged to listen to You. Others have been healed and You are in this very house doing deeds of Grace while I look on and, therefore, though I am a dog, I am a dog under the table. Therefore, Lord, let me have the crumbs.”

Do you see, dear Hearer? You admit that you are a sinner and a great sinner, but you say, “Lord, I am a sinner that is *permitted* to hear the Gospel, therefore bless it to me! I am a dog, but I am under the table, deal with me as such! When there is a sermon preached for the comfort of Your people, I am there to hear it. Whenever the saints gather together and the precious promises are discussed, and they rejoice therein, I am there, looking up and wishing that I was among them. But Lord, since You have had the Grace to let me be a hearer of the Gospel, will You reject me, now

that I desire to be a *receiver* of it? To what end and purpose have You brought me so near, or rather *come* so near to me, if, after all, You will reject me? Dog I am, but still, I am a dog under the table. It is a favor to be privileged to be among the children, even if I may only lie at their feet. I pray You, good Lord, since now I am permitted to look up to You and ask this blessing, do not reject me.”

To me it seems that this was a strong point with the woman and that she used it well. Her next plea was *her encouraging relationship*. “Truth, Lord,” she says, “I am a dog, but the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from *their master’s table*.” See the stress laid there by Matthew—“From their master’s table”? I cannot say that you are my father. I cannot look up and claim the privilege of a child, but you are my Master, and masters feed their dogs. They give at least the crumbs to those dogs which acknowledge them as their lord.” The plea is very much like that suggested to the mind of the poor returning prodigal. He thought to say to his father, “Make me as one of your hired servants,” only his faith was far less than hers.

For hers pleaded, “Lord, if I do not stand in relation to you as a child, yet I am Your *creature*. You have made me and I look up to You and beseech You not to let me perish. If I have no other hold upon You, I have at least this, that I ought to have served You and, therefore, I am Your servant though I am a runaway. I do belong to You—at least under the Covenant of Works if I do not under the Covenant of Grace, and oh, since I am Your servant, do not utterly reject me! You have some property in me by creation, at any rate. Oh, look upon me, and bless me. The dogs eat what falls from their master’s table—let me do the same.” She spies out a dog’s relation to its master and makes the most of it with blessed ingenuity, which we shall do well to imitate.

Notice next, she pleads *her association with the children*. Here I must tell you that it is a pity that it was not, I suppose, possible for our translators to bring clearly out what is, after all, the heart of the passage. She was pleading for her *little* daughter and our Lord said to her, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the *little* dogs.” The word is a diminutive and the woman focused upon it. The word, “dogs,” could not have served her turn one half as well as that of, “*little* dogs.” But she said, “Truth, Lord, yet the little dogs eat of the crumbs.” In the East, as a rule, a dog is not allowed indoors. In fact, dogs are looked upon there as foul creatures and roam about uncared for and half wild.

Christianity has raised the dog and made him man’s companion, as it will raise all the brute creation, till the outrages of vivisection and the cruelties of the vulgar will be things unheard of except as horrors of a past barbarous age. In the East a dog is far down in the scale of life—a street wanderer, prowling for scanty food—and in temper little better than a reformed wolf. So the adult Easterns do not associate with dogs, having a prejudice against them. But children are not so foolish and, consequently, the Eastern *children* associate with the little dogs. The father will not have the dog near him, but his child knows no such folly and seeks out a little

dog to join him in his sports. Thus the little dog comes to be under the table, tolerated in the house for the child's sake.

The woman appears, to me, to argue thus—"You have called me and my daughter whelps, little dogs. But then the little dogs are under the children's table. They associate with the children, even as I have been with Your disciples today. If I am not one of them, I have been associating with them, and would be glad to be among them." How heartily do I wish that some poor soul would catch at this and say, "Lord, I cannot claim to be one of Your children, but I love to sit among them, for I am never happier than when I am with them. Sometimes they trouble and distress me, as little children pinch and hurt their little dogs, but oftentimes they caress me and speak kindly and comfortably to me. And they pray for me, and desire my salvation. So, Lord, if I am not a child, yet You call me a little dog and so I am. So give me a little dog's treatment—give me the crumbs of mercy which I seek."

Her argument goes further, *for the little dog eats the crumbs of the children's bread with the child's full consent*. When a child has its little dog to play with while he is eating, what does the child do? Why, of course, it gives a little bit to the dog every now and again and the doggie, himself, takes great liberties and helps himself as much as he dares. When a little dog is with the children at meal time it is sure to get a crumb from one or other of its playmates—and none will object to its eating what it can get.

So the woman seems to say, "Lord, there are the children, Your disciples. They do not treat me very well. Little children do not treat little dogs always so kindly as they might, but still, Lord, they are quite willing that I should have the blessing I am seeking. They have a full portion in You. They have Your Presence. They have Your Word. They sit at Your feet. They have obtained all sorts of spiritual blessings. I am sure they cannot grudge me so much less a blessing—they are willing that I should have the devil cast out of my daughter, for that blessing, compared with what they have, is but a crumb—and they are content that I should have it. So Lord, I answer Your argument. You say it is not meet until the children are filled to give bread to dogs, but, Lord, the children are filled and are quite willing to let me have my portion. They consent to allow me the crumbs! Will You not give them to me?"

I think there was another point of force in her plea—*the abundance of the provision*. She had a great faith in Christ and believed big things of Him and, therefore, she said, "Lord, there is no great strength in Your argument if You do intend to prove that I ought not to have the bread for fear there should not be enough for the children, for You have so much that even while the children are being fed, the dogs may get the crumbs and there will still be enough for the children!" Where it is a poor man's table and he cannot afford to lose a crumb, dogs should not be allowed. But when it is a *king's* table where bread is of small account, and the children are sitting and feeding to the full, the little dogs may be permitted to feed under the table for the mere droppings—not the bread the master

casts down, but the crumbs which *fall* by accident are so many that there is enough for the dogs without the children being deprived of a mouthful.

“No, Lord,” she said, “I would not have You take away the bread from Your own children! God forbid that such a deed should be done for *me*! But there is enough for Your children in Your overflowing love and mercy and still enough for me, for all I ask is but a *crumb* compared with what You are daily bestowing upon others.” Now, here is the last point in which her argument had force. *She looked at things from Christ’s point of view.* “If, great Lord,” she said, “You look at me as a dog, then behold I humbly take You at Your word, and plead that if I am a dog to You, then the cure I ask for my daughter is but a crumb for Your great power and goodness to bestow on me.” She used a diminutive word, too, and said, “A little crumb.”

The little dogs eat of the little crumbs which fall from the children’s table. What bold faith this was! She valued the mercy she sought beyond all price! She thought it worth 10,000 worlds to *her*, but yet to the Son of God she knew it to be a mere crumb, so rich is He in power to heal and so full of goodness and blessing! If a man gives a crumb to a dog, he has a little the less, but if *Jesus* gives mercy to the greatest of sinners, He has none the less—He is just as rich in condescension and mercy and power to forgive as He was before! The woman’s argument was most potent. She was as wise as she was earnest and, best of all, she believed most marvelously!

I shall close this outline of the argument by saying that at bottom the woman was, in reality, arguing according to the eternal purposes of God, for what was the Lord’s grand design in giving the bread to the children, or, in other words, sending a Divine Revelation to Israel? Why, it always was His purpose that through the children, the dogs should get the bread—that through Israel the Gospel should be handed to the Gentiles! It had always been His plan to bless His own heritage that His way might be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations! And this woman, somehow or other, by a Divine instinct, fell into the Divine method. Though she had not spied out the secret, or at least it is not told us that she did so in so many words, yet there was the innate force of her argument.

In other words, it ran thus—“It is through the children that the dogs have to be fed. Lord, I do not ask You to cease giving the children their bread. Nor do I even ask You to hurry on the children’s meal—let them be fed first—but even while they are eating, let me have the crumbs which drop from their well-filled hands and I will be content.” There is a brave argument for you, poor coming Sinner. I leave it in your hands and pray the Spirit of God to help you to use it! And if you can turn it to good account, you shall prevail with the Lord this day!

IV. Our last and closing head is this—FAITH WINS HER SUIT. This woman’s faith first *won a commendation for herself*. Jesus said, “O, Woman, great is your faith.” She had not heard of the prophecies concern-

ing Jesus. She was not bred and born and educated in a way in which she was likely to become a Believer and yet she *did* become a Believer of the first class. It was marvelous that it should be so, but Grace delights in doing wonders. She had not seen the Lord, before, in her life. She was not like those who had associated with Him for many months and yet, with but *one* view of Him, she gained this great faith! It was astonishing, but the Grace of God is always astonishing!

Perhaps she had never seen a miracle—all that her faith had to rest upon was that she had heard in her own country that the Messiah of the Jews was come—and she believed that the Man of Nazareth was He and on this she relied. O Brothers and Sisters, with all our advantages! With the opportunities that we have of knowing the whole life of Christ and understanding the doctrines of the Gospel as they are revealed to us in the New Testament—with many years of observation and experience—our faith ought to be much stronger than it is! Does not this poor woman shame us when we see her with her slender opportunities, nevertheless so strong in faith, so that Jesus Himself commending her says, “O Woman, great is your faith”?

But her faith prevailed further in that it *won a commendation for the mode of its action*, for, according to Mark, Jesus said, “Go your way; *for this saying* the devil is gone out of your daughter.” It was as if He rewarded the *saying* as well as the faith which suggested it! He was so delighted with the wise, prudent and humble, yet courageous manner in which she turned His words against Himself, that He said, “For this saying the devil is gone out of your daughter.” The Lord who commends faith, afterwards commends the fruits and acts of faith! The Tree consecrates the fruit! No man’s actions can be acceptable with God till He, Himself, is accepted. And the woman, having been accepted on her faith, the results of her faith were agreeable to the heart of Jesus.

The woman also *gained her desire*—“The devil is gone out of your daughter,” and he was gone at once! She had only to go home and find her daughter on the bed taking a quiet rest—something which she had not done since the demon had possessed her! Our Lord, when He gave her the desire of her heart, gave it in a grand manner! He gave her a sort of *carte blanche* and said, “Be it unto you even as you will.” I do not know that any other person ever had such a word said to them as this woman, “Be it unto you even as you will.” It was as if the Lord of Glory surrendered at discretion to the conquering arms of a woman’s faith! The Lord grant to you and me, in all times of our struggling, to be able, thus, by faith, to conquer—and we cannot imagine how great will be the spoil which we shall divide when the Lord shall say, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

The close of all is this—this woman is a lesson to all outsiders—to you who think yourselves beyond the pale of hope, to you who were not brought up to attend the House of God, who perhaps have been negligent of all religion for almost all your life. This poor woman is a Sidonian. She comes of a race that had been condemned to die many centuries before—

one of the accursed seed of Canaan! And yet, for all that, she became great in the kingdom of Heaven because she believed! And there is no reason why those who are reckoned to be quite outside the Church of God should not be in the very center of it—and be the most burning and shining lights of the whole! O you poor outcasts and far-off ones, take heart and comfort! Come to Jesus Christ and trust yourselves in His hands!

This woman is, next of all, an example to those who think they have been repulsed in their endeavors after salvation. Have you been praying and have you not succeeded? Have you sought the Lord and do you seem to be more unhappy than ever? Have you made attempts at reformation and amendment and believed that you made them in the Divine strength—and have they failed? Yet trust in Him whose blood has not lost its efficacy, whose promise has not lost its truth, and whose arm has not lost its power to save! Cling to the Cross, Sinner! If the earth sinks beneath you, hang on! If storms should rage and all the floods be out, and even God, Himself, seems to be against you, cling to the Cross! There is your hope! You cannot perish there!

This is a lesson, next, to every intercessor. This woman was not pleading for *herself*, she was asking for another. Oh, when you plead for a fellow sinner, do not do it in a cold-hearted manner! Plead as for your own soul and your own life! That man will prevail with God as an intercessor who solemnly bears the matter upon his own heart and makes it his own and with tears entreats an answer of peace! Lastly, remember that this mighty woman, this glorious woman, is a lesson to every mother, for she was pleading for her little daughter! Maternal instinct makes the weakest strong, and the most timid brave. Even among poor beasts and birds, how powerful is a mother's love!

Why, the poor little robin which would be frightened at the approach of a *footstep*, will sit upon its nest when the intruder comes near when her little ones are in danger. A mother's love makes her heroic for her child! And so, when you are pleading with God, plead as a mother's love suggests to you, till the Lord shall say to you, also, "O Woman, great is your faith; the devil is gone out of your daughter; be it unto you even as you will." I leave that last thought with parents as an encouragement to pray. The Lord stir you up to it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 15:1-31.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 551, 540.**

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

*"She said, Truth, Lord: yet."
Matthew 15:27.*

DID YOU notice, in the reading of this narrative of the Syro-Phoenician woman, the two facts mentioned in the 21st and 22nd verses? "Then Jesus went from there and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region." See, Jesus goes towards the coast of Sidon on the land side and the woman of Canaan comes from the seashore to meet Him and so they come to the same town. May we find that case repeated this morning in this Tabernacle! May our Lord Jesus come into this congregation with power to cast out the devil and may someone—no, may *many*—have come to this place on purpose to seek Divine Grace at His hands!

Blessed shall be this day's meeting! See how the Grace of God arranges things. Jesus and the seeker have a common attraction. He comes and she comes. It would have been of no use her coming from the coast of Tyre and Sidon if the Lord Jesus had not also come down to the Israelite border of Phoenicia to meet her. His coming makes her coming a success. What a happy circumstance when Christ meets the sinner and the sinner meets his Lord! Our Lord Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, came that way, drawn by the instincts of His heart—He was seeking after lost ones and He seemed to feel that there was one to be found on the borders of Tyre and Sidon and, therefore, He must go that way to find that one.

It does not appear that He preached, or did anything special upon the road. He left the 99 by the sea of Galilee to seek that one lost sheep by the Mediterranean shore! When He had dealt with her He went back again to His old haunts in Galilee. Our Lord was drawn towards this woman, but she, also, was driven towards Him. What made her seek Him? Strange to say, a *devil* had a hand in it—but not so as to give the devil any of the praise. The truth was that a gracious God used the devil, himself, to drive this woman to Jesus—for her daughter was "grievously vexed with a devil" and she could not bear to stay at home and see her child in such misery.

Oh, how often does a great sorrow drive men and women to Christ, even as a fierce wind compels the mariner to hasten to the harbor! I have known a domestic affliction—a daughter sorely vexed—influence the heart of a mother to seek the Savior. And, no doubt, many a father, broken in spirit by the likelihood of losing a darling child, has turned his face towards the Lord Jesus in his distress. Ah, my Lord! You have many ways of

bringing Your wandering sheep back and among them You even send the black dog of sorrow and of sickness after them. This dog comes into the house and his howls are so dreadful that the poor lost sheep flies to the Shepherd for shelter!

God make it so this morning with any of you who have a great trouble at home! May your boy's sickness work your health! Yes, may your girl's death be the means of the father's spiritual life! Oh, that your soul and Jesus may meet this day! Your Savior drawn by love and your poor heart driven by anguish—may you thus be brought to a gracious meeting!

Now, you would suppose that as the two were seeking each other, the happy meeting and the gracious blessing would be very easily brought about—but we have an old proverb that, “the course of true love never runs smooth,” and the course of true faith, for certain, is seldom without trials. Here was genuine love in the heart of Christ towards this woman and genuine faith in her heart towards Christ—but difficulties sprang up which we should never have looked for. It is for the good of us all that they occurred but we could not have anticipated them. Perhaps there were more difficulties in the way of this woman than of anybody else that ever came to Jesus in the days of His flesh.

I never saw the Savior in such a mood as when He spoke to this woman of great faith. Did you ever read of His speaking such rough words? Did such a hard sentence, at any other time, ever fall from His lips as, “It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs”? Ah, He knew her well and He knew that she could stand the trial and would be greatly benefited by it—and that He would be glorified by her faith throughout all future ages! Therefore with good reason He put her through the athletic exercises which train a vigorous faith. Doubtless, for our sakes, He drew her through a test to which He would never have exposed her had she been a weakling unable to sustain it. She was trained and developed by His rebuffs. While His wisdom tried her, His Grace sustained her!

Now, see how He began. The Savior came to the town, wherever it was—but He was not there in public—on the contrary, He sought seclusion. Mark tells us, in his seventh chapter, at the 24th verse, “From there He arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid. For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet.” Why is He hiding from her? He does not usually avoid the quest of the seeking soul.

“Where is He?” she asks His disciples. They give her no information—they had their Master's orders to let Him remain in hiding. He sought quiet and needed it, and so they discreetly held their tongues. Yet she found Him and fell at His feet. Half a hint was dropped—she took up the trail and followed it until she discovered the house—and sought the Lord in His abode. Here was the beginning of her trial—the Savior was in hiding. “But He could not be hid” from her eager search. She was all eyes and ears for Him and nothing can be hid from an anxious mother eager to bless her child!

Disturbed by her, the Blessed One comes into the street and His disciples surround Him. She determines to be heard over their heads and therefore she begins to cry aloud, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, You son of David." As He walks along, she still cries out with mighty cries and pleadings till the streets ring with her voice—and He who "would have no man know it" is proclaimed in the market place. Peter does not like it—he prefers quiet worship. John feels a great deal disturbed by the noise—he lost a sentence just now—a very precious sentence which the Lord was uttering. The woman's noise was very distracting to everybody and so the disciples came to Jesus, and they said, "Send her away, send her away! Do something for her or tell her to be gone, for she cries after us. We have no peace for her clamor—we cannot hear You speak because of her piteous cries."

Meanwhile, she, perceiving them speaking to Jesus, comes nearer, breaks into the inner circle, falls down before Him, worships Him and utters this plaintive prayer—"Lord, help me." There is more power in worship than in noise! She has taken a step in advance. Our Lord has not yet answered her a single word. He has heard what she said, no doubt, but He has not answered a word to her as yet. All that He has done is to say to His disciples, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." That has not prevented her nearer approach or stopped her prayer, for now she pleads, "Lord, help me."

At length the Blessed One speaks to her. Greatly to our surprise, it is a chill rebuff. What a cold word it is! How cutting! I dare not say how cruel—yet it seemed so. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." Now what will the woman do? She is near the Savior—she has an audience with Him, such as it is. She is on her knees before Him and He appears to repulse her! How will she act now? Here is the point about which I am going to speak—she will not be repulsed, she perseveres, she advances nearer—she actually turns the rebuff into a plea! She has come for a blessing and a blessing she believes that she shall have! And she means to plead for it till she wins it!

So she deals with the Savior after a very heroic manner and in the wisest possible style—from which I want every seeker to learn a lesson at this time, that he, like she, may win with Christ and hear the Master say to him this morning, "Great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will." Three pieces of advice I gather from this woman's example. First, *agree with the Lord whatever He says*. Say, "Truth, Lord; truth, Lord." Say, "Yes," to all His words. Secondly, plead with the Lord—"Truth, Lord; yet." "Yet."

Think of another Truth of God and mention it to Him as a plea. Say, "Lord, I must maintain my hold. I must plead with You yet." And thirdly, *in any case have faith in the Lord, whatever He says*. However He tries you, still believe in Him with unstaggering faith and know for sure that He deserves your utmost confidence in His love and power.

I. My first advice to every heart here seeking the Savior is this, AGREE WITH THE LORD. In the Revised Version we read that she said, "Yes,

Lord.” Whatever Jesus said, she did not contradict Him in the least. I like the old translation, “Truth, Lord,” for it is very expressive. She did not say, “It is hard, or unkind,” but, “It is true. It is true that it is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs. It is true that compared with Israel I am a dog—for me to gain this blessing would be like a dog’s feeding on the children’s bread. Truth, Lord. Truth, Lord.”

Now, dear Friends, if you are dealing with the Lord for life and death, *never contradict His Word*. You will never come unto perfect peace if you are in a contradicting humor, for that is a proud and unacceptable condition of mind. He that reads his Bible to find fault with it will soon discover that the Bible finds fault with him. It may be said of the Book of God as of its Author—“If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you.” Of this Book I may truly say, “With the obstinate You will show Yourself obstinate.” Remember, dear Friends, that *if the Lord reminds you of your unworthiness and your unfitness, He only tells you what is true* and it will be your wisdom to say, “Truth, Lord.”

Scripture describes you as having a depraved nature—say, “Truth, Lord.” It describes you as going astray like a lost sheep and the charge is true. It describes you as having a deceitful heart and just such a heart you have. Therefore say, “Truth, Lord.” It represents you as, “without strength,” and, “without hope.” Let your answer be, “Truth, Lord.” The Bible never gives unrenewed human nature a good word, nor does it deserve it. It exposes our corruptions and lays bare our falseness, pride and unbelief. Quibble not at the faithfulness of the Word of God. Take the lowest place and admit you are a *sinner*—lost, ruined and undone. If the Scripture should seem to degrade you, do not take offense, but feel that it deals honestly with you. Never let proud nature contradict the Lord, for this is to increase your sin.

This woman took the very lowest possible place. She not only admitted that she was like one of the little dogs, but she put herself under the table and under the children’s table, rather than under the master’s table. She said, “The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” Most of you have supposed that she referred to the crumbs that fell from the table of the master of the house himself. If you will kindly look at the passage you will see that it is not so. “Their masters” refers to *several* masters—the word is *plural* and refers to the *children* who were the little masters of the little dogs. Thus she humbled herself to be not only as a dog to the Lord, but as a dog to the house of Israel—to the Jews.

This was going very far, indeed, for a woman of proud Sidonian blood, to admit that the house of Israel were to her as masters—that these disciples who had said just now, “Send her away,” stood in the same relation to her as the children of the family stand in towards the little dogs under the table! Great faith is always sister to great *humility*. It does not matter how low Christ puts her, she *sits there*. “Truth, Lord.” I earnestly recommend every hearer of mine to consent unto the Lord’s verdict and never to raise an argument against the sinner’s Friend. When your heart is heavy.

When you have a sense of being the greatest of sinners, I pray you remember that you are a *greater* sinner than you *think* yourself to be!

Though conscience has rated you very low, you may go lower, still, and yet be in your right place, for, to tell the truth, you are as bad as bad can be—you are worse than your darkest thoughts have ever painted you—you are a wretch most undeserving and Hell-deserving! And apart from Sovereign Grace your case is hopeless. If you were now in Hell you would have no cause to complain against the justice of God for you deserve to be there. I would to God that every hearer here who has not yet found mercy would consent to the severest declarations of God's Word—for they are all true and true to him in particular.

Oh, that you would say, "Yes, Lord—I have not a syllable to say in self-defense"! And, next, *if it should appear to your humbled heart to be a very strange thing for you to think of being saved, do not fight against that belief.* If a sense of Divine justice should suggest to you—"What? You saved? Then you will be the greatest wonder on earth! What? You saved? Surely God will have gone beyond all former mercy in pardoning such a one as you are! In your case He would have taken the children's bread and cast it to a dog! You are so unworthy and so insignificant and useless, that even if you are saved, you will be good for nothing in holy service."

How can you expect the blessing? Do not attempt to argue to the contrary. Seek not to magnify yourself, but cry, "Lord, I agree with Your valuation of me. I freely admit that if I am forgiven; if I am made a child of God and if I enter Heaven, I shall be the greatest marvel of immeasurable love and boundless Grace that ever lived on earth or in Heaven." We should be the more ready to give our assent and consent to every syllable of the Divine Word since *Jesus knows better than we know ourselves.* The Word of God knows more about us than we can ever discover about ourselves. We are partial to ourselves and hence we are half blind. Our judgment always fails to hold the balance evenly when our own case is in the weighing.

What man is there who is not on good terms with himself? Your faults, of course, are always excusable—and if you do a little good, why, it deserves to be talked of and to be estimated at the rate of diamonds of the first water! Each one of us is a very superior person—so our proud heart tells us. Our Lord Jesus does not flatter us. He lets us see our case as it is—His searching eyes perceive the naked truth of things and as "the faithful and true Witness" He deals with us after the rule of uprightness. O seeking Soul, Jesus loves you too well to flatter you! Therefore I pray you, have such confidence in Him that, however much He, by His Word and Spirit may rebuke, reprove and even condemn you, you may without hesitation reply, "Truth, Lord! Truth, Lord!"

Nothing can be gained by arguing with the Savior. A beggar stands at your door and asks for charity. He goes the wrong way to work if he begins a discussion with you and contradicts your statements. If beggars must not be choosers, certainly they must not be controversialists! If a beggar will dispute, let him dispute—but let him give up begging! If he

cavils as to how he shall receive your gift, or how or what you shall give him, he is likely to be sent about his business. A critical sinner disputing with his Savior is a fool in capitals! As for me, my mind is made up that I will quarrel with *anybody* sooner than with my Savior—and especially I will contend with myself and pick a desperate quarrel with my own pride rather than have a shade of difference with my Lord!

To contend with one's Benefactor is folly, indeed! For the justly condemned to quibble with the Law-Giver in whom is vested the prerogative of pardon would be folly! Instead of that, with heart and soul I cry, "Lord, whatever I find in Your Word. Whatever I read in Holy Scripture which is the revelation of Your mind, I do believe it! I will believe it! I must believe it! And I, therefore, say, 'Truth, Lord!' It is all true, though it condemns me forever." Now, mark this—if you find your heart agreeing with what Jesus says, even when He answers you roughly, you may depend upon it, *this is a work of Divine Grace*—for human nature is very upstart and stands very much upon its silly dignity. And therefore it contradicts the Lord when He deals truthfully with it and humbles it.

Human nature, if you want to see it in its true condition, is that naked thing over yonder which so proudly aims at covering itself with a dress of its own devising. See, it sews fig leaves together to make itself an apron! What a destitute object! With its withered leaves about it, it seems worse than naked! Yet this wretched human nature proudly rebels against salvation by Christ! It will not hear of imputed righteousness—its own righteousness is far dearer. Woe be to the crown of pride which rivals the Lord Christ! If, my Hearer, you are of another mind and are willing to call yourself a sinner—lost, ruined and condemned—it is well with you.

If you are of this mind—that whatever humbling Truth the Spirit of God may teach you in the Word, or teach by the conviction of your conscience, you will at once agree with and confess, "It is even so"—then the Spirit of God has brought you to this humble and truthful and obedient condition and things are going hopefully with you! The Lord Jesus has not come to save you proud and arrogant ones who sit on your thrones and look down contemptuously on others. Sit there as long as you can! Sit there until your thrones and yourselves dissolve into perdition—there is no hope for you!

But you who lie upon the dunghill. You who feel as worthless as the broken potsherds around you. You who mourn that you cannot rise from that dunghill without Divine help—you are the men and women whom He will lift from your mean estate and set you among princes, even the princes of His people! See the spokes of yonder wheel! They that are highest shall be lowest—they that are lowest shall be raised on high! This is how the Lord turns things upside down—"He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent empty away." If you find it in your heart to say, "Truth, Lord," to all that the Holy Spirit teaches, then surely that same Spirit is at work upon your soul, leading you to look to

Jesus and causing you to give your heart's consent to the way of salvation through the merit of the Redeemer's blood.

II. And now my second point is this—although you must not argue with Christ, you may PLEAD WITH HIM. “Truth, Lord,” she says. But she adds, “yet.” Here, then, is my first lesson—*set one Truth over against another*. Do not contradict a frowning Truth of God, but bring up a smiling one to meet it!

Remember how the Jews were saved out of the hands of their enemies in the days of Haman and Mordecai? The king issued a decree that on a certain day the people might rise up against the Jews and slay them and take their possessions as a spoil. Now, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, this could not be altered—the decree must stand. What then? How was it to be overturned? Why, by meeting that ordinance by another! Another decree is issued that although the people might rise against the Jews, yet the Jews might defend themselves! And if anybody dared to hurt them, the Jew might slay *them* and take *their* property!

One decree thus counteracted another. How often we may use the holy art of looking from one doctrine to another! If a Truth of God looks black upon me, I shall not be wise to be always dwelling upon it—but it will be my wisdom to examine the whole range of the Truth of God and see if there is not some other doctrine which will give me hope. David practiced this when he said of himself, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.” And then he most confidently added, “Nevertheless I am continually with You: You have held me by my right hand.” He does not contradict himself—and yet the second utterance removes all the bitterness which the first sentence left upon the palate.

The two sentences together set forth the supreme Grace of God who enabled a poor beast-like being to commune with Himself. I beg you to learn this holy art of setting one Truth side by side with another, that thus you may have a fair view of the whole situation and may not despair. For instance, I meet with men who say, “O Sir, sin is an awful thing! It condemns me! I feel I can never answer the Lord for my iniquities, nor stand in His holy Presence.” This is assuredly true. But remember another Truth of God: “The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

Set the Truth of the sin-bearing of our Lord over against the guilt and curse of sin due to yourself apart from your great Substitute. “The Lord has an elect people,” cries one, “and this discourages me.” Why should it? Do not contradict that Truth of God—believe it as you read it in God's Word—but hear how Jesus puts it: “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes.” To you who are weak, simple and trustful as babes, the doctrine is full of comfort! If the Lord will save a number that no man can number, why should He not save you?

It is true it is written, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me,” but it is also written, “And him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast

out.” Let the second half of the saying be accepted as well as the first half! Some are stumbled by the Sovereignty of God. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He may justly ask, “Shall I not do as I will with My own?” Beloved, do not dispute the rights of the eternal God! It is the Lord—let Him do as seems good to Him. Do not quarrel with the King—but come humbly to Him, and plead—“O Lord, You alone have the right to pardon. But Your Word declares that if we confess our sins, You are faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And You have said, that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved.”

This pleading will prevail! Kick not at the Truth of God lest you dash your naked foot against iron pricks. Yet, dwell not on one Truth till it distracts you, but look at others till they cheer you! Submit to *all* the Truth of God but plead on your own behalf that which seems to you to look favorably upon *you*. When you read, “You must be born-again,” do not be angry! It is true that to be born-again is a work beyond your power—it is the work of the Holy Spirit—and this need of a work beyond your reach may well distress you. But that third chapter of John says, “You must be born-again,” also says, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Thus it is clear that he that believes in Jesus *is* born-again!

I pray you, have an eye to all the land of Truth and when you seem to be persecuted in one city of Truth, go to another—for there is a City of Refuge even for you! Besides, there is a bright side to every Truth of God if you have but the wit to spy it out. The same key which locks will also unlock—very much depends on the turn of the key—and still more on the turn of your thoughts.

This brings me to a second remark—*draw comfort even from a hard Truth*. Take this advice in preference to that which I have already given. The Authorized translation here is very good, but I must confess that it is not quite so true to the woman’s meaning as the Revised Version. She did not say, “Truth, Lord: *yet*,” as if she were raising an objection, as I have already put it to you. But she said, “Truth, Lord, *for*.” I have gone with the old translation because it expresses the way in which our mind too generally looks at things. We fancy that we set one Truth over *against* another, whereas all Truths of God are *agreed* and cannot be in conflict. Out of the very Truth which looks darkest we may gain consolation!

She said, “Yes, Lord; *for* the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” She did not draw comfort from another truth which seemed to neutralize the first—but, as the bee sucks honey from the nettle, so did she gather encouragement from the severe Word of the Lord—“It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it to dogs.” She said, “That is true, Lord, for even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” She had not to turn what Christ said upside down—she took it as it stood and spied out comfort in it. Earnestly would I urge you to learn the art of deriving comfort from every statement of God’s Word—not necessarily bringing up a second doctrine—but believing that

even the present Truth which bears a threatening aspect is yet your friend.

Do I hear you say, "How can I have hope? For salvation is of the Lord." Why, that is the very reason why you should be filled with hope and seek salvation of the Lord alone! If it were of yourself, you might despair! But as it is of the Lord, you may have hope. Do you groan out, "Alas, I can do nothing"? What of that? The Lord can do everything! Since salvation is of the Lord alone, ask Him to be its Alpha and Omega to you. Do you groan, "I know I must repent but I am so unfeeling that I cannot reach the right measure of tenderness"?

This is true and therefore the Lord Jesus is exalted on high to give repentance! You will no more repent in your own power than you will go to Heaven in your own merit—but the Lord will grant you repentance unto life—for this, also, is a fruit of the Spirit! Beloved, when I was under a sense of sin I heard the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty—"He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy"—but that did not frighten me at all, for I felt more hopeful of Divine Grace through the sovereign will of God than by any other way! If pardon is not a matter of human deserving, but of Divine prerogative, then there is hope for me!

Why should not *I* be forgiven as well as others? If the Lord had only three elect ones and these were chosen according to His own good pleasure, why should I not be one of them? I laid myself at His feet and gave up every hope but that which flowed from His mercy. Knowing that He would save a number that no man could number and that He would save every soul that believed in Jesus, I believed and was saved! It was well for me that salvation did not turn upon *merit* for I had no merit whatever! If it remained with Sovereign Grace, then I, also, could go through that door—for the Lord might as well save me as any other sinner. And inasmuch as I read, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," I came, by His Grace, and He did not cast me out!

Rightly understood, every Truth in God's Word leads to Jesus and no single Word drives the seeking sinner back. If you are a fine fellow, full of your own righteousness, every Gospel Truth looks black to you. But if you are a sinner deserving nothing of God but wrath—if in your heart you confess that you deserve condemnation—you are the kind of man that Christ came to save! You are the sort of man that God chose from before the foundation of the world and you may, without any hesitancy, come and put your trust in Jesus who is the sinner's Savior! Believing in Him you shall receive immediate salvation!

I will not give you further instances and particulars for time would fail me. I leave you just there with this advice—it is not yours to raise questions but submissively to say, "Truth, Lord." Then it is your wisdom to set one Truth of God over against another till you have learned the better plan of finding light in the dark Truth itself. God help you to fetch honey from the rock and oil out of the flinty rock by a simple and unquestioning faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Thirdly, in any case, whatever Christ says or does not say, HAVE FAITH IN HIM. Look at this woman's faith and try to copy it. It grew in its apprehension of Jesus. First, He is *the Lord of mercy*—she cried, "Have mercy on me." Have faith enough, dear Hearer, to believe that you need mercy. Mercy is not for the meritorious—the claim of the meritorious is for *justice*—not for mercy. Only the *guilty* need and seek mercy. Believe that God delights in mercy, delights to give Grace where it cannot be deserved, delights to forgive where there is no reason for forgiveness but His own goodness.

Believe also that the Lord Jesus Christ whom we preach to you is the Incarnation of mercy—His very *existence* is mercy to you, His every word means mercy—His life, His death, His intercession in Heaven, all mean mercy, mercy, mercy, nothing but mercy! You need Divine mercy and Jesus is the embodiment of Divine mercy—He is the Savior for you! Believe in Him and the mercy of God is yours. This woman also called Him *Son of David* in which she recognized His manhood and His kingship towards man. Think of Jesus Christ as God over all, blessed forever—He that made the heaven and the earth and upholds all things by the word of His power.

Know that He became man, veiling His Godhead in this poor clay of ours—He hung as a babe upon a woman's breast. He sat as a weary man upon the curb of a well. He died with malefactors on the Cross—and all this out of love to man! Can you not trust this Son of David? David was very popular because he went in and out among the people and proved himself the people's king. Jesus is such. David gathered to him a company of men who were greatly attached to him because when they came to him they were a broken-down crew—they were in debt and discontented—all the outcasts from Saul's dominions came around David and he became a captain to them.

My Lord Jesus Christ is One chosen out of the people, chosen by God on purpose to be a Brother to us, a Brother born for adversity, a Brother who has come to associate with us despite our meanness and misery. He is the Friend of men and women who are ruined by their guilt and sin. "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." Jesus is the willing Leader of a people sinful and defiled whom He raises to justification and holiness and makes to dwell with Himself in Glory forever! Oh, will you not trust such a Savior as this? My Lord did not come into the world to save superior people who think themselves born saints. I say again, you may sit upon thrones till you and your thrones go down to perdition!

But Jesus came to save the lost, the ruined, the guilty, the unworthy. Let such come clustering round Him like the bees around the queen bee, for He is ordained on purpose to collect the Lord's chosen ones. As it is written, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." This believing woman might have been cheered by another theme. Our Lord said to His disciples, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "Ah," she thinks, "He is a Shepherd for lost sheep. Whatever His flock may be, *He is a Shepherd*, and He has a heart of compassion for poor lost sheep—surely He is One to whom *I* may look with confidence."

Ah, dear Hearer! My Lord Jesus Christ is a Shepherd by office and by Nature, and if you are a lost sheep this is good tidings for you! There is a holy instinct in Him which makes Him gather the lambs with His arms and causes Him to search out the lost ones who were scattered in the cloudy and dark day. Trust Him to seek you! Yes, come to Him now and leave yourselves with Him. Further than that, this woman had a faith in Christ that He was like *a great Householder*. She seems to say, "Those disciples are children who sit at table and He feeds them on the bread of His love. He makes for them so great a feast and He gives to them so much food that if my daughter were healed, it would be a great and blessed thing to me, but to Him it would be no more than if a crumb fell under the table and a dog fed upon it."

She does not ask to have a crumb thrown to her, but only to be allowed to pick up a crumb that has fallen from the table. She asks not even for a crumb which the Lord may drop—but for one which the *children* have let fall—they are generally great crumb-makers. I notice in the Greek, that as the word for "dogs" is, "little dogs," so the word rendered, "crumbs," is, "little crumbs"—small, inconsequential morsels which fall by accident. Think of this faith! To have the devil cast out of her daughter was the greatest thing she could imagine and yet she had such a belief in the greatness of the Lord Christ that she thought it would be no more to Him to make her daughter well than for a great housekeeper to let a poor little dog eat a tiny crumb that had been dropped by a child! Is not that splendid faith?

And now, can you exercise such a faith? Can you believe it—you, a condemned, lost sinner—that if God saves you it will be the greatest wonder that ever was—and yet that to Jesus, who made Himself a Sacrifice for sin—it will be no more than if this day your dog or your cat should eat a tiny morsel that one of your children had dropped from the table? Can you think Jesus to be so great that what is Heaven to you will be only a crumb to Him? Can you believe that He can save you readily? As for me, I believe my Lord to be such a Savior that I can trust my soul wholly to Him and that without difficulty! And I will tell you something else—if I had all *your* souls in my body, I would trust them *all* to Jesus! Yes, and if I had a million sinful souls of my own I would freely trust the Lord Christ with the whole of them and I would say, "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

Do not suppose that I speak thus because I am conscious of any goodness of my own? Far from it—my trust is in no degree in myself or anything I can do or be. If I were good I could not trust in Jesus. Why should I? I should trust myself! But because I have nothing of my own, I am obliged to live by trust and I am rejoiced that I may do so. My Lord gives me unlimited credit at the Bank of Faith! I am very deeply in debt to Him and I am resolved to be more indebted, still! Sinner as I am—if I were a million times as sinful as I am and then had a million souls, each one a million times more sinful than my own—I would still trust His atoning blood to cleanse me and Him to save me!

By Your agony and bloody sweat. By Your Cross and passion. By Your precious death and burial. By Your glorious resurrection and ascension. By Your intercession for the guilty at the right hand of God, O Christ, I feel that I can repose in You! May you come to this point, all of you—that Jesus is abundantly able to save. You have been a thief, have you? The last person that was in our Lord’s near company on earth was the dying thief. “Oh, but,” you say, “I have been foul in life. I have defiled myself with all manner of evil.” But those with whom He associates now were, all of them, once unclean—for they confess that they have washed their robes and made them white in His blood! Their robes were once so filthy that nothing but His heart’s blood could make them white!

Jesus is a great Savior, greater than my tongue can tell. I fail to speak His worth and I should still fail to do so, even if I could speak Heaven in every word and express infinity in every sentence! Not all the tongues of men or of angels can fully set forth the greatness of the Grace of our Redeemer. Trust Him! Are you afraid to trust Him? Then make a dash for it. Venture to do so—

***“Venture on Him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude.”***

“Look unto Me,” He says, “and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else.” Look! Look now! Look to Him alone and as you look to Him with the look of faith He will look on you with loving acceptance and say, “Great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will.”

You shall be saved at this very hour! And though you came into this house of prayer grievously vexed with a devil, you shall go out at peace with God and as restful as an angel! God grant you this blessing for Christ’s sake. Amen.

***PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 15:21-34.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34 (VERSION II) 622, 624.***

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

CHILDREN'S BREAD GIVEN TO DOGS

NO. 715

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 14, 1866,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE FREE TABERNACLE, NOTTING HILL.

*"And she said, Truth, Lord: yet even the little dogs eat
of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."
Matthew 15:27.*

IN this narrative we have the portrait of a soul for which a sure blessing is reserved. If the story closed without its final verse, one might be quite sure as to what the result of the woman's pleading would be. Christ must change His Nature if a person coming as she is said to have come, could be sent away empty! I shall with a few touches sketch the woman's picture, and shall beg you to see if you are like she, for if so it will be evidence to you that the time to favor you, yes, the set time, has come.

This woman had a great and pressing need. Her daughter was vexed with a devil, and she could not endure to see the misery which that evil spirit caused her child. The pain and anguish, the delirium and horror into which the child was thrown were too much for her to bear. Her need was conscious, troublesome, burdensome. She had grown desperate under it—she must be rid of it. Is it so with you, dear Hearer? Does your sin plague you? Does your transgression come up before you like a continual offense? Does it vex you both day and night till it has come to this—that you cannot live without pardon—that you must be forgiven or driven into madness?

Do you feel that things are at such a point with you that you cannot live any longer under the sentence of Divine wrath? This is a very blessed and hopeful sign. If there are many such here, there is music in store for angels. When her case was come to such a point, she heard of the Lord Jesus—and what she heard she acted upon. They told her that He was a great healer of the sick and able to cast out devils. She was not content with that information—she set to work at once to try its value. She went to Jesus with all speed and found that it was a convenient season, for He was near to her land, and she hastened to cry unto Him.

Ah, dear Hearer, you, too, have heard of Jesus! I shall not ask you whether you know the doctrine of His Godhead and of His Manhood and of His Atonement for sin—you know it well—but have you put it to the trial? You understand that He saves souls—have you taken your own soul to Him to be saved? You know that He can forgive sin, are you looking to Him, now, to forgive your sin? If it is so, though as yet you sit in the shadow of death, your hour of deliverance hastens on apace! For a soul under a sense of need that honestly seeks the Savior's face is not far from the kingdom of Heaven!

This woman was most desperately resolved. She had made up her mind, I believe, that she would never go back to the place from where she came till she had received the blessing. She would dog the Savior's footsteps. She would waylay Him. If the disciples pushed her back she would wait another opportunity. If not then successful, she would try the next occasion, and if that would not suffice, she would venture yet again. She was sorely tried by the Savior, for He sometimes tests those whom He knows to be strong enough to bear the trial. And when she obtained no answer from Him, but rather met with a rebuff, she was not daunted but pressed her suit, for she had drunk deep into the spirit of the hymn—

*"Resolved, for that's my last defense,
If I must perish there to die."*

If there is a soul here who has come to this—that he will never give up praying until he receives a comfortable answer, that he will never cease to weep for sin until the blood has washed it out—rejoice, you heavens, and be glad, O earth, for there are souls here who have come to the birth, and they shall be brought forth this day! There are souls here who are now upon the edge of liberty, upon the verge of

peace—they shall even this day obtain a complete liberation from all their bondage! I said at the commencement that this woman was a correct portrait of the most hopeful case in the world. Can you spy your own face in her story, even as men see their countenances in a glass? Then am I happy, for your position is full of hopefulness.

I may not leave this picture, however, without observing that this woman triumphantly endured a trial very common among seeking souls. Brethren, those evangelists who are not pastors will perhaps differ from me in what I am about to say, but if they knew more about souls they would not. It is customary in the pulpit to exhort people to believe in Jesus Christ. It is not only customary but it is most proper and right, and the more of it the better! But there are some who are content with giving the exhortation generally, and do not with affectionate discrimination deal with the separate cases of men.

There are cases in which the bare exhortation to believe is not enough. I wonder what mere exhorters would do with certain peculiar instances which I have now under my own hand. I have explained the Gospel to them to the best of my ability many times, and have prayed *with* them and *for* them. I have given them books which God has blessed in other cases. I have directed them to passages of Scripture which have been the means of giving light to thousands. Yet these persons, month after month, remain in as much doubt and distress of mind as at first. No, they are even worse.

This was my own case for years as a child. The Gospel was taught me by my parents but I was in such darkness and despondency of spirit that I could not do what I was bid to do, and felt as if when bid to look to Christ I had no eyes to look with. Even the Gospel did not then appear to suit my case. It was my sinful blindness and guilty folly which made me think so, but alas, how many are there equally blinded who need to have their cases handled gently and wisely! Albeit that we say to them, "Believe," they are far from being comforted by the advice. There is needed some further explanation, some simpler opening up of the saving Truth of God, and perhaps a laborious answering of *their* difficulties before they can find peace.

Genuine seekers who as yet have not obtained the blessing, may take comfort from the story before us. The Savior did not at once give the blessing, even though this woman had faith. Be not startled! It is the truth. She had real and genuine faith in Christ when she came to Jesus, else she would never have put up with the rebuffs of the disciples. Yet, Believer as she was, she did not, at first, obtain the blessing which she sought! The Savior always intended to give it, but He waited awhile. "He answered her not a word." Were not her prayers good? Never better in the world! Was not her case needy? Sorrowfully needy! Did she not feel her need sufficiently? She did feel it overwhelmingly! Was she not earnest enough? She was as earnest as ever woman could be! Had she no faith? She had such a high degree of it that even Jesus wondered, and said, "O woman, great is your faith." Yet for awhile she could not obtain an answer to her prayers.

See then, dear Friends, although it is true that faith brings peace, yet it does not always bring it *instantaneously*. There may be certain reasons calling for the *trial* of faith, rather than the reward of faith. Genuine faith may be in the soul like a hidden seed, but as yet it may not have budded and blossomed into joy and peace. Comfort is the child of Faith, but it is not always as old as its mother. I say this to cheer some of you. Do not, I beseech you, give up seeking! Do not give up trusting my Master because you have not yet obtained the conscious joy which you long for!

I doubt not but that you certainly will be saved, even though as yet no kindly promise has gladdened your heart. "Slow breaks the light" on many a heart, but surely will it break before long! A painful silence from the Savior is the grievous trial of many a seeking soul, but heavier, still, is the affliction of a harsh cutting reply such as this, "It is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the little dogs." Many, in waiting upon the Lord, find immediate delight, but this is not the case with all. Some, like the jailer, are in a moment turned from darkness to light, but others are plants of slower growth.

A deeper sense of *sinn* may be given to you instead of a sense of pardon, and in such a case you will have need of patience to bear the heavy blow. Ah, poor Heart, though Christ beat and bruise you or even slay you, trust Him! Though He should give you an angry word, believe in the love of His heart! And even if for the next few months you should not be able to say, "I know comfortably that He is mine," yet cast yourself on Him and perseveringly depend even where you can not rejoicingly hope!

We come to the text itself. The woman's case is an instance of prevailing faith. And if we would conquer, we must imitate her tactics. If I were called to be a commander in an army I should observe how other commanders who have been successful have managed the matter. Here is a woman who conquered Christ! Let us go by her rule, and we will conquer Christ, too, by His own Divine Grace.

I. In the first place, observe that SHE ADMITS THE ACCUSATION BROUGHT AGAINST HER. Jesus called her a dog, and she meekly said, "Truth, Lord." Here is no controversy with Christ—no setting up of oppositions, palliations, excuses, and mitigations. She is frank, prompt, humble, and open. "Truth, Lord"—that is her only answer to Him. When a man wrestles, much depends upon his foothold. If he does not stand firmly he cannot win the day, and if we would wrestle with the Angel of Mercy, we must find a foothold where this woman did—in a deep sense of unworthiness.

She knew herself to be an outcast from Israel, and at once confessed it. The most of men, if they had been called dogs, would either have turned on their heel and gone away in sullen despair, or else would have blazed into a bad temper and replied to the Master, "I am no more dog than You, and if I come to ask a charity, can You not at least give me a civil refusal?" The natural heart rebels against what the Scriptures says about it. Until a man is truly humbled he scorns to admit the depravity of his nature.

Though he may be quite willing to use the common terms of humility, he does not mean them, for if they were applied to him in another shape he would grow very angry. Like the monk who said he had broken all the Commandments and was as bad as Judas Iscariot. But when a bystander remarked, "I always thought so," the monk grew dreadfully angry, and vowed vengeance on the man who so insulted him! Call me a horse if you will, but it is quite another thing to put a saddle on my back.

I have heard of a woman who told her minister who visited her that she was a shocking sinner. "Well," said the minister, "I have no doubt you are. Let us go over your sins." So beginning with the First Commandment, she declared that she had never broken that—she had never worshipped any other god but God. As to the Second Commandment, she had never set up any graven images, she was sure. Nor had she broken the Sabbath. She had honored her father and mother, never coveted, never borne false witness, never killed anybody. In fact she pleaded that she had not broken *one* of the Ten Commandments, notwithstanding she had confessed herself so sad a sinner!

We plead guilty to stealing a forest, but deny that we ever thieved so much as a couple of sticks. The woman before us believed in her heart in the degradation of her state, so that when the Savior addressed her in apparently the coarsest manner as a dog, she was so thoroughly conversant with her own fallen condition that it did not startle her to be called what she knew herself to be! She had heard sin bark within her so often, and so loudly that when the Savior called her a dog she only felt that He was calling things by their right names.

If I were to go over the whole statement of the Fall, and the mischief of sin, everybody in this place would say, "That is true." But oh, how few there are who really feel it to be true, and are deeply grieved over it! We are all sinners, so we *say*—but we all have our excellencies—so we *feel*. The Word of God does not give us a very complimentary picture of humanity. It informs us that our first father sinned, and that through him, as he stood for all of us, we all fell and lost the favor of God. The Herald's College of Scripture draws up for us a miserable pedigree. Those aristocrats who are so proud of their Norman ancestors would do well to trace the family tree to a still earlier date, and they will find the one of blue blood ending in the gardener who stole his Master's fruit, and was sent adrift without a rag to cover his nakedness!

A beggarly pedigree this, you nobles of the earth! This is a sinister mark on your coat of arms which nothing can wipe out. The Inspired Word goes on to tell us that, in consequence of this, we are all born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and that in sin our mothers conceive us. It testifies that we are not only sinners with the hand, but with the heart—that sin is not merely a scab upon the skin, but a leprosy in the soul—that "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." It tells us that the heart, itself, is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

No, it goes further and certifies that we are not simply sick and depraved, but utterly perverted—that through our sin our wills have become perverse so that we will not come to Christ that we might have life, habitually putting the bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter—choosing the evil and eschewing

the good. It tells us that this inability of ours to goodness is so great as to be tantamount to spiritual death. It describes us as being by nature "dead in trespasses and sins." In such a state that we can no more restore ourselves to salvation than the dead in their graves can raise themselves of their own power and put themselves into a state of life and health. The Book of God says all against man that can be said, and more than man is willing to confess except when the Spirit of God comes, and then our heart answers, "Truth, Lord."

Moreover, God's Word goes on to say that our sin is so great that it must be always hateful to God. That it deserves that we, who have committed it, should be banished from His Presence into unutterable woe. But human nature kicks at this, and says, "No, sin is a weakness, a foible, a mistake, and nothing more." But when the Holy Spirit enters the heart we cry, "Truth, Lord. It is a black thing, a devilish thing, an infernal thing. And if You cast us into Hell You only do with sin what ought to be done with it!" Beloved Friends, whenever you meet with a sinner bowed down with the burden of sin, never try to make his sin appear to be lighter! On the contrary, say to the soul that is most despairing, "You feel that you are a great sinner, but you are a much greater sinner than you feel yourself to be."

When the soul cries, "My sin is very heavy," do not attempt to comfort it by making excuses for it. On the contrary, say, "Heavy as you think your sin to be, it is much heavier than you know." Never play into the devil's hands by excusing sinners in their sins. If you give comfort to your friend by saying to him, "Well, you have not been such a sinner as you think you are," you are giving him ruinous comfort. You are presenting to him a poisonous drug which may lull him to sleep, and which will therefore lull him to destruction! Tell him that sin is in itself so horrible that if a man could see a naked sin it would drive him mad! Tell him that the very least offense against God is so intolerable, that if Hell fire were put out, one sin could kindle it again.

The woman in this case, if it had been a sound way of getting comfort, would have argued, "No, Lord, I am not a dog. I may not be all I ought to be, but I am not a dog at any rate. I am a human being. You speak too sharply. Good Master, do not be unjust." Instead of that she admits the whole. This showed that she was in a right state of mind, since she admitted in its blackest, heaviest meaning whatever the Savior might choose to say against her. By night the glow-worm is bright like a star, and rotten touch wood glistens like molten gold. By the light of day the glowworm is a miserable insect, and the rotten wood is decay, and nothing more.

So with us. Until the light comes into us we count ourselves good. But when Heaven's light shines, our heart is discovered to be rottenness, corruption, and decay. Do not whisper in the mourner's ear that it is not so, and do not delude yourself into the belief that it is not so. You are a lost sinner. You deserve damnation! You deserve it, especially, even if no one else deserves it! You have sinned against light and against knowledge! You are ruined, and ruined utterly. Bad as you think yourself to be, your case is infinitely worse than you conceive it to be, and I am not here to give you any comfort by saying peace, peace, where there is no peace.

Your state, O Sinner, is horribly bad, and will soon be worse, hopelessly worse! And before God may you be made to feel this, and to say, "Truth, Lord."

II. But notice, in the second place, SHE ADHERES TO CHRIST NOTWITHSTANDING. Did you notice the force of what she said? "Truth, Lord; yet the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from" — where? "From their master's table." Dogs in the East very seldom have a master. There are big dogs about every Eastern city that live on the garbage thrown from the houses, and these big dogs are such a nuisance that I am not aware that there is one word in the whole of Scripture in favor of them.

The dog, as we know him, is a most affectionate, faithful servant of man, and deserves great honor. But the dog, as he is in the East, deserves nothing but contempt. He is simply a big howling brute who will bark at or bite anybody who is passing. In the Savior's days the Easterners had learned Roman manners and had introduced little household dogs. It is remarkable that our Lord did not call this woman one of the big dogs without a master, but one of the little lap dogs. It was a name of contempt, certainly, but still not the severest form of it. "It is not meet to give the children's bread to these little dogs."

There is a word here which I want you to notice. The woman does not say, "the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table," but, "from their master's table." Notice her adherence to Jesus. She says

in effect to Him, "You are my Master." She seems to say, "Lord, I am asking for a great blessing, and say what You will to me, I mean to have it. But if I cannot obtain the blessing, at any rate, I will always follow You—You shall be my Master. If You shall never say, 'go in peace, your faith has given you the blessing,' yet I take You to be my Master." As a stray dog picks up with a stranger and follows him home, and seems to say, "you may kick me or shut the door, but I have taken you to be my master. If you shut me out of one door I will go in at the other. If you shut me out at both doors I will be on the doormat. And if you kick me into the street, I will stand there until you come out, and then I will follow you—I have taken you to be my master, and my master you shall be."

Now, poor Soul, is this your case? If not, I urge you to take that stand. You have admitted that all which Jesus has said is true, but you say, "For all that, whether I am a dog or a devil, I will never leave off coming to Christ as my Savior. If I am a dog I will follow at the heels of Mercy—morning, noon, and night I will crouch at my Master's feet—and I will never give up trusting in Jesus, even if I have no comfort from Him. I have argued out the case with my own heart, and I have concluded that if God becomes a Savior, there can be no case beyond His infinite power. If the Son of God dies and sheds His blood there can be no scarlet sin which His blood cannot wash out. And if He rose again and is gone up on high, then He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. I am resolved, therefore, to wait and wrestle until He deigns to give me an answer."

No man clings more closely to Christ than he who is most sensible of his lost estate. Who holds the plank the tightest? Why the man who is the most afraid of being drowned! Fear frequently intensifies faith. The more afraid I am of my sins the more firmly do I grasp my Savior. Fear is sometimes the mother of faith. One who was walking in the fields was surprised to find a trembling lark fly into his bosom. A strange thing for a timid bird to do, was it not? But there was a hawk after it, and therefore fear of the hawk made the bird bold enough to fly to man for shelter! And oh, when the fierce vultures of sin and Hell are pursuing a poor sinner, he is driven by the courage of despair to fly into the heart of the blessed Jesus!

John Bunyan has said, somewhere, words to this effect, "I was brought into such a dread and horror under the wrath of God that I could not help trusting in Christ! I felt that if He stood there with a drawn sword in His hand I must even run right upon its point sooner than endure my sins." I hope and pray that the Lord may drive you to Jesus in such a way as this if you will not be drawn by gentler means. Brethren, a soul set upon Jesus, and clinging to Him with a death grip can by no means perish! The thing is utterly impossible! I have sometimes tried to picture a soul in Hell that has sought Jesus and resolved to die at the foot of His Cross. Such a thing cannot be. But suppose it for a moment, and the supposition will destroy itself.

"Alas," says that lost soul, "Jesus, I did hang alone upon You, but I am undone. I was worthless. I deserved nothing of Your favor. But I did trust in You as the Savior of the vile. I did depend upon Your power to deliver me, and here I am in the pit." Can you fancy such a sound as that amid the wailings of Hell? How the devils would laugh! "Ha, ha! Where are the promises? Where is the great heart of Christ to let a sinner perish who twined his arms about Him? Was it because He could not?" Then Satan cries, "Ha, ha! He was not able to save to the uttermost them that came to God by Him. Though He claimed to be a Physician He could not heal. "Or else," says the arch-fiend, "He *could not* save those who longed and panted to be saved."

You shudder to think what fearful blasphemy all this would be, and how it would tarnish the honor of the glorious Redeemer! It shall not be, Sinner, it shall not be! If you are the filthiest offender that ever lived, cast yourself at the feet of Jesus, resolved never to leave until He give you pardon! He cannot refuse you! We must not limit God and say what He can or cannot do. But we do read that He cannot lie, and certainly if Jesus were to cast out a soul that came to Him, He would lie. Therefore be of good cheer. Only stand to it that you will never leave the Savior—that you will die at the foot of the Cross—and all shall be well with you.

III. Furthermore, the woman's great master weapon, the needle gun which she used in her battle, was this, SHE HAD LEARNED THE ART OF GETTING COMFORT OUT OF HER MISERIES. Jesus called her a dog. "Yes," said she, "but then little dogs get the crumbs." She could see a silver lining to

the black cloud. Christ threw a bone at her. She took it up and cracked it, and got marrow out of it. It looked to be a very hard stone, but it had a lump of gold inside, and she knocked away the quartz and found the clear bright bullion and was enriched. "Call me a dog," she says, "very well, I will be a dog, and I shall get the crumbs."

She draws water of comfort from the deep well of her miseries. Now, poor Soul, in the same state, try, by the Holy Spirit's aid, to do the same thing. Satan has been saying to you, "You have broken God's Law. You have offended Him. You have been a sinner." Soul, if you have any wit left, cut the devil's head off with his own sword! Say to him, "I am a sinner, but it is written, 'It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' What do you say to that, Satan? If I am a sinner He came into the world to save sinners. If I had not been a sinner Jesus would not have come to save me, for it is nowhere written that He came to save those who are not sinners."

The more clearly I prove that I am a sinner, the more clearly I prove that I am an object for the Savior's mercy. Perhaps Conscience whispers, "You are not a sinner of an ordinary kind. You have gone to the greatest lengths until you have made your heart hard—you are a *lost* sinner." "Ah!" you can say, "I will catch at that then, for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was *lost*. He did not come to seek those who did not need seeking. He did not come as the Great Shepherd to find the sheep that were in the *fold*, but those which had gone *astray*. And I, being a lost one, when I see the Shepherd going over the mountains after the lost ones, I will bleat like a lost sheep, for perhaps He has come to look after me." But Conscience says to you, again, "You are such an undeserving one. You are not only a lost sinner, but you are utterly unworthy." Sinner, catch at that and say, "God is a God of Mercy. If I deserved *anything* there would be the less room for mercy—for something would be due to me as a matter of justice. But as I am a sheer mass of undeservingness, there is room for the Lord to reveal the abounding of His Grace."

There is no room for a man to be generous among yonder splendid mansions in Belgravia! Suppose a man had thousands of pounds in his pocket and desired to give it away in charity? He would be terribly hampered by princely palaces. If he were to knock at the doors of those great houses, and say he wanted an opportunity of being charitable, powdered footmen would slam the door in his face and tell him to be gone with his impudence. But come along with me! Let us wander down the Mews all among the dung-hills, and get away into back alleys where crowds of ragged children are playing amid filth and squalor—where all the people are miserably poor—and where cholera is festering.

Now Sir, down with your money bags! Here is plenty of room for your charity! Now you may put both your hands into your pockets, and not fear that anybody will refuse you. You may spend your money right and left now, with ease and satisfaction. When the God of Mercy comes down to distribute mercy, He cannot give it to those who do not need it! But you need forgiveness, for you are full of sin, and you are just the person likely to receive it.

"Ah!" says one, "I am so sick at heart. I cannot *believe*, I cannot *pray*." If I saw the doctor's brougham driving along at a great rate through the streets, I should be sure that he was not coming to *my* house, for I do not require him. But if I had to guess where he was going, I should conclude that he was hastening to some sick or dying person. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Physician of souls. The more sick you are, the more room is there for the physician's art. When a man sets up in a trade, he likes to find a locality where his articles are needed, and there he opens his shop.

What if I say it is my Master's trade to save sinners? What if I say it is the only business and calling that He undertook, to become a Savior of lost and ruined souls? Then He can drive a brisk trade in your heart, and I believe that He will open shop there and enrich Himself with your praise and your love by saving you. Do try now, my Hearer, thus to find hope in the very hopelessness of your condition, in whatever aspect that hopelessness may appear to you. The Bible says that you are dead in sin—then conclude that there is space for Jesus to come, since He is the Resurrection and the Life. If you were alive, you would not want two lives—but as you are dead, there is room for Jesus to give you life!

The Bible tells you that you are empty—do not deny it—say, "Truth, Lord." But then there is room for Christ's fullness. If you were full you could not hold two fullnesses—your own fullness would keep Christ's fullness out. But now that you are empty there is room for Him. Dear Heart, instead of trying to

make your case out to be *better*, believe in its thorough badness, and yet be of good cheer. You can not exaggerate your sin, and even if you could it were wiser to err in that direction than the other.

A man called at my house some time ago for charity—an arrant beggar, I have no doubt. Thinking that the man's rags and poverty were real, I gave him a little money, some of my clothes, and a pair of shoes. After he had put them on and gone out, I thought, "Well, after all, I have done you a bad turn very likely, for you will not get so much money now as before, because you will not look so wretched an object." Happening to go out a quarter of an hour afterwards, I saw my friend, but he was not wearing the clothes I had given him, not he! Why, I should have ruined his business if I could have compelled him to look respectable! He had been wise enough to slip down an archway, take all the good clothes off, and put his rags on again.

Did I blame him? Yes, for being a rogue, but not for carrying on his business in a business-like manner. He only wore his proper livery, for rags are the livery of a beggar. The more ragged he looked the more he would get. Just so is it with you. If you are to go to Christ, do not put on your good doings and feelings, or you will get nothing. Go in your sins, they are your livery. Your *ruin* is your argument for mercy! Your *poverty* is your plea for heavenly alms! And your *need* is the motive for heavenly goodness. Go as you are, and let your miseries plead for you.

If I were wounded on the battle-field, and the surgeon was going about to attend on the sick, he would be sure to visit those first whose wounds were the worst. In the hurry of a battle they do not look after a man who has had his finger shot off when there are others whose arms and legs are gone! But I would take care to state my case as fully as I could—by no means speaking lightly of my hurts—in order to have my bleeding wounds bound up as soon as possible. I should not feel inclined to say, "Oh, it is nothing, I am very little injured, it is no problem." I should be for taking time by the forelock, and getting what help I needed as soon as possible.

Now, you too, sinner, learn this art. Do not paint yourself in bright colors, but admit yourself to be lost and ruined, and then, adhering still to Christ, make your very wants, and needs, and death, and ruin to be an argument why the Lord of Mercy should show His mighty power in you.

IV. Let me, in the fourth place, notice the way in which the woman gained comfort: SHE THOUGHT GREAT THOUGHTS OF CHRIST. I must have your attention in this. The Master had talked about the children's bread. "Now," she argued, "since You are the Master of that table, I know that You are a generous housekeeper, and there is sure to be abundance of bread on Your table. You are no stingy provider, there will be such an abundance for the children that there will be crumbs to throw on the floor for the little dogs—and the children will fare none the worse because the little dogs are fed."

She did not think the Lord Jesus to be a workhouse master who must serve out so many ounces of bread for each one! She thought Him to be a generous provider who kept so good a table that all that she needed would only be a crumb in comparison. Yet remember, what she wanted was to have the devil cast out of her *daughter*. It was a very great thing to her, but she had such a high esteem of Christ that she said, "It is nothing to Him—it is but a *crumb* for Christ to give." This is the royal road to comfort! Great thoughts of your sin, alone, will drive you to despair—but great thoughts of Christ will soon bear you upwards upon eagle's wings!

"My sins are many, but oh, it is nothing to Jesus to take them all away! He can as easily lift the mountains of my sin as I could lift a molehill on a shovel. It is true the weight of my guilt presses me down as a giant's foot would crush a worm, but it would be no more than a grain of dust to Him because He has already borne its curse in His own body on the Cross. It will be but a small thing for Him to give me full remission, although it will be an infinite blessing for me to receive it." She opens her mouth to expect great things of Jesus, and He fills it with His love.

I ask you, dear Friends, to do the same. Oh may the Holy Spirit enable you! But you may say, "help me." Well, I will help you. You ought to think great thoughts of Jesus when you remember that He is God. What limit can you set when you have God to deal with? He with His span measures the heavens! In the hollow of His hands He holds the seas! He takes up the isles as a very little thing. If Jesus Christ is God, how can you think He cannot save you? O Man, when you have to deal with the Eternal and Infinite let your doubts fly to the winds!

Think again that He, being God, suffered the penalty of sin—a grief which man alone could not have endured. The weight of His Father's wrath fell upon Jesus at Calvary. Can you see Him with His pierced hands and feet? Can you read the lines of agony written upon His crown of thorns and not believe that He is able to save? God over all, the glory of whose countenance fills Heaven with splendor, yields His face to be covered with shameful spittle, and His brow to be bedewed with drops of bloody sweat! Is anything impossible to the merits of the agonizing God? Think of that, Sinner, and you will put no limit to what Jesus can do.

But Jesus rose again. See Him as He rises from the tomb, ascending to His Father's Throne amid the jubilations of ten thousand angels! See how He wears the keys of Heaven, and Death and Hell, swinging at His waist! What cannot He do? Not save *you*? He who is "exalted on high to give repentance," who is, "able to save to the uttermost," seeing that He ever lives to intercede—can you doubt His power to save? Oh, do not dishonor my Master! Trust Him now! But you are still doubting. Then I will bring you one thing more that shall, by God's sweet love, drive your doubts away and make you cling to the Savior.

There are some country towns in the eastern counties where there is a celebrated doctor, and I have heard of wagons starting from remote hamlets loaded with people to go twenty or thirty miles to consult the famous man. Whether he does them good or not I am sure I cannot tell, but the illustration serves my purpose. Suppose one of you were to set off to see this doctor. Feeling very sick and ill, you are afraid that he will be of no service to you when you get there. But on the road you meet wagonloads of persons journeying cheerfully home. They ask, "Where are you going?" and you reply, "I am going off to Doctor So-and-So, for I am ill." "Oh!" they say, "you are very blest to be able to go! We have been there—we were all as bad as you and we have been cured, and are now going home."

"But," you say, "had any of you a bad leg like mine?" "Oh, yes," one replies, "I had *two* bad legs! My case was even worse than yours." "Well, were you perfectly restored?" "Yes," says the man. "See how I can walk, I am fully restored." Would you not go on with confidence? You were half afraid before, but you say, "Now I shall proceed joyfully, for these cures are so many proofs of the physician's power." There are hundreds this morning, even in this free Tabernacle, who can say, "Yes! Jesus is able to save," and they can give the very best proof of it, too, by adding, "He saved me!"

Dear Hearers, I know that Christ can save sinners, for I have seen His salvation in thousands of cases! But the best proof I ever had was when He saved me! When I looked to Him and was lightened, and my face was not ashamed, then I knew, I needed no further arguments. O Sinner, He has saved drunkards, swearers, harlots, whoremongers, adulterers. Paul says that He saved those that defiled themselves with nameless sins, for he says, "Such were some of you. But you are washed." Even the murderer can have deeds of blood washed out by the blood of Jesus. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses from all sin."

He is a great Savior! He is the greatest Savior! He is a Savior greater than the greatest! And as for *your* sins, they shall sink beneath the sea of His atoning blood and shall be found against you no more forever! The woman thought great thoughts of Christ, and that brought her comfort.

V. And so you see, in the last place, SHE WON THE VICTORY. She confessed what Christ laid at her door. She laid fast hold upon Him and drew arguments even out of His hard words. She believed great things of Him, and she thus overcame Him. Now let me say that the reason why she overcame Christ was really here, that she had first of all overcome herself. She had conquered, in another fight before she wrestled with the Savior, her own soul.

I think I see her before she started away from home. She was sitting down one day when a talkative neighbor came in and said, "Have you heard about the new Prophet?" "No, I have not. What about him?" "Oh! He is a great healer of diseases." "Tell me all about it," said the woman, for that subject interested her. She heard the story. She knew that her friend talked a great deal more than she needed, and she did not quite believe it. The next day she called at the house, and said, "Are you certain that what you told me was quite true?" "Well," she said, "I heard it from So-and-So, whose daughter was healed."

The woman then determined to hunt the matter out, and at last found an eyewitness whose word could be taken. "Yes," said the friend, "it is the Messiah, the Son of God, who has come down to earth, and I am sure He is able to cure, for I have seen some wonderful miracles worked by Him. There can be no

doubt about His power.” At first the woman was puzzled. She had been brought up as a heathen. She had tried her heathen gods, and they had failed her. She had tried her priests, and they had only deluded her and she thought that this, perhaps, was a delusion, too. But she thought it over.

There were fifty objections, but then she said, “I have heard that there will be such-and-such marks attending the coming of the Messiah and this Man is just what they said the Messiah would be. I believe He is the Messiah, and if He is God’s Son, He must be able to heal my daughter.” Then hosts of difficulties came up. “You are a Canaanite.” “Yes, but it was said of the Messiah, ‘A bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench.’ Therefore, I will go and try Him. And again it is written, ‘In Him shall the Gentiles trust.’ I am a Gentile, and I will trust in Him.”

I can suppose that she debated all this over in her mind, and having first conquered herself she easily overcame the willing Savior. Possibly some of you may suppose that there is a degree of difficulty in bringing the Lord Jesus to save a sinner. There is none whatever! The difficulty is in bringing the sinner to trust Jesus! This is the work, this is the labor. In this woman’s case the conflict with Jesus was only external but not real. He was already on her side. The true conflict was with her own *unbelief*, and when her faith had proved itself victorious within, it became victorious with Christ.

Sinner, there is nothing between you and salvation but yourself. Do I speak boldly? Christ has leveled every mountain that stands in your way! He has filled up every valley, and He has made a high road from you to the very Throne of God! The difficulty is with *you*, not with God. How, then, is it with you? Can you trust Christ, dear Hearer? Can you throw yourself wholly upon Jesus crucified?

If so, your sins are forgiven you! Go your way and rejoice. But if you cannot, here is your difficulty. Oh, may God help you to contend with it! It is a *sin* to doubt Christ! It is a cruelty! It is an unkind cut to suspect that He is unwilling to forgive. Cast away, I pray you, your wicked unbelief! May God the Holy Spirit help you to do so! Come just as you are, and rest in Jesus, and you shall find eternal life.

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

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

THE PERSEVERANCE OF FAITH

NO. 2253

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 24, 1892.
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“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”
Matthew 15:28.

I have frequently spoken to you concerning the faith of this Canaanite woman—of the way in which Christ tried it and of the manner in which, at length, He honored it—and granted all that the suppliant sought. The story is so full of meaning that one might turn it this way, that way and the other way, but always see jewels in it. But I am going to use it with only one aim, namely, to encourage those who have faith enough to seek Jesus, but have not yet, to their joy and peace, been quite able to find Him.

This woman had come to her last word. I do not see what more she could have said. When Christ had likened her to a dog, she had consented to it and said, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.” She had come to her *last* word and now Christ gives her His *best* word. It is His way, sometimes, to make us wait till we are completely exhausted and can say and do no more—then He comes in with the fullness of His Divine Power and gives to us what we have importunately sought at His hands. Our extremity is His opportunity.

I. The first remark which I shall make and enlarge upon is that FAITH ALONE CAN KEEP A SOUL UNDER DISCOURAGEMENT SEEKING AFTER CHRIST. Other causes may send us a certain distance along the road, but only faith will bring us to the goal of assured rest.

That which made this woman seek the Savior was, first of all, parental love. She loved her daughter. She longed to have the devil cast out of her, that her daughter might not be so grievously vexed. That started her going and carried her some way towards the blessing—but she would have stopped short of the blessing she desired if she had relied only upon natural love.

Her earnestness, also, to a large extent, urged her forward. When she desired healing for her daughter, she meant what she said. When she cried, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, You Son of David!” it was with a shrill and piteous voice. She could not bear to be refused. Nobody ever

came to Christ who pleaded more from the heart than did this poor Canaanite. She was not an idle repeater of *forms* of prayer. Her prayer leaped, red-hot, from her soul—"Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David!" But her earnestness, alone, would not have upheld her under the ordeal through which she was called to pass. It would have given way if she had not had the believing conviction that Christ could heal her daughter and that He would do so!

Her humility, also, helped her greatly. Had she been a proud woman, she would have stood upon her dignity when she was called a dog—but humility came to her help and she did not even resent the harsh words the Lord used—but still pleaded for her poor child. Now, parental love and earnestness and humility are good things, but they are not enough to enable a soul to cling to Christ and never let Him go. Something more is needed.

This Canaanite woman was a very sensible woman, wise and prudent. She knew how to turn the hard words of Christ into arguments in her own favor. She would not be put back. If He had not answered her, she would have pleaded with Him again. When He *did* answer her and say that it was not meet to give the children's bread to dogs, she found, even in that dry bone, some little marrow on which to feed her heart. But wise as she was, and prudent as she was, she would not have held out to the end and obtained the blessing she desired for her daughter, if it had not been for her *faith*.

We may be quite sure that the one thing especially noteworthy in this woman's case was her faith, first, because *we have Christ's word for it*. He said unto her, "O woman, great is your faith!" He did not say, "Great is your love to your child." Nor did He say, "Great is your earnestness." Nor, "Great is your importunity." But He put His finger on the power that had urged her forward and He said, "O woman, great is your faith!" And not in this case, alone, did Christ trace the blessing to faith, but in nearly every instance where a suppliant obtained favor from Him, *faith* was the medium of securing the mercy. Faith is mightier than all other available forces!

Besides this, *we know that faith supports the other Graces*. If other Graces can help a soul to plead with Christ, they all owe their power to faith. If it had not been for the faith which she had to support it, parental love would not have helped this woman much. If it had not been for faith, she would not have been earnest and importunate. Faith hangs on to Christ in the dark. It holds to a silent Christ. It holds to a refusing Christ. It holds to a rebuking Christ and it will not let Him go. Faith is the great holdfast that hooks a soul on to the Savior.

Faith is thus powerful because of its effects. *Faith enlightens, enlivens and strengthens*. It is written of some of old that, "They looked unto Him and were lightened." Faith shed a light upon many things and lets us see that even if Christ has a frown on His face, He has love in His heart. Faith looks right into the heart of Christ and helps us to perceive that He can-

not mean anything but mercy to a seeking soul. Faith also enlivens and when the heart begins to faint, faith brings its smelling bottle and revives it. David said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed." Believing is the cure for fainting and you must do one of two things—either believe or faint! Faith is thus a great help to one who is seeking Christ because it both enlightens and enlivens the soul. Faith also strengthens. It makes the lame take the prey. Beloved, it is because faith thus enlightens and enlivens and strengthens, that it is the Grace most useful to a soul that is seeking to lay hold upon Christ and yet cannot get a comfortable look at His blessed face.

Moreover, *faith lays hold on Christ*. It is like the Greek, Antisthenes, who went to a philosopher to learn. But he was a dull scholar and the philosopher bade him go away. The next time the class met, Antisthenes returned and the philosopher thereupon sent for a man with a club to drive the stupid scholar away—but he was overcome by his scholar, for Antisthenes said, "There is no club that was ever made that is heavy enough to drive me away from you. Here I mean to stay, and learn whatever you can teach me." Oh, may we have a faith like that! A faith that will say to Christ, "I will not go away from You. I can but perish if I stay with You, but if I go from You, I *must* perish! Therefore I will abide with You always and learn all You will teach me!" Faith is like the Greek, in the days of Xerxes, who seized the boat with his right hand. When they chopped off his right hand, he seized it with the left hand. When they cut off his left hand, he laid hold of the boat with his teeth and did not let go until they severed his head from his body. Soul, if you can lay hold of Christ with your right hand, or with your left hand, it will be well with you! Cling to Christ and say to Him with that holy boldness that is the result of faith, "I will not let You go except You bless me." Faith, then, holds on to Christ.

Further, I would say that *faith does this best without help*. How often we try to assist faith! We want faith to have some works, some prayers, something or other of our own to help it. It is as if somebody were to try and help me to walk by giving me a big chair to carry! I could not walk so well with the burden, as without it! Have you ever heard this parable concerning Faith? She had to cross a stream and the current was strong. And there came one to her who said, "Faith, I will help you! Come with me up the river till we can find a place where we can ford it." Faith said, "No, I was bid to cross the river here." So another came, and said, "I will build a bridge for you, that you may go over the river with ease." And he laid hold of a few stones, but not much ever came of it. Yet another said, "I will go and find a boat." But there were no boats about and, therefore, they asked Faith to wait till they built a boat for her.

What did she do? She took off her vestments and plunged into the water. "Thank God," she said, "I can swim." And so she swam across and reached the other side without boat, without bridge and without ford. That is what I should like to see every sinner here do—begin to swim! Do not wait for help. Cast yourself into the stream of everlasting Love. Believe

in Christ Jesus and have no more confidence in the flesh, with its bridges and boats! Commit yourself to the stream of Eternal Grace and swim across. Faith can enable you to do it! Nothing else can. Take that lesson home to yourselves, you who are seeking to Savior at this time.

The only thing that will help you to follow after Christ till you find Him is faith. All your groans will not help you! All your doubts and your trembling will be of no avail—your feeling that you are too vile to be saved—and that faith would be presumption in such a sinner as you are will not aid you! But believe that Christ can save you and trust to His power and love, and He will save you! Come to Him as the woman of Canaan came, with her importunate cry, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David,” and He will have mercy on you even as He had upon her! Believe, believe, believe! You will never come into light by doubting and fearing! The way to liberty lies through this one door of faith. Therefore believe and live.

Thus much upon our first remark, that faith alone can keep a soul under discouragement seeking after Christ.

II. Secondly, FAITH IS EXCEEDINGLY DELIGHTFUL TO CHRIST. What He said to this woman began with an exclamation, as if He were struck with something in her that delighted Him. He said, “O woman, great is your faith!” Notice that He spoke of her *faith* and of that, alone. He knew about her love. He knew about her earnestness. He knew about her humility. But He said nothing at all about them—His one word of commendation was for her faith. “O woman, great is your faith!” That is what my Lord is looking for now! He comes round and looks at you, who are sitting in these pews, to see whether you have faith in Him. There are several thoughts suggested by this, that should encourage you who are seeking Christ.

He can spy out the beginnings of faith. “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed,” He will see it and He will accept it. If you have only, now, begun to believe that Jesus is the Christ, and to trust Him—though your faith is feeble as a babe that cannot stand and can only cling to its mother’s breast—Jesus will see the beginnings of it. He is the “Author” as well as “the Finisher of our faith.” Be you comforted, then, concerning that tiny trust you have in Him!

Still, *He is greatly pleased when He sees great faith.* When a great sinner says, “I believe that He is a Savior great enough to save me, it brings joy to the heart of Christ! When an old sinner says, “I believe that His precious blood can take away the sin of 70 or 80 years,” the Lord’s heart is gladdened. Christ loves a great faith! He *deserves* great faith and when He gets it, He is highly pleased. “O woman,” He said, “great is your faith!”

He is so delighted with faith, that *He passes by other things for it.* If that woman’s ears had been hung with rings, her neck had been decked with pearls and her hands had been covered with diamonds, He would not have cared about her ornaments and her beauty. He sees something that He prizes more than any of these things and, therefore, He says to her, “O woman, great is your faith!” He is charmed with that choice decoration of

her *heart*. By that treasure, “The king is held in his galleries.” Christ may say of faith, “You have ravished My heart with one of your eyes.” When we can but look straight to Christ and trust in Him, He is charmed and carried away by our faith.

Why does Christ think so much of faith?

One reason is because *faith glorifies Him*. He thinks much of it because it thinks so much of Him. Faith believes Him, faith trusts Him, faith lives upon Him. He is “the chief among ten thousand” and the “altogether lovely” to faith. Therefore, because faith highly esteems Christ, Christ highly esteems faith.

Next, He loves faith because it is *God’s appointed way* in which we are to receive blessing. God might have appointed *ordinances* as the vehicle of Grace, but, instead thereof, He has made *faith* to be the medium of salvation. If you believe, you shall be saved. He that by faith lays hold on Christ, has laid hold on eternal life! “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” To the awakened sinner our word is still, “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” Since God has put faith into so eminent a place, our Lord Jesus Christ loves to see it! He takes delight in that which pleases His Father!

Another reason why He loves it is because *faith is the signal which permits the train of mercy to come to us*. Whenever unbelief holds up its arms, the train of almighty Grace stands still. Of a certain place it is said, “He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.” Their doubt blocked the way! But when faith lowers the signal, the great Driver of Heaven’s express says, “That road is clear,” and He delights to see it and drives right ahead. Oh, if you can but let that signal go down, showing that the line is clear of all obstructions, Christ will surely come to you! He is glad to come wherever He can bring a blessing and He rejoices when faith reveals a clear road to Him.

Besides, *faith has open arms for embracing Christ*. When He comes to our door and finds it locked, He stands there till His bitter lament is, “My head is filled with dew, and My locks with the drops of the night.” But when He comes and the door is open, the poor sinner is so taken up with His beauty that He never thinks of shutting Him out. “Oh,” says the seeking soul, “if the Lord would but come in!” And as surely as Christ finds the door open, He comes in and dwells there—and makes that heart and that house happy with His Divine Presence. Christ loves faith because faith gives Him a hearty welcome—faith receives Him—faith embraces Him.

Oh, I would to God you would think of this and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus! May you see that nothing delights Christ like a sinner believing in Him! That nothing gives Him more joy than to have a saint resting completely upon Him without doubt or fear!

Thus have we considered two points—first, that the only way to keep a soul under discouragement seeking Christ is by faith. And, secondly, that nothing pleases Christ like believing on His name.

III. The third point is that FAITH WILL, BEFORE LONG, GET A KIND ANSWER FROM THE LORD JESUS. This poor woman, at the first, received no reply to her petition, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David!" Then, when Christ did speak to her, He gave her what seemed to be a rough answer. But, after a while, these notes of heavenly music sounded in her ear, "O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will!"

Now, someone here probably says, "I have been praying ever so long and I have received no cheering reply." Well, if you believe in Jesus, you shall have a good reply before long. If you can but hold on to Christ, determined to plead with Him till He answers you, He will answer you kindly before long. But keep on believing that He can and will give you what you need and you shall not be disappointed. "Oh," says one, "you do not know who I am! I am an outcast." So was the woman. She was a Canaanite woman, yet she obtained a blessing from Christ! And you shall get one, too, if you follow her in her faith. "Oh, but I do not think that I am fit!" Did Christ ever say to you that you were a dog? He did as good as tell this woman that—yet she held on to Him by faith and prevailed. "Oh, but I have prayed in vain for such a long time!" So did she. She prayed and, for a while, she received no answer. "Oh, but I feel worse after I have prayed!" So did she, for, instead of getting a comfortable answer, she heard Christ say, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." You cannot be in a worse plight than she was! "But the devil troubles me," you add. The devil also troubled her. She pleaded about her daughter who was *possessed with a devil!* And she kept on pleading and believing. She meant to have Christ. I exhort you to come to the same holy determination! Oh, that Almighty Grace might help you to do so, for in so doing you will surely get an answer of peace! You will get a comfortable answer before very long, probably much earlier than you have reckoned upon.

Remember that *Christ delays in order to increase your faith.* Your faith will grow by exercise—therefore He tests it that you may use it and that thus it may become stronger.

Christ delays in order to increase the blessing, itself. While we wait, the blessing becomes bigger and our hands become stronger to hold it when it does come. You may be sure that our blessed Lord will give you a comfortable answer, for do you not know that He has been sustaining you while you have been pleading and as yet have received no answer? Did you ever notice, when Joseph's brothers went down into Egypt, that he made himself strange to them and spoke roughly to them and put them in prison? But in spite of that, there was one thing he did—when they went back to Jacob, he filled their sacks for them. He would not smile upon them, but he would not starve them and, at last, it is said, "Joseph could not refrain himself," and he, "made himself known to his brothers. He was, at last, obliged to show his love, but even before he did that, he always filled their sacks for them. Christ will deal with you in the same manner—while you are waiting, He will not let you die.

Oh, in what wonderful ways did the Lord support me when, through weary years, I was seeking His face! I could not say that I had any comfort that I dared to call my own and yet there flowed into my soul, somehow, a secret power that enabled me still to hope and still to hold on! For that I now desire to bless His name and I tell it for the encouragement of any who may be in soul-trouble as I was. Keep on seeking His Grace, dear Friend! Believe still, for He must give you a comfortable answer one of these days.

Consider well that *it is contrary to His Nature to refuse to bless*. He is filled to the brim with love and if He does put a sinner back for a while, it is only because it is right and kind and wise to do so. But His heart yearns over every seeking sinner. He wants you more than you want Him! He longs after you. He desires to bless you. He must do so—it is His Nature to do so!

He must give you a comfortable reply before long, again, *for it is contrary to His Glory to refuse*. If He allowed a seeking sinner to die, where would His Truth be? Has He not said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? Our friend, Dr. Barnardo, announces that in his refuges no homeless boy will ever be rejected—that no destitute child shall ever be turned away. Suppose somebody could prove—which, of course, they cannot—that scores of destitute children were turned away? Why, all confidence in him would be destroyed! And if it could be proven that Christ ever cast out a single soul that came to Him, it would take away His honor and glory! We could never believe Him any more. Perish the thought of such a thing!

It is contrary to His Word to refuse any seeker and Christ will keep His word. “Come unto Me,” He says, “all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” If Christ will not give you rest when you come to Him, what is His promise worth? My friend, Dr. Pierson, sent me, the other day, an imitation of an American banknote which they call a “green-back” over there, and on one side of it were these words, “My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus.” A splendid note, that! It had our friend’s name on the back, “Arthur T. Pierson,” and he said to me, when he sent it, “If the Lord does not pay you, I will, for I have endorsed the note.” I shall never have to look my Brother Pierson up and tell him that the note he endorsed is of no value. There it stands, and stands forever—God will keep His word. I know it and I want you poor sinners to know it, too! He cannot run back from His own promise. His Word is His bond! To every honest man it is so, but to the thrice-holy God, His oath and His promise bind Him eternally!

Let me add that if Christ does not give a comfortable answer to you who believingly seek Him, *it is contrary to His custom*. Here are many of us who have known our Lord, now, for 40 years, and we can say that His custom is to hear our prayers and, according to our faith, so is it unto us. Come along, you blackest sinner out of Hell! Come and wash in the Fountain filled with blood and you shall be cleansed, as surely as ever Christ died!

Come along, you lowest, meanest, most self-abhorred, most self-condemned of humankind! Come and look to Him, and trust in Him—and if you do not find peace at once, yet be sure that you shall have it before long! “The morning comes.” It is not for long that Christ’s mercy can be restrained. He must break forth, like Joseph, weeping over His Brothers and Sisters! He must manifest Himself to you in love, tenderness and kindness. I will be bound for Him, any day, that it shall be so.

IV. Lastly, we come to a very glorious thought. FAITH GETTING CHRIST’S WORD HAS ALL THINGS. Listen to the text, again—“Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”

Christ’s word was *a comforting word*. How the look on this woman’s face must have been altered when Christ talked to her so! When He answered her never a word, she doubtless had a long and sorrowful face, and probably the big tears stood in her eyes. But now He began to talk in another strain, how happy she felt! The woman was sad no more. So it is even today! One word from Christ can comfort you, even if they talk about putting you into an asylum because you are so melancholy. One word from my Master shall be the balm of Gilead to your wounds! He will bind up your broken heart. He will comfort you and speak peace to you as He did to her. It was a comforting word.

It was also *a commending word*, “O woman, great is your faith!” She had never been praised like that before. I have no doubt that her husband had praised her. What good husband is there who does not praise his wife, even as it is written of the virtuous woman, “Her husband, also, and he praises her”? But his praise had never been so sweet as this word from the Lord Jesus! I have no doubt that her daughter had called her all the sweet names she could think of, for she loved her child, and it was only natural to believe that her child loved her. But now, when Christ looks her in the face, and says, “O woman, great”—“ah!” she may have thought, “He is going to say, ‘Great is your sin,’ or else, ‘Great is your noise.’” What astonishment must have been hers when He said, “Great is your *faith*”! He gave her a gold medal for her faith, yes, something even better than that—she was put into the class called, “Highly commended.” “O woman, great is your faith!” It was a commending word and she needed it!

Next, it was *a commanding word*. Notice that, well. Listen to it—“Be it unto you.” He speaks like a king! And if the Lord now speaks His gracious word with power, as I pray that He may, He will say, “Minister, comfort that woman who puts her trust in Me.” He will say, “Ordinances, comfort those weary ones. Bread and wine, be sweet to the taste of those poor troubled ones.” He will say, “Prayer Meetings, be a joy to those poor tried ones.” It is a commanding voice with which the Lord of Hosts speaks when He says, “Comfort you, comfort you, My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.”

In addition to being a commanding word, it was *a creating word*. Why, it was the very word that God, Himself, used when He made the light! He said, "Be light." He said to the earth, "Be," and it was! He said to the heavens, "Be," and they were! The word is a fiat. In the Latin it is precisely that, a *fiat*. So here, that same mighty Voice says, "Be it unto you. Be it unto you." O God, send forth a fiat at this moment to some poor weary heart! Create light! Create joy! Create peace! He can create all of these in your heart right now. Oh, that He might do it by the power of His almighty Grace! The faith of this poor Canaanite thus obtained for its reward a creative fiat from the lips of Christ!

Further, it was *a complying word*. You can see all these adjectives begin with the same letter—it was a *comforting* word, a *commending* word, a *commanding* word, a *creating* word and a *complying* word. "Be it unto you even as you will—just as you please, whatever you wish for—and in the way you wish to have it." Christ capitulates to a conquering faith. Nothing ever conquered Him yet but faith! His love is stronger than death. Death could not conquer Christ, nor could all the powers of Hell. But here He surrenders at discretion to a soul that can vanquish Him by believing! "Be it unto you even as you will." Do you need more joy? Do you need full salvation? Do you need perfect rest? Behold, He says to each of you who can and do believe in Him, "Be it unto you even as you will."

Thus, lastly, this word became *a completing word*—"her daughter was made whole from that very hour." From that very hour she was well again! Christ speedily finished that work. He was not long about it. It does not take so long to save a soul as it does for a lightening flash to become visible! You pass from death to life in an instant. When lost, ruined, condemned, the man who casts himself at Christ's feet is saved immediately! It is not the work of hours or weeks, or years, when you trust to the finished work of Christ. All that required time, Christ has accomplished. All that now has to be done, can be done in a moment! When a man is thirsty, it does not take him long to drink when the water is there. Remember the invitation with which the Scriptures must conclude, "Let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let Him take the Water of Life freely." The Water of Life is there—take it! When a man is hungry, it does not take him long to eat when the bread is on the table. God can now give you, who came to this Tabernacle afar off from Him, Grace which shall enable you to be made near at once! He can bring you immediately out of the blackness of sin and make you on the instant, whiter than snow. Make David's prayer your own, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Believe my Lord and Master. Oh, why do you not believe Him? Cease your artful doubts and reasonings! I would now take the hammer and nails and fasten my unbelief and fear to Christ's Cross. Hang there, you thieves, and die! You destroy men's souls, you doubts and reasonings! Come here, simple Faith, you who have no wisdom! You are a mere child, but, O, simple Faith, *you* have the key of the Kingdom! Come, and wel-

come, into my heart! Will all of you not also believe and trust in Christ, even now? If you do, you shall be saved! “Be it unto you even as you will.” God bless you! Amen.

**Portion of Scripture Read before Sermon—Matthew 15:21-39.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—560, 599, 550.**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON
MATTHEW 15:21-39**

[The sermons available for future use are those preached on Lord’s-Day and Thursday *evenings*. These were usually shorter than the morning discourses. The publishers will issue, with the Sermon, the Exposition that preceded it as often as they are able to do so. They believe that readers will value all of these utterances of the beloved preacher who is now with the Lord. They have heard of many sermon readers who regularly turn to the portions of Scripture expounded by Mr. Spurgeon and even read the hymns sung at the Tabernacle. Such friends will now have a very full report of the services held there during the late Pastor’s ministry.]

Jesus had been in conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees. He never liked such discussions and though He was always victorious in every controversy, it grieved His spirit.

Verse 21. *Then Jesus went from there, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* He was glad to get away and made a journey over the hills to get at as great a distance as possible from these cavilers.

22. *And behold, a woman of Canaan came.* A Syro-Phoenician woman, one of the old condemned race living in Tyre and Sidon.

23. *But He answered her not a word.* Answers to prayers may be delayed, but delays are not always denials. Christ’s silence must have been a great trial to the poor woman, but our Lord knew with whom He was dealing.

23. *And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.* Ah, these disciples made a grand mistake! She did not cry after *them*—she cried after Him! But so they understood it and, therefore, they said, “Get rid of her; she disturbs us; when we are in the street, we can hear her cry. Send her away; for she cries after us.” Ah, Poor disciples, she was not so foolish as to cry after *you*—she was crying after your Master! If any here have come only to hear the preacher, they have made a great mistake! But if you have come for a word from the Master, I pray that you may be gratified.

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Christ did what He was sent to do. He was the Messiah, the Sent One. He would not go beyond His mission, so He says, “I am sent.” He was sent as a Preacher and a Teacher, not to the Gentiles, but to Israel. He had a larger commission in reserve and was yet to be a

Savior to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews—but for the present He was to be a Shepherd to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

25. *Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord help me.* A very short prayer; but how much there was in it!

26, 27. *But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to the dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.* It is the faculty of faith to see in the dark. This woman spied out light in what seemed to be a very dark saying. Did Christ call her a *dog*? Well, dogs have their privileges when they lie under the table. Even if their master does not throw them a crumb, yet they may take that which falls from his hand. If Jesus would but allow any mercy to drop, as it were, accidentally, this woman would be content.

28, 29. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And Jesus departed from there.* When He had done His business, He was off. Our Lord was a great itinerant—He was always on the move! He had come all the way to the parts of Tyre and Sidon to help one woman—and when that one woman had been attended to, He immediately goes back to His old post by the sea of Galilee.

29, 30. *And Jesus departed from there, and came near unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto Him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus’ feet; and He healed them.* In the Prayer Meeting held by the deacons and elders this morning, before I came in here, one of our friends observed in prayer that there might be many lame, blind and maimed in the congregation. And he prayed that they might be brought to Jesus. Let us, by faith, bring them to Him and lay them at His feet. Oh, that this Word of God, “He healed them,” might be true again today!

31. *Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be made whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.* Oh, for glory to God! There is no glory to God which equals that which comes from blind eyes which have been made to see! And from dumb lips which have been made to speak! The glories of Nature and Providence are eclipsed by the glories of Grace. May we see such things today!

32. *Then Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.* Ah, dear Friends, they were willing to put up with inconvenience to hear the Gospel in those days! Three days of sermon-hearing! People need sermons wonderfully short, now, and the sermons must be marvelously interesting, too, or else the people grow dreadfully tired. If dinner time came around, the dinner bell, at any time, in these days, would drown all the attraction of the pulpit! But here were people that attended

Christ's ministry for three days and they had nothing to eat. He had compassion upon them and said to His disciples, "I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way."

33, 34. *And His disciples said unto Him, Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus said unto them, How many loaves have you? That is the point. It is idle to enquire about how much you need. "How many loaves have you?"*

34, 35. *And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. It was a token of Christ's Presence and Power that they were willing to sit down on the ground. Think of thousands of people taking their places in an orderly way to feed upon seven cakes and a few little fishes! Without any argument, the crowd arranged itself into banquet order at the command of Jesus.*

36, 37. *And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and broke them, and gave them to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled; and they took up of the broken food that was left seven baskets full. They were large baskets, too—not like the small food-baskets mentioned when the 5,000 were fed. The word used here is the same word that is employed to describe the basket in which Saul was let down by the wall of Damascus.*

38. *And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. Now, if the women and children bore the same proportion to the men as they generally do in our congregation, there must have been a very large crowd, indeed! Why is the number of the women and children not mentioned? Was it because there were so many? Or was it because their appetites, being smaller than the appetites of men, the men are put down as the great eaters and the women and children, as it were, thrown into the count? What a mercy it is that the Lord adds to the Church daily a vast number of men, women, and children! May the Lord sends us many more—until we cannot count them!*

39. *And He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala. He had taught the people and fed them—so now He goes elsewhere to carry similar blessings to others.*

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

CARTE BLANCHE

NO. 2446

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
JANUARY 5, 1896.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 20, 1890.**

***“Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman,
great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will.”
Matthew 15:28.***

I mean to dwell Especially upon those words at the end of the verse, “Be it unto you even as you will,” but before we consider them, I should like to remind you again, as I did in the reading, that our Lord admired this woman’s faith. He said unto her, “O woman, great is your faith.” She was humble, she was patient, she was persevering, she was affectionate towards her child, but our Savior did not mention any of these things, for He was most of all struck by her *faith*. What other good things she had sprang out of her faith, so the Lord Jesus went at once to the root of the matter and, as it were, held up His hands in astonishment and exclaimed, “O woman, great is your faith.” Her faith really was great, extremely great, when you consider that she was a Gentile and one of a race that had, ages before, been doomed. The Canaanite race was one in whose nature idolatry seemed to be ingrained, yet this woman showed that she had greater faith than many a Jew!

There are two cases of extraordinary faith recorded in the early part of Matthew’s Gospel—and in both of these instances where our Savior expressed His astonishment at the greatness of the faith, the believers were Gentiles. Of the centurion at Capernaum He said, “Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great a faith, no, not in Israel.” It is a wonderful thing when persons who have lived in ignorance and vice exhibit great faith. We are glad when those who have been brought up religiously and morally are led to believe in Christ, but we are often more astonished when the immoral—those who have previously known nothing of true godliness—are enabled by Divine Grace to exercise great faith in Christ. “O woman, great is your faith,” said our Lord, for it was great even apart from her being a Gentile, for it had been sorely tried. Trials of faith from disciples are often very severe, but the disciples had put her aside and even besought their Lord to, “Send her away.”

But trials of faith from the Master, Himself, are still more severe. To have Christ’s deaf ear and dumb lips—this was a trial, indeed, and worse than that, to have rough words from such a loving and tender Teacher as

He was, and even to be called a dog by the great Shepherd of Israel and to be told that it was not right to give her the children's bread—these were heavy tests of her confidence! But she had such faith that she bore up under all and still pressed her suit with the Son of David, the Lord of Mercy! We cannot but feel that Christ did her justice when He said, "O woman, great is your faith."

Our Savior seems to have been especially struck with the *ingenuity* of her faith. Little faith always lacks ingenuity—it must have everything very plain or else it cannot move at all. But great faith makes crooked things straight, sees light in the midst of darkness and gathers comfort out of discouragement! For this woman to turn Christ's word inside out, as it were, and when He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs," for her to say, in effect, "I do not ask to have it cast to me—only let me have the *crumbs* which fall by accident from the children, themselves, when they have brought the dogs under the table"—this was, indeed, extraordinary faith and wonderful pleading. "If You will heal my daughter, there will be none the less of Your marvelous power for the children of Israel, for You can heal them, too. If You grant me this that I ask—great as it is to *me*, it is only like a crumb to You—Your table is so lavishly provided for by Your Grace. Even this great favor that I ask of You will be nothing more to You than a chance crumb that falls from the children's table." This was splendid pleading and the Savior saw the force of it at once. He loves ingenuity on the part of those who come to Him. He is so ingenious, Himself, in devising means of bringing back His banished ones, that He is glad to see ingenuity in the banished ones, themselves, when they desire to come back to Him. He therefore cries in holy astonishment, "O woman, great is your faith!"

Taking the case of the woman as a whole, I think that it must have been her pertinacity, her firmness, that surprised the Lord. Others are easily put off, but she would not be put off. Others need encouragement, but she encouraged herself. When the door is shut in her face, she only knocks at it—and when Christ calls her, "Dog," she only picks up what Christ has said, as a good dog will pick up his master's stick, and brings it right to His feet! There was no baffling her. If all the devils in Hell had been about the business, not merely that terrible one that possessed her daughter, she would have beaten them all, for she had such faith—shall I not say—such *dogged* faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that she could even get comfort out of being called a dog! She had such resolute faith that she must have what she sought and she would not go away without it. If she does not succeed at first, she will battle on until she does win the victory! She will continue pleading till she carries her suit.

Our Lord was not only, to speak after the manner of men, astonished at her faith, but, with reverence we may say that He was conquered by it. He yielded to her faith and He yielded unconditionally. He gave her much more than she asked, for she had not asked that her daughter might be healed the same hour. She had hardly got as far as the asking at all and,

as to mentioning the details, she had only pleaded with Him in general. But Christ gave her definitely what He knew she wished for and gave it to her at once! And, what is more, He did, as it were, hand her over the keys of His house. “There,” He said, “My good woman, I so admire your faith that I say to you, Go and help yourself! You may have whatever you like. Whatever treasure of Grace I have is yours if you want it—be it unto you even as you will.” He gave her the keys of the heavenly vault!

Some time ago, a lady wishing to help the Orphanage, sent me a check and she did a very unwise thing, indeed, for she signed the check, but she did not fill in the amount. Never do that! You see, I might have put all her fortune down and made out the check for any amount that the lady had in the bank. She evidently trusted me very largely, but I sent her check back to her saying that I did not know what amount to put down. Of course, she intended to give a guinea, or £5, or something of the kind, but she forgot to say how much—and that is a very dangerous plan, indeed, with most people. So our Savior gave this woman a blank check. “Make it out for whatever amount you like,” He said. “Great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will. Whatever it is that you wish for, you shall have. Your faith has won from Me this gift that I now put at your disposal all My power to bless. Be it unto you even as you will.”

I am going to talk especially about that point, and first I will try to answer the question, *How far did this carte blanche extend?* Then, secondly, *when is it safe for the Lord to give such a cart blanche as that?* And, thirdly, *if He did give us such power, how would we use it?*

I. First, then, dear Friends, HOW FAR DID THIS CARTE BLANCHE EXTEND when the Savior said to the woman, “Be it unto you even as you will”?

In answer to which I would say, first, that it went so far as *to baffle all the powers of Hell*. This woman’s child was grievously vexed with a devil and we read, “her daughter was made whole from that very hour.” “For this saying, go your way,” said Christ, according to Mark’s account, “the devil is gone out of your daughter.” Now Satan is very mighty—there is not one of us, nor all of us put together who can be equally matched with him! He takes small account of 10,000 men—he is more crafty and cunning than all the wise men and more powerful than all the mighty men who ever came together—and yet the Savior seems to say, “I have heard you, good woman, I have seen your faith. I will rebuke the demon, I will send the evil spirit back to his own place and your child shall be snatched out of his cruel grasp.”

Beloved, if you have faith enough, Christ will give you power, even, to cast out devils! If you can only trust Him—trust Him without measure or stint and believe in Him as this woman did—He will give you power to make Satan fall like lightning from Heaven and flee before you. “Jesus I know,” said the evil spirit at Corinth, “and Paul I know”—and the devil still knows those who make him know them! Through faith in Jesus they speak to him with authority and he must flee from them. So, if you have

faith, you shall resist the devil and even he, powerful as he is, shall turn his back and flee from you! And, as Luther said, though there were as many devils as the tiles upon the housetops, yet would faith in God give you Grace to vanquish them all! Remember that glorious promise, “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.” So this *carte blanche*, when He said to the woman, “Be it unto you even as you will,” meant, “The devils, themselves, are now subject to your will.”

Next, it meant that it was the will of the Lord *to heal her daughter completely*. She had come all the way from Syrophenicia to the borders of the land of Israel that she might plead with Christ about her daughter, her dear child, perhaps her only child. This sorrow pressed very heavily on her heart, so she cried unto the Lord, “Have mercy on me.” She so identified *herself* with her child that she did not know any difference between herself and her child! They had seemed to grow into one in the great trouble that they had at home. I have known many a mother who certainly would far rather have suffered, herself, than that her child should suffer, so completely had she identified herself with her child.

Now, Beloved, if you can plead with Christ with this woman’s heroic faith. If you can fully believe in Him and not dare to doubt Him, you shall have your children put at your disposal. He will deal graciously with them—with the girl for whom you are pleading, with the boy over whom your heart is aching. He will say to you, dear mother, “O woman, great is your faith; be it unto you even as you will.” The boy shall repent, the girl shall believe, the children shall come to Jesus’ feet and become your comfort and joy through their early conversion to Christ. Is not this a great blessing?

Yes, and the woman had such faith in Christ that this blank check further meant her *to have this gift at once*. “Be it unto you even as you will, now, at once.” So she willed at once, of course, that the devil should go out of her daughter—and out the devil had to go, for her will had become *God’s will*, and Christ had infused into her will a mighty power which even Satan could not resist! Oh, if you have faith enough, you may get the blessing you desire even now! It may be that while sitting in this Tabernacle, breathing a prayer for your child, God may bless your child before you get home! If you can but have faith enough, He has power enough—and if He deigns to say, “Be it unto you even as you will,” I know that it will be your will—not that your girl may be converted when she becomes a woman, not that your boy may be saved when he becomes a man—but that the blessed miracle may be worked at once, even now! What parents want to let the devil have their children even for an hour? O Jesus, turn him out at once! Let us see our children, our children’s children, our brothers and sisters and friends converted *now*, for while now is the accepted time with God, now is the time which every earnest Christian will prefer for the conversion of those for whom he prays. A splendid promise is this concerning great blessings to be had and to be had at once—“Be it unto you even as you will.”

I must go a little further and say that I think our Lord, when He said to the woman, “Be it unto you even as you will,” permitted her *to eat the children’s bread*. She had said before, “The little dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table”—and, “then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will.” I think this means that instead of having the privilege to go and roam like a dog under the table and eat only what she could pick up, she was made into a child and was permitted to sit at the table, and eat of all that the Lord had provided! O poor Sinner, you came in here, tonight, feeling like a whipped dog, did you not? You said to yourself, “There will not be anything for me in the sermon.” But, by-and-by, as you heard of the great Grace of Christ to this poor woman, you thought that there *might* be hope even for *you*. And now you begin to think that there is a possibility that even *you* may be blessed!

Well, well, I venture to say to you that if you wish to eat the children’s bread, you may! “Be it unto you even as you will.” Lord, we do not ask of You that we may be treated better than the rest of Your family! If any of you pray to God to make a distinction and to give you more than He gives His other children, I do not think you are likely to get it. If you come to Christ as Mrs. Zebedee did and begin asking that James and John may sit, the one at His right hand, and the other at His left, you will not get what you ask. But if you say, “O Lord, You are my God. I love Your people—let me fare as they do. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. I do not ask to be exempt from tribulation, for all the heirs of salvation have to endure it. I only ask that I may eat what Your children eat. If they have bread, Lord, I will be happy to have bread. I ask for no dainties. If they drink water from the rock, Lord, let me have a draft of the same—I ask for nothing more.” Jesus says, “Be it unto you even as you will. If you are content to sit at the table with My children, come along with you. If you sigh after their bread which came down from Heaven—if you will take ‘scot and lot’ with them, there is nothing to hinder you. Be it unto you even as you will.”

Surely, also, when the Savior spoke thus to the Syrophenician woman, He meant to make reference to her first prayer. She cried unto Him, saying, “*Have mercy on me, O Lord, You Son of David.*” “Yes,” He said, “now be it unto you even as you will. I have mercy on you. If you have sinned, I forgive you. If you are hard of heart, I will soften your heart. If you have been an ignorant heathen, I will enlighten you and bring you to My feet. I will be to you the Son of David and you shall be one of My own chosen people, and I will care for you, and protect you, and deliver you, as David did the many for whom he fought.”

O Souls, if any of you are crying, “Lord have mercy upon me”—If you have faith in Christ—and He deserves to be trusted, for there is none like He! He deserves to be trusted without a single doubt, for He never failed anyone and He never lied to anyone. Therefore let no wicked mistrust come in to weaken your faith—if *you* can trust Him, He says to you, “Be

it unto you even as you will.” Take mercy! Take mercy and more mercy, and yet more mercy! Come to the Table of Love and sit among the children of the Lord and feed on heavenly bread! Put up your prayer for your child, pleading the promise to the jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, *and your house.*”

Come to Christ with all the torment you have felt from the devil’s possession of you—the horrible thoughts, the blasphemous insinuations, the desperate doubts—and hear the Savior say to you, “Be it unto you even as you will.” The devil shall be made to depart from you. Your poor head shall lose the fever from the burning brow. Your heart shall beat at its even pace and you shall be at peace again. The Lord shall rebuke your adversary. In this confidence, say unto the demon even now, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.”

Oh, this is a grand, grand word from our Lord’s lips! It is a wonderful check, signed by our Savior’s own hand, and left blank for faith to fill up! We might have half thought that He would have said, “O woman, your faith is too big for Me to trust you with unlimited prayer. If you had only a little faith, I would go as far as your little faith would go and keep pace with you.” But no, no! That is not Christ’s method of acting. He says, “O woman, great is your faith and as you can trust *Me*, I can trust *you*. Cry as you will, for so be it unto you. You have firmly resolved to have no doubt about My power and willingness, and to trust Me without reserve. so I trust you without reserve—be it unto you even as you will.”

II. So now I pass to our second question, which is this—WHEN IS IT SAFE FOR THE LORD TO TRUST ANYBODY WITH SUCH A PROMISE AS THIS, “Be it unto you even as you will”?

It would be very unsafe to trust some of you thus. Why, there is one man here who, if it were said to him, “Be it unto you even as you will,” would at once pray for—well, I do not know how many thousand pounds—but when he got home, he would be discontented and say, “What a fool I was not to ask for two or three times as much!” Ah, yes, yes, yes! But the Lord does not trust greedy people in that way. Not while there is any idea of your own merit left, will Christ trust you at all! Not while there is a fraction of self-will left, will Christ trust you at all. And not while doubt remains. That must go, for the whole verse says, “O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will.” He trusts *faith*. He will not trust unbelief, he will not trust self-confidence, he will not trust human merit—but where there is faith, there He gives the keys of His treasury and says, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

When will the Lord thus trust us? Well, I think, first, *when we agree with Christ*—when we are like this woman who had no quarrel with the Savior. Whatever He said was right in her eyes. If He called her a dog, she said, “Truth, Lord.” When you and Christ agree and there is no quarrel between you, then He says, “Be it unto you even as you will.” If you do not yield to Him, He will not yield to you. But when you just end all disputing and say, “Lord, I have done with all quibbling and quarrelling. I

will never raise another question and never harbor another doubt. I believe You. I believe You. As a child believes its mother, I believe You. When I cannot understand You, when You distress me, still I believe You.” Ah, when you come to *that* point, then the Lord will say, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

Next, *when our soul is taken up with proper desires*. This woman had no idea of asking for a hundred thousand shekels of silver, or a wedge of gold, or a goodly Babylonian garment. Only one thought possessed her—“My child! My child! Oh, that the devil might be cast out of my child!” “Now,” says Christ, “be it unto you even as you will.” And when you have great desires for heavenly things—when your desires are such as God approves of—when you will what God wills, then you may will what you like! When it comes to this, that you have dropped your own desires of an inferior and groveling kind and you are taken up with desires for necessary things—desires that come to you from Christ, Himself. When you desire the bread, not from the devil’s oven, but from Christ’s table—when that is what you crave—then it shall be unto you even as you will.

Next, it shall be to us even as we will *when we see our Lord in His true office*. This woman saw that Christ was a Healer and she appealed to Him as a Healer. If you see Christ as Prophet, Priest and King, you may go and ask of Him as a Prophet what a Prophet is ordained to give, or as a Priest what a priest is intended to bestow, or as a King what a king is set upon the throne to do! You may go to Christ as He really is and if you see that He is ordained for this purpose and for that, then keep in tune with what He is ordained to be and you may ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. You must not try to take Christ away from His offices! Christ is not sent of God to make you a *rich* man—He is sent of God to make you a *saved* man. So you may go to Him as a Savior, for that is His office. You may go to Him as a Priest, for it is His office to cleanse, to offer sacrifice, to make intercession. Take Christ as God sets Him forth and then be it unto you even as you will.

Next, it will be to us even as we will *when we can believe about the distinct objective that is before us*. This woman pleaded for her child. All her faith went out towards her child. I love the prayer that has in it faith concerning the thing for which it pleads. There are many Christian people who say they have faith about 20 things, but then the thing that they cannot believe about is the twenty-first! You must have a faith that can not only cover 21 things, but that can cover *everything*! We say, “Oh, I could believe if my trouble were like So-and-So’s!” You could not believe at all unless you can believe about your present trouble—and you must believe about the objective for which you are praying, that it can be given you, that it will be given you in answer to your prayer—and then Jesus will say to you, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

Again, we can have whatever we like *when our heart seeks only God’s Glory*. When what we pray for is not for wealth, nor with a desire for our own honor, but when even what we want for ourselves is asked with the

higher motive that God may be glorified in us by our obtaining such-and-such a gift, or being delivered from such-and-such a trial. When God's Glory is your one aim, you may ask what you will and it shall be given unto you.

And above all, when we always keep to what I have already mentioned, *when we only ask for the children's bread*, then the Lord will give us what we crave. If you ask for what God gives His elect, for what Christ has bought for His redeemed. If you ask for what the Holy Spirit works in the minds of men converted by His power. If you ask for what God has promised. If you ask for what it is customary for God to bestow upon His waiting people, then, "be it unto you even as you will." No wild fancy, no rhapsody, no whim that makes you wish for this or that, is worthy to come within the compass of my text. But that which the Lord waits to give you—that which He knows would be good for you, that which will be an honor to Him, and which will help you to honor Him—you may ask without any stammering or fear and you shall have it, for He says to you, "Be it unto you even as you will."

I do not know, but I think that I am speaking personally to somebody here in trouble, who has been long pleading and praying and has never got an answer yet. "Be it unto you even as you will." Hannah, the woman of a sorrowful spirit, sits in this house, bowed down in soul and pouring out before the Lord her silent prayer. Let her take this message from the Lord's servant, or, better still, from the Lord, Himself, "Be it unto you even as you will." But then I only dare to say it to one to whom I could *also* say, "O woman, great is your faith." If you have not any faith, how are you to have it? Here is a soup kitchen opened for the poor, and they are told to bring their jugs, their mugs, their basins—anything they like. A woman comes and says, "I have not a mug." "Have you a basin?" "No." Well, you say to her, "You can have the soup," but then, you see, she cannot carry it home without a basin, or a jug. So, here is the mercy of God and many lack it—here is a blessing rich and rare, and many cannot carry it home because they have no faith—but Christ could say to the Syrophenician, "O woman, great is your faith: be it unto you even as you will."

II. Now I finish by asking another question. Suppose this blank check to be given to us, HOW WILL IT BE USED?

Well, first, *I should use it upon that thing about which I have been praying most*. I will not say what it is. This woman had been praying most about her daughter, so, when the Savior said, "Be it unto you even as you will," she did not say a single word, but she just willed in her mind that the devil should be driven out of her daughter. Oh, that you might have faith enough to be able to will the right thing! If Christ leaves His own will in your hands and feels safe in doing so, oh, will strongly! It is for God, you know, to give a fiat, but Christ here gives a fiat to the woman! As I read the text, He says to her, "Be it unto you"—"So let it be." "Be it so," He says, "as you will." Behold, the fiat of God goes forth to you,

Believer, to let it be even as you will it to be! Now, can you not will for the child for whom you have been praying? Do you not will for the congregation that lies on your heart? Do you not will for that friend with whom you have been speaking in order to try to bring him to Christ? Will for the distinct objective for which you have been praying and then, may the will of the Lord be done and may your will also be done because it is an echo of the will of the Lord!

Next, I think that if we had this said to each one of us—“Be it unto you even as you will,” *we should first will our own salvation*. Pray, as we sang just now—

***“With my burden I begin Lord,
Remove this load of sin!
Let Your blood, for sinners spilt,
Let my conscience free from guilt.
Lord! I come to You for rest,
Take possession of my breast.
There Your blood-bought right maintain,
And without a rival reign.”***

Let each one of us pray, “Lord, save me! Lord, make sure work of it! Save me from sin, save me from self, save me from everything that dishonors You.”

I was talking, the other day, with a man who was saying that he attended a ministry where he heard very little about holy living. He thought that he was a believer in Christ, though he was living in sin, and continued to live in sin. He knows, now, that he was no believer, or else he could not have lived in sin as he did. And now he prays to God, not for salvation while he is living in sin, but for salvation *from* sin. So, we will first ask of God our own full salvation, and we know that His answer will be, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

Have we not all a prayer, also, *for our children, or our friends, or those who lie near to our hearts?* Then let us pray on with great faith till we hear Christ say, “Be it unto you even as you will.” And then let us go home and expect to see the work of Divine Grace begun in our children! Watch for it, O parent, and carefully nurture it as soon as you see the first beginnings of it! About this matter, also, Jesus says, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

I think that if I were asked to pray, now, for something very special, and that I might have whatever I asked, my prayer would be, “Lord, make me grow in Divine Grace. Give me more faith. If I have great faith, give me more. If I have much love to You, give me more love to You. If I know my Lord, I pray that I may know more of Him and know Him to a fuller and more intense degree.” My prayer shall be—

***“Nearer, my God, to You,
Nearer to You.”***

Let that be the prayer of each one of you to whom it is left to fill up this blank check!

Then there is another prayer that I am sure I would remember, if nobody else here did, and that would be *concerning Christ's Kingdom*. If it is to be unto me as I will, then I will it that God's Truth should be preached *everywhere*, and that false doctrines should be made to fly like chaff before the wind! If our prayer is heard and we are permitted to have what we will, our will is that God may send us Luthers and Calvins, and brave men like John Knox, again—men with bones in their backs and fire on their lips—with hearts that burn and words that glow with holy fervor! We need them so badly! The Lord have mercy upon the Free Church of Scotland and give her back faithful covenanting men and women! The Lord have mercy upon our own poor denomination and give us those who love the Truth of God and dare to stand up for it, come what may! Oh, for such a prayer as that! Lord, revive Your Church! Lord, lift up a banner because of Your Truth! Lord, put Your adversaries to the rout!—

***“Fight for Yourself, O Jesus, fight,
The travail of Your soul regain!”***

Oh, to hear in our hearts this gracious word from the King, Himself, as we plead with Him concerning His Kingdom, “Be it unto you even as you will.”

By-and-by you and I shall lie sick and ill. And they will say, “His days are numbered.” Then, if the Lord shall visit us in answer to our prayers and whisper to us, “Be it unto you even as you will,” oh then the promise will read in a very different sense from what I can read it now! Then will the poor tent begin to be taken down—well, it never was worth much. Fearfully and wonderfully made is this mortal frame, but it is capable of bringing us great pain and much sorrow and, also, of deadening our devotion and hampering us in our work for God. “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” “Ah, well,” says the Lord, “you shall be rid of your flesh one day! It shall be unto you even as you will.” You have sung, sometimes—

***“Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode.
I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your seat, my God!”***

“Be it unto you even as you will.”

A dear Sister who was buried today said, when they told her that she could not live another day, “Does it not seem wonderful? Is it not a grand thing to know that I am going to see the Lord Jesus Christ today?” And she lay on her bed saying this to all who came, “It seems too good to be true that I should be so near that for which I have longed these many years! I am going, today, to see the King in His beauty!”

Ah, thank God, we, too, shall come to that last day of our earthly life! Unless the Lord descends quickly, we, too, shall come to our dying bed and then we shall hear our Savior say, “Be it unto you even as you will,” and oh, we shall will to see His face and to be forever with the Lord, and to praise Him with infinite rapture forever and ever! Blessed be His name! We have faith to believe that it will be even so. Then we will tell Him what

we cannot tell Him now—how much we love Him, how deeply we feel our indebtedness to Him—and we will give all the glory of our salvation to His holy name forever and ever! God grant that this may be the happy lot of everyone of us, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—327, 978, 980.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: MATTHEW 15:21-28.

Verse 21. *Then Jesus went from there.* He was glad to get away from the scribes and Pharisees who had been disputing about such trifles as the washing of His disciples’ hands. He was tired of the murmuring of these cantankerous, frivolous triflers.

21. *And departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* He felt that He would rather be with “sinners of the Gentiles” than with these Ritualistic and hypocritical Hebrews! He will get as far away from them as He well can. He will go, even, to the heathen, for among them He will be able to do His real business and not be trifled with.

22. *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts.* When sinners come to Christ, it is because Christ comes to them. Notice the two statements, how they coincide—Jesus “departed to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon,” and this, “woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts”—and so they met. Oh, that there might be such a meeting here, tonight, between someone who has come from a long distance to meet Christ—and Christ who has come on purpose to meet that person!

22. *And cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, You son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* The devil had extraordinary power at that time, so that he possessed the bodies and minds of men. I am not certain that there are not instances of Satan’s possession even now among us. There are cases that look very much like it, but in the Savior’s day there were evidently singular and remarkable possessions of men and women by Satan. This poor mother says, “My daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.”

23. *But He answered her not a word.* Has the Savior become deaf and dumb? Will He not hear a suppliant cry? He heard her, but He said nothing.

23. *And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she cries after us.* “She is a stranger and, as far as we can judge, she means to hang on until she gets what she wants. If you will not give it to her, bid her be gone, for she cries after us.” One thing I notice that they said which was not true, “*She cries after us.*” Not she! She never cried after *them*—she was crying after Christ—she would have pleaded in vain if she had cried after them, for all they had to say was, “Send her away.” A very different result came from her crying unto the Lord!

24. *But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* As a Preacher and a Teacher, Christ came to adminis-

ter to the circumcision—the Jews, the seed of Israel. He did not go about among the nations—it was His work to be a witness to the Jews. As a Preacher, He must begin somewhere, and He chose to begin with them. “I am not sent,” He said. And, therefore, how could He go if He was not sent? Our Savior had a greater regard to the *sending* of the Father than some preachers have, for they run *before* they are sent! Sometimes they run when they are never sent at all! But, as Paul asked, “How shall they preach, except they are sent?”

25. *Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me.* She takes a humbler attitude than she had at first assumed. She comes closer and she is more earnest and personal in her pleading than she had been—“Lord help me.” Her prayer is shorter than it was at first and I think that, when prayers grow shorter, they grow stronger. There is often more proof of earnestness in a short prayer than there is in a long one—glibness of speech is not prevalence in intercession.

26, 27. *But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord.* You remember the sermon that we had upon this text not long ago. [Sermon #2129, Volume 36—“Pleading, Not Contradiction”—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] The woman did not contradict the Savior, she did not enter into any controversy with Him, but she said, “Truth, Lord.” Whatever He says—however black the words may look to her—she accepts them as true and says, “Truth, Lord.”

27. *Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.* When the children drop crumbs. then the little dogs which have been fondled by the children feed on the crumbs which fall, not from “*the*” master’s table, but from “*their masters’ table*”—that is, from the table of the children.

28. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is your faith.* He seems quite amazed at the woman’s faith, but He admires it and exclaimed, “O woman, great is your faith.”

28. *Be it unto you even as you will. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.* It was as she wished and she went home to glorify the Christ and to tell everybody how her prayer to Him had sped.

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JESUS KNOWN BY PERSONAL REVELATION

NO. 2041

DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 26, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that You are John the Baptist: some, Elijah. And others, Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets. He said unto them, But whom do you say that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you but My Father which is in Heaven.”
Matthew 16:13-17.

THIS is one of the earliest places in the New Testament in which we find any mention of the Church. Jesus says, in verse eighteen, “I will build My Church.” It is very significant that our Lord should connect with the Church the right idea of Himself. In our text we have the test question which must be put to everyone who is to be admitted into the assembly of the Lord—“Whom do you say that I am?” The first question to be put to one who would join the Church is, “What do you think of Jesus?” You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of Him.

If you do not begin aright with Jesus, the Christ, the Son of the living God, you will not go on aright, and your joining of any visible Church will be a mistake which will be injurious both to yourself and the Church. Beloved, let it be with you first, Christ, then the Church. There is a certain style of preaching in which the Church is the leading idea—meaning, to a great extent, by “the Church,” the priest, as the dispenser of ordinances and the voice of God. But as for us, our chief word is not “Church,” but “Christ,” and not even the Church of Christ, but Christ as very God of very God—the Son of the Highest.

First Christ, the Root, then the Church, the outgrowth. First Christ, the Builder, then the Church, which is His building. The most important question is not, “To which part of the Church do you belong?” but, “Do you belong to Christ, who is the Son of the living God?” This must be decided by that other question, “Whom do you say that I am?” If you know Christ, if you rest in Christ, if Christ is to you “the Way, the Truth and the Life”—above all, if Christ is “formed in you the hope of glory”—your connection with the true Church, the Church of God’s election and redemption, is clear and certain.

In putting the question about Himself, our Lord made a distinction between two classes of persons, who are named as “men,” and as His disciples. He enquired, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” These “men” formed their judgment of Christ according to flesh and blood—they

went upon the ground of carnal reasoning. Or else they followed current opinion. They went upon natural and not upon spiritual, grounds. They discerned nothing of spiritual things—their judgment was that of flesh and blood. What conclusion did they arrive at while guided by flesh and blood?

The conclusions were varied—“Some say that You are John the Baptist—some, Elijah. And others, Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets.” Error is multiform. Truth is one. A thousand lies will live together and tolerate each other, especially at this time, when errorists are all crying out, “Cast in your lot with us. Let us all have one purse.” A thousand false gods will stand together in the Pantheon. But if the ark of the true God enters Dagon’s temple, Dagon must come down on his face and be dashed to pieces. Jehovah is God, alone, and will not allow a rival. Truth is of necessity intolerant of error. Do not misunderstand me—I believe in the fullest religious liberty and that conscience owes allegiance to none but God—but I speak of principles—holiness cannot endure sin, righteousness cannot bear injustice and truth cannot consort with error. “What concord has Christ with Belial?”

The results today of the judgments of men about Christ are very many. But they agree in this—they contradict the one and only Truth. Today, some say, “He is a good man,” others say, “No. But He deceives the people.” Some say that He is Divine, though not actually God. Others that He has become God, though He was not always so. And a third company think Him a Divine man. Some agree that His teachings were admirable for the occasions on which He delivered them but that they are somewhat stale in this advanced age. Others ridicule His teachings as altogether impracticable. The doctrines of flesh and blood concerning Jesus are very various.

They were also contradictory. For, if Jesus were John the Baptist, He could not be Jeremiah. Certain spirits contradicted all the opinions which are registered in our text, for they called Him master of the house Beelzebub. The Apostles quoted to their Lord the best things that had been said of Him—they hardly liked to foul their mouths with the baser titles. Flesh and blood make many guesses but they settle upon no one—the enemies of the Lord are at war with each other. In this case, as in others, the false witnesses did not agree.

The judgments of men here recorded are respectful to our Lord Jesus. It is usual nowadays to speak very respectfully of Him—if there can be any respectfulness in words which deny His Godhead. Today they rend the seamless vesture of the Crucified. They retain His example and profess to value it. But His sacrifice they fling aside as a rag of superstition. They dare to deny His miracles while they applaud His precepts—they will have nothing to do with the doctrine of the Cross. But with the self-denial of the Cross they affect to be enamored. Our Lord will not thus be divided. Those who take not a whole Christ take not Christ at all.

Whether the conclusions of flesh and blood are respectful to Jesus or not, they are every one of them wrong. In the favorable summary here

given, not one conjecture of men is correct. Jesus was not John the Baptist, nor Elijah, nor Jeremiah, nor one of the Prophets. Assuredly He was not Beelzebub. Men did not know what Jesus was. They neither knew Him, nor His Father. The character of Jesus is much too hard a nut for philosophic teeth to crack. Men wonder at Him and, as the case may be, they admire or abhor Him. But who among them can declare His generation, or read the enigma of His Person? He is spiritual and they are carnal. He is holy and they are “sold under sin.”

The brightness of His Glory blinds them. The pure in heart shall see God. But those who are in love with evil cannot see the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in Jesus. They guess and reason and blunder. Jesus is to them a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. The conclusions of flesh and blood are unblessed. No blessing is attached to any of the various notions which men hold concerning the Son of Man. But that judgment which came by Revelation from the Father made Simon Peter blessed and our Lord beheld and declared the blessing. Gazing at Jesus as if he were John the Baptist, or Elijah, brought no blessing with it. And if Jesus is not known by the Revelation of the Holy Spirit, He is not known as a well-spring of blessedness to the soul.

If you know no more of Christ than the world knows, than the learned know, than the philosophical know—you have not found the blessing. If you know no more of Christ than you have found out for yourselves, even by reading the Word of God, unaided by the Father, you are not blessed. If you know no more of Jesus than flesh and blood has revealed to you, it has brought you no more blessing than the conjectures of their age brought to the Pharisees and Sadducees, who remained an adulterous and unbelieving generation.

There was a handful of people in the world in the Savior’s day who were known as His disciples. To them He put the question, “Whom do you say that I am?” They were disciples, that is, learners. They were not so much “thoughtful men,” as the cant phrase now is, as learners. They received what He imparted to them. His, “Verily, verily,” being to them better than reasoning. As disciples, they were also servants—they learned obedience. They knew Jesus by following in His steps. Put these two things together—learners and servants—and you will see how different they were from the men of the world.

“Men” were not learners, for they already knew. They were not obedient, for they followed their own devices and boasted that they were never in bondage unto any man. The chosen of God received by Divine Grace that humble spirit which confesses its ignorance and is willing to learn. That yielding spirit which lays aside its own will and is eager to obey its Lord. Judge, dear Hearers, to which you belong, whether you are “men,” boasting of your intellect, guided by “flesh and blood,” or whether you are “His disciples,” who judge after the Spirit and are taught of the Father.

Consider whether the Father has revealed the Son unto you. If you belong to this latter class you are among the blessed. The benediction of the Savior falls like morning dew upon your hearts at this time—“Blessed are

you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you but My Father which is in Heaven.”

You have now fully before you the subject of our morning’s meditation. May the Spirit of God guide us into it!

I. Our first observation is this—THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS DIFFERS FROM THAT OF THE WORLD.

It is more serious, more thoughtful, more personal. Men of the world said, “We do not know who Jesus may be. He is a very remarkable Person—He disturbs the quiet of the age and He is certainly out of His element among us. We do not know who He may be and we do not particularly care.” Herod came to the hasty conclusion that John the Baptist was risen from the dead. Others said, “It is very likely Elijah, who was to appear before the coming of the Messiah.” A third party, hearing of His sorrows, thought that he might be Jeremiah come back to life.

He might be some other Prophet but it did not matter which. The disciples had arrived at their conclusion solemnly, thoughtfully, carefully, each one for himself. And when the Savior said to them, “Whom do you say that I am?” they would any one of them have spoken, only they had fallen into the habit of making Peter the foreman and mouthpiece of the twelve, and so he spoke first and said very properly and positively, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” To my mind these words have a tone of deep solemnity. Evidently the man means what he says, values the Truth he speaks and attaches deep importance to it.

The replies of the world were flippant and frothy. But the answer of the Apostles was devout and deliberate, for they judged the subject to be one of the highest importance. Now, Beloved, what do you think of Jesus? Is His name a weighty matter with you? Do you see that your view of Him is the test of your state? Have you weighed it well? Is He God? Is He the sent and anointed of the Lord? Has He washed you in His blood? Have you taken Him to be your All in All? Personally, for yourself, have you done this and done it with care and deliberation? Will you repeat your choice this morning? Well, then, in this you are what a disciple should be.

In the next place, the disciples’ knowledge is more definite, more clear, more assured. If you had asked the outsiders about Jesus, they would have said, “Well, perhaps He is John the Baptist, or perhaps He is Jeremiah.” But their notions were all in the clouds—they could not make Him out. They saw that Jesus was a mysterious Person, a holy Person, a compassionate Person, a wonder-working Person. But who He might be they could not make out. But to the disciples, Jesus was known and His personality was distinct. They knew enough to say for certain, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

I will not enlarge upon this but come to close grips with you. Do you believe in Jesus by an inward discernment of Him? Is He to you, clearly and distinctly, the Son of Man and the Son of God? Is He to you, definitely, your Savior, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for your sins? Is He your Surety, Substitute and Sacrifice? Beware of a misty religion! Beware of that which is without form, for it is sure to be void! Beware

of that which is undefined and undefinable, because there is nothing solid in it! Beware of the religion which cries with the poet laureate, “Behold, we know not anything”!

This may suit brutes but will never satisfy men. Let the things visible go. They should go, for they are only a daydream. But I pray you, as Rutherford says, “tighten your grips” upon eternal things. Realize the Christ and hold Him fast. Make sure work with Him. Know what you do know concerning Jesus. Have no secondhand information, no hypothesis, no inference. But say, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”—not the Son of a mere abstraction but of Jehovah, who lives, thinks and acts. A disciple’s knowledge, then, differs from the common, windy knowledge of men, in that it is definite, clear, assured.

Thirdly, this knowledge of the disciples was unanimous. Outside the circle Jesus was a dozen things. Inside the circle he was only one—“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Beloved, men sometimes talk to us of the divisions in the Christian Church and it is a pity there should be even the semblance of a division there. But I am bold to say that there is no real division in the true Church of Jesus Christ. Those who are really taught of the Father believe one doctrine concerning Jesus. If I were to lead upon this platform a representative of any one Christian denomination who was spiritually in Christ, his opinion of the Lord Jesus would be the same as mine.

A thousand of us would each one say, “He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Put Believers on their knees, where they talk *to* Christ, rather than *of* Christ and they all say the same thing. Peter was answering his Lord when he made the confession now before us. When we speak to one another we are warped by party forces but when we speak to our Master we all speak the same language—

***“The saints in prayer appear as one,
In word and deed and mind;
While with the Father and the Son
Sweet fellowship they find.”***

All the spiritual in the world are one. We believe in Jesus Christ as Man, as God, as Messiah, as Redeemer, as He by whose merit and precious blood we are saved. We alike glorify Jesus, on whom all our hopes are fixed. Glory be to His name forever and ever. Brethren, we, without exception, join in the general verdict of the Church of God concerning Jesus Christ—“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”!

Furthermore, the true disciples’ knowledge of Christ differs from that of men in that it is permanent. The verdict of men concerning Jesus is changeable as the wind. In one age Jesus was hounded down as the Nazarene, the blasphemer. By-and-by men would set up His statue in the Pantheon among the gods. In one age, His teachings were held to be deeply philosophical and the Gnostics began to mystify them at a great rate—at another period they were denounced as visionary, or ridiculed as absurd.

Christ is sometimes up in the market and sometimes down in the market—but, mark you, He is not in the market at all. He can neither be bought nor sold. They say well of Him one day, they speak ill of Him another day—what matters it what they say? He needs no honor from them and He fears not their dishonor. Unless they will believe in Him as Lord and Savior, it is of no importance what they think of Him. Till they submit to Him as their Prophet, Priest and King, their thoughts of Him are vain. As dogs bay the moon and yet the moon shines on, so do men howl at Jesus, or cringe at His feet. But He shines on in steadfast light.

True Believers have always the same idea of Christ. They grow in the extent of their knowledge, they grow in the depth of their convictions. But when they begin with Him, He is the Son of the living God to them and when they know Him best, He is still both Christ and God. In every country and in every age, during every phase of the world's fickle thought, the disciples of Jesus hold fast by His Messiahship and Godhead and on this rock they build their hopes.

The belief of disciples differs from the notions of "men," in that it is more glorifying to Jesus. Men make Him John the Baptist. But that earnest man was not worthy to unloose the latchets of His shoes. They make Him Elijah, the Prophet of fire, as if He would call fire from Heaven upon men to destroy them. Whatever they judge Jesus to be, they do not agree to sing with the virgin, "My soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." As for me, my tongue can never speak a thousandth part of the praises my heart adjudges to Him and, alas, my heart does not worship Him a thousandth part as much as He deserves.

When I have striven with all my might to extol Him in my discourse, I feel ready to bite my tongue for being so slow and slack. I go home, saying to myself, "A pretty herald of your King are you! You did conceal His excellence instead of commending it to the eyes of men." Brethren, "words are but air and tongues but clay," and our Master's glories are too great to be set forth by such poor means. Oh, that we knew how to extol Him! Away, you men of the world, with your comparison of Him to this or that mortal—you are blind as bats! As well might you compare the sun to glow-worms.

Come, angels and archangels and help us with your burning words! No, even *you* must fail. Jesus is infinite, incomparable. The brightness of the Father's glory is not to be set forth by our words. Once more, the knowledge which disciples have of Christ differs from that of the world in that it is more influential. The world is not influenced by believing on Jesus as John the Baptist. But we are greatly influenced by believing that He is the Son of God. This takes possession of our heart, our head, our eyes, our hands, our feet, our body, our soul and our spirit. This Son of God is Lord over us. He sits supreme upon the throne of our hearts, and our lives show that He rules and governs our thoughts. Is it not so?

This is no inert opinion but a living, active principle. I leave these things with you that you may search yourselves and see whether you be-

long to the mass outside, guessing and blundering. Or whether you are of the inner circle, who are taught of the Father and therefore know the Son.

II. Secondly and this is a very important point—THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST POSSESSED BY TRUE DISCIPLES IS RECEIVED IN A SPECIAL WAY. “Flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you.”

Beloved, if we know the Savior aright, we have not learned it by the instruction of other men. Peter had heard others speak but he did not know Jesus as the Christ till the Father revealed Him. Paul tells us concerning the Gospel that he neither received it of man, neither was he taught it, but he received it by the Revelation of Jesus Christ. I grant you that God uses men to instruct us. But all the Prophets and Apostles could not teach us Christ if the Father did not reveal His Son in us personally. Holy men are the pens but God Himself must write with them, or they will write nothing on our hearts. God must reveal Jesus to us, or we shall never see Him, however faithful the minister may be.

Nor had Peter found out the nature and glory of the Lord Jesus by his own reasoning. These were the flesh and blood by which Jesus is never made out. No doubt, as he read the Old Testament, he said—“This prophecy and that are fulfilled in Jesus.” But, even that would not have sufficed to make Jesus known to him as Christ and God. The Father, who sent Jesus to us, must also make Jesus known to each one of us, or we shall remain in ignorance of Him. Man cannot, by searching, find out God, no, not even God in Christ Jesus. Peter came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Son of the living God because the Father in Heaven made him to see and know that it must be so.

We do not even discover Christ merely by reading the letter of the Word of God. God teaches us saving Truth through Holy Scripture and by our devout meditation. But these operate not of themselves effectually but only as He is at the back of them. You might go on hearing, reading, and thinking—and yet never discern the Lord’s Christ. The true disciple’s knowledge of Christ comes not through flesh and blood but by Revelation of the Spirit, who is sent of the Father.

Can you follow me experimentally in this? Has the Father revealed Christ to you by a birth in you? You can never know the Father till you become a son. You can never know the Son till you are yourself a son. A spiritual faculty must be created in us, by which we are enabled to perceive the Son of God. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing more—and flesh cannot discern spiritual things. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” and spirit alone can enter into the spiritual world and understand spiritual things. “You must be born again.” You must be begotten again of the Father; otherwise Jesus Christ will be as little known to you as the light of the sun is known to dead men.

Moreover, the Father must also purify us. As we have already heard, “the pure in heart shall see God.” It is only when the Father by the Holy Spirit purifies the mental eye, by cleansing the heart and life, that we are able to understand and perceive the true nature, work and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ. Regeneration must be followed up by sanctification if

we would obtain edification in the things of Christ. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord”—he may have the Lord set before him but he cannot see Him without holiness.

He may hear about Jesus, he may read about Jesus but he cannot see Him as Christ and God unless his nature is sanctified. There must be a character given corresponding in a measure to that of Christ before we can perceive Christ. Do not misunderstand me. You can believe Christ to be Divine, you can believe Him to be sent of God. You can believe all this as a matter of orthodoxy and be lost today and lost forever. To know Jesus as the Christ, to know Him so that you are acquainted with Him even as you are acquainted with a friend—must be given you of the Spirit of God or you will never attain it. Flesh and blood cannot reveal this to you.

Let me refresh the memories of God’s people. Have there not been times with you when the Son of God has been revealed in you with power? Certain of these occasions have happened when you were in trouble—you found no rest till you thought of Jesus, your Lord and God, and then your peace was like a river. The storm raged till you saw Jesus walking on the waves and bidding them be still. And then you said, “Truly this is the Son of God.” Remember when you were burdened with sin—you can never forget that! You were crushed to the earth under your load of guilt and Jesus was revealed as the Sin-bearer. And as you kissed His pierced feet He spoke pardon to you and you knew that He was God. Had He not said of old, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God and there is none else”?

At times my heart has been so full of joy that I could hardly have endured more. Jesus has been Heaven within my heart. In standing alone, contending for the faith, I have enjoyed a sweet content in the sole fellowship of my Lord. In His Presence, anxieties and fears have fled away and questions have been solved once and for all in a peaceful sense of infinite love. Son of the Highest, You are revealed to me in Your own light and I am glad!

This Revelation of Christ must be given to each one of you, or else you will miss the blessedness to which Simon Peter had attained. I am obliged to be brief where I should like to enlarge. But time will not tarry, even when we are spending it best. May you enjoy a personal Revelation in your souls by which the Divine Revelation in this Book shall be made your own forever.

III. Thirdly, THIS KNOWLEDGE HAS ITS OWN PECULIAR MARKS! It comes not by flesh and blood but by the teaching of the Father and it has characteristics all its own.

First, it has this mark—it comes with an infallible certainty to the heart. If you read of Jesus in books, or hear of Him from ministers, it is well. But if the Father reveals Him to you, it is infinitely better. For then no shadow of suspicion rests upon the testimony. The witness of God cannot be questioned. Men must not wonder that we grow indignant when the glorious Truths concerning our Lord are questioned. For to our hearts they are not in the region of things to be disputed. There is constructive

blasphemy in discussing those facts concerning the Son of God which the Father has revealed to us.

When such questions do cross our minds, they are exceedingly painful to us and we chase them out as thieves which defile the temple of the Lord. But when the Father is revealing Jesus as the Christ, the intruders do not come near. They could not. There is no doubting when the Father is witnessing to the heart. Doubts cannot come—as fire among stubble burns up the dry straw, so does the Father’s witness consume questioning.

“Oh,” says one, “but the Father has never spoken to me in that way.” I am sorry for you. Ask Him to do so. I am glad that you confess your want of such an experience. But it is a very serious want. The Lord must deal with you—His Spirit must come into contact with your spirit—there must be an inward illumination by the Holy Spirit, or else you will never be truly blessed. It was not only what Peter knew but the way in which he came to know it which made Peter blessed. Truth thus revealed comes with a force far transcending the arguments of pure reason. Notwithstanding the precision of mathematical demonstrations, I venture to assert that what the Holy Spirit writes on the soul is even more sure to him who receives it. The demonstration of the Spirit is the most certain of demonstrations. To the illuminated mind the witness of the Father is absolute certainty. Oh for more of it!

In the next place, this knowledge has this peculiar mark—it is attended with sacred operations. When the Father reveals Christ to a man, He at the same time reveals the man to himself. This discovery of the sin and ruin of self leads on to humiliation, contrition, repentance and renewal. The man is moved to desire holiness, to long to be like Jesus. And this is a blessed fruit of knowing Jesus. All manner of holy and blessed work goes on in the heart at the time when Jesus becomes known—faith, hope, love, patience, zeal and joy in the Holy Spirit come with a discovery of the glories of Jesus. He is that living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever and from Him there grows up in the soul all those holy fruits which are well pleasing unto God. If you have Christ, you have the new birth, you have the heavenly life, you have holy aspirations and you are on the way to the attainment of perfection.

There also comes with this Revelation a remarkable restfulness. The mind before flitted about like a bat at eventide. But now it rests like the dove when she was clasped in Noah’s hands and taken into the ark. Get a Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ in your soul from the Father Himself and “the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind.” I cannot describe that peace. Indeed, I can describe nothing—I must leave you to feel it for yourselves. We read in the Gospels that after our Lord had spoken to the winds and waves, “there was a great calm.” It was not only “a calm,” but “a great calm.”

Did you ever feel that profound serenity, that unbroken rest? Even desire, at such a time, seems to sleep. You could not wish for more. You remember nothing grievous and you foresee nothing alarming. You have all

things in Christ Jesus your Lord—and you feel like singing all the time. This is one of the marks of the Revelation of Christ in the soul—it brings an inward repose which is the pledge and earnest of the heavenly rest.

There is this one more mark about it—that this conviction of the Godhead and glory of Christ abides forever. The man who has obtained his religion from other people may have it taken away by other people. But he who has received it from the Father holds it by a tenure which cannot be broken. That which we have learned from the Father will never be unlearned. Nothing can erase what the Holy Spirit has engraved. Beloved, I beseech you, beware of a homemade religion, cobbled on your own lap stone.

Equally, beware of a religion which is a sort of patchwork, made up by the kind contributions of Christian friends, and none of it your own. Beware of that oil which you borrow—you must go to them that sell and buy for yourselves. No man among you can drink from my pitcher, you must go to the wellhead, each one for himself. Jesus stood and cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” There is no safe religion in the world but that which comes through a personal application to Jesus and a reception of Him for yourself. In this matter, God Himself must reveal Jesus to you. For He Himself says, “No man can come unto Me, except the Father which has sent Me draw him.”

The Spirit must take of the things of Christ and show them to us—or we shall never receive them. Everyone that has been taught of the Father comes to Jesus and comes to Jesus to remain—all short of that is temporary and delusive. Get the better part by sitting at the feet of Jesus and it will never be taken from you. But religion which does not come by a personal Revelation is a mere mirage—there is no reality about it and it will disappear like a dream of the night.

IV. Lastly, THIS KNOWLEDGE SECURES PECULIAR PRIVILEGES TO ITS POSSESSOR. What says the Lord Jesus? “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you but My Father which is in Heaven.” How was he blessed?

Simon Peter was blessed, first, because he had eternal life. How do we know? Our Savior said, “This is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” “This is life eternal”—if you know Jesus as sent of God, you have eternal life. The knowledge of Him is life eternal. You read about Julius Caesar, Mark Anthony and the like. But you certainly do not know them. You cannot know them. You know about them in proportion to your scholarship but you do not know them as living persons, or as sent of God to you.

They are dead and gone long ago and to you they never had an existence or a mission. At this hour you know something about the President of the United States. But you do not know him. With regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, you not only know a great deal about Him but I trust you know HIM. Do you know Jesus Himself? Have you ever spoken to Him? Has He ever spoken to you? Have you ever leaned your head on His bosom? Do you know His heart? Does he know your heart by your having

told your heart to Him? Is He a Friend, an Acquaintance, a Brother to you? This is life eternal. This kind of knowledge is revealed to us by the Father. Flesh and blood cannot make us friends of Christ. The Apostles knew Christ after the flesh, yet this was not the cause of their blessedness but the Father gave them a Revelation which brought eternal life with it.

Again—Peter was blessed because this knowledge was an evidence that he was a peculiarly favored man. What a question is that, “Lord how is it that you will manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?” The world does not know Christ, it cannot know Him. It is to His chosen that He reveals Himself—the rest believe not and therefore see Him not. To His chosen He comes and speaks with them as a Friend with friend. He takes them apart and looks into their hearts and hearkens to their sorrows. And in return opens His heart and says to each one of them, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.”

What a favor to be so instructed of the Father as to know the Son! If you know Christ, the Father foreknew you. “Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” If you know Christ, your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, you are in the family register of Heaven and you shall, by-and-by be with Him where He is. Well did the Savior say, “Blessed are you.”

He that knows Christ is in a favored position wherever he is. In every condition he is blessed. You are very ill—you are blessed in being ill. You are prospering in the world—if you know Christ, your prosperity is blessed. Do you lament that you are going down in the world? Mourn not, for your adversity is blessed. You are very simple-minded and have not much education. Never mind, you are blessed if you know Christ—His knowledge is the most excellent of the sciences. Are you well-instructed? Rejoice not in all knowledge but glory in this one thing—that you know Jesus and are blessed. Does the world curse you? Fret not. Does the devil snuff at you? Tremble not but resist him. Jesus says you are blessed and I know that he whom Christ blesses is blessed and none shall reverse the Word.

I close, desiring that every man among you may know this blessedness to the full. If you do know it, it will qualify you for honorable service. Peter was the man who knew and confessed the Lord’s Christ as the Son of the living God and he was not only blessed himself but he was chosen to be one of the first stones of the Church whose foundation courses were then being laid. Peter was described by his Lord as a piece of rock and on that rock would the Lord build His Church. Peter was to have the keys, because in his faith in the Savior God he already possessed the key of all Gospel Truth.

Having received the word by a Revelation from the Father, he became a fit person to be built into the Church at its first founding. He who clings to Christ for himself is the man to help others. Unless you do first of all know Christ by the distinct revealing of God, what can you do? So you would run, would you? Wait till you are sent! And you are not sent yourself if you do not know Jesus Christ whom God has sent. So you would

deliver a message, would you? Wait till you know it! And you do not know it unless you have a personal knowledge of Christ as God's Messiah and as the Son of God.

I may be speaking to some young Brother who thinks about preaching, or to some Sister who looks forward to teaching in the Sunday school—do not set up to teach what you do not know. If you have never been taught of the Father, wait till you have been. Pray that you may now be taught of the Lord. He that would teach a trade but has never practiced it, will make a fool of himself. And he that would go and tell of a Christ he has never known is foolish even to think of it. Go home and pray the Father to reveal His Son Jesus Christ to you. Then, when you go out to speak, you will speak with confidence.

Men, perhaps, will say, "He is very dogmatic." But a brave confession is much needed nowadays. You must be sure of something, or you will teach nothing worth learning. A man must have a fulcrum, or fixed point, or his lever is useless—if everything is uncertain to you, one thing alone is certain, namely, that you had better let the matter alone till you have found out something certain. If you have no foundation for yourself, you cannot build up others. Therefore, do, first and foremost, cry to God, "Lord, reveal Your Son in me!" It is a prayer I would have you all put up—"O Lord God, the giver of Christ, shine into my heart, that I may see Your unspeakable gift! By Your Holy Spirit enable me to know who and what Jesus is, that I may accept Him as You have proposed Him to me. You did give Him out of Your bosom, give Him into mine. Enable me to speak of Him, as of One whose glory I have beheld, whose power I have felt."

Do not suppose, my Hearers, that you will find out the Lord Christ by your own wit and wisdom. Young man, do not say, "I will be a student, I will by my own ability discover this Son of Man." Remember that Jesus can only be seen by His own light. Only Godhead can teach us Godhead. Christ is a Book in which no man can read unless Christ Himself shall spell the words to him. Jesus is His own Interpreter. He is the Door but He is also the Key. He is to be seen but He supplies the light in which He is to be seen.

Jesus came forth from God and the power to know Jesus also comes forth from God, so that all comes from God. And unto God let us return it, adoring Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

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AN AWFUL PREMONITION NO. 594

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

***“Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”
Matthew 16:28.***

I MUST confess that I have frequently read this verse with but a vague sense of its profound impressiveness and I have passed it over rapidly because I did not understand it clearly. Though well acquainted with the usual interpretations, none of them had ever satisfied my mind. It seemed to me as if the text had awakened surprise without suggesting a simple obvious meaning, and therefore the good commentators had invented explanations and offered suggestions widely different one from another, but all equally obscure and improbable. Lately, however, in reading a volume of sermons by Bishop Horseley, I have met with a view altogether new of the passage which I firmly believe to be the correct one.

Though I do not suppose I shall carry the judgment of all of you with me, yet I shall do my best to bring out of it that terrible denunciation which I believe the Savior has here left on record. With His own Cross and passion in view, He was admonishing His disciples to steadfastness, appealing to them at any sacrifice to take up their cross and follow Him. Then portraying the inestimable value of the soul and reflecting on the horror of the soul being lost—a doom, the full force of which would be impossible to comprehend until He should come in the Glory of His Father, with all His holy angels—He stopped short, looked upon some of the company and said in words like these, “There are certain persons standing here who shall never taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.”

Now what did He mean by this? Obviously it is either a marvelous promise to some who were His disciples, indeed, or else it is a portent of woe to others who should die in their sins. How do the popular interpretations of our learned expositors look at it? Some say it refers to the Transfiguration and it certainly is remarkable that the account of the Transfiguration immediately follows this verse both in Mark and in Luke, as well as in this record of Matthew. But can you, for a moment, bring your minds to believe that Christ was describing His Transfiguration when He spoke of “the Son of Man coming in His kingdom”?

Can you see any connection between the Transfiguration and the preceding verse, which says, “For the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of His Father with His angels. And then He shall reward every man according to His works”? We grant you that Christ was in His Glory upon Mount Tabor, but He did not there “reward every man according to his works,” nor is it fair to call that a “coming” of the Son of Man at all! He did not “come” on Mount Tabor, for He was on the earth already. And it is a mis-

use of language to construe that into an advent. Besides, where would be the occasion for such a solemn prefix—"Assuredly I say unto you"?

Does it not raise expectation merely to cause disappointment if He intended no more than this—"There are some standing here who shall see Me transfigured"? That scene took place six days afterwards. The next verse tells you so, "And after six days Jesus takes Peter, James and John, his brother, and brings them up into an high mountain apart." Why, the majesty of the prediction which carries our thoughts forward to "the last things" in the world's history makes us shrink from accepting an immediate fulfillment of it all! I cannot imagine, therefore, that the Transfiguration is in the slightest degree referred to here—and I do not think that anyone would have thought of such a thing unless he had been perplexed and utterly nonplussed for an explanation.

And again—though it seems almost incredible—Dr. Gill endorses this view, and moreover says that it also refers to the descent of the Holy Spirit. At this I am staggered! How any man can find an analogy with Pentecost in the connection here I cannot understand! Pentecost took place six months after this event and why Jesus Christ should say, "Assuredly I say unto you there are some standing here who will live six months," I really cannot comprehend! It seems to me that my Master did not waste people's time by talking such platitudes. Who, that reads this passage, can think it has any reference to the descent of the Holy Spirit?—"For the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of His Father with His angels. And then shall He reward every man according to his works."

Did Christ come at Pentecost in the Glory of His Father? Was there any company of angels at Pentecost? Did He then reward every man according to his works? Scarcely can the descent of the Holy Spirit, or the appearance of cloven tongues, like as of fire, be called the "coming of the Son of Man in the Glory of His Father with His angels, to give every man according to his works" without a gross misuse of our mother tongue, or a strange violation of symbolic imagery. Both these constructions, however, which I now mention, have now been given up as unsatisfactory by those modern students who have thought most carefully upon the subject.

The third still holds its ground and is currently received, though I believe it to be quite as far from the Truth of God as the others. Will you carefully read the chapter through at your leisure and see if you can find anything about the siege of Jerusalem in it? Yet this is the interpretation that finds favor at the present time! Some persons were standing there who would be alive when Jerusalem should be destroyed by the Romans!! Nothing, surely, could be more foreign to the entire scope of our Lord's discourse, or the narrative of the Evangelists. There is not the slightest shadow of a reference to the siege of Jerusalem!

It is the coming of the Son of Man which is here spoken of, "in the glory of His Father with His angels, to reward men according to their works." Whenever Jesus spoke of the siege of Jerusalem and of its coming, he was known to say, "Assuredly I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things are fulfilled," but He never singled out some few persons and said to them, "Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here

which shall not taste of death till the city of Jerusalem is besieged and destroyed.”

If a child were to read this passage I know what he would think it meant—he would suppose Jesus Christ was to come and there were some standing there who should not taste of death until really and literally He did come. This, I believe, is the plain meaning. “Well,” says one, “I am surprised! Do you think, then, that this refers to the Apostle John?” No—by no means. The fable passed current, you know, that John was to live till Christ came again. But John himself repudiated it. For at the end of his Gospel, he says, “Then went this saying abroad among the Brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die, but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to you?”

This, you see, was putting a suppositions case and in no sense the language of prediction. Now, dear Brethren, if you are so far convinced of the unreasonableness of each of these efforts to solve the difficulty by feigning a sense, I shall hope to have your minds in readiness for that explanation which appears to me to harmonize with every requirement. I believe the “coming” here spoken of, is the coming of the Son of God to judgment at the last great and terrible assize, when He shall judge the righteous and separate the wicked from among them. The next question is—“Of whom were the words spoken?”

Are we warranted in supposing that our Lord intended this sentence as a gracious promise, or a kindly expectation that He would kindle in the breast of His disciples? I suppose not. To me it appears to have no reference whatever to any man who ever had Grace in his soul—such language is far more applicable to the *ungodly* than the wicked. It may well have been aimed directly at those followers who should apostatize from the faith, grasp at the world, shrink at the Cross, endeavor to save their lives but really lose them and barter their souls. At the glorious appearing of Christ there are some who will taste death, but will they be the righteous? Surely, my dear Friends, when Christ comes, the righteous will not die!

They will be caught up with the Lord in the air. His coming will be the signal for the resurrection of all His saints. But mark you, at the time of His coming, the men who have been without God and without Christ, will begin, for the first time, to “taste of death.” They passed the first stage of dissolution when the soul quitted the body, but they have never known the “taste of death.” Till then, they will not have known its tremendous bitterness and its awful horror. They will never drink of the wormwood and the gall, so as really to “taste of death,” till the Lord shall come.

This tasting of death here may be explained and I believe it is to be explained by a reference to the second death, which men will not taste of till the Lord comes. And what a dreadful sentence that was, when the Savior said—perhaps singling out Judas as He spoke—“Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here who shall never know what that dreadful word ‘death’ means, till the Lord shall come. You think that if you save your lives, you escape from death. Ah, you do not know what death means! The demise of the body is but a prelude to the perdition of the soul. The grave is but the porch of death—you will never understand the meaning of that terrible word till the Lord comes.”

This can have no reference to the saints, because in the eighth chapter of John and the fifty-first verse, you find this passage—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keeps My sayings, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that you have a devil. Abraham is dead and the Prophets. And you say, If a man keeps My sayings, he shall never taste of death." No righteous man, therefore, can ever "taste of death."

He will fall into that deep oblivious sleep in which the body sees corruption. But that is another and a very different thing from the bitter cup referred to as tasting of death. When the Holy Spirit wanted an expression to set forth what was the equivalent for the Divine wrath, what expression was used? "Christ, by the Grace of God, tasted death for every man." The expression, "to taste of death," means the reception of that true and essential death, which kills both the body and the soul in Hell forever. The Savior said then, as He might say, I fear, if He stood in this pulpit tonight—"Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

If this is the meaning and I hold that it is in keeping with the context, it explains the verse, sets forth the reason why Christ bespoke breathless attention with the word "assuredly," answers both the grammar and the rhetoric and is not by any argument that I have ever heard of to be repudiated. If this is so, what thrilling denunciations are contained in my text! O, may the Holy Spirit deeply affect our hearts and cause our souls to thrill with its solemnity! What thoughts it stirs up! Compared with the doom which will be inflicted upon the ungodly at the coming of Christ, the death of nature is nothing.

We go farther—compared with the doom of the wicked at the coming of Christ, even the torments of souls in a separate state are scarcely anything. The startling question then comes up—"Are there any sitting or standing here who will have to taste of death when the Lord comes?"

I. THE SINNER'S DEATH IS BUT A FAINT PRESAGE OF THE SINNER'S DOOM AT THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN IN HIS GLORY. Let me endeavor to show the contrast. We can make but little comparison between the two in point of time. Many men meet with their death so suddenly that it can scarcely involve any pain to them. They are crushed, perhaps, by machinery. A shot sends them to find a grave upon the battlefield, or they may be speedily poisoned.

If they are for hours, or days, or weeks, or months, upon the bed of sickness, yet the real work of dying is but short. It is more a weary sort of living than an actual sense of dying while hope lingers though even in fitful dreams. Dying is but the work of a moment—if it shall be said to last for hours, yet the hours are brief. Misery may count them long, but oh, with what swift wings do they fly! To die, to fall asleep, to suffer—it may be but a pin's prick—and then to have passed away from the land of the living to the realm of shades!

But oh, the doom which is to be brought upon the wicked when Christ comes! This is a death which never dies. Here is a heart palpitating with eternal misery. Here is an eye never filmed by the kind finger of generous

forgetfulness. Here will be a body never to be stiffened in apathy—never to be laid quietly in the grave—never rid of keen pangs, wearing disease and lingering wretchedness! To die, I say, is nature's kind release—it brings ease. It comes to a man, for this world, at least, a farewell to his woes and griefs.

But there shall be no ease, no rest, no pause in the destination of impenitent souls. "Depart, you cursed," shall ever ring along the endless aisles of eternity. The thunderbolt of that tremendous word shall follow the sinner in his perpetual flight from the Presence of God—from its baleful influence he shall never be able to escape—no, never! A million years shall make not so much difference to the duration of his agony as a cup of water taken from the sea would to the volume of the ocean. No, when millions of years told a million times shall have rolled their fiery orbits over his poor tormented head, he shall be no nearer to the end than he was at first.

Talk of Death! I might even paint him as an angel when once I think of the terrors of the wrath to come. Soon come, soon gone, is Death. That sharp scythe gives but one cut and down falls the flower and withers in the heat of the sun. But eternity, eternity, eternity! Who shall measure its wounds? Who shall fathom the depths of the gashes? When eternity wields the whip, how dreadfully will it fall! When eternity grasps the sword, how deep shall be the wounds, how terrible its killing!—

***"To linger in eternal pain,
Yet death forever fly."***

You are afraid of death, Sinner? You are afraid of death? Were you wise, you would be ten thousand times ten thousand times more afraid of the coming and the judgment of the Son of Man! In point of loss there is no comparison. When the sinner dies it is not tasting of death in its true sense, for what does he lose? He loses wife and children and friends. He loses all his dainty bits and his sweet draughts. Where now are his violin and his lute? Where now the merry dance and the joyful company? For him no more pleasant landscape nor gliding stream. For him no more light of the sun by day, nor light of moon and stars by night. He has lost, at one stroke, every comfort and every hope.

But then the loss, as far as death is concerned, is but a loss of earthly things—the loss of temporal and temporary comforts—and he might put up with that. It is wretched enough to lose these, but let your imagination follow me, faint as is my power to describe the everlasting and infinite loss of the man who is found impenitent at the last great Judgment Day. What does he lose then? The harps of Heaven and the songs. The joys of God's Presence and the light. The jasper sea and the gates of pearl. He has lost peace and immortality and the crown of life.

No, he has lost all hope—and when a man has lost that, what remains for him? His spirit sinks with a terrible depression, more frightful than a maniac ever knew in his wildest moods of grief. His soul sinks never to recover itself into the depths of dark despair, where not a ray of hope can ever reach him. Lost to God! Lost to Heaven! Lost to time! Lost to the preaching of the Gospel! Lost to the invitation of mercy! Lost to the prayers of the gracious! Lost to the Mercy Seat! Lost to the blood of sprinkling! Lost to all hope of every sort—lost, lost, forever! Compared with this

loss the losses of death are nothing, and well might the Savior say that lost spirits shall not even “taste of death” until He shall come and they shall receive their sentence.

Neither does death bear any comparison with the last judgment in point of terror. I do not like to paint the terrors of the deathbed of unrepentant men. Some, you know, glide gently into their graves. It is, in fact, the mark of the wicked that they have no bands in their death—their strength is firm. They are not troubled like other men are. Like the sheep they are laid in the grave. A peaceful death is no sign of Grace. Some of the worst of men have died with a smile upon their countenance to have it changed for one eternal weeping. But there are more men of other exquisite sensibility, instructed men, who cannot die like brutes—and they have alarms and fears and terrors when they are on their deathbeds.

Many an atheist has cried to God under dying pangs and many an Infidel who up to then could brag and speak high things against God, has found his cheek turn pale and his throat grow hoarse when he has come there. Like the mariner, the boldest man in that great storm reels to and fro and staggers like a drunken man and is at his wits’ ends—for he finds that it is no child’s play to die. I try sometimes to picture that hour when we shall perhaps be propped up in bed, or lying down with pillows round about us, and diligently watched. And as they hush their footfalls and gaze anxiously on, there is a whisper that the solemn time has come and then there is a grappling of the strong man with the stronger than he.

Oh, what must it be to die without a Savior! To die in the dark without a light except the lurid glare of the wrath to come! Horrors there are, indeed, around the deathbed of the wicked! But these are hardly anything compared with the terrors of the Day of Judgment! When the sinner wakes from his bed of dust, the first object he will see will be the Great White Throne and the Judge seated upon it—the first sound that will greet his ears will be the trumpet sounding—

***“Come to judgment, come to judgment,
Come to judgment, Sinner, come.”***

He will look up and there will be the Son of Man on His judgment throne—the King’s officers arranged on either side—the saints on His right hand and angels round about. Then the books will be opened. What creeping horror will come upon the flesh of the wicked man! He knows his turn will arrive in a moment. He stands expecting it. Fear takes hold upon him while the eyes of the Judge look him through and through and he cries to the rocks to hide him and the mountains to fall upon him! Happy would he be now to find a friendly shelter in the grave, but the grave has burst its doors and can never be closed upon him again. He would even be glad to rush back to his former state in Hell, but he cannot!

The judgment has come, the assize is set—again the trumpet rings—

***“Come to judgment, come to judgment,
Come to judgment, come away.”***

And then the book is opened and the dread sentence is pronounced. And, to use the words of Scripture, “Death and Hell are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” The man never knew what death was before. The first death was but a flea-bite! This is death, in-

deed. The first death he might have looked back upon as a dream, compared with this tasting of death now that the Lord has come!

From what we can gleam darkly from hints of Scripture, the pains of death are not at all comparable to the pains of the judgment at the second advent. Who will speak in a depreciating manner of the pains of death? If we should attempt to do so, we know that our hearts would contradict us. In the shades of night, when deep sleep falls upon men, you sometimes suddenly awake. You are alarmed. The terror by night has come upon you. You expect—you hardly know what it is—but you are half afraid that you are about to die. You know how the cold sweat comes upon the brow. You may have a good hope through Grace, but the very thought of death brings a peculiar pang.

Or when death has really come in view, some of us have marked with terrible grief the sufferings of our dearest friends. We have heard the eye-strings break. We have seen the face all pallid and the cheek all hollow and sunken. We have sometimes seen how every nerve has become a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on and how every vein has been a canal of grief. We have marked the pains, and moans, and groans, and dying strife that frightens the soul away. These, however, are common to man. Not so the pangs which are to be inflicted both on *body* and *soul* at the coming of the Son of God!

They are such that I cast a veil over them, fearful of the very thought! Let the Master's words suffice—"Fear Him who is able to cast both body and soul into Hell; yes, I say unto you, fear Him." Then the body in all the parts shall suffer. The members which were once instruments of unrighteousness shall now be instruments of suffering. And the mind, the major sinner, shall be also the greater sufferer. The memory, the judgment, the understanding, the will, the imagination and every power and passion of the soul will become a deep lake of anguish. But I spare you these things! Oh, spare yourselves! God alone knows with what pain I have talking about these horrors!

Were it not that they must be spoken of, or else I must give my account at the Day of Judgment as a faithless servant. Were it not that I speak of them in mercy to your souls, poor Sinners, I would gladly forget them altogether, seeing that my own soul has a hope in Him who saves from the wrath to come. But as long as you will not have mercy upon yourselves, we must lay this axe at your root—so long as you will make a mockery of sin and set at nothing the terrors of the world to come—we must warn you of Hell.

If it is hard to talk of these things, what must it be to *endure* them? If a dream makes you quiver from head to foot, what must it be to endure really and in person, the wrath to come? O Souls, were I to speak as I ought, my knees would knock together with trembling! Were you to feel as you should, there would not be an unconverted man among you who would not cry, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?" I do beseech you to remember that death, with all its pangs, is but a drop in a bucket compared with the deep, mysterious, fathomless, shoreless sea of grief you must endure forever at the coming of the Lord Jesus unless you repent!

Death makes great discoveries. The man thought himself wise, but Death draws the curtain and he sees written up in large letters—"You fool!" He said he was prudent, for he hoarded up his gold and silver and kept the wages of the laborer. But now he finds that he has made a bad bargain while the question is propounded to him—"What does it profit you, to have gained the world and to have lost your soul?" Death is a great revealer of secrets. Many men are not believers at all until they die. But Death comes and makes short work with their skepticism. It gives but one blow upon the head of doubt and all is done. The man believes then, only he believes too late!

Death gives to the sinner the discovery that there is a God—an angry God—and punishment is wrapped up in the wrath to come. But how much greater the discoveries that await the Day of Judgment! What will the sinner see then? He will see the Man who was crucified sitting upon His Throne. He will hear how Satan has been defeated in all his craftiest undertakings. Read from those mysterious books, the secrets of all hearts shall then be revealed. Then men shall understand how the Lord reigned supremely even when Satan roared most loudly—how the mischief and the folly of man did but, after all, bring forth the great purposes of God.

All this shall be in the books and the sinner shall stand there defeated, terribly defeated, beaten at every point—baffled, foiled, stultified in every act and every purpose by which he thought to do well for himself. Yes, and utterly confused in all the hostility and all the negligence of his heart towards the living and true God who would, and who did rule over him. Too late he will discover the preciousness of the blood he despised—the value of the Savior he rejected—the glory of the Heaven which he lost and the terror of the Hell to which he is sentenced! How wise, how dreadfully wise will he be when fully aware of his terrible and eternal destruction! Thus sinners shall not taste of death in the real meaning of the term until the Lord shall come.

II. Still further—IN THE STATE OF SEPARATE SPIRITS THEY HAVE NOT FULLY TASTED OF DEATH, NOR WILL THEY DO SO UNTIL CHRIST COMES. The moment that a man dies, his spirit goes before God. If without Christ, that spirit then begins to feel the anger and the wrath of God. It is as when a man is taken before a magistrate. He is known to be guilty and therefore he is remanded and put in prison till his trial shall come. Such is the state of souls apart from the body—they are spirits in prison—waiting for the time of their trial.

There is not, in the sense in which the Romanist teaches it, any purgatory! Yet there is a place of waiting for lost spirits which is in Scripture called, "Hell," because it is one room in that awful prison, in which must dwell forever spirits that die finally impenitent and without faith in Christ. But those of our departed countrymen and fellow citizens of earth who die without Christ have not yet fully tasted of death, nor can they until the advent of the Lord. Just consider why not. Their *bodies* do not suffer. The bodies of the wicked are still the prey of the worm—still the atoms are the sport of the winds and are traversing their boundless cycles and must do so until they are gathered up into the body again, at the trump of the archangel—at the voice of God.

The ungodly know that their present state is to have an end at the Judgment, but after the Judgment their state will have no end. It is then to go on and on and on, forever and forever, unchanged and unchangeable. Now there may be half a hope, an anticipation of some change, for change brings some relief. But to the finally damned—upon whom the sentence has been pronounced—there is no hope even of a change. Forever and forever shall there be the same ceaseless wheel of misery!

The ungodly, too, in their present state, have not as yet been put to the shame of a public sentence. They have, as it were, merely been cast into prison, the facts being too clear to admit of any doubt as to the sentence. And they are their own tormentors, vexing and paining themselves with the fear of what is yet to come. They have never yet heard that dreadful sentence—“Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” I was struck, while studying this subject, to find how little is said about the pains of the lost while they are merely souls and how much is said concerning them when the Lord comes.

You have that one parable of the rich man and Lazarus and there it speaks of the soul being already tormented in the flame. But if you turn to the thirteenth chapter of Matthew and read the parable of the tares, you will find it is at the *end* of the *world* that the tares are to be cast into the fire. Then comes the parable of the dragnet. It is when the dispensation comes to an end that the net is to be dragged to shore and then the good are to be put in vessels and the bad cast away. And then the Lord says, “The Son of Man shall send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

That memorable description in Matthew of those of whom He said, “I was hungry and you gave me no meat. I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,” is described as happening when, the “Son of Man shall come in His glory and all His holy angels with Him.” The Apostle Paul, too, tells us plainly in the Epistle to the Thessalonians that the wicked are to be destroyed at His coming by the brightness of His power. The recompense of the ungodly, like the reward of the righteous, is *anticipated* now—but the full reward of the righteous is to be at His coming. They are to reign with Christ. Their fullness of bliss is to be given them when the King Himself in His glory shall sit upon His Throne. So, too, the wicked have the beginning of their heritage at death, but the dread fullness of it is to be hereafter.

At the present moment, death and Hell are not yet cast into the lake of fire. Death is still abroad in the world slaying men. Hell is yet loose. The devil is not yet chained, but still does he go about the “dry places, seeking rest and finding none.” At the last day, at the coming of Christ, “death and Hell shall be cast into the lake of fire.” We do not understand the symbol. But if it means anything, one would think it must mean this—that at that day the scattered powers of evil, which are to be the tormentors of the wicked, but which have up to now been wandering up and down throughout the world, shall all be collected together—and then, indeed, shall it be

that the wicked shall begin to “taste of death” as they have never tasted of it before!

My soul is bowed down with terror while I speak these words to you! I scarcely know how to find suitable words to express the weight of thought which is upon me. My dear Hearers, instead of speculating upon these matters, let us try to shun the wrath to come. And what can help us to do that better than to weigh the warning words of a dear and loving Savior when He tells us that at His coming such a gloom shall pass upon *impenitent* souls, that compared with it, even death itself shall be as nothing?

Christians, by the faith of their risen Lord, swallow death in victory. But if you die impenitent, you swallow death in ignorance. You do not feel its bitterness now. But, oh, that bitter pill has yet to work its way and that fierce draught has yet to be drained even to the dregs, unless you repent! And now, does not the meditation of these terrors prompt A QUESTION. Jesus said—“Assuredly I say unto you, there are some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.” Are there any standing or sitting here who shall not taste of death till then?

In that little group addressed by the Savior stood Judas. He had been trusted by His Master and he was an Apostle. But after all he was a thief and a hypocrite. He, the son of perdition, would not taste of death till Christ should come in His kingdom. Is there a Judas here? I look into your faces and many of you are members of this Church and others of you, I doubt not, are members of other Christian Churches—but are you sure that you have made sound work of it? Is your religion genuine? Do you wear a mask, or are you an honest man?

O Sirs, try your own hearts and since you may fail in the trial, ask the Lord to search you! For as the Lord my God lives, unless you thus search yourselves and find that you are in the right, you may come presumptuously to sit at the Lord’s Table. Though with a name to live, you may be among His people here, but you will have to taste of death when the Lord comes. You may deceive us, but you cannot deceive Him! The preacher reflects that he himself may be mistaken. That he himself may be self-deceived. If it is so, may the Lord open my eyes to know the worst of my own state! Will you put up this prayer for yourselves, professors? Do not be too bold, you who say you are Christ’s—never be satisfied till you are quite sure of it. And the best way to be sure is to go again just as you went at first and lay hold on eternal life through the power of the blessed Spirit and not by any strength of your own.

No doubt, however, there stood in that little throng around the Savior some who were careless sinners. He knew that they had been so during the whole of His teaching and that they would be so still, and therefore they would taste of death at His coming. Are there not some careless persons come in here tonight? I mean you who never think about religion, who generally look upon Sunday as a day of pleasure, or who loll about in your shirtsleeves nearly all the day. You who look upon the very name of religion as a bugbear to frighten children with—who mock God’s servants and despise the very thought of earnestly seeking after the Most High.

Oh, will you, will you be among the number of those who taste of death when the Son of Man shall come in His kingdom? Oh, must I ring your death knell tonight? Must my warning voice be lost upon you? I beseech you to recollect that you must either turn or burn! I beseech you to remember this—"Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts. And let him turn unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." By the wounds of Jesus, Sinner, stop and think! If God's dear Son was slain for human sin, how terrible must that sin be! And if Jesus died, how base are you if you are disobedient to the doctrine of faith! I pray you, if you think of your body, give some thought to your soul! "Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And labor for that which satisfies not?" Harken diligently unto Jehovah's Word and eat of that which is good, real, and substantial food. Come to Jesus and your soul shall live!

And there are some here of another class—Bethsaida sinners, Capernaum sinners! I mean some of you who constantly occupy these pews and stand in yonder area and sit in yonder gallery Sunday after Sunday. The same eyes look down on me week after week. The same faces salute me often with a smile when Sunday comes and I pass you journeying to this, the Tabernacle of your worship. And yet how many of you are still without God and without Christ? Have I been unfaithful to you? If I have, forgive me and pray to God both for me and for yourselves that we may mend our ways.

But if I have warned you of the wrath to come, why will you choose to walk in the path which leads to it? If I have preached to you Christ Jesus, how is it that His charms move you not and that the story of His great love does not bring you to repentance? O that the Spirit of God would come and deal with you, for I cannot! My hammer breaks not your flinty hearts, but God's arm can do it and O, may He turn you yet! Of all sinners over whom a minister ought to weep, you are the worst—for while the careless perish you perish doubly!

You know your Master's will and yet you do it not. You see Heaven's gate set open and yet you will not enter. Your vicious free will ruins you! Your base and wicked love of self and sin destroys you! "You will not come unto Me that you might have life," said Christ. You are so vile that you will not turn even though Jesus should woo you. I pray you let the menace of judgment to come contained in my text stir you now if you have never been stirred before! May God have pity on you even if you will have no pity upon yourselves.

Perhaps among that company there were some who held the Truth of God, but who held it in licentiousness—and there may be such here present. You believe in the doctrine of election. So do I. But then you make it a cloak for your sin! You hold the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, but you still persevere in your iniquity. Oh, there is no way of perishing that I know of worse than perishing by making the Doctrines of Grace an excuse for one's sins! The Apostle has well said of such that their damnation is just—it is just to any man, but to a seven-fold degree is it just to such as you are! I would not have you forget the doctrine, nor

neglect it, nor despise it—but I do beseech you do not prostitute it—do not turn it to the vile purposes of making it pander to your own carnal ease.

Remember, you have no evidence of election except you are *holy* and you have no right to expect you will be saved at the last unless you are saved now. A present faith in a present Savior is the test. O that my Master would bring some of you to trust Him tonight! The plan of salvation is simple—trust Christ and you are saved! Rely upon Him and you shall live! This faith is the gift of God, but remember that though God gives it, He works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. God does *not* believe *for* you. The Holy Spirit does *not* believe *for* you—you must believe, or else you will be lost!

And it is quite consistent with the fact that it is the *gift* of God, to say that it is also the *act* of man. You must, poor Soul, be led to trust the Savior, or into Heaven you can never enter. Is there one here who says, “I desire to find the Savior tonight”? Go not to your bed until you have sought Him and seek Him with sighs and with tears. I think this is a night of Divine Grace. I have preached the Law and the terrors of the Lord to you, but it will be a night of Grace to the souls of some of you! My Master does but kill you that He may make you alive! He does but wound you that He may make you whole!

I feel a sort of inward whisper in my heart that there are some of you who even now have begun your flight from the wrath to come. Where do you flee? Fly to Jesus! Hurry, Sinner, hurry! I trust you will find Him before you retire to your beds, or if you lie tossing there in doubt and fear, then may He manifest Himself to you before the morning light. I think I would freely give my eyes if you might but see Christ! And I would willingly give my hands if you might but lay hold on Him! Do, I beseech you, put not from you this warning, but let it have its proper work upon you and lead you to repentance!

May God save you and may the prayer we have already offered this evening be answered, that the company of you may be found among His elect at His right hand. To that end let us pray. Our Father, save us with Your great salvation. We will say unto God, do not condemn us! Deliver us from going down to the pit, for You have found the ransom. May we not be among the company that shall taste of death when the Son of Man shall come. Hear us, Jesus, through Your blood. God be merciful to us sinners. Amen.

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“I WILL,” YET, “NOT AS I WILL” NO. 2376

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 2, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1883.**

*“Father, I will.”
John 7:24.*

*“Not as I will.”
Matthew 16:39.*

We have, here, two prayers uttered by the same Person, yet there is the greatest possible contrast between them. How different men are at different times! Yet Jesus was always essentially the same—“the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Still, His mood and state of mind varied from time to time. He seemed calmly happy when He prayed with His disciples and said, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me.” But He was in an agony when, in Gethsemane, having withdrawn from His disciples and fallen on His face, He prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” It is the same Man and an unchangeable Man, too, as to His *essence*, who uttered both prayers, yet see how different were His frames of mind and how different the prayers He offered! Brother, you may be the same man and quite as good a man when you are groaning before God as when you are singing before Him. There may be more Grace, even, in the submissive, “Not as I will,” than in the triumphant, “Father, I will.” Do not judge yourselves to have changed in your standing before God because you have undergone an alteration as to your *feelings*. If your Master prayed so differently at different times, you, who have not the fullness of Grace that He had, must not wonder if you have a great variety of inward experiences.

Notice, also, that it was not only the same Person, but that He used these two expressions almost at the same time. I do not know how many minutes—I had better say minutes rather than hours—intervened between the Last Supper, the wonderful high-priestly prayer and the agonizing cries of Gethsemane. I suppose that it was only a short walk from Jerusalem to the olive garden and that it would not occupy long to traverse the distance. At one end of the walk Jesus prays, “Father, I will,” and at the other end of it, He says, “Not as I will.” In like manner, we may undergo great changes and have to alter the tone of our prayers in just a few minutes. You prayed, just now, with holy confidence. You took firm hold of the Covenant Angel and, with wrestling Jacob, you said, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” And yet it may be equally becoming

on your part, within an hour, to lie in the very dust and, in agony, cry unto the Lord, “Pardon my prayers, forgive me that I was too bold, and hear me, now, as I cry to You and say, ‘Not as I will, but as You will.’”—

**“If but my fainting heart is blessed
With Your sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God, to You I leave the rest—
‘Your will be done!’”**

Never be ashamed because you have to mend your prayers! Be careful not to make a mistake if you can help it, but, if you make one, do not be ashamed to confess it and to correct it as far as you can. One of our frequent mistakes is that we wonder that we make mistakes. Whenever a man says, “I should never have thought that I could have done such a foolish thing as that,” it shows that he does not really know himself, for had he known himself, he would rather have wondered that he did not do *worse*, and he would have marveled that he acted as wisely as he did. Only the Grace of God can teach us how to run our prayers down the scale from the high note of, “Father, hear me, for You have said, ‘Ask what you will,’” right down to the deep, deep bass of, “Father, not as I will, but as You will.”

I must further remark that these two prayers were equally characteristic of Christ. I think that I should know my Lord by His voice in either of them. Who but the eternal Son of God may dare to say, “Father, I will”? There speaks Incarnate Deity! That is the sublime utterance of the well-beloved Son. And yet, who could say as He said it, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” Perhaps you have uttered those words, dear Friend, but in your case they were not concerning such a cup of woe as Christ emptied! There were but a few drops of gall in your cup. His was *all* bitterness, from the froth to the dregs—all bitterness—and such bitterness as, thank God, you and I can never taste! That cup He has drained to the dregs and we shall not have to drink one drop from it. And it was of that cup that He said—and I detect the voice of the Son of God, the Son of Man, in that brief utterance—“Not as I will, but as You will.”

My two texts make up a strange piece of music. Blessed are the lips that know how to express the confidence that rises to the height as far as we can go with Christ—and descends, even, to the deeps as far as we can go with Him in full submission to the will of God! Does anybody say that he cannot understand the contrast between these two prayers? Dear Friend, it is to be explained thus. There was a difference of *position* in the Suppliant on these two occasions. The first prayer, “Father, I will,” is the prayer of our great High Priest with all His heavenly garments on—the blue, and purple, and fine twined linen, and the pomegranates, and the golden bells, and the breastplate with the 12 precious stones bearing the names of His chosen people. It is our great High Priest, in the Glory of His majestic office and power, who says to God, “Father, I will.”

The second Suppliant is not so much the Priest as the Victim. Our Lord is there seen bound to the altar, about to feel the sacrificial knife, about to be consumed with the sacrificial fire, and you hear Him as

though it were a lamb bleating, and the utterance is, “Not as I will, but as You will.” The first petition is the language of *Christ in power* pleading for us. The second is the utterance of *Christ made sin for us*, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That is the difference of position that explains the contrast in the prayers.

Let me tell you, also, that there is a difference in the subject of His supplication which is full of instruction. In the first prayer, where our Lord says so majestically, “Father, I will,” He is pleading for His people. He is praying for what He knows to be the Father’s will. He is officiating, there, before God as the very mouthpiece of God, and speaking of something about which He is perfectly clear and certain. When you are praying for God’s people, you may pray very boldly. When you are pleading for God’s cause, you may speak very positively. When you know you are asking what is definitely promised in the Scriptures as part of the Covenant ordered in all things and sure, you may ask without hesitation, as our Lord did.

But, in the second case, Jesus was praying for Himself—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” He was praying about a matter, concerning which He did not, as Man, know the Father’s will, for He says, “If it is possible.” There is an, “if,” in it—“If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” Whenever you go upstairs in an agony of distress and begin to pray about yourself, and about a possible escape from suffering, always say, under such circumstances, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” It may be given you, sometimes, to pray very boldly even in such a case as that, but, if it is not given you, take care that you do not presume. I may pray for healing for my body, but not with such confidence as I pray for the prosperity of Zion and the Glory of God. That which has to do with myself I may ask as a child of God asks of his Father, but I must ask *submissively*, leaving the decision *wholly* in His hands, feeling that, because it is for myself, rather than for Him, I must say, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.”

I think that there is a plain lesson, here, for Christians to take heed that, while they are very confident on one subject for which they pray, they are equally submissive on another, for there is a heavenly blending in the Christian character, as there was in Christ’s Character, a firm confidence and yet an absolute yielding to the will of God—let that will be what it may—

**“Lord, my times are in Your hands.
All my sanguine hopes have planned
To Your wisdom I resign,
And would make Your purpose mine.”**

Now all this while, you may say that I have only been going round the text. Very well. But, sometimes, there is a good deal of instruction to be picked up around a text. The manna fell round about the camp of Israel. Perhaps there is some manna round about this text. May the Lord help every one of us to gather his portion!

I want you now, for a few minutes, to view this great Suppliant in the two moods in which He prayed, “Father, I will” and, “Not as I will,” and

then to combine the two. We will, first, view *Jesus in the power of His intercession*. Next, we will talk of *Jesus in the power of His submission*. And in the third place, we will try to *combine the two prayers*, "I will," yet, "Not as I will."

I. First, let us view Jesus IN THE POWER OF HIS INTERCESSION, saying, "Father, I will."

Where did He derive that power? Who enabled Him thus to speak with God and say, "Father, I will?" First, *Jesus prayed in the power of His Sonship*. Sons may say to a father what strangers may not dare to say and such a Son as Jesus was so near to His Father's heart, He was One who could say, "The Father has not left Me alone; for I always do those things that please Him." He was One of whom the Father had said, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Well might He have power with God so as to be able to say, "Father, I will."

Next, He derived this power from *the Father's eternal love to Him*. Did you notice how, in the very verse from which our text is taken, Jesus says to His Father, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world"? We cannot conceive what the love of the Father is to Christ Jesus His Son! Remember, they are one in *Essence*. God is one—Father, Son and Holy Spirit and, as the Incarnate God, Christ is unspeakably dear to the Father's heart. There is nothing about Him of which the Father disapproves. There is nothing lacking in Him which the Father would desire to see there. He is God's ideal of Himself—"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Well may One who is the subject of His Father's eternal love be able to say, "Father, I will."

But *our Lord Jesus also based this prayer upon His finished work*. I grant you that He had not yet actually died, but in the certain prospect of His doing so, He had said to His Father, "I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." Now, He has actually finished it, He has been able, in the fullest sense, to say, "It is finished," and He has gone up to take His place in Glory at His Father's side. You remember the argument with which Paul begins his Epistle to the Hebrews—"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His Glory, and the express image of His Person and, upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had, by Himself, purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He has, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?"

When the Father looks at Christ, He sees in Him Atonement accomplished, satisfaction presented, sin annihilated, the elect redeemed, the Covenant ratified, the everlasting purpose settled on eternal foundations! O Beloved, since Christ has magnified God's Law and made it honor-

able—and since He has poured out His soul unto death—He may well possess the power to say, “Father, I will.”

Remember, too, that *Jesus still possesses this power* and possesses it for you and for me. O my dear Hearers, you may well go to Christ and accept Him as your Mediator and Intercessor, since all this power to say, “Father, I will,” is laid up in Him on purpose for poor believing sinners who come and take Him to be their Savior! You say that you cannot pray. Well, He can—ask Him to plead for you! And I thank God that, sometimes, when we do *not* ask Him to plead for us, He does it all the same, as He did for Peter, when Satan had desired to have him, but Christ had prayed for him. Peter did not know his danger, but the Savior did, and He pleaded for him at once. What a blessing it is to think of Christ, clothed with Divine authority and power, using it all for us! Well does Toplady sing—

***“With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below!
But with authority He asks,
Enthroned in Glory now
For all that come to God by Him.
Salvation He demands,
Points to their names upon His breast
And spreads His wounded hands.
His Covenant and Sacrifice
Give sanction to His claim—
‘Father, I will that all My saints
Be with Me where I am.’”***

Further, that power of Christ will land every Believer in Heaven. Notice how Christ turns all His pleading with God that way. He says, “Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” The devil says that we shall never get to Heaven, but we remember that declaration of Moses, “Your enemies shall be found liars unto you,” and the arch-enemy will be found to be the arch-liar, for the Lord’s Prayer will be heard and, as He pleads that those whom the Father gave Him should be brought up to be with Him where He is, you may depend upon it that they will all arrive safely in Heaven! And you, if you are among those who are given to Christ—and you may know that by your faith in Him—shall be among that blessed company!

I shall have finished with this first point when I have said this—*that power which Christ had, may, in a measure, be gained by all His people*. I dare not say and I would not say that any of us will ever be able to utter our Savior’s words, “Father, I will.” But I *do* say this—if you abide in Christ and His words abide in you—you may attain to such power in prayer that you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. This is not a promise to all of you—no, not even to all of you who are God’s people—but only to those of you who live wholly unto God and serve Him with all your *heart*. You can, by habitual communion with God, attain to such power with the Most High that men shall say of you what they used to say of Luther, “There goes a man who can ask what he likes of God and have it.” You may attain to that glorious altitude! Oh, I

would that every one of us would seek to reach this height of power and blessing! It is not the feeble Christian. It is not the worldly Christian who has just enough Grace to make him miserable—the man who has only about enough Grace to keep him from being absolutely immoral! That is *not* the man or woman who will prevail with God. You paddlers in Christianity who scarcely wet your toes—you who never go in beyond your ankles, or your knees—God will never give you this privilege unless you go in for it! Get where the waters are deep enough to swim and plunge in! Be perfectly consecrated to God! Yield your whole lives to His Glory without reserve! Then may you obtain something of your Master’s power in prayer when He said, “Father, I will.”

II. Now I ask you kindly to accompany me, in the second place, to notice JESUS IN THE POWER OF HIS SUBMISSION. Our second text is all submission—“Not as I will.”

This utterance, “Not as I will,” proved that *the shrinking of Christ’s Nature from that dreadful cup were all overcome*. I do not believe that Christ was afraid to die. Do you believe that? Oh, no—many of His servants have laughed at death! I am sure that He was not afraid to die. What was it, then, that made that cup so awfully terrible? Jesus was to be made *sin* for us. He was to come under the *curse* for us! He was to feel the Father’s wrath on account of human guilt and His whole Nature, not only His flesh, but His whole *Being* shrank from that fearful ordeal! It was not actual defilement that was to come upon Him, but it looked like it and, as Man, He could not tell what that cup of wrath must contain—

**“Immanuel, sunk with dreadful woe,
Unfelt, unknown to all below—
Except the Son of God—
In agonizing pangs of soul
Drinks deep of wormwood’s bitterest bowl,
And sweats great drops of blood.”**

After dwelling in the love of God from all eternity, He was, in a few hours, to bear the punishment of man’s sin, yet He must bear it and, therefore, He said, “Not as I will, but as You will.” Do you wonder that He prayed, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me”? Is Christ to be blamed for this shrinking of Nature? My dear Friends, if it had been a pleasure to Him and He had had no shrinking, where would have been His holy *courage*? If it had not been a horrible and dreadful thing to Him, where would have been His *submission*, where would have been the *virtue* that made Atonement of it? If it had been a thing that He could not, or must not, shrink from, where would have been the pain, the wormwood, and the gall of it? The cup must be, in the nature of things, something from which He that bears it must shrink, or else it could not have been sufficient for the redemption of His people and the vindication of the broken Law of God! It was necessary, then, that Christ should, by such a prayer as this, prove that He had overcome all the shrinking of His Nature.

“Not as I will,” is also an evidence of *Christ’s complete submission to the will of His Father*. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a

sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth.” There is no resistance, no struggling. He gives Himself up completely. “There,” He seems to say to the Lord, “do what You will with Me; I yield Myself absolutely to Your will.” There was on Christ’s part no reserve, no wish, even, to make any reserve. I go further, and say that Jesus willed as God willed—and even prayed that the will of God, from which His Human Nature, at first, shrank, might be fulfilled. “Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.”

O Brothers and Sisters—for you both need this Grace—pray God to help you to learn how to *copy your Lord in total submission!* Have you submitted to the Lord’s will? Are you submitting now? Are not some of you like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke? There is a text, you know, in the 131st Psalm, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” I have sometimes thought that, for some of the Lord’s children, the passage would have to be read, “My soul is even as a *weaning* child,” and there are many of God’s people who are very long in the weaning! You cannot get satisfaction, quiet and content, can you? Can you give yourself up entirely to God, that He may do whatever He likes with you?

Have you some fear of a tumor, or a cancer? Is there before you the prospect of a painful and dangerous operation? Is business going badly with you, so that you will probably lose everything? Is a dear child sickening? Is the mother likely to be taken away? Will you have to lose your position and reputation if you are faithful to the Lord? Will you be exposed to cruel slanders? Will you probably be cast out of your employment if you do what is right? Come now, whatever you dread or expect, can you give yourself up wholly to God and say, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seem good to Him”? Your Lord and Master did—He said, “Not as I will.” Oh, that He might teach you this Divine art of absolute resignation to the purpose and ordinance of God till you, also, would be able to say, “Not as I will”! Thus you will sing—

**“I bow to Your will,
O God, and all Your ways adore!
And every day I live I’ll seek
To please You more and more!”**

III. I have finished my discourse when I have just twisted these two sayings together a little. So, thirdly, let us COMBINE THE TWO PRAYERS—“I will,” yet, “Not as I will.”

First, let me say, *Number One will help you very much to Number Two.* If you learn to pray *with* Christ, with the holy boldness that almost says, “Father, I will,” you are the man who will know how to say, “Not as I will.” Is it not strange that it should be so? It looks like a contradiction, but I am sure that it is not so. The man who can have his will with God is the very man who does *not want his own way with God.* He who may have what he likes is the man who wishes to have what God likes!

You remember the good old woman who lay near to death, and one said to her, “Do you not expect to die soon?” She answered, “I do not know whether I shall live or die and, what is more, I have no concern which way it is.” Then the friend asked, “But if you had your choice

whether you should live or die, which would you choose?” She replied, “I would rather that the Lord’s will should be done.” “But suppose the Lord’s will were to leave it entirely to you to choose whichever you liked?” “Then,” she said, “I would kneel down and pray the Lord to choose for me.” And I think that is the best way to live—not to have *any* choice at all, but to ask the Lord to choose for you! You can always have your way, you know, when your way is God’s way. The sure way to carry out self-will is when self-will is nothing else but God’s will! Oh, that the Lord would teach us this mighty power with Him in prayer! It will not be given without much close fellowship with Him. Then, when we know that we can have what we will of Him, we shall be in the right state to say, “Not as I will.”

The next remark that I would make is, that *Number Two is necessary for Number One*. That is to say, until you can say, “Not as I will,” you never will be able to say, “Father, I will.” I believe that one reason why people cannot prevail in prayer is because they will not yield to God. And they cannot expect God to yield to them. God does this and that with you, and you quarrel with Him. And then you go upstairs and begin to pray—get down on your knees and make your peace with Him, first—for if you must not come to the altar till you have become reconciled unto your brother, how can you come to the Throne of Grace till you have given up your quarrel with God?

But some people are never at peace with God. I have heard of a good friend who lost a child and he was wearing mourning clothes several years afterwards. And he was always fretting about the dear child, till a Quaker said to him, “What? Have you not forgiven God yet?” And there *are* some people who have not yet forgiven God for taking their loved ones. They ought always to have blessed Him, for He never takes away any but those whom He lent to us, and we should bless His name as much for taking them, again, as for lending them to us. Dear Friends, *you must submit to the will of God or else you cannot have power with Him in prayer.*

“Well,” you say, “you will not let me have my own way at all.” Certainly, *I will not let you have your own way!* But when you say, “There, Lord, I have no quarrel with You. Do what You will with me,” then *He* will say, “Rise, My child, ask what you will, and I will give it to you; open your mouth wide and I will fill it.”

Notice, also, dear Friends, that *Jesus will help us to have Number One and Number Two*. He gives Himself over to us to teach us the power of prevailing prayer, but He also gives Himself over to teach us the art of blessed *submission in prayer*—and it is His will that these two should not be separated. “Father, I will,” is Christ’s word on our behalf. And, “Not as I will,” is equally Christ’s word on our behalf. When you cannot pray either of these prayers as you would, fall back upon Christ’s prayer and claim it as your own.

Lastly, I think that *true sonship will embody both Number One and Number Two*. It is the true child of God who knows that he is his Father’s

child, who says, "Father, I will." He is often very bold where another would be presumptuous. Oh, I have heard full often of somebody's prayers—I will not say who the somebody is—he seems so familiar with God in his prayer. Oh, yes, I know! You love those very stately prayers in which the bounds are set about the mountaintop and no man may dare to come near! You make the Throne of Grace to be like Sinai was of old, of which the Lord said, "Whoever touches the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it is beast or man, it shall not live."

"Oh, but," you say, "so-and-so is so familiar at the Mercy Seat!" Yes, I know, and you think that is a pity, do you not? Perhaps you are acquainted with a judge. Look at him on the bench wearing his wig and robe of office! But you will not dare to speak to him, there, unless you address him as, "My Lord," and behave very respectfully to him. By-and-by he goes home—and he has a little boy there, Master Johnny. Why, the child has seized hold of his father's whiskers! There he is, up on his father's back! "Why, Johnny, you are disrespectful!" "Oh, but he is my father!" says the boy, and his father says, "Yes, Johnny, that I am; and I do not want you to say, 'My Lord,' and talk to me as they do in the court." So, there are certain liberties which God's children may take with Him which He counts no liberties at all, but He loves to be treated so by them. He will let each one of them say, "Father, I will," because they are His children!

Then, mark you, you are not God's child unless you can also say, "Father, not as I will." The true child bends before His father's will. "Yes," he says, "I would like so-and-so." His father forbids it. "Then I do not want it and I will not touch it." Or he says, "I do not like to take that medicine, but my Father says I am to take it," and he takes the cup and he drinks the whole of its contents. The true child says, "Not as I will," although, after his measure, he also says, "Father, I will."

I have only been talking to you who are the Lord's people. I hope you have learned something from this subject. I know you have if the Lord has taught you to pray after the fashion of these two prayers, as you humbly, yet believingly may, copying your Lord.

But oh, what shall I say to those of you who are not the Lord's people? If you do not know how to pray at all, may the Lord teach you! If you do not yet know your needs, may the Lord instruct you! And let me tell you that if ever there shall come a time when you feel your need of a Savior, the Lord Jesus will be willing to receive you! If ever you should yearn after Him, you can be sure that He is also yearning after you. Even now—

"Kindled His relentings are,"

and if you will but breathe the penitent's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and turn your eye Christ-ward, and Cross-ward, there is salvation for you even now! God grant that you may have it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 17:15-26; Matthew 26:36-46.

We will read, this evening, a portion of two prayers offered by our Divine Lord and Master on that night in which He was betrayed. The first is that memorable intercessory prayer of His recorded in the 17th Chapter of the Gospel according to John.

John 17:15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* Christ did not pray that His disciples should be taken out of the world. It is very seldom that we ought to present such a petition. If that had been a proper prayer for us to offer, it would have been authorized by the Master. There are times when, in great pain of body, or in deep depression of spirit, the Believer, like Elijah under the juniper tree, requests for himself that he may die. If you ever do pray such a prayer, utter it very softly, for the Master does not authorize it and that is a matter that must be left to the Lord of Life and Death. Jesus says here, “I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.” Sin is the real evil of the world—the danger of our being entangled in worldly customs, or dropping into the evil ways of an ungodly generation. Christ prays that we may be kept from the evil that is in the world and we, also, may and must pray that the Lord will keep us from the evil by which we are surrounded—and especially from the Evil One who seeks our destruction.

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* “They are of another race—they are swayed by other motives, they have another life—they have another destiny, “They are not of the world.” Is that true of you, dear Hearer? We are reading out of God’s Book, remember. This is the description of *Christ’s people*—does it describe *you*? “They are not of the world.” They are not worldly, they are other-worldly. Their thoughts and hearts are set upon the *world to come*.”

17. *Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* What? Do they need to be sanctified? They are not of the world and are kept from the evil in the world—do they need to be sanctified? Yes, we shall always need sanctifying until we reach our heavenly Home where sin cannot enter. Every day we need the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to lead us unto holiness! “Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.” It is only the Truth of God that can beget holiness. False doctrine is never the medium of sanctification. You can tell which are false doctrines and which are the true by our Lord’s own test—“By their fruits you shall know them.” The same men who reject the old-fashioned doctrines also rebel against the old-fashioned style of living! Loose living generally goes with loose doctrine. There never was an age in which the Doctrines of Grace were despised, but, sooner or later, licentiousness prevailed. On the other hand, when we had Puritan teaching, we had also pure and holy living. This prayer is still needed for all Christ’s disciples—“Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.”

18. *As you have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* This is the original Missionary Society and the model for all others. Christ sent, commissioned, of the Father, and every saint commissioned of Christ. Are you carrying out your mission, O you people of God? How dare you call yourselves by that name if you have no mission to anybody! If you are living here only for yourself, how can you belong to Christ who never lived a moment for Himself, but always lived wholly for others?

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself.* "I set Myself apart, as One who is consecrated, dedicated, devoted to a grand design."

19. *That they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth.* This is our Lord's prayer for His disciples. In the ninth verse we read, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours." Now our Lord Jesus prays for those who are to be His people. I wonder whether there are any of them here tonight?

20. *Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe in Me through their word.* There is a great company of people who are not, at present, Believers, but who shall yet believe on Christ through the testimony of those who are already Believers on Him. O God, call out many such through our word!

21. *That they all may be one.* This is Christ's prayer for all those who shall believe on Him, that they may be converted and brought into the one Church, together, with those who are already there—"that they all may be one."

21. *As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* Christ would have all His people joined in communion with Himself and with His Father. And when that is the case, then will men know that Christ came into the world for a definite purpose—"that the world may believe that You have sent Me."

22-23. *And the glory which you gave Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.* Christ is the Incarnation of God, and the Church should be the incarnation of Christ. Oh, when shall this great prayer be answered?

23-26. *And that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me. Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* A very short time after our Divine Lord offered this intercessory supplication, He prayed a very different prayer, in a strangely-altered style. You will find it in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter twenty-six. Remember that there was a very short interval between the utterance of the majestic prayer I have

been reading and the presentation of the cries and tears of which we are now to read.

Matthew 26:36-40. *Then came Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and said unto the disciples, Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said He unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry you here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will. And He came unto the disciples and found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What, could you not watch with Me one hour? He felt the need of human sympathy in that awful hour. Yet He trod the winepress alone.*

41. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Admire the tenderness of Jesus in making this apology for His disciples. What He said about them was true, but it is not everybody who would have uttered that gentle truth at such a trying time. Dear Friends, make excuses for one another whenever you can! Never make them for *yourselves*, but often make them for others, and especially when some treat you as you think very untenderly, be the more tender towards them.

42-44. *He went away, again, the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Your will be done. And He came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away, again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.* You cannot use much variety of language when your heart is very heavy. You will usually dwell upon just a few words at such a time. Do not blame yourself for doing so—it is natural, and it is right. Even your Lord, the Master of language, “prayed the third time, saying the same words.”

45, 46. *Then came He to His disciples, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that does betray Me.* May the Master never have to say this concerning any of us, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—262, 701.

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CHRIST'S TRANSFIGURED FACE

NO. 2729

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 2, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 1, 1880.

*"His face did shine as the sun."
Matthew 17:2.*

WHILE our Lord Jesus Christ was upon this earth, He was as much Divine as before He left His Father's court in Heaven. He never ceased to be God, nor was the Godhead for a single moment separated from His Humanity. He was, therefore, always glorious. Yet there was a greater Glory about Him than could usually be seen. This may seem to be a paradox, but it is true. For Christ to be glorious was almost a less matter than for Him to restrain or hide His Glory. It is forever His Glory that He concealed His Glory and that, though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor. Though He was God over all, blessed forever, He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Our Lord's humiliation was all perfectly voluntary and I should not be surprised to learn that, when alone, His face was frequently radiant with Glory as it was on this occasion of His Transfiguration. I can easily imagine that He may often have returned to what must have been His natural condition when there were no human eyes to gaze upon Him. If you carefully read the four Gospels, I think you will see that there are indications that the Glory was always there, ready to flash forth. What was it that made those who came to take Him in the garden of Gethsemane, go backward and fall to the ground when He said, "I am"? Was it, do you think, because the light of Jehovah gleamed upon them at least in some degree? Certainly there was a mystic Glory shining about Him at times, and those who came near Him appear to have been arrested by it. I fancy that it was something more than natural eloquence which made the officers return without Him to the Pharisees and chief priests who had sent them to take Him, while they excused themselves by saying, "Never man spoke like this Man."

A sort of radiance would shine forth from Christ, in some dim degree, now and then, but, on this occasion, He took off the veil—no, perhaps it would be more correct to say that He lifted just a corner of it and permitted these three highly-favored individuals to see what was always there, though usually concealed from their eyes! "We beheld His Glory," wrote John. "We were eyewitnesses of His Majesty," wrote Peter. They certainly saw the Glory which may, I think, have been manifested at other times

when Christ was alone—but whether that was so or not, He had a good reason for letting it be seen on this one occasion—and it may be that we shall gather some instruction while we meditate first, upon the transfiguration as a whole, and then turn our thoughts especially to the brightness of Christ's transfigured face.

I want you to notice under what circumstances Christ revealed His Glory to His three disciples. And my first observation is that it was in a lone spot. They were on "a high mountain apart." Learn from this, dear Friends, that if we would see Jesus in His Glory, we must get apart from the multitude. He may come to us when we are with His people, as He came to the disciples in the upper room, but there was a kind of loneliness and seclusion even there, for the world was shut out and none were there but His own followers. Our Lord delights to talk to His beloved ones when they are in retirement. Leave the servants at a distance from the sacred meeting place, even as Abraham did, and go up to the top of the hill, alone, or with some specially chosen companions.

We who live in London need more solitude—I mean, at least, that we need to find for ourselves more opportunities for solitude than those who live in retired spots. They almost inevitably walk the fields at eventide and we may hope that, like Isaac, they there have communion with their God. But if we have not any fields to walk in, we must somehow manage to get alone. The best visits from Christ are like the best visits we have from those we love—not in the busy market, or in the crowded street, but when we are alone with them! Our blessed Master also, on this occasion, revealed His Glory when He was in prayer. Luke says that, "as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening." Prayer is the key of all mysteries. When Christ would, as it were, unlock Himself, the casket, so as to let His disciples see His inner Glory, He prayed—and this should teach us that if we would see Christ's Glory, we also must pray. And if we would glow with the Glory of Christ, we must be much in prayer. These are practical Truths of God—much more practical than many imagine. We are far too often like Martha, "cumbered about much serving." We need to be more like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, looking up into His dear face and listening to His gracious words. The active life will have little power in it if it is not accompanied by much of the contemplative and the prayerful. There must be retirement for private prayer if there is to be true growth in Grace.

When our Lord's disciples did see His Glory, it was revealed in an amazing light. And this may teach us how truly Divine He is, for "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." It may also show us how He has come to us as the Light of God—not in the blackness of darkness, to overwhelm us in despair and make us sit like the Egyptians during that darkness which might be felt—but Christ is "the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world." And when we see Him, we shall perceive this. The Glory which the disciples saw was a light that was perceptible by the eyes and there is about the Glory of Jesus a moral, mental, spiritual light which we shall behold when we see Him as He is. This

will be the main thing that we shall see when we are favored with a sight of Him.

Something is to also be learned from the persons to whom our Lord revealed His Glory. They were very few. There were only three of them and I venture to say that among the saints of God in all ages, there have not been many who have seen our Lord Jesus Christ to the fullest. Blessed, indeed, are the eyes that have so seen Him, but they are very few. All of us who have believed in Jesus, have looked unto Him and have been lightened, and have found salvation through Him—but, even among us there are some who have missed many of their rightful privileges. They are partially blind and cannot see afar off. By the Grace of God they will get to Heaven all right, but they will have much darkness on the road. There are few of us who so abide in Christ, from day to day, as to see Him as distinctly as He is to be seen. I must confess that I envy some saints, whose biographies I have read, who have seen the Lord far better than I have. And I aspire, I hunger, I thirst to see as much of Him as can be seen on this side of the river of death! Why should we not all do so? Eyes are meant to see light. And spiritual eyes are intended to see Christ! And they are never so fully used for their true design as when they are constantly fixed upon Him—all lower lights being forgotten and permitted to burn out—while He becomes the one great Light in which the soul basks and revels. Mark this then, you multitudes of professors—out of the 12 Apostles, only three saw the Transfiguration—and what a small proportion were those three to the great company of men and women who at that time were disciples of Jesus!

Yet these three were very special persons. Some say that Peter was one of them because he loved his Master much. They say that John was another because his Master loved him much—and that James was the third because he was so soon to die—the first of the Apostles who would become a martyr for the faith of Jesus Christ. I do not think, however, that is a good conclusion to draw, for I should not say that Peter loved Christ more than John did. Peter was openhearted, bold, enthusiastic. To my mind, there is something very lovable about Peter and, in my opinion, we need more Peters in the Church of the present day. Though they are rash and impulsive, yet there is fire in them and there is steam in them so that they keep us going. As for John, you can all see that it was well that the man whose head was to lie in the bosom of Christ, who was so affectionately to care for the Master's mother and who was to see His Lord "in the isle that is called Patmos," should behold Him once in His Glory, that He might recognize Him when He again appeared to him. And as for James, we can easily believe that there were special traits of beauty about his character that made him to be one of those three—his early martyr death and the fact that he was the brother of John—certainly lift him up to a very high position among the Apostles of Christ.

There were three, I suppose, in order that there might not be any question concerning their testimony to the Transfiguration. Two or three witnesses were sufficient to establish a case in a court of law. A thing that cannot be proved by three honest men as witnesses, probably can-

not be proved by thirty—and if three men join to testify to a lie, probably thirty will not speak the truth!

These three Apostles were specially chosen to see Christ in His Glory because they were afterwards to behold Him in His greatest agony. I cannot imagine what must have been their feelings when they first saw Him brighter than the sun, and then beheld Him red as the rose with bloody sweat. I know not which sight a man might more desire—to see Christ robed in light, and brighter than the sun, or to see Him crimsoned with His own blood, the very essence of His being poured out in agony for us. “Oh,” said Rutherford, “but was He not bonny when He wore the red shirt of His own blood for you and me?” Oh, the loveliness of an agonizing Savior! I cannot compare Him in these two so strangely differing experiences—one would have needed to see Him in both to understand either of them.

These Apostles saw their Lord in His Glory and also in His agony. And perhaps somebody here is saying, “Oh, I wish I could be favored with those two sights. I wish I could, in vision, if not in actual fact, see the Lord Jesus Christ.” Dear Friend, do not ask for anything of the kind! Be content to see Him by faith, for that is the only sight that you really need. Remember, also, that although Peter saw Christ thus, he yet lived to deny Him. And although James and John saw Him, they also forsook Him and fled with the rest of the Apostles. Well did Peter, therefore, set the Revelation of Christ in the Scriptures even above the Revelation on the Mount of Transfiguration when he wrote, “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His Majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and Glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

Sacred Scripture, accepted by faith, will give me a better view of Christ than even if—

“Tabor’s glorious steep I climb,”

for—

***“At the too-transporting light,
Darkness rushes o’er my sight.”***

Therefore it is better, calmly and quietly to see Christ in the Scriptures, than to wish to behold Him either in His Glory or in His agony.

Another thing which we may learn from our Lord Jesus Christ having shown Himself to His Apostles thus robed in brightness is that we are scarcely aware of the glory of which the human body is capable. Nobody knows what beauty may surround these bodies of ours—they are only “vile” in certain aspects. You know what a difference there is in the appearance of a man when his face is lighted up, as we say, or when he is sitting still and a photographer is taking his portrait. The moment the operator begins to take the cap off the camera, the man’s soul vanishes

and his true likeness is not there at all. But see him when he is full of animation, when he is speaking upon some delightful theme—his face lights up and his whole appearance is changed. I have known some persons who have seemed to me to have a singular brightness upon their face when they have been speaking about Christ and, very often, the faces of the dying are lit up with a wonderful splendor. There is actually, as physicians know, a kind of luminosity that does arise from the human face in certain stages of disease—that is a brightness which is not to be desired, but our flesh is capable of becoming marvelously transformed when it shall please God to make that change in us! We shall, ourselves, wonder that such bodies as these can become so light, so bright, so ethereal! The body of Christ became so and we, in our measure, are to be raised in the likeness of His glorious body. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” And this image of the heavenly, which the Apostles saw upon the holy mountain, is a kind of index to us of the evident possibility of these poor bodies of ours being clothed with supernal splendor!

Now I want to talk to you, though only for a few minutes, about Christ's transfigured face, concerning which our text says, “His face did shine as the sun.”

I. First, from this Truth of God we learn that JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME IN HIS GLORY AS HE WAS BEFORE.

He was transfigured, but He was not transformed into another person. Matthew says that “His face did shine as the sun.” Then, *His face was the same as it was before*. It was His face that the Apostles saw. All the familiar features of His Countenance were there, though illumined with supernatural radiance. So, whatever Glory may come to Christ in the future it will be the same dear lineaments that will be lit up with heavenly brightness.

And as there was no change of feature, so there was no change of nature. *The transfigured Christ was the same Savior whom the Apostles had known before* and I like to think that, though now He reigns exalted high, He is, so far as His identity and Nature are concerned, the same as He was when here below. Nothing has changed in His heart, or in His purposes, or in His designs towards His people!

Further, when He was glorified, *His disciples were with Him*, for Matthew says that He “was transfigured before them.” Do not imagine, dear Friends, that our Lord Jesus Christ will forget His disciples when He is in His highest Glory. No, even then they will be with Him, for this is part of His great intercessory prayer for them, “Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” Circumstances change some people—they rise in the world and then they do not know their poor friends and relations. But Christ was not changed in heart by the wondrous transformation which He had undergone in being clothed in light. After the Transfiguration He spoke to His disciples with the same gentle, human, tender tones as before. He laid His hand upon them in the old-fashioned, familiar way, and said, “Arise, and be not afraid,” just as, when walking upon the water, He had said to them, “It is I. Be not afraid.”

No, dear Friends, there was no change in Him, for, as I have already reminded you, even when He was thus manifesting His Glory, *His talk was concerning His decease at Jerusalem*. There was no swerving from the great objective for which He had descended from Heaven—and there was no change, either, in His feelings or in His manner towards His people.

O Beloved, have you known Christ here? Then you shall know Him hereafter! Have you trusted Him on the Cross? Then He will not disown you when He wears His many crowns and sits upon the Throne of God. You shall say, when you see Him in the day of His greatest Glory, as we sang just now—

***“This is the Man, the exalted Man,
Whom we unseen adore.”***

Oh, yes! You shall see the nail-prints shine resplendent and you shall know that He is, indeed, your old familiar Savior who was with you on earth—and now you are to be with Him forever in Heaven!

II. Our text also teaches us a second lesson, namely, that THE GLORY OF CHRIST SURPASSES ALL HUMAN EXPRESSION.

We can measure the illuminating power of the gas that we burn. We talk of it as having so many candle-power, but will any gentleman who is quick at calculations compute for us the candle-power of the sun? No, that is a task he can never accomplish, for the sun has more light than all other lights put together. So far as we are concerned, all the lights that we can make or imagine cannot equal the sun—he is the very source of all the light that floods the world on our brightest days.

So is it with Christ. *He has in Him all brightness and Glory*. If there is any virtue, if there is any goodness, if there is any excellence, it is all in Him. One said of Henry the Eighth that if the portraits of all the tyrants who ever lived had been lost, they might all be painted again from his one face. And, surely, I may change the expression and say that if all the beauty, all the goodness, all the love and all the kindness that there ever were among men should be forgotten, it might all be reproduced from the Character of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

We cannot really see the full glory of the sun—some have been blinded by looking at him too intently. And *no mortal eye can gaze upon all the splendors of Christ*. You may see much of Him, but there is such a wondrous mystery—such a marvelous excess of Glory about Him that if any man says, “I know Him fully,” he proves that he knows Him not! Paul wrote to the Philippians, “that I may know Him.” Yet he had known Christ for many years. I suppose that he knew a great deal more about Christ in the first year of his Christian life than most of us know after 20 or 30 years, yet, after that long period of gracious instruction which the Holy Spirit had given him, he still had to write, as the expression of his most ardent desire, “that I may know Him,” for he felt that he had not yet comprehended, with all the saints, what are the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ which passes knowledge!

There is an inexpressible Glory about my Master—I can never exaggerate in speaking of it. I can never go to any excess in praising Him! I can never extol Him so much that anyone shall truthfully dare to say to

me, "You have said too much in honor of your Lord." No, if all human tongues were eloquent and all did speak His praise *forever*—and if all angelic voices never spoke except to laud and magnify Him—so glorious is He that the praises of all combined would not rise above the soles of His feet!

III. I gather from our text, in the third place, that THE GLORY OF CHRIST IS ALL MEANT TO CHEER AND TO ENLIGHTEN.

The light of the sun reveals and *Christ also reveals much to us*. In His light we see light. He who knows Christ knows God, who is Light. The light of the Spirit of God is given to such as know Christ. They have an unction from the Holy One and they know all things. Christ has brought immortality to light by His appearing. He is indeed a wondrous Revealer.

Christ, like the sun, is also a great Consoler. What comfort the sun spreads to us! How sad we should be if we were to lose his light! But, oh, what floods of comfort come streaming down to darkened hearts when Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, appears! No lonely watcher on the tower did ever sigh for the dawn as they do who love the Savior and have lost His company—and never were hands so heartily clapped with exultation at the light of the sun reappearing in the far North as we clap ours, in a spiritual sense, when Christ manifests Himself to us, for He is, indeed, "the consolation of Israel."

Jesus, also, like the sun, is a great Healer. The Italians say, "Where the sun comes not, the physician will soon come," but where the sun shines, his beams usually bring at least a measure of health to men. So, where Jesus is, there the sick revive, for healing is found beneath His wings. Thus the face of Jesus is as the rays of the sun, scattering no malicious vapor, no deadly darts of baleful wrath, but only goodness and love. Oh, that we would all look, by faith, upon His blessed face and receive all the benefits that He is waiting and willing to bestow upon us!

IV. I am obliged to speak very briefly upon each point where one might enlarge almost without end, so I ask you to notice, in the fourth place, that THE GLORY OF CHRIST IS SUCH THAT IT MAY BE REFLECTED BY US.

Everybody knows that the sun's light can be reflected. We owe much to reflected light. Well, the Glory of Christ is such that it can shine upon you so that you can see it and then, afterwards, you can reflect it, and refract it, and send it back upon others. You can give to others something of what Christ has given to you—and this is a very blessed thing. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," in order that we may let that light shine out upon others!

John says, "We beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and truth." Well, now you can have *Grace and truth* and you can so live that you shall be the means of bringing Grace to others, and you can so display the Truth of God that some, who have not yet looked to Jesus, can see something of Jesus reflected in you! Some Christians are very poor reflectors, but when we are as we ought to be, we shall be like that invention you see sometimes for underground

rooms where they try to send some of the daylight down by means of a reflector. The poor people of London are, many of them, both literally and spiritually, underground—very little light ever gets to them—so try to be reflectors, to shed the light upon them. Reflectors are not of much use when they get dirty. Unless they are cleaned, they cannot be of much service—and I know some Christians who need a good shower to cleanse them.

There are some professors who do not reflect much credit upon their profession, I am sorry to say, and they generally blame the minister when this is the case. I sometimes wish that some of you Christians would be more careful as to what you do, because the blame for your inconsistencies often falls upon me. If I could do you any good by bearing it, I would not mind, but it is not so—you bring discredit upon the name of one who wishes to live to the Lord in the best way he can, and who has quite enough faults of his own without having all those of other people unjustly laid at his door. “Ah,” say the fault-finders, “that is one of Spurgeon’s people.” Of course they do! And I am blamed for your wrongdoing, although I am not in the least responsible for it. If the sheep go astray because the shepherd has not done his best to keep them from wandering, blame him. But if he has done all he could and the sheep then stray, so that the dog has to go after them, do not say that the shepherd ought to have the dog set on him! O, Beloved, try to reflect the Glory of God so that people shall ask, “What makes that man’s countenance so bright?” And the answer shall be, “He has set his face so close to the Well-Beloved’s face that he reflects the light that shines from it.”

V. Lastly—for our time fails us—we learn that THIS GLORY OF CHRIST WILL SOON BE MORE FULLY DISPLAYED.

In Heaven, the glorified face of Jesus is always to be seen, for we are expressly told that, “His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face.” Their eyes will be specially strengthened so that they can gaze upon it without injury—

“O long-expected day, begin”—

when we, too, shall be caught up to see that wondrous Countenance! Do not your desires often make you feel like a bird that wants to fly, but cannot, because it is held down by a chain? Then you sing—

**“My heart is with Him on His Throne,
And ill can brook delay!
Each moment listening for the voice,
‘Rise up, and come away.’”**

They who behold Christ in Heaven, even from the outermost rank of the saints, are to be envied above all earthly kings and princes. One said to an old saint, “You cannot see God’s face and live.” “Then,” he replied, “let me see God’s face and die!” And I will be glad enough to die a hundred deaths if I may but see Christ! One hour with Christ in Glory will more than make up for a weary lifetime of service, or suffering, or poverty, or persecution. I have often tried to imagine what the first five minutes with Jesus Christ in Heaven will be, but I have sought in vain to picture the novelty and freshness of that wondrous time when the soul, filled with amazement, will exclaim, “The half has never been told me!” The Queen of Sheba was astonished when she saw all the glory of King

Solomon—but he was a mere nobody compared with our Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, what will it be to see Him?

Now I close with this thought—*the glorified face of Jesus is also to be revealed here on earth.* In a short time, according to His promise, He will come. I do not know that He is coming tomorrow, but I do not know that He is *not* coming then. His return may be a thousand years hence—perhaps, fifty thousand years hence, or it may be before that clock strikes again. But, whenever He comes, He will fulfill His own words, “Surely I come quickly.” One thing is certain, He will come again. In like manner as He went up into Heaven, He will return in His own proper Person, enthroned upon the clouds of Heaven, to hold the last assize. And, my Hearers, you will be there, every one of you! As surely as you are here, you will be there! When the earth rocks and the sky shakes, you will be there! When stars are falling like the leaves of autumn, and when Heaven and earth shall flee away from His Presence, you will be there! And, whether you love Him or not, you shall see Him, for “every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him.”

Are you ready for His appearing? Say not, “It will be a long while before it happens.” It may not be. It may be tonight. But if it is a long time, yet He will surely come and then where will you be? If you live and die without the Savior, how will you face Him? His eyes are as a flaming fire to search you out and burn into your very soul. Oh, seek His face this very hour! It still shines as the sun. You know that when you are out of doors and the sun is shining, you do not ask, “Where is the sun?” Why, my dear man, you cannot help finding out where he is! “Oh, but how can I look at the sun?” My dear man, nobody needs to ask such a question as that! You just open your eyes and look! It is the simplest thing in the world to look. And so, to look to Jesus, which is faith, is the simplest, easiest thing ever performed by man! And that is why it is so difficult to many people.

That is another paradox. If it were *really* difficult, men would do it, but because it is so easy, they say they cannot. “If the Prophet had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it?” said the servants to Naaman, their master. “How much rather, then, when he says to you, Wash and be clean?” And so, when the message is, “Look and live,” you proud gentlemen want to have a much more elaborate system of salvation! You do not like to simply look to Christ, that you may be saved. But if there is a poor soul, anywhere, who is willing to have a whole Christ for nothing, he may have Him, and have Him now! Accept Him and God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 16:24-28; 17:1-13.**

Matthew 16:24, 25. *Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever will save his life shall lose it: and whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.* This is the law of self-sacrifice, based on the Sacrifice of Christ and leading up to the complete sacrifice of the re-

deemed. We are not our own—we are bought with a price. To try to keep ourselves to ourselves would be acting contrary to the whole spirit of the redemption which Christ has worked for us. And that is the last thing that any Christian should think of doing.

26-28. *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There are some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.* By which, I suppose He meant that they should see Him in His majesty—that, notwithstanding the Cross, they should see something of His crown of Glory, as they did when they beheld Him after His Resurrection, and as they did, even better, when He ascended on high. And as they did, some of them, in vision, when they saw Him standing at the right hand of God, even the Father.

Matthew 17:1. *And after six days.* Luke says, “about eight days after these sayings,” but I suppose he counted the day before and the day after. “After six days”—and the first day was, probably, the first day of the week, so he was now coming to another Lord’s-Day. One of the high Christian festivals of the life of Christ was about to be celebrated. Jesus was not yet dead, therefore it was not the Resurrection that was celebrated on that day, but the Transfiguration. “After six days”—six days’ teaching concerning the Cross before He revealed His Glory.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, there are many in these days who delight to speak almost exclusively about the glory of the Second Advent. Now, God forbid that we should be silent concerning that great theme! But I think our teaching concerning it must be given after six days’ consideration of the sufferings of Christ. Let those who will, say, “We preach Christ *glorified*.” I mean to still say, with Paul, “But we preach Christ *crucified*.” When I have had my six days for that topic, then am I right glad to have another day to speak concerning Christ’s Glory. We must never forget His death—all our immortal hopes are centered in the death of our great Substitute! “After six days”—

1, 2. *Jesus took Peter, James, and John, his brother, and brought them up unto an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.* “White and glistening,” says Luke. “Exceedingly white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can whiten them,” says Mark.

3. *And, behold.* As if this was a great wonder! The Transfiguration of Christ could scarcely be called miraculous, for it is according to the Nature of Christ that His face should shine and His very raiment become glorious.

3. *There appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him.* Moses, the great representative of the Law of God, and Elijah, the chief of the Prophets—one who had died, and one who had entered Heaven without dying—thus representing both the quick and the dead!

4. *Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if You will, let us make here three tabernacles; one for You, and*

one for Moses, and one for Elijah. If Peter had known that hymn by Dr. Watts—

***“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss,”***

he would have thought it appropriate to sing at that moment! And whenever we get up on the mountain, we have no desire to go down again! Our one thought is, “Oh, that this happy experience would last! Oh, that we might stay in this blessed company forever!” Yet our highest religious excitements cannot continue, even as the sea is not always at flood tide. The talk between those three—Jesus, Moses and Elijah—must have been well worth hearing. I would like to have been one of the three Apostles, to listen to the conversation of the three glorified ones. We know what they talked about, for Luke tells us that they “spoke of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” And it is very singular that the Greek word which he used to describe Christ’s decease is the word, “exodus.” They “spoke of His *exodus* which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Moses knew all about the exodus out of Egypt, and what a type that was of Christ’s departure out of this world—the death of the lamb—the sprinkling of the blood—the slaying of the firstborn among the Egyptians, even as Christ smote sin, death, and Hell—the triumphant coming out of Israel with silver and gold, setting forth Christ’s Ascension to His Father with all His precious treasures captured from the hand of the enemy! How changed must the feelings of Elijah have been since the day when he said, “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away,” for now he was seeing the King in His Glory, and talking with Him about His approaching departure!

How did Peter, and James, and John know that these two men were Moses and Elijah? They had never seen them in the flesh, yet they evidently recognized them—so, as they knew people whom they had not known on earth, I am sure that I shall know in Heaven those whom I did know here—I shall have the advantage of them in that respect. I suppose they said to each other, as soon as they saw these men, “That is Moses! That is Elijah!” Yet they had never seen them—and shall not we, when we meet our dear kindred and friends, say at once, “That is So-and-So, with whom I took sweet counsel on earth when we walked to the House of God in company”? Surely, the mutual recognition of the saints hardly needs a better support than this passage supplies!

5. *While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them.* The Shekinah cloud, which was the type of the Divine Presence in the wilderness—bright, yet a cloud, softening the excessive Glory of the face of Jesus with its overshadowing, yet casting no dimness upon it—“a bright cloud overshadowed them.”

5, 6. *And behold a Voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear you Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.* We cannot bear for God to come too near us, for we are such frail earthen vessels that if He reveals His Glory too much within us, we are ready to break.

7. *And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.* Yes, it was only Jesus who could give them comfort. And I have to say—

***“Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy, begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His Grace removes my sins.”***

The hand of a Man touched the Apostles, and the voice of a Man said to them, “Arise, and be not afraid.”

8. *And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.* And they did not need any other man “save Jesus only.” Let Moses, and Elijah, and all others go—so long as Christ remains. There will be the most blessed company for us so long as He abides with us!

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, staying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man is risen again from the dead. And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?* “May we not tell the story, of what has happened on this mountain? Elijah has come! If we publish this news, it may convince even the scribes that You are the Messiah.”

11, 12. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatever they liked. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them.* How He comes back to that point! Evidently the chief thought in our Savior's mind was concerning His suffering. On another occasion He said, “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!” As the magnetic needle always points to the pole, so did the heart of Jesus always point to the Cross.

13. *Then the disciples understood that He spoke unto them of John the Baptist.* John had indeed come “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” yet Herod had put him to death, as other wicked men would deal with his Lord and Master whose way he so gloriously prepared.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—421, 793, 337.

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NO. 3440

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 1915.

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

***“Hear you Him.”
Matthew 17:5.***

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured, there came a Voice from the bright, overshadowing cloud, which said, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear you Him.” It was the Voice of the Father concerning His Son—a testimony to His Person, a notification of His office, an announcement of His authority to teach and to legislate. You can understand how imperative it then was for those who heard it to heed Him. But now He is gone up from us. He has entered into the excellent Glory—He no more teaches in our streets, yet still, as though present with us, He speaks to us. By the written Word, His sayings are handed down to us Infallibly. Often times, when the Holy Spirit rests upon God’s servants, they become as the voice of Christ to us, and when that same blessed Spirit, as the Comforter, brings to our remembrance the things of Christ, does it not seem as though Jesus, Himself, spoke to our souls? The admonition is not out of date—it has not lost its telling point or its vital force. Still does the Father say to us concerning His well-beloved Son, “Hear you Him.” Let us proceed to meditate on this sacred charge. The three little words may give rise to four short questions. *Why? What? How? When?*

I. WHY SHOULD WE HEAR HIM?

It might serve for a sufficient answer, had we no other reply, because God, Himself, commands us! This injunction comes of the Father, “Hear you Him.” Over and over again are we enjoined to listen to the voice of Christ. Every messenger from God ought to have our respectful attention—how much more the greatest of all messengers—that Messenger of the Covenant, the Messiah, the Sent One, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession? Did not Jehovah, Himself, say, “This is My Son”? It seemed reasonable that the Son should receive more reverence than any of the servants. If senators and patriots, counselors and Prophets, had been stoned and cast out of the vineyard, deference might yet be paid to the Son! If their perverseness had refused Him homage, their scruples might have sheltered Him from indignity. Surely they would not go so far as to cast out the Son, Himself! There is a willfulness, a defection of heart, an enormity of sin in refusing to hear the Christ of God, for which it is difficult to find terms. Appointed, anointed, commissioned of the Fa-

ther to speak to us, to confer with us, to make known among us the mind and will of our great and gracious Sovereign, it becomes treason and blasphemy of the highest order and the deepest dye for us to refuse to heed His Presence or listen to His words!

Why hear Him? do you ask? *Does not our lord Jesus Christ, Himself, deserve to be heard?* Peerless among the princes of Heaven, is He not very God of very God? And immaculate among the children of men, is He not Man of the substance of His mother? Here is a double claim upon our attention. Beaming with Divinity, instinct with Humanity, He speaks as never man spoke, clothing the highest oracles in the most familiar parables. And will you not hear what this God-Man has to say? Is He not perfect in wisdom, pure in motive and undeviating in truthfulness? To whom should we listen, if we turn away from Him? He has all those high sanctions which should claim our allegiance and all those sweet traits of Character which should attract our regard. If we will not listen to such an one as Jesus of Nazareth, the gentle, and meek, and lowly, yet the truthful, the honest, and the brave—to whom will we ever lend an attentive ear? O sons of men, there was never mentor or orator so worthy of your regard as Jesus Christ! Never philosopher who had such maxims to deliver, or such mysteries to unfold as this Man—the Son of God—the Incarnate Wisdom!

Why will you not hear Him, when *the message He has come to communicate concerns yourselves*, your present and future welfare, your most solemn interests? The tidings He brings are, indeed, laden with ten thousand blessings for us, if we will but incline our ears and listen to them. He comes to redress our grievances, to retrieve our disasters, to redeem our souls, to secure our prosperity, to effect our salvation! As an Ambassador from God, He comes, not to treat upon small matters, to settle petty disputes, or to advise upon local or temporary affairs, but with supreme authority to show how sinful man may be reconciled to his Maker, how the foul stains of transgression may be washed away and scarlet sins become white as snow! He comes to tell us how we may escape the impending doom of Hell and how we may attain an inheritance in Heaven! To fit us for that high estate, and that blessed society, He comes to cleanse us from our corruptions and to endow us with a nature that is Divine, and faculties that are suited to the celestial Glory! Such a message as this should enamor our very selfishness and compel our ambition to regard it with favor. Hear you Him! O you sick and wounded, will you not listen to the Physician? O you bankrupt debtors, will you not listen to the Jubilee trumpet that proclaims your debts paid and your forfeited rights restored? O you outcasts, wandering all forlorn, in climates uncongenial to your health, your peace, your homely joys—will you not heed the voice of a Guide who comes to conduct you in safety to your fatherland? O you despairing souls, He sets before you an open door! You famished poor, He invites you to a banquet—a banquet richly provisioned with all the dainties of eternal love! With such words upon His lips, such

blessed news to bring to such needy creatures, our Lord Jesus Christ may well claim to be heard!

There is a further argument which ought to have thrilling force among full many of you, my Hearers. *With what zest should we, who profess to be His disciples, hear Him.* Years ago some of us took His easy yoke upon our shoulders and we bless His name it has never galled us—neither are we weary of the load. He is our Master and our Lord, and if He is so, surely our proper place is at His feet. It is an ill thing of us, and untruthful, if we call Him Master, and yet will not believe what He teaches! If we say to Him, “Rabboni,” and yet turn aside to hail some fellow creature—be he a noted saint long since dead, or a party leader who still survives among us, as our captain and commander-in-chief. If Peter is our master, let us call him so! If Calvin is our master, let us call him so! And if Wesley is our master, let us call him so—but if we are disciples of Jesus, then let us follow Jesus—and follow Him with other men only so far as we perceive they followed Christ! Hear you Him, O you disciples, if you are His disciples. Will you enlist as His soldiers and shrink from His lead? Will you engage to be His servants and yet violate His orders? Will you who declare that He is your Chief and wear His uniform, cede your homage to other masters? No, by all that is honest and just, pure and comely, and of good report, the shame would fester in every Believer’s conscience! You call Him, “Master and Lord,” and you say well, for so He is—but prove yourselves to be truly His disciples by listening to Him!

To the rest—(I am grieved at heart that I should have to speak of the rest, but we know there is such a remnant here)—to those who are not His disciples, there is an argument, that if it counts not now, will count hereafter. You must hear Him in the Day of Grace, or else *you shall hear Him in that Day of Judgment* and perish forever! Do you refuse to hear Christ? There are not any tidings of mercy to be heard elsewhere! “See that you refuse not Him that speaks, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him that speaks from Heaven.” O Sinners, hear you the Savior’s voice! O wanderers, hear your Shepherd’s voice! O you dying, hear your Physician’s voice! I will add, O you dead, hear you the voice of the Great Quickener, for the time is come that they who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man—and they that hear Him shall live! “Do you Hear Him?”

Thus with general arguments suitable to all and with special arguments suitable for those who have believed—and for those who have not believed—we leave with you a few of the reasons why. Our second catchword is—

II. WHAT?

What are we to hear? “Hear you *Him.*” There is much to hear concerning the Person of Christ, the actions of Christ, the sufferings of Christ and the offices of Christ—but the fullness of all Revelation is embodied in

Him. Greater than the greatest sermon that was ever preached in the world, is the Word made flesh! He is the manifestation of God, the brightness of the Father's Glory and the express image of His Person. Would you know God, you must know Christ. "He that has seen Me" (it is His own testimony) "has seen the Father." In the Character of Jesus, the Character of God is reflected with ineffable purity! The invisible God is in Him, made visible to men as far as the sense of faith can behold Him—infinitely farther than the natural senses can discern. The Infinite can never be brought down to the level of our puny intelligence so as to be comprehended by us, yet in the Presence of Christ we are conscious of the Infinite. It is palpable to us as a mountain that cannot be scaled, but under whose shadow we can find shelter. And when we look to Christ, and listen to His voice, we are as those who gaze on the vast ocean in which, to our poor minds, the Infinite is mirrored forth, for, as far as the vision can stretch, there is no bound, no shore beyond—and His Words sound on and on like the mighty sea through time that knows no limit, and through eternity that has no end! He is the Wisdom of God and the Power of God. Hear Him, then! Hear Him! Let His voice break on your ears as the music of the main, in that melodious anthem, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Or in that thrilling utterance, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Hear *Him*, I say, hear *Him*! As the sound of many waters, as the chorus of the waves, hear this—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." View Christ as a Child who must be about His Father's business and as a Man who must work the works of His Father while it is day! Know Him as a Teacher and a Guide—mark His zeal to minister and His devotedness to suffer! Then let poets sing of "Nature," if they please. Let them call it "the thin veil which half conceals and half reveals the face and lineaments of God," as some of them have done. But let Christians bear me witness that the simple tale of Christ living among men, with which we delight to make ourselves more and more familiar, unveils the attributes of God in words and deeds of mercy and compassion, of patience and long-suffering, of sweet mindfulness and great marvel in such clearness as days of sunshine and moonlight nights could never teach you, though more than three-score and ten of these revolving seasons should pass over your head!

But especially read God in the death of Jesus! Behold the Divine Justice gleaming there, for He wakens His sword that He may sheath it in the heart of the Great Shepherd, so that the sheep may escape its keen edge! See there the love of God, who spared not His own Son! See all the Divine attributes marvelously blended on the Cross in the bleeding Person of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of the Father. Hear Him! And now do you hear tell of Him as He goes beyond the stars and enters the pearl gate to take possession of His well-earned crown? Let us hear Him there and understand that He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lively to make intercession for us.

Hear the voice of His Ascension as it proclaims the justification of those for whom He died and rose again—and the assurance of the eternal perfection of all those for whom His blood was shed—“for this Man has perfected forever them that are set apart by the one Sacrifice that He has offered.” Hear Him! His very Person and everything connected with Him speaks with trumpet tongue! Hear what God says to you by Him! Oh, I wish that we were more attentive to the Lord Jesus Christ, but I am afraid many of us are very superficial in our considerations of our Savior. We do not labor “to comprehend with all saints what are the heights and depths.” God speaks to dull ears. Though His accents are far more sweet than music when He speaks by Jesus Christ, yet a very large part of what God has thus said to us, many of you have not understood.

Let me remind you, dear Friends, that the Lord Jesus has many forms of speaking—many varieties of utterance. Sometimes *He instructs*. He is a skillful Teacher and He has spoken by the mouth of His Apostles, as well as with His own lips. The Truths of God that were uttered in His name, like the miracles that were worked in His name, have the impress of His Sovereign authority. Hence that summary of Christian Doctrine which Paul was inspired of the Holy Spirit to open up, was the plain result of the life of Jesus—a key to interpret what He said and did. Did you read in the Gospels how He obeyed the Father? In the Epistles you read of that obedience as a righteousness imputed to all who believe. Do you find in the Gospels a minute account of the Lord Jesus—the Epistles will tell you that His death was a propitiation for our sins. Do the Gospels furnish you with proofs of His rising from the dead? The Epistles will assure you that He was raised for our justification! Do you learn from the Gospels that He ascended up into Heaven? The Epistles will teach you that He always lives to make intercession for us! We are bound to take our theology from the entire Scriptures.

Where, and when, and by whomever Christ speaks to us, let us hear Him! The well of undefiled theology is the Word of God. We err when we pin our profession to creeds of human devising. Creeds are exceedingly useful and I hope they will never be discarded. In fact, they never can be, for every man has a creed, whether he likes to think so or not. He has a consistent or an inconsistent one. But our creed must not be the dogmas of general councils, or the opinions of learned men, much less must it be the reflection of “modern thought,” which is full of infidelity—it must be the Truths of God which we have received directly from the Word of God! And surely, after reading controversies upon theology, one has often said, like David, “Oh, that one would give me a drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem that is within the gate! Oh, that I could get a drink of the water from the wellhead from Scripture itself!” And you do well, my Brothers and Sisters, if your only Doctor of Divinity is Christ—and if He is your only body of divinity, for, indeed, was there ever any other body of divinity under Heaven except Jesus Christ? Let my Doctrine be what

Christ taught! Let my reason for believing it be that He said it! Let me sit at His feet and learn of Him, and let Him be my Authority. I shall need no better argument, if I gather my reason from the fact that He has declared it!

But the Word of the Lord is not always the voice of instruction—it is sometimes spoken in peremptory tones, *commanding us*. The Lord Jesus Christ has given many absolute injunctions to His people. Some there are among us—we grieve to confess it—who are not so fond of His precepts as of His Doctrines. They will hear the preaching that sets forth the precious Doctrines of Grace and the sweet promises of the Covenant with very great delight, as I hope we all do, but at the mention of the precepts and practical obligations, they are offended and afraid that there is more of a legal twang than of a Gospel tone in the sermon! Perhaps such fears have too often been justified. At the same time, Brothers and Sisters, we should always be ready to suffer the word of exhortation and be as content to do for Christ that which He enjoins, as to get from Christ that which He freely bestows! That saying of the mother of Jesus to those who waited at the feast of Cana is good advice for us all. She said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” Does Christ command separation from the world—separate yourselves and come out! Does Christ command bearing your cross and going outside the camp? Take up your cross cheerfully and follow Him outside the camp! Does Christ command integrity of character and holiness of life—oh, that we might be blameless in the one and exemplary in the other! Does He command love, a kindly affection for the Brothers and Sisters and a practical benevolence towards all mankind—let us diligently cherish both! Does He command us to forgive injuries, to show a peaceable disposition—then let us bear and forbear in advance of all the maxims of society, stimulated by the noble example of our Lord and obedient to the Law of His mouth! Do you call the blessed Jesus your Lord and Master? “Hear you Him.” Heed His precepts, as well as listen to His Doctrine! Often, too, by way of direction, does our Lord speak to us. How wisely would our lives be ordered, did we simply and sincerely follow Christ’s guidance! We often make glaring mistakes in trivial matters because we fancy ourselves able to direct our own steps in plain, common paths. Many a man has gone straight through an intricate course because he has prayed earnestly—and in answer to prayer he has found out the narrow channel between the quicksands and the rocks—yet on other occasions that same man has committed folly in Israel because he thought it was fair sailing, and he did not want to take the Divine Pilot on board. Let us, in all things, great or small, ask counsel of Christ! And when once we know His will, let us never have a second thought! It is not ours to reason or to question, but it is ours to suffer loss and endure reproach, if necessary, when we have His orders. The Christian’s, like the soldier’s duty is to obey. Be it to do or to die, it is imperative that he lay his judgment at the feet of his Commander. His judgment is never more sound than when he defers to his

Chief, demurs to nothing, and decides at the spur of prescript or prohibition. With His charge for your chart, be ready to hear His direction!

Nor is there any lack in another particular. Full often, blessed be His name, Christ gives us the *word of consolation*. Unhappy are those disciples who turn a deaf ear to these sweet refreshments. We know some who are so sickly and depressed in spirit, that “their soul abhors all manner of meat, and they draw near unto the gates of death.” “My soul refuses to be comforted,” says the Psalmist, and there are persons in that pitiable condition. But, dear Friends, when Jesus deigns to comfort, surely it is wise to obey the injunction, “Hear you Him.” Why, if I could not believe the promise of my father, or the promise of my brother, yet must I believe the promise of my Savior! He cannot deceive! He would not speak flattering words! It were not possible for Him to buoy me up with specious consolations, showing me the bright side of the picture and veiling the darker shadows. Oh, no! He, Himself, has said, “If it were not so, I would have told you.” He is perfectly ingenuous in what He says. He conceals nothing which is profitable for us to know! He is, Himself, transparent Truth. When He says to me—to you—“Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God: believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions,” shall we not dismiss our fears, renew our hearty confidence in Him, believe in the many mansions and look forward to them? And if He says to us (as He does), “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” If He declares, “I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands,” should we not ground our full assurance on His simple assertion? Are we to question what He affirms because it seems too good to be true? May it not remind us of that famous speech of the Lord by the mouth of His servant Isaiah—“As the heavens are above the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Oh, bow your ear, you mournful one, disconsolate as you are! I marvel not that you refuse earthly sedatives, but I wonder much that you should deny yourself these heavenly restoratives! The oil and wine that Jesus brings is healing and healthful. The ointment that He puts upon you will not aggravate your sores, but will cure your malady! Yield yourself to His generous treatment! The spirit of Christ never comforts unwisely. Rejoice that He has given the Holy Spirit and still speaks by the Spirit unto the mourners in Zion.

I might linger over these and kindred reflections. When our Lord speaks by way of warning and bids you, “Flee from the wrath to come,” hear you Him! When He speaks by way of exhortation, or of invitation, saying, “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” then, “hear you Him!” If His tone should seem somewhat severe to your souls, and your flesh should revolt against it, yet, “Hear you Him.” His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh—always sweet smelling and healing like the myrrh. Oh, regard Him! Catch His

faintest accents! Treasure His words. Take your tablets and write down what He says—but let your tablets be your heart's best flesh, made soft by the power of the regenerating Spirit! Pray the Holy Spirit to write upon your souls, to carve deeply upon your hearts, all that Jesus Christ may speak to you! This is what we would have you hear. "Hear you Him." The third word about which some remarks were to cluster was—

III. HOW?

How shall we hear Him? We have shown you that He speaks in the Word of Scripture, that He speaks through His sent servants, that He speaks by His Holy Spirit to the hearts of His people. How shall we hear Him, then? Undoubtedly it becomes us to listen with devout reverence. Let us revere every Truth of Scripture for the sacred Authority with which it comes to us. Every rightly constituted mind must feel shocked at the way in which certain parts of God's Word are treated by the thoughtless, as well as the profane! I believe, Brothers and Sisters, that the habit of trifling with the minutest detail of God's Word is very sinful. I know that it has led to much mischief in the Church of God. I remember hearing a minister speak of the controversy about Baptism with palpable levity. It made me shudder when he said that for his part, he did not care two cents about Baptism! Is there not a Baptism of the Lord's commandment? Some sort of Baptism there is, at any rate, which Christ has enjoined. God forbid that I should scoff at it! Where is your loyalty to the Son of God if you rudely snap your fingers at any ordinance He has appointed? You that hear may account it of no consequence, but He that declared it to us well knew its profound importance, for He said, "Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven." You have coined a new proverb to supersede the old statutes. "There are no sects in Heaven," you inform us. Then, having forged a text, you supply us with a commentary. "These points are really nonessential," you tell us, "it would promote love and concord utterly to ignore them." No, Sirs, but the points of which you speak so lightly are not mere specks on the horizon—they are more like lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night—let them be to you for signs and for seasons! "They are not essential for salvation," says one. Be it so, and yet they may be essential for approbation, I reply. As a servant, "Will you willfully offend because the penalty is to be reprov'd, not to be discharged? As a pupil in the school of Christ, will you violate His Laws because you will only be put to the bottom of the class, and no one supposes you will be expelled from the school? Has it come to this with you, professing Christian, that to escape from Hell is the only thing you care about? Are you of so mean, so beggarly a spirit, that, provided you get saved, it is all you are concerned about?" Dear Friends, after we are saved, it is essential to the peace of our conscience that we search the Word of God to know the will of Christ concerning us and that in every particular, as far as we are able, we endeavor to do His will! You may err through ignorance, not

knowing that you are doing wrong. That is a sin, a sin concerning which Christ says that you shall be beaten with few stripes. But it is an aggravation of sin when a person does not wish to know His Lord's will—no, refuses to enquire, and thinks it quite unimportant—for such willfulness the servant, to use our Lord's own words, "shall be beaten with many stripes." God save us from the censure, as well as the penalty of that transgression! Never treat with levity any text of Scripture. Never suppose that because the Truth of God is considered small by the men of your generation, that it is, therefore, inconsiderable in the eyes of Him who rules throughout all generations. The sweepings of the lapidary's shop, where diamonds are polished, are precious—how much more should each member of the whole Church be jealous of every minute particle of the Truth of God! Small errors are the seedlings from which gigantic heresies spring up. The more accord with the mind of Christ there is in the individual disciples of Jesus, the more concord there will be in the visible Church. Unity is not promoted by endorsing one another's faults, but by conspiring with one another to maintain the Master's statutes!

Let us hear believingly. Some are troubled with doubts and, fears, and others foster them as if they were accessories to faith and proofs of a naive disposition! We have heard from the philosophic side that there is more faith in doubting than in crediting the revealed Word. Really, such cant I do not care to quote. The marvel is that it gets currency for an hour. The class of doubters we have abroad in the present day may well be always declaring that they are honest, since there is so much reason to suspect the honesty of their doubts. And then there are Christian people who think it a commendable humility and an excellent feature of experience, to entertain doubts, to make a profession of fears and to cast reflections on "the full assurance of faith," as though it were presumptuous and unbecoming! From the tone of their conversation you might infer that the promise of the Gospel is to him that doubts and hesitates to show his allegiance, rather than to him that believes and is baptized, that he shall be saved! The new birth is a grave subject to their thinking. It fills them with terror, instead of inspiring them with hope. But their morbid views are all wrong, my Brothers and Sisters! What Christ has said is true, Infallibly true! It is not to be lightly questioned, but implicitly relied on. Be it ours to accept from His lips whatever of teaching, of consolation, or promise He may utter. And let us hear Him expectantly, with the full assurance of hope, knowing that He is faithful who has promised. Especially in the matter of prayer, let us encourage the utmost confidence that He will hear us. Have you not caught yourselves sometimes telling of the remarkable answers you have obtained, as if it caused you the greatest possible surprise that you should ask and receive? Meet and right it is, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that you should relate what God has done for you—but is it quite right for you to express astonishment

that He has fulfilled His own engagements? Should it be accounted strange by God's own children that their Father keeps His word? Are His oracles so equivocal, that when they are literally fulfilled, we lift up our hands in blank amazement? Not so, Beloved! Better far the saying of that aged Christian woman, who, when she heard a young disciple relate the answer he had got to the prayer he had offered, and finish up his story with the exclamation, "Wasn't it surprising?" replied, "No! it is just like Him." As it is His custom to keep His word, let us always hear Him expectantly!

And let me charge you, beloved Friends, that you take heed by the power of God's Spirit always to hear Jesus Christ *obediently*. There is a way of hearing that is worse than not hearing at all. Who are so deaf as those that will not hear or hearing, will not obey? How often has the Lord called some of you—and yet you have not come to Him? Though He has taught you much, you have not learned anything. Though He has exhorted you many times, you have not stirred. Though He has frequently warned you, you have taken no heed. Oh, that we obeyed, instantly obeyed Him, scrupulously obeyed Him, universally obeyed Him! Oh that we enquired and ascertained His will with an eagerness to do His bidding! Gladly would I be like a cork upon the waters, that feels every breath of the wind and every rise of the wave—not like some great steam vessel, that needs a storm to make it roll. Would to God we were delicately sensitive to the mind of Christ like the photographer's sensitive plate that catches the image as it passes and permanently retains the reflection, so that when Jesus Christ's perfect image comes before our soul, it might be there stamped upon us to abide evermore! Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, ponder this pensively. Pray over it privately. Ask yourselves personally, are we all thus hearing the Lord Jesus Christ? Come to close quarters—let us put it pointedly—are any of you living in habitual disregard of your Lord's will? If so, you are unhappy, I know you are! You cannot be happy until you come and yield yourself up to Him. What is the true posture of a servant but to wait his master's beck and bidding? Where can you expect to know the sweetness of Christ but in acknowledging Him as your Lord and yielding your souls in allegiance to Him? Cry to God, then, for cleansing from the errors of the past! Invoke His help to make your obedience complete, now and in days to come. We know we are not saved by *our* obedience—we are saved already by *His* obedience—but for the love we bear His name, what was our gain, we count our loss, and we desire to render ourselves as living sacrifices unto Him, which is but our reasonable service! Thus let us hear Him.

I beseech you, you who listen to me from Sabbath to Sabbath, never to take any of your beliefs from my sermons unless you can verify them from His sayings! I would cheerfully blot out from your recollection every dogma that has no authority but my own. I would urge you to give it like chaff to the wind. Let your soul be established upon the Truth of God as it is in Jesus! "Hear you Him." Whatever He says, accept beyond appeal.

Let that be your beginning and your ultimatum, the beginning of your confidence, and the end of all your controversy! Should Christ's teaching take you out of our connection, or out of any association where you now are, never mind, follow it! Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads, follow His guidance! Don't be foolish enough to take up with impressions that are merely of the flesh. Don't be forever changing and shifting with the currents of opinion. Don't have windmills on the brain. Read well, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Having done so, if nobody in this world beside yourself professes to believe the Truth that Christ has taught, believe it all the more intensely! Be concerned that so much dishonor should be done Him by so many being in ignorance or error, but be concerned to honor Him yourself by holding that Truth firmly which others overlook or despise. "The Bible, and the Bible alone," said Chillingworth, in that oft quoted opinion of his, "is the religion of Protestants," but I am afraid it is hardly a fact. It ought to be true and it would be true, were we true to Christ. It is the professed religion of Christendom! The Word of God applied to the soul by the eternal Spirit becomes to us the voice of Christ, and we desire to hear it, God helps us to hear it! One more question remains to be answered.

IV. WHEN?

When shall we hear Him? The reply must be, *Evermore!* Hear Him when you begin your Christian career. "Hear, and your soul shall live." "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It is the hearing of Him that quickens the soul. "Incline your ear," He says, "and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live." Nor are we to give up hearing Christ after we have found life in Him—we are to continue still learning of Him. We shall never grow so wise that we do not need Him for a Teacher. We shall never be so experienced that we can find our own way, and no longer need Him as a Guide. We shall have to keep on hearing Him when our locks are gray and our age is reverend. When we are on the banks of Jordan, and our feet almost tread the hallowed soil of the border land—even then, Brothers and Sisters, we must still hear Him! And then across the river His voice will greet us. We shall forever hear Him in the upper skies. The great matter, however—great because it presses so heavily on our present interest and our future destiny—is that we hear Him now! "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years." May we have Grace to hear Him now. If we do not hear Him now, speaking with the voice of mercy, tomorrow we may hear Him say, "I never knew you." It would be a terrible hearing that, "Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity!" The thunder of those dreadful words will be everlasting! May God, of His infinite Grace, save us from hearing the dreary sentence of the Judge by enabling us to now hear the cheery welcome of the Savior!

And do you not think, dear Friends, it would be well that Believers should have a special time for hearing Christ every day? Might you not mark off a quarter of an hour in the day for hearing what God the Lord shall speak? In the middle of London, amidst all the din of traffic, the sweetest chimes cannot be heard—they are drowned. But that same music, when other sounds are hushed, will be extremely pleasant. We have the rush and crash of the world in our ears nearly all day. If we want to hear Christ's voice, we must sometimes get alone and sit in silence. It is the best commerce a man can engage in—it brings in the richest treasure! He will be poor who does not set apart some time in which He can listen to the voice of Christ by searching the Scriptures, by drawing near to God, by watching and prayer. Even the public Prayer Meetings should be second to private intercessions. "This ought you to have done," I would say of the Prayer Meeting, "not to have left the other undone." Both should be regarded, for oftentimes in the morning, if one can get a text of Scripture and put it under the tongue, it will keep the mouth sweet, the breath sweet and the heart sweet all day long! And at night, when one is weary, it gives calmness to our slumbers and even makes our dreams pleasant, if we can get a kiss from the lips of the Spouse in some joyful promise, some precious portion of the Word of God! "Hear you Him," my Brothers and Sisters! "Hear you Him." The Lord unstop your ears to hear, O you that have never heard Him! And you that have heard Him often, may you hear Him yet more frequently and more familiarly till He shall say unto you, "Come up here," and you shall finally enter into His joy! God bless each one of us richly for Christ's sake. Amen.

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

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

VOICES FROM THE EXCELLENT GLORY

NO. 909

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 9, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from Heaven, saying, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased.”
Matthew 3:16, 17.*

*“While he yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a Voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased; hear Him.”
Matthew 17:5.*

*“Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a Voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”
John 12:28.*

THAT our Lord was the true Messiah of God was proved by His answering to all those prophecies which described the promised Messenger of the Covenant. His miracles also proved that God was with Him, and from their character they marked Him out as the ordained Deliverer. To open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears were works foretold as denoting the Messiah. His teachings were equally clear proofs of His mission—there is about them an authority found nowhere else. The words which He spoke are Spirit and Life. They are self-evidencing in their elevation, purity, perfection. “Never man spoke like this Man.”

His Testimony is unique and bears a majesty of Deity about it which bespeaks itself. His resurrection also was a clear proof that he was sent of God. He was “declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead.” But in addition to all this and a great deal more, the Divine Father was pleased, also, to speak out of Heaven with an audible voice to declare that Jesus of Nazareth was no other than the Son of God and the promised Christ for whom the faithful were watching. Thrice did the majesty of Heaven break its sublime silence and bear witness to the Incarnate God. The three occasions, as mentioned in our texts, are most instructive, and shall command our attention this morning. May the Holy Spirit instruct us.

Without any further preface, let us consider the three Testimonies given to our Lord by the voice of the Most High. If time permits we will then notice one or two instructive circumstances connected with them. And we will close by drawing a great practical lesson from them.

I. In endeavoring to bring before your attentive minds THE THREE OCCASIONS ON WHICH THE FATHER, BY A VOICE FROM HEAVEN, BORE WITNESS TO HIS SON, I would invite you to observe, first, when these voices were heard.

Angels had proclaimed His birth, and wise men had seen His star, but the Divine Voice was not heard during the first thirty years of His sojourn. The three celestial utterances were reserved for the brief period of His public life. The first came at the commencement of His public ministry—at His Baptism. The second some little time after the central point of His ministry. And the last, just before He closed His work, by being offered up. It is a fit thing to pray that all our works may be begun, continued, and ended under the Divine blessing.

Certainly our Lord Jesus Christ, as to His public work, both began it, continued it, and ended it with the publicly declared witness of the Most High. How cheering a thing it is at the beginning of a great enterprise to have from God clear Testimony that He has sent you upon it! Such was the Testimony given to the Master in the waters of Jordan, when He was first announced as “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”

How sweetly encouraging it is to the soul when the labor is heavy, the opposition vehement, and the spirit faint, to receive another affirming word from the excellent Glory! Such was that which came to Jesus on the Holy Mount, when retiring from the multitude He sought the refreshment of prayer and fellowship with God. Then, as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered and His raiment was white and glistening, and a Voice came out of the cloud, “This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased, hear Him.”

And best of all, when our work is almost done, and the shadows of evening are lengthening—when we are about to depart into the land of spirits—what a consolation it is to receive another refreshment from the Divine mouth! Such our Savior had a little while before He was lifted up from the earth. In answer to His fervent cry, “Father, glorify Your name,” there came a Voice from Heaven saying, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

In our departing hours we are most anxious about that which was our life’s dearest object. The lifework of Christ was to glorify His Father’s name. Concerning that He prayed, and concerning that the Voice gave full assurance. The result of the Lord’s lifework was declared to be ensured, and therefore, wrapping Himself about with that heavenly Testimony, the great Redeemer went bravely to His death. It is to be noted, then, that at the beginning, the middle, and end of our Master’s work, the Divine Voice was heard.

The first celestial witness was uttered after He had lived for thirty years in comparative obscurity. It seemed meet that when He first appeared, there should be some token that He was what He professed to be. That

heavenly declaration, be it also remembered, came just before His memorable temptation. He was to be forty days in the wilderness tempted of the devil, and among the horrible suggestions hissed forth from the serpent's mouth would be the doubt, "if you are the Son of God." What better fore-arming of our great Champion than the witness, "This is My Beloved Son"?

How in the recollection of that paternal Testimony would the Son be made strong to overcome all the temptations of the Fiend, or to endure the hunger which followed the forty days of lonely fast! Thus ever, my Brethren, it is not with the Master, only, but with the servants. Before temptation there comes spiritual sustenance which makes the heart strong in endurance. Like Elijah of old, the Believer falls asleep. Being awakened, he eats bread of Heaven's own providing and in the strength of that meat he journeys forty days through the wilderness without weariness. Expect that when the Lord tries you He will also send you strength to sustain you under it.

The second occasion of the heavenly utterance was when our Lord was about (according to Luke) to send out other seventy disciples to preach the Word. The twelve had healed the sick, cast out devils and done many mighty works. But now the laborers were to be increased and the harvest more rapidly ingathered. The seventy Evangelists were to carry the Divine Crusade through all the Holy Land.

Brethren, it is instructive that Heaven gave to our Savior, before extending His agencies of mercy, a fresh token for good. And we also, when the Lord calls us to wider service, may go up to the mountain to pray. And while we are there we, too, may expect to enjoy the comforting and strengthening witness of the Spirit within. The heavenly Voice shall whisper, "You are Mine," and we shall descend with radiant countenance to fight anew the battles of the Lord.

The third heavenly Testimony came to our Lord just before His sufferings and death. I need not say to you how well-timed was that witness. With such a death before Him, with such circumstances surrounding Him—all tending to make His agony sharper, and His death more terrible than any which had fallen to the lot of man before. With Gethsemane, with Gabbatha, with Golgotha all before Him. With such words as these yet to be uttered, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And these, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—it was meet that the oppressed Sufferer, who must tread the winepress alone—should receive at the outset a Word from the Throne of the Highest, meeting exactly the point about which His soul was most concerned, namely, the glory of the Father's name.

While still enlarging upon the times when the Divine Voice was heard, we may also note that the first came to our Lord when He was in the attitude of *obedience*. Why needed He to be baptized? It is a *sinner's* ordinance—Jesus is no sinner and needs no washing, no death, no burial!

But He takes the sinner's place, and therefore comes to be buried in Jordan, for, "Thus," says He, "it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." It was to Christ an act of *obedience*. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient to every ordinance of God, and hence He yielded Himself to Baptism. Then came the Voice, "This is My Beloved Son."

Brothers and Sisters, learn that when you are in the path of filial obedience you may expect the Spirit to bear witness with your spirit that you are born of God! But if you live in neglect of any known duty—if you are willfully unobservant of any command of Christ—you may expect that there shall be withheld from you the sweet assuring tokens of Divine love. But if you are scrupulously obedient on desiring to know what is the Lord's will, and then promptly do it—not asking the reason why, nor using your own tastes, or indulging your own whims—then in the path of obedience, especially if it costs you much, you may expect to have the witness in yourself that you are a child of God.

The second attestation came to our Master in His devout retirement. He had gone up to the mountain to pray. His desire was to be alone. He had taken with Him His accustomed bodyguard of three—Peter, James, and John—that they might be with Him while His soul communed with God. I doubt not that, as in the garden, they were bid to remain a stone's cast distance off, for surely Jesus poured out His soul before God alone. And then it was that suddenly the Glory of God shone upon Him. Then, in His retirement, Moses and Elijah appeared, coming forth from the spirit-world to commune with Him. Then did the Father utter a second time the Testimony, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased."

Brothers and Sisters, you too, like your Master, may expect to receive Divine Testimonies when you are on the mount of communion alone, when your fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The neglect of retirement will probably rob you of such assurances. If your prayer should be, "Show me a token for good," the answer will be, "Get you to the top of Tabor, get you away to your retirement. There will I give you the token which your heart desires." But to live evermore spending our strength in public, wasting ourselves in the turmoil of this world, and to neglect the soul-refreshing ordinance of private devotion is to deprive the inner man of the richest of spiritual delights.

The third Testimony came to our Lord in His ministry. He was preaching in the temple when the Father responded to His prayer. Now while I have spoken a good word for obedience, and also have sought to magnify retirement, let it never be forgotten that public service is equally acceptable to God. Our Lord had been conversing with certain enquiring Greeks and declaring the living power of His death to all who chose to hear Him. In that same hour the Father gave an audible answer to His prayer. If you, my Brethren, are called to any form of service, I beseech you, under no

pretext neglect it. The neglect of anything for which you have the talent, and to which you have the call, may deprive you of the inward witness.

Bear much fruit—so shall you be His disciples consciously so. Keep His Commandments—so shall you abide in His love and know it. Forget not to be obedient, forget not to be prayerful in retirement, but forget not, also, that you are meant to shine as a light in this world. Forget not that you must work while it is called today. Forget not that you are not sent into this life merely to enjoy spiritual recreation or even celestial refreshment—but to do a work which no other can do—and for which you must give a personal account.

We must now dismiss the question of the times, and briefly consider to whom the attestations were given. The first at Baptism, came to John and to our Lord, and most probably to them, only. We do not think the Voice from the opened Heaven was necessarily heard by anyone but John and our Lord. The token of the descending dove was given to John as the sign by which he should discern the Christ. “And I knew Him not. But He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit.”

John probably gathered from all that he had heard of Jesus that He was the great Bridegroom to whom he stood as a friend. But he was not to follow his own judgment—he was to receive a token from God Himself—and till that token came he could not act as one fully and indisputably convinced. When he had immersed our Lord he saw the heavens opened, saw the Spirit descending upon Him, and heard the confirming Voice. And then he knew beyond all doubt that Jesus was the Christ. To the Baptist, alone, that Voice was audible. And then through him it was published to all Judea.

The second Testimony had a somewhat wider range—it came not to one, but to three. Peter, James, and John were present. What if I say to *five*? For there were with them Moses and Elijah. They represented the Law and the Prophets. The three Apostles were the representatives of the Christian Church—as if to show that Law and Gospel meet in Jesus—and the things in Heaven and the things on earth are gathered together in one in Him. The Testimony enlarges, you see. At first one opened ear hears it, next five are assured.

The third time the Voice was heard by many. How many I cannot say, but the crowd in the temple heard it. Many heard it who did not understand it, for they said it thundered—perhaps perversely determining not to believe in the Presence of God—but to ascribe that articulate Voice rather to a rumbling thunder than to the Divine mouth. Others who confessed that they heard words, averred that an angel spoke—men will have anything but God! Thunder, or cherubim, or even devils they will welcome—but Divine interpositions are irksome to them.

Many, we say, heard the third Voice. It was a Testimony to hundreds—may we not learn from this that God’s Testimony to Christ is evermore a growing one? If at first He was revealed to one, then to more, then to a numerous band, expect, my Brethren, the fulfillment of that promise, “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.” If the glory of Jesus is today seen by thousands, it shall yet be unveiled to tens of thousands, and in the latter days the Voice which spoke once and again to our fathers, shall so speak as to shake not only earth, but also Heaven. And in that day, if not before, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

The heavenly Testimony grows and spreads. Jesus is proclaimed as Lord in many hearts. Look not on the present littleness of His visible kingdom, despise not the day of small things. The witness of Jesus is but a spark of fire. But the conflagration thereof shall yet belt the world with holy flames. The three Testimonies were given in this wise. The first, to the greatest of men—for “among those that are born of women there was not a greater Prophet than John the Baptist.” Yet the voice revealed a greater than he, whose shoelaces he was not worthy to untie.

The second was heard by the best of men—the great Lawgiver, the chief of the Prophets, and the noble of the Apostles—yet the Voice bore witness to a better than they. The third time the Voice echoed in the holiest place in the temple—and there it testified to a holier than the holiest shrine. Jesus is everywhere magnified beyond all others as the only Beloved Son of the Father. I need not however enlarge. There is far more of teaching than either time or ability allow me to open up to you.

We come, in the next place, to notice to what God bore Testimony. God never sets His seal to a blank. What was it, then, which He attested? First, at the Jordan, witness was borne to Christ’s miraculous *origin*. “This is My Beloved Son.” He comes not here as the Pharisees, and soldiers, and others have done, a mere son of man. Son of man He is, but He is also Son of the infinite, eternal God. And now on His introduction to His work He receives a spiritual anointing and a recognition from the Father. The seal was set that day to His Godhead and His relation to the Father was acknowledged.

By the second audible declaration it seems to me that the Father sealed the Son’s *appointment* as the great Prophet, and the anointed Servant of God. For in the second Testimony these memorable words were added, “hear Him.” Here God commands us to accept Him as the great Teacher, to acknowledge Him as the Head of the dispensation, to yield to Him our loyal attention and obedience. When the Lord appears, it is necessary that men should know who He is. When He is actually engaged in His work it may be needful to confirm His authority.

This was done on the Holy Mount, for so Peter understood it, as he writes in his second Epistle, “For we have not followed cunningly devised

fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a Voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the Holy Mount.”

The third Testimony bore witness to the success of His work. “I have both glorified My name,” says the Father, “and will glorify it again.” “What,” you say, “what if Jesus should not succeed? He has come into the world to vindicate the justice of God, and reveal His love, and so to glorify God—what if He should miss the mark? What, if after all His life of labor and His death of agony, He should be unsuccessful?”

The Father’s Word declares that the results anticipated shall certainly be produced. “I have glorified it,” says the Father—“all Your past life has glorified My name. Your coming down from Heaven, Your life of thirty years’ obedience, all the works which You have done in Your three years of toil. All these have brought renown to the infinite Majesty.

And “I will glorify it again,” in the most supreme sense. Amidst the glooms of the garden, amidst the terrors of Pilate’s hall, and amidst the sorrows of the Cross, I will glorify My name yet again. Yes, and in Your resurrection, in Your ascension, in Your majesty at My right hand, in Your judgment of the quick and the dead I will glorify My name again.” The three Voices may be viewed as attesting the Son’s Person, work, and success.

Some have thought that the three Voices attested our Lord in His three-fold offices. John came proclaiming the kingdom—Jesus was in His Baptism proclaimed as the Chief of the new kingdom. On the second occasion, the Voice which said, “Hear Him,” ordained Him as the Prophet of His people. And on the third occasion Jesus was owned as a Priest. Standing in the midst of priests—in the Temple where sacrifice was offered—Himself about to offer the true sacrifice. And praying that His sacrifice might glorify God, He receives the witness that God has been glorified in Him, and will be yet again.

My Brethren, in this threefold witness receive into your hearts the Testimony of God who cannot lie. Behold your Savior, well-pleasing to His Father. Let Him be well-pleasing to you. Hear Him proclaimed as God’s Beloved. O let Him be the Beloved of your hearts! Hear the Testimony born to Him that He has glorified God, and remember that His further glorifying God in some measure depends on you—for it is by your godly conversation, by your holy patience, by your zealous exertions for your Master’s praise that God in Christ Jesus is to be glorified until He comes. Let these three Testimonies, as they make up a complete and conclusive code of evidence, have force upon your hearts and minds, and win you to a solemn confidence in your Lord and Master.

I shall now ask your attention to the question, How were the Testimonies given? Observe that when our Lord was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Spirit descended. What if this proclaims to us that by His obedience our Lord procured the opening of Heaven for us—that our prayers might ascend to God, and all blessings might descend to us, and especially that the Holy Spirit might come down and rest forever upon the Church of God?

The Master's Baptism was the type of His death. Buried beneath the waters of Jordan, He pictured there His being buried in the deeps of agony and in the darkness of the tomb. Rising from the Jordan, He typified His resurrection. Ascending its banks He represented His Ascension into Heaven. God sees in figure all righteousness fulfilled, and answers the type by the relative type of Heaven opened and the dove descending.

Heaven was not beheld as opened when a second time the Voice was heard. In Luke 9 we read that the Voice came out of the cloud. The overshadowing cloud is a beautiful representation of the Mediatorship of Christ. He, like a glorious cloud, veils the excessive brightness of the Godhead. He shields us, so that when God speaks, He may not speak as from the top of Sinai—with a voice of trumpet and sound of thunder—but may speak through an interposing Medium, with that still, small voice of love which we can hear with delight.

Out of the cloud, my Brethren, God speaks to His people. That is to say, He speaks to us in Christ Jesus. That was a strong utterance of Luther, but it was strictly true, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God," meaning I will have nothing to do with God out of Christ. If, indeed, we had to do with God out of Christ, what misery were it for us, my Brethren! We should stand in the same terror as Israel did when bounds were set about the Mount. Even Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." It is a great mercy that the heavenly Voice, as it reaches us, comes out of the cloud.

In reading the narrative of the third Divine Testimony, our mind rests neither upon the opening of Heaven nor the cloud, but upon the Voice alone. It is as if the glory of God in the work of Christ put every other thought aside. The opening of Heaven, or the interposition of a Mediator are but means to the great end of glorifying God. O that this one great object may absorb all our souls! But, alas, the Voice, plain as it was, was misunderstood, and the clearest Revelation that God ever gave to mortals has been misunderstood by many. There will always be those who think of thunder and the so-called grandeur of nature—and others who see only angels or second causes.

Once more, consider what was it that was spoken on those three occasions. There was a difference in each case, though in the first two but slight. The first time the heavenly Voice preached the Gospel, "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." The old fathers were likely to say, "Go to Jordan if you would see the Trinity," and we may add, go to

Jordan if you would hear the Gospel. "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased." Observe the Gospel in this sentence! The Gospel is tidings concerning a blessed Person sent of God. Such tidings the Lord here utters.

This Man rising dripping from the water. This Man is pointed out as the Hope of the world! The Gospel is never preached except where the Person of Jesus Christ is exhibited to men. "I, if I am lifted up"—not truths about Me—but "I Myself, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." The attraction lies in the Person of Christ, because the real power to save lies there. We have here the Gospel revealing the acceptableness of the chosen Person with God—"My Beloved Son."

What men needed was a Savior who could stand for them before God. One dear to the heart of God. It is good news to us that the Anointed One is well-beloved of the Father. Why, my Hearers, though I have not yet opened up the fullness of that utterance, does not Gospel light break in upon you already? Here is a Person sent of God to save—a Man of your own race, but yet right well-beloved of God. He is so near to God as to be called His Beloved Son! But note, yet more earnestly, the Gospel of the next words, "In Whom I am well-pleased." Not, "with Whom," as hasty readers suppose, but, "*In Whom I am well-pleased.*"

This is the very Gospel—that God, as He looks upon men is well-pleased with all who are *in* Christ. God in Christ is not anger, but good pleasure. If I, a poor sinner, enter by faith *into* Christ, then I may be assured that God is well-pleased with me—that, if I, as His child, come to Him, and by a living faith link my destiny with the life and person of Christ—I need not fear the wrath of Heaven. Sinner, God is not well-pleased with you as you are. Child of God, God is not well-pleased with you as you are—there is enough about either saint or sinner to provoke the Lord to jealousy. But, Sinner, if you are in Christ by faith, God is well-pleased with you. And, O Heir of Heaven, with all your infirmities and imperfections, since you are one with Christ by an eternal and now vital union, God is well-pleased with you! Said I not well that the Gospel sounded from Jordan's waves?

The second sound of the Voice uttered not only the Gospel itself, but the Gospel command, "Hear Him." Matthew Henry has some very delightful remarks upon this expression, "Hear Him." He remarks, in effect, that salvation does not come by seeing, as the Roman church would have it, for the disciples were not directed to behold Christ in His Glory, though the sight deserved all their attention. No, but they were bid to *hear* rather than see. To hear the Gospel is a most important duty, for *faith* comes by *hearing*. Salvation comes not by hearing the doctrines of men but by hearing Jesus Christ.

There stood Moses. And those three Jewish worthies, Peter, James, and John, might have longed for Moses to open his Mouth—and had he spoken to them they would have been very attentive to Him. But the Word

was not, “Hear Moses,” but “Hear Him.” There was Elijah, too. O for a burning word from that master among the Prophets, whose life was flame. But it was not said, “Hear Elijah,” but “Hear Him.” “They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them,” is the word sent to careless sinners, but to sincere seekers the direction is, “Hear Him.”

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the great salvation of God comes to us through the Testimony of Jesus Christ—not through the moral essays or philosophical treatises or doctrinal discussions of men. “Hear Him,” the Gospel so commands you. Let not your ears be deaf when God communicates tidings of eternal life.

On the third occasion the Testimony given was not the Gospel nor the Gospel precept, but the Gospel’s result—“I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” I call your attention to this that you may be earnest in preaching the Gospel. It is through the Gospel that God is glorified. By the poorest Gospel sermon that was ever preached, God, through His Holy Spirit, gets to Himself a glory which the most pompous ritual cannot yield Him. You never speak well of Jesus but what you glorify God. No Gospel Word falls to the ground and is lost. It must accomplish that for which God has sent it.

He has glorified His name by the Gospel, and He will again. Let this encourage those of you who are afraid that the times are very bad and that we are all going to the pope. Do not be at all afraid. God will glorify His name by the Gospel again as He did before. Martin Luther was not, in himself, a character so lovely that one might be overwhelmed with admiration of him. Where, then, lay his power? His power lay in this—that he grasped the true Gospel—and he was a man who, when he grasped a thing, gave it a “grip so firm that the devil himself could not wrench it away from him.

With the Gospel in his hands he could say, “Heaps upon heaps with the weapon of the Gospel I have slain my thousands. Heaps upon heaps the foes of God are overturned.” He was mighty because he declared the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and with this he shook the world and brought about the Reformation. You need not, therefore, despair.

If the ministers of Christ will only come back to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, plainly, simply, and with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven, we shall drive the Ritualists, those cubs of the old Roman monster, back to their dens, as our fathers did their mother of old. Never lose your faith in the Gospel. Always believe that our power is gone when we get away from the Cross—but know also without a doubt—when we come back to the Truth as it is in Jesus, God glorifies His name.

II. LET US NOW OBSERVE ONE OR TWO INSTRUCTIVE CIRCUMSTANCES connected with these three Divine Testimonies. On each occasion Jesus was in *prayer*.

My dear, dear young people, look at the proofs of that in your Bibles. You will find in one or other of the Evangelists that it is distinctly stated

on each occasion that our Lord was in prayer. Learn, then, that if any child of God would have God speak comfortably to him, he must speak to God in prayer. If you would have the witness of the Holy Spirit in your soul, you must be much in supplication. Neglect not the Mercy Seat.

Notice next that each time the sufferings of Christ were prominently before Him. John, at the waters of Jordan had said, "Behold the Lamb of God," plainly speaking of sacrifice. Baptism itself, the fulfilling of all righteousness, we have seen to be the type of His death, and of His immersion in suffering. On Tabor, on the second occasion, Matthew tells us that, "Behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah: who appeared in glory, and spoke of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem."

The subject that the best of men talked about when they met was the death of Jesus. No better topic, then, for us when we meet. If we were the most talented and the wisest men that ever lived, if we met together and wanted the most select topic for an eclectic discussion, we ought to choose the Cross. For Jesus, Moses, and Elijah—three great representative men—talked of the Atoning death of the great Substitute. The third time our Lord had just spoken about the hour being come in which He was to be glorified, as you well remember. Learn then, my Brethren, that if you desire to see the glory of Christ, as attested of the Father, you must dwell much on His death.

Do not talk to me about the life of Christ in all its parity, I know it and rejoice in it. But I tell you that the *death* of Christ, in all His misery, is the grandest point of view. The example of Jesus should be exalted by all means—but His Atonement is far grander. And you, Sirs, who take the Man Christ and offer your pretty, complimentary phrases about Him—but then turn round and deny His expiating Sacrifice—I tell you your tawdry offerings are unacceptable to Him. To be complimented by your lips is almost to be censured, for if you do not believe on Him as an Atoning Sacrifice, you do not understand His life. Thus each attestation came in connection with the Lord's *sufferings*, as if the glory of Christ dwelt mainly there.

Once more—each time that Jesus received this Word from the Father He was honoring the Father. In Baptism He was honoring Him by *obedience*. On the mountain He was honoring Him in devotion. In the Temple the very words He was using were, "Father, glorify Your name." Oh, if you would see God's glory, and hear God's Voice in your own heart, honor Him! Spend and be spent for Him! Keep not back your sacrifices, withhold not your offerings! Lay yourselves upon His altar, and when you say with Isaiah, "Here am I, send me," for any service—whatever it may be—then shall you also feel that the Lord is with you, owning both you and your works, and glorifying Himself in it.

III. Lastly, THE PRACTICAL LESSON may be found in the words, "Hear Him."

Earnestly let me speak to everyone here. God has three times with audible Voice spoken out of Heaven to bear witness to Jesus. These are historical facts. I beseech you, then, receive with assured conviction the Truth to which God bears witness. The Man of Nazareth is the Son of the Highest. The Son of Mary is the Savior appointed to bear human sin. He is the way of salvation, and the only way. Doubt not this Truth of God. Accept the Savior, for God declares that He is well-pleased in Him. Hear Him, then, with profound reverence—accept the teaching and invitations of Jesus as not the mere utterances of fallible men—but as the instructions and the loving expostulations of God.

I pray you have respect to every Word and command of Christ. Listen to Him as spirits listen to the voice of the Most High when they bow before the Truth of God. And if He says to you, as He does this morning, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” hear Him and lovingly obey the command. Hear Him, I pray you, with unconditional obedience. God attests Him as being sent from Heaven. Whatever He says to you, do it. And since He bids you believe Him, be not unbelieving. He has told us to say in His name, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” Despise not that *double* command. Attend, O Sinner, attend, for it is the Son of God who speaks to you! Trust and be baptized, and you shall be saved. There stands the Gospel stamped with the authority of Deity! Obey it now. May the Holy Spirit lead you to do so.

Hear Him, lastly, with joyful confidence. If God has sent Jesus, trust Him. If He bears the Glory of God’s Seal upon Him, joyfully receive Him. You who have trusted Him, trust Him better from this day forth. Leave your souls right confidently in the hands of Him of whom Jehovah, thrice speaking out of Heaven, declares that He is the only Savior. Receive Him, Sinner, you that would be saved! May the Lord confirm the Testimony which He spoke out of Heaven, by speaking in your hearts by His Holy Spirit, that you may rejoice in His Beloved Son, and glorify God in Him.

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THE VOICE FROM THE CLOUD AND THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED NO. 1727

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 24, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“While He yet spoke, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.”
Matthew 17:5, 6, 7.

IT is exceedingly important to have clear evidences of the truth of our holy religion. Sometimes, I dare say, you have wished that God would speak out of Heaven in your hearing, or that He would work some extraordinary marvel before your eyes, that you might know beyond all question the truth of the Gospel of Jesus. This desire for signs and wonders is no new thing. Ah, my dear Friends, we know not what we ask, nor what we desire, for if such a voice were to come to us out of a bright cloud—we are made of the same flesh and blood as Peter, James and John, and it would, therefore, produce the same effect upon us as upon them—we would fall on our faces and be sorely afraid.

Spirituals must grow out of spirituals—saving faith can never be produced by carnal sight and hearing. The Holy Spirit can work faith in us apart from any form of miracle and, miracle, alone, can never create a spiritual faith. Do we wish to receive a sign in order to confirm our belief in God? Suppose that we had it—we would soon need to have it repeated, for unbelief dies hard. I cannot tell how often we should need to hear the voice out of the cloud, but certainly life would soon become a misery to us, for we should be so frequently lying on our faces, so often cast into a swoon of fear, that we should be shattered, nervous and incapable of the ordinary duties of life! Like Israel at Sinai, we would begin to entreat that the Lord would not speak to us any more!

The fact is that the voice of God, as absolute God, is too awful, too majestic for mortal ears—and the sight of overwhelming miracles would put such a strain upon the human mind that it is better for us to be without them. It is plain from the example of Israel in the wilderness that even the lowest form of Grace does not grow out of frequent miracles, for the tribes fell into every form of evil, though they *lived* on miracles—and even ate and drank the result of them! Not signs and wonders on the outside, but a new heart *within* is the grand cure for unbelief! Christ *in* you is the hope of Glory and the death of doubt—anything else will fall short of your need.

According to our text, what is needed is not an audible voice of God to confirm the evidences of our religion, but the touch and the voice of Christ to make us conscious within ourselves of the power of Him to whom God bears witness. Not external, but *internal* evidences are what we need! The best evidences in the world are what we call experimental—such as grow out of actual *experience*. It is a better thing for a man to live near to Christ and to enjoy His Presence, than it would be for him to be overshadowed with a bright cloud and to hear the Divine Father, Himself, speaking out of it! The voice out of the cloud would but dismay and distract—the voice of Christ would cheer and comfort and, at the same time, would be an equally powerful assurance to us of the divinity of the whole matter. *Assurance* is the thing which we so much desire and we can better obtain it by personal test than by any external witness.

Brothers and Sisters, the most profitable thing for me, at any rate, is not so much to study evidences or to seek them, as to enjoy the Gospel, itself, by personal contact with the Christ of God. You may be told that this is the Bread of Heaven, but you will not *know* it, however heavenly the voice, one half so vividly as if you eat thereof and live! Then shall you know when Jesus touches you and bids you, “Be not afraid.” A miraculous interposition would crush as well as convince. A spiritual visitation and a consoling word will convince as certainly and it will comfort at the same time! The verses which I have selected seem to me to teach us just this—that even the voice of God, the Father, would need to be supplemented by the voice and by the touch of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son, or else we would not be so assured as to become active witnesses for Gospel truth.

To preach Christ we must hear Christ! No other voice will suffice unless He speak to us. This morning I propose to treat the subject thus—first, let us hear the voice out of the cloud. And then, secondly, let us hear the voice of Jesus. May the Holy Spirit sweetly enable us to listen diligently in each case.

I. First, LET US LISTEN TO THE VOICE THAT SPEAKS OUT OF THE CLOUD. Observe at the outset the words, “Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them.” When God draws near to man, it is absolutely necessary that His Glory should be veiled. No man can see His face and live. Therefore the cloud, in this instance, and in other cases. Hence that thick veil which hung over the entrance to the Most Holy Place. Hence the need of the incense to fill that place with smoke when the High Priest once a year went within the veil. Hence above all, the need of the Body and the Manhood of Christ that the Godhead may be softened to our view.

God shines graciously through the Man and we behold the brightness of the Father’s Glory without being blinded. There *must* be a cloud. Yet it was a *bright* cloud, which, in this case, yielded the shadow and not a thick darkness like that which became the canopy of Deity at the giving of the Law. Then Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke and the Lord sat enthroned in thick darkness. On other occasions we read, “He made darkness His secret place; His pavilion round about Him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.” But now on Tabor, where God bears peaceful

witness to His well-beloved Son, He veils Himself in a brightness significant of His good pleasure towards the sons of men!

There were but three who saw this glory of the Transfiguration and heard the Father's voice. Such signs are not for unholy eyes and ears. Three were sufficient to bear complete witness, for "the testimony of two men is true" and, "in the mouth of two or three witnesses the whole shall be established." It is not necessary that you and I, therefore, should see the transfigured Savior—the fact of the Transfiguration is quite as sure as if we *did* see it, for three men saw it of whose truthfulness we have no question. It is not necessary that these ears should hear the attesting words of the Divine Father, for those three Apostles heard Him speak and they bore witness thereof by their honest lives and martyr deaths.

We know that their witness is true and to us, today, there is an absolute certainty of belief that the Lord God Almighty did, with an audible voice, declare Jesus of Nazareth to be His Son, in whom He is well pleased. The testimony of honest men is all that we can have about most things and we are accustomed to accept it and act thereon. In this case we may be as sure as if we had been there, ourselves, and had seen and heard! It is a very instructive fact that the utterance of God out of the cloud was made up of words out of Scripture. We are told, "If any man speaks, let Him speak as the oracles of God." And what honor has the Father put upon Holy Scripture here! He did but utter three brief sentences and each of them might be called a quote!

The Lord God is the master of language, for He is the creator of tongues! He need not, therefore, confine Himself to language used by Prophets and Seers in the volume of Inspiration. But because He did so in this instance we conclude that He intended to put special honor upon the Words of Scripture. The occasion was most august, yet no better words are needed by the Lord, Himself, concerning His own Son than those recorded in former ages in the pages of Holy Writ! First, the Father said, "This is My beloved Son." Turn to Psalm 2:7 and there you read, "You are My Son." Then the Father said, "In whom I am well pleased." Look at Isaiah 42:1 and there you will read of our Lord that He is called, "My elect, in whom My soul delights." This passage is quoted in Matthew 12:18 in a rather different form—"In whom My soul is well pleased," thus showing how nearly the words agree in all respects.

Then comes the last word, "Hear Him," which is a repetition of Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses says, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me; unto Him you shall listen." Or, as Stephen puts it, "Him shall you hear." The words of Moses are as much imperative as prophetic and contain the sense—"hear Him." So that this voice of the Lord utters three Bible phrases and surely, if the Lord speaks in the language of Scripture, how much more should His servants? We preach best when we preach the Word of God! We may be confident in what we say when we preach the Truths of God in the words which the Holy Spirit teaches and endeavor to convey the mind of the Holy Spirit in His own words.

I take it that the Scripturalness of the Divine Witness is noteworthy and full of instruction. Coming to the words, themselves, the Father said,

“This is My beloved Son.” “This.” As if He called their attention away from Moses and Elijah and said, “This is He of whom I speak to you. He is above the Law and the Prophets, He is My Son.” There was a question among the Jews who the Messiah would be—they believed in the Messiah, but they did not know when He would come, nor where, nor how—and, therefore, when He did come, they made a mistake and missed Him. Here the great Father points to Jesus of Nazareth, who is the son of Mary as to His flesh and He says, “This is My beloved Son.” It is a word of demonstration and distinction by which He marks Jesus out from all others as His own nearest and dearest One.

By this He also points Him out as being present then and there—not as yet to come, but as actually with them—their Master and Friend. “This is My beloved Son.” It is not a finger pointing into history, but a hand laid upon the true Messiah, who, in very flesh and blood, stood before them, of whom they afterwards said, “We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent Glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.” In this very place, upon this Tabor, Jesus stood among them, and the Father pointed Him out, saying, “This is My beloved Son.” They could make no mistake whatever about the Person—the Word of the Lord so distinctly pointed Him out.

While it thus pointed Him out *personally* as being present, it separated Him from all others and set Him apart by Himself as the sole and only One. “This is My beloved Son,” and no one else may claim that title. Truly, other sons are the Lord’s by adoption and regeneration, but none are such in the sense in which the Lord said, “This is My beloved Son.” Beyond all others and in a special sense, He is, “the only-begotten Son.” “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son, this day have I begotten you?” We do not understand, we *cannot* understand the doctrine of the Eternal Affiliation of the Son of God. I suppose it to be well-high profane to endeavor to look into that sublime mystery—a holy delicacy forbids and, besides, the Glory is too bright! We lack the eyes which could perceive anything in such a blaze of light.

This, however, we may observe, namely, that Jesus is not the Son of God so that the idea exactly tallies with sonship among men, for He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father—and He is, Himself, called, “The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father.” He is not of fewer years than the Father, for, “in the beginning was the Word.” Concerning this matter we may sing—

**“Your generation who can tell,
Or count the number of Your years?”**

Yet, doubtless, *sonship* is the nearest approach to the great mystery which could be found among human similitudes and the word, “Son,” is the nearest description that could be given in human language. Hence the Father, looking at Jesus and at none other besides Him, says of Him and of Him, only, “This is My beloved Son.” He says, “I proceeded forth and came from God.” He is, “the only-begotten Son,” which is in the bosom of the Father. Oh, dear Friends, how we ought to fix our gaze upon Jesus! His is

a most singular personality, the wonder of wonders, for He is Son of God as truly as He is Son of Man! Verily, He is Man and we err not when we think so of Him, for He both suffered and died! Yet verily He is God, for He lives forever and ever and upholds all things by the word of His power!

“This is My Son.” Moses and Elijah were His *servants*—only Jesus was His Son. By His being thus called, Son, we are taught that Jesus is of the same Nature as God—is, indeed, God. A man is the father of a man; a man is not the father of that which he makes with his own hands, such as a statue or a painting. But a man is the father of another who is of the same nature as himself—and the Lord Jesus Christ is of the same Nature as God in all respects—a true Son. The Lord Jesus Christ is equal in Nature to the Father and, therefore, He counts it not robbery to be equal with God and He receives the same honor and worship as the Father, as says the Scripture, “that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son, honors not the Father which has sent Him.”

A son bears the likeness of his father and assuredly the Lord Jesus is described as “the brightness of His Father’s Glory and the express image of His Person,” so that He said, Himself, “He that has seen Me has seen the Father.” “He is the image of the invisible God.” In Him is the Godhead better seen than in all the works of creation. Not only is there a likeness between them, but there is a perpetual union—“I and My Father are One.” “I am in the Father,” said Christ, “and the Father is in Me.” This leads to continual communion with each other and a participation in plans and designs. “The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do: for what things soever He does, these also does the Son, likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He does.”

The Lord Jesus was forever in the bosom of the Father and He says, “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomever the Son will reveal Him.” It was with the Son of God that the Father took counsel when He said, “Let Us make man in Our own image, after Our likeness.” Our Lord knows and reveals the inmost heart of the Father. Yes, the Being and Essence of God, unknown to all besides, are with Him, for He, Himself, is “God over all, blessed forever, Amen.” Let us never, Brothers and Sisters, think of the Lord Jesus without the lowliest reverence of Him as very God of very God, co-equal, co-eternal with the Father!

While we call Him Master and Lord, let us take care that we render unto Him the glory which is due unto His name. There must be no trifling with Him, nor with the things which He speaks, for He is Lord of All and to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. For a minute let me dwell upon this declaration. “This is My Son.” Does it not teach us the great love of God to us guilty creatures? “He spared not His own Son.” You perceive the love of Abraham to God when he is ready to offer up Isaac at the Lord’s bidding. Remember the words, “Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and offer Him for a burnt offering.” This is just what the great

Father did for us! And yet we were His enemies, living in alienation and in open rebellion against Him.

Hear, O heavens, and wonder, O earth! He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all! "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins." What gratitude this should create! What devotion it should bring! "This is My Son." When you see Jesus on Tabor or on Calvary, you see God giving Himself to us, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life. Does the Father say, "This is My Son"? What a Savior this must be! How confidently may you and I trust Him! If the Lord Jesus Christ is no common person, but nothing less than God, Himself, who shall doubt His power to save? If He is God's only-begotten Son, how safely we may trust our souls' affairs in His almighty hands! He is, indeed, "a Savior, and a great one!" "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell."

What an Intercessor we have! So dear to Him with whom He pleads, for He is His beloved Son! What a Sacrifice we have that may cover *all* our sin, for, "He gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor." However black our sin and however deep our despair, we may readily rise out of it and say, "Verily, there is salvation here!" If the Son of God has made His own Person the price of our redemption, then we are, indeed, redeemed, and none can hold us in bondage! One thing more is worthy to be noted here. If the Father says, "This is My Son," observe the graciousness of our adoption!

With such a Son, the Lord had no need of children! He did not make us His children because He *needed* sons and daughters, but because *we* needed a Father. The infinite heart of the Father was well filled by the love of the Only-Begotten. There was enough in Jesus to satisfy the love of the Divine Father and yet He would not rest till He had made Him "the first-born among *many* brethren." Herein we ought to exceedingly admire the Grace of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." When a man is childless and desires an heir, it may be that he adopts a child to fill the vacancy which exists in His house. But the heavenly Father had no such need, for He says, "This is My beloved Son." Our adoption is, therefore, not for His gain, but for ours—it is a matter of Divine charity, arising out of the spontaneous love of God. Thanks be unto the Father evermore!

Do you remind me that I have left out one word? The Father said, "This is My *beloved* Son." I have by no means forgotten it, for though I cannot speak as I would upon *that* word, yet it is exceedingly sweet in my ears. "This is My *beloved* Son." We, none of us, know how much beloved our Lord is of the Father. We love our children—we love them as our own souls—we could not measure our affection for them. But we are finite and so are our children! And the finite to the finite yields but a finite love. But here is an Infinite Father with an Infinite Son and He loves Him infinitely! Why should He not? He is most near to Him—His own Son! Why should He not? He is in all things like unto Him in nature, dignity, character, and glory. Why should He not? For He in all things does His will. Jesus said, "And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him."

If we had such a son as God has in Jesus, then we should love him, indeed, for there has been nothing in the Son throughout eternity which is in the least opposed to the Father's mind. These are wonderful words of the Man, Christ Jesus—"Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again." When Solomon speaks of wisdom, which is but another name for our Lord Jesus, he represents Him as saying, "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him."

He has been in the bosom of the Father from of old and when He left the bosom of the Father it was to do His Father's will and to be obedient to Him even unto death! His will and His Father's will are perfectly joined together in one spirit and, therefore, we cannot fathom the depths of love which are indicated in these words which came from the Father who Himself is Love! He, looking at His own Son, says plainly, "This is My beloved Son." Oh that we might have Grace to trust without wavering in this glorious Son of God!

Permit me, now, to introduce to you the second of the sentences—"In whom I am well pleased." I have heard it quoted, "*With* whom I am well pleased." The alteration cannot be tolerated—it robs the language of half its sense. True, God is pleased with Christ, but that is not all that He says here. He is pleased *in* Him, which means not only that God is eternally, infinitely pleased with Jesus Christ, Himself, but that *God*, Himself, is reconciled and pleased as we view Him in His Son. I thought this over last night till my heart seemed ready to dance for joy, for I thought—"Then, however much I have displeased the Father, my Lord Jesus, who stands for me, has pleased Him more than I have displeased Him! Mine is finite sin, but His is infinite righteousness! If my sins have vexed the Lord God, yet Christ's righteousness has pleased Him more. I cannot be more than *finitely* displeasing to God, but Jesus is *infinitely* pleasing to Him—and if He stands in my place, then the pleasure which the Father derives from His Son is greater than the displeasure which He has ever felt towards me."

My Brothers and Sisters, how displeased the great God has been with men. He said that it repented Him that He had made men upon the earth. That was a striking expression which is used in Genesis 6:6—"It grieved Him at His heart." He seemed to grow so weary of man's wanton wickedness that He was sorry that He ever made beings capable of so much evil. Yet He is so well content with His beloved Son, who has assumed our Nature, that we read of Him, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake: He will magnify the Law and make it honorable" (Isa. 42:21). The Lord looks down upon those who are in Christ with an intense affection. He loves them even as He loves the Son, for that is the meaning of this word, "In whom I am well pleased."

All who are in Christ Jesus are pleasing to God! Yes, God in Christ looks with Divine satisfaction upon all those who trust His Son—He is not

only pleased, but well pleased. If you are pleased with Jesus, God is pleased with you! If you are in the Son, then you are in the Father's good pleasure. Out of Christ there is nothing but Divine *displeasure* for you. Concerning you who are out of Christ, it is written, "The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries." Who can stand before His indignation? Who can abide the fierceness of His anger? God cannot look on sin without hatred! He says of sinners, "My soul loathed them, and their souls also abhorred Me." There is no peace between a Christless soul and God, neither can there be.

But when a poor sinner, by faith, enters into Christ, then such is the Father's delight in Christ's Person, that He delights in all that are in Him. Jesus said, "The Father Himself loves you." God is pleased with every hair of Christ's head—the meanest member of Christ's body is delightful to the Father! If I am pleased with a man, I am not angry with his foot or with any part of him. So, then, if I am a member of Christ, if I am joined to Him by a living, loving, lasting union, then I am well pleasing to God, because Jesus is well pleasing to Him! Indeed, the Scripture speaks of all saints as *one with Christ*—they are so perfectly joined to Him that they are one body with Him—and God has no hatred to some part of the body and love to another part of it. Is Christ divided? It cannot be! The Father is well pleased with the entire mystical body for the sake of Jesus Christ its Head.

I wish I could speak at length upon this, but I might weary you upon this close and sultry day, when your spirit truly is willing but your flesh is weak. Oh, the charm of this voice of God! Each word has a Divine emphasis upon it. It is not the voice of man, but of the Eternal, Himself. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Consider, next, the third word, which is, "Hear Him." Listen to what He says; remember it carefully; endeavor to understand it; heartily accept and believe it; confidently trust in it and cheerfully obey it. All these precepts are wrapped up in the expression "Hear Him" as we could prove if there were time available. "Hear Him"—it is as if the Father said, "You need not hear Moses any longer—hear *Him*. You need not listen to Elijah any more—hear My Son."

There are thousands of priests in the world who say, "Hear us." But the Father says, "Hear Him." Many voices clamor for our attention—new philosophies, modern theologies and old heresies revived—all call to us and entreat us to listen, but the Father says, "Hear Him." As if He said, "Hear Him and no one besides." Does any man claim to be a successor of Christ? The Father speaks of no succession, but bids us, "Hear Him." If Jesus were dead and His prophetic office extinct, we might hear others, but since He lives, we hear the celestial voice rolling along the ages and distinctly crying, "Hear Him." Beloved Brothers and Sisters, do not hear me as though I spoke of myself, for I have no more claim upon your attention than any other man. I speak faultily, for I know but in part and prophesy in part.

So far as I speak my own mind, I speak in vanity! But if I speak the words of Christ and the Truth of God which the Spirit of God has revealed, then it is no longer I that speak, but Christ, Himself, that speaks—and then you are bound by the Word from the Father, which says, "Hear

Him.” Oh, to be content with hearing Christ and letting other voices go away into eternal silence! Is He God’s Son? Then “hear Him!” Is He God’s beloved Son? Then “hear Him!” Is the Father well pleased with Him? Then “hear Him!” Is the Father well pleased in Him, and with you in Him? Then “hear Him!” What less can you do? Ought you not to do this always and with all your might? Peter, you need not build the tabernacles—the Father bids you hear Jesus, your Lord!

It is better to hear Christ, that is, to believe His teaching and obey it, than it would be to build cathedrals for Him, much more such frail tents as Peter intended. Peter, you need not cumber yourself with much serving and play the Martha—you will do better if you sit at His feet with Mary and hear Him! The highest honor we can render to Christ as a Prophet is to hear Him, trusting Him in His promises and obeying Him in His precepts! Jesus came on purpose to teach—and we are in our best position for adoration when we lend Him our ears and hearts—and are determined to believe what He says and to do what He commands! “This is My beloved Son; hear Him.”

It seems to me as if the great Father said, “I have spoken to you once, with My own voice, and I see you fall upon your faces with fear. Evidently you cannot bear My immediate Presence. I see your faces white with fright; you lie prone upon the ground, stiff with dismay: I will speak no more directly from Myself; I have made My beloved Son your Mediator; hear Him.” The Psalmist David said, “The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.” Is it not gracious on His part that He should no more speak with us, Himself, but reveal Himself by His Son, whose name is, “The Word of God”?

Remember what Israel said at Sinai to Moses, the *typical* mediator—“Speak with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” To this the Lord replied to Moses, “They have well said all that they have spoken.” The Lord recognized at once the need of a mediator and He finds us One in the Person of the Well-Beloved as He says, “Hear Him.” It is like Pharaoh saying to those who came for corn, “Go to Joseph.” This day God says to men, “Come not to Me at first—go to My Son. No man comes to the Father but by Jesus Christ His Son. I will not speak with you, for you are but dust and ashes, and you would be overwhelmed by the thunder of My voice. Hear HIM!”

Blessed ordinance of that gracious One who knows our frame and remembers that we are dust! He has spoken to us by His Son! Let us incline our ears and come to Him. Let us hear that our soul may live. This links the first part of my discourse to the second, upon which I will speak as briefly as I can, though the subject might well demand a full sermon.

II. Secondly, LET US HEAR THE VOICE OF JESUS. The Father Himself has sent us to Jesus and unto Jesus let us go. “When the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.” Dear Friends, I think you will be cured of desiring miracles and of wishing to hear voices from God, if you well consider the effect of the Divine voice upon these favored Apostles. You could not hear the Divine voice any better than they could, if, indeed,

as well. I hope that you will now be content with what the Father recommends to you—namely, that you hear His beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord!

The Apostles, one would have thought, needed not to have been afraid, for they were holy men engaged in the best possible business—and in the company of their Lord who was their Protector and Friend! And yet such is the amazing power of the Glory of God upon the human mind that they fell on their faces! So was it with Job, Daniel, Isaiah, Habakkuk and all such holy men—the Presence of the Lord filled them with fear, trembling and self-abhorrence! See how Jesus acts to His three disciples. We might have thought that they would have hastened to their Lord. Why didn't they? Why didn't they cry out to Him, "Master, we perish"? Why didn't Peter say, as he did on another occasion, "If it is You, bid me come unto You"?

No, they are overpowered, bewildered, confused—the Glory of the Lord has laid them on their faces as dead, and they are terribly frightened! Then the Incarnate God, their Lord and yet their Brother, interposes His sacred ministry. First, He comes to them. Wycliffe's version puts it, "He came near." He approached them, for any distance is painful when a heart is afraid. Jesus came near to the frightened three. This is the beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He comes so near to us, poor troubled ones, when we are overwhelmed with the Glory of God and our own sense of sin! "The man is near of kin unto us: one of our next kinsmen." God, the Glorious, must always be far off as to our weakness, however near He comes to us in condescending Grace. He is in Heaven and we upon earth. He is the Creator and we are the creatures of an hour.

The Lord Jesus comes so very near to us because He bears our Nature and is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. We may be familiar with Him and yet incur no censure. Little children climbed on His knees and He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." We feel that we may come where children are welcomed! Yes, we rejoice that when we cannot come to Him, our Lord Jesus *comes to us*—and when our weakness makes us fall upon the ground, He stoops over us to help us up! His sympathy makes Him quick to draw near and calm our troubled breasts. When a child falls, how fast the mother runs to set it on its feet again! Yet she is no more in haste than Jesus, who leaves not His own to remain long in their distress. He draws very near to His poor, fainting, swooning disciples. He will not leave them comfortless. He will come unto them.

He is the same Christ, at this hour, as in the days of His flesh—He is still in the habit of visiting His people and manifesting Himself to them as He does not to the world. Brothers and Sisters, do not ask for evidence any more! Do not begin searching books to find out arguments and reasons! Ask Jesus to come to you—His Presence will stand in the place of all reasoning and be better, by far! Communion with Christ supplies the soul with irresistible arguments as to His being, His love, His power, His Godhead. Actual nearness to Him clothes the mind with a coat of mail which wards off every arrow of unbelief! Let Christ come to us and questions and doubts are heard no more. Quibblings are nailed to His Cross; insinuations fall dead at His feet! This assurance works in an infinitely better

manner than if out of yon black cloud, God Himself were to speak to us in thunder-tones!

When Jesus came, the next thing He did was, He touched them. This is, to me, most precious! As they lie there all fainting, He touches Peter, and touches James, and touches John, just as in later days we read, "He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not." That was His way of healing those diseased with leprosy. He touched the blind man and gave him sight. The dead maiden was thus revived. Oh, the power of His touch! One touch of Jesus saves us! What will not His touch do? We are so much made up of feelings, after all, that we need to know that the Lord really feels for us and will enter so tenderly into our case as to touch us. That touch reassures our fainting hearts and we know our Lord to be Emanuel, God With Us. Sympathy! This is the meaning of that human touch of a hand which is, nevertheless, Divine!

Oh, how sweetly Christ has touched us by being a partaker in all that is human! He touched us everywhere—in poverty, for He had not where to lay His head! In thirst, for He sat by the well and said, "Give Me to drink." In anguish, for He was betrayed by His friend. He has touched us in depression of spirit, for He cried, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, "for He was tempted in all points like as we are." An absolute God does not seem to touch us with a feeling as of a man—He pities us as a father pities His children—yet in this He is above us and our fears prevent our reaching up to Him. For the most tender sympathy in adversity, a brother must be born, and Jesus is that Brother. We are frail and sinful, and Jesus touches us in both respects, for He has taken our flesh and carried away our sins.

He was "numbered with the transgressors," thus He touched transgressors, and He became frail, even as we are, until, at last, He said, "I am a worm, and no man"—thus He touched our infirmities. Dear Friends, nothing so cheers the heart as the Divine touch of Christ, for if you have felt it, you will bear witness that contact with His wondrous Person is like life from the dead! Virtue comes out of Christ to us when His garment's hem and our finger meet. The contact of Grace on His part and faith on our part brings into us strength, light, joy—and everything else that is laid up in Jesus to meet our needs. The hand of Jesus is laid upon us and, in the strength which it gives, a man might dash through Hell and climb to Heaven! Ezra said, "I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me." Touched with the almighty Sufferer's sacred sympathy, we glory in tribulation and triumph in death!

Is not this more effective evidence of the Truth of the Gospel and of the commission of Christ than if the Lord God should again speak out of a cloud? To feel the wondrous power of Christ strengthening our hearts—surely this is the most certain witness! Next time you read of the Red Sea, and of God's dividing it for His people, and drowning Pharaoh in the deep waters, do not say to yourself, "I wish I had been there!" but pray God to make a way for you through your troubles, to dry up the Red Sea of your sins and lead you into Canaan! Pardoned sin will make you rejoice in Him!

It must have been a fine demonstration of God's glorious majesty when He sent a thick darkness over all the land, even darkness that might be felt.

For my part, I count it a more-to-be desired demonstration of the power of God when He took away my thick darkness and brought me into His marvelous light. When He turned all the waters of Egypt into blood, so that they loathed to drink of the river, it was a sure proof that God was there. But to my soul it was a more assuring proof when He turned my water into wine and made my ordinary life to become like the life of those in Heaven by His sovereign Grace! He has raised us up together from the depths of our natural ruin and made us sit together in the heavenly places—is not this as great a proof of His power and Godhead as when He raised up Israel from the brick-kilns and set His people free? It was a sure proof of God's being in Egypt when He called for the frogs—and they came—even into the king's chambers!

But what a proof of His being with *us* is given to our mind when the Lord sweeps out of our soul all the frogs of fear that used to croak within us, even in the king's chambers of devotion and communion! We could not worship God for their croaking—we were defiled and disturbed with doubts and fears—but when Jesus comes and clears them all away, it is a surer proof and more effectual to the heart than a thousand plagues could be! So there were two actions of Christly sympathy—Jesus came near and He touched them. But always the great thing with Jesus is His Word—He *spoke* to them. He *is* the Word of God and as the Word He proves His Godhead. “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” Jesus, after He had touched them, said, “Arise, be not afraid.”

Precious words! “Arise, be not afraid.” When the Word of Jesus Christ comes with power to our discouraged souls and we are made strong in confidence, then we are persuaded of the truth of the Gospel! When we are disabled from the Divine service through fear and Jesus renews our strength by saying, “Arise,” so that we are able to work, again—then do we believe and are sure! “The joy of the Lord is our strength.” Whenever the blessed Comforter reveals Christ to us so that we are cheered and made glad in the midst of our tribulations, then we need not ask for signs and wonders, nor for voices speaking out of the clouds! It is enough, the truth is sealed in our consciences. The voice of Christ is far better than all other manifestations, for it does not leave us swooning with fear, but sends us out to fight the battles of the Lord!

This is the sum of what I have spoken to you—ask not for signs and wonders which God will not give. But, “Hear Him.” Listen to Jesus by faith and your personal experience of His Presence shall be to you all that you need by way of assurance. Live *on* Christ, live *in* Christ, live *with* Christ and this shall be better to you than visions or bright clouds, or celestial voices, or all supposable evidences! This shall make your spirit leap and your heart rejoice till the day breaks and the shadows flee away—and you see God, even the Father—face to face in Glory! May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. Amen.

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JESUS ONLY

NO. 924

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 3, 1870,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.”
Matthew 17:8.*

THE last words will suffice us for a text, “Jesus only.” When Peter saw our Lord with Moses and Elijah, he exclaimed, “Master, it is good to be here,” as if he implied that it was better to be with Jesus, and Moses, and Elijah, than to be with Jesus only. Now it was certainly good that for once in his life he should see Christ transfigured with the representatives of the Law and the Prophets. It might be for that particular occasion the best sight that he could see—but as an ordinary thing an ecstasy so sublime would not have been good for the disciples.

And Peter himself very soon found this out, for when the luminous cloud overshadowed him, and the voice was heard out of Heaven, we find that he, with the rest, became very afraid. The best thing, after all, for Peter was not the excessive strain of the Transfiguration, nor the delectable company of the two great spirits who appeared with Jesus, but the equally glorious, but less exciting, society of “Jesus only.”

Depend on it, Brethren—ravishing and exciting experiences and transporting enjoyments, though they may be useful as occasional refreshments—would not be so good as that quiet but delightful ordinary fellowship with “Jesus only.” This it is which ought to be the distinguishing mark of all Christian life. As the disciples ascended the mountain side with Jesus only, and as they went back again to the multitude with Jesus only, they were in as good company as when they were on the mountain summit with Moses and Elijah there also.

And although Jesus Christ, in His common habitation and in His ordinary attire might not so dazzle their eyes as when they saw His raiment bright as the light, and His face shining as the sun—yet He really was quite as glorious, and His company quite as beneficial. When they saw Him in His everyday attire, His Presence was quite as useful to them as when He robed Himself in splendor. “Jesus only,” is, after all, upon the whole a better thing than Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. “Jesus only,” as the common Jesus. The Christ of everyday. The Man walking among men, communing in secret with His disciples, is a better thing for a continuance while we are in this body than the sight, even, of Jesus Himself in the excellence of His majesty.

This morning in trying to dwell upon the simple sight of “Jesus only,” we shall hold it up as, beyond measure, important and delightful. And we

shall bear our witness that as it was said of Goliath's sword, "there is none like it," so may it be said of fellowship with "Jesus only." We shall first notice what *might* have happened to the disciples after the Transfiguration. We shall then dwell on what *did* happen. And then, thirdly, we shall speak on what we anxiously desire *may* happen to those who hear us this day.

I. First, then, WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED to the three disciples after they had seen the transfiguration? There were four things either of which might have occurred. As a first supposition, they might have seen nobody with them on the Holy Mount. They might have found all gone but themselves. When the cloud had overshadowed them, and they were sorely afraid, they might have lifted up their eyes and found the entire vision melted into thin air—no Moses, no Elijah, and no Jesus. In such a case they would have been in a sorry plight, like those who having begun to taste of a banquet, suddenly find all the viands swept away. Like thirsty men who have tasted the cooling crystal drops, and then seen the fountain dried up before their eyes.

They would not have gone down the mountain side that day asking questions and receiving instruction, for they would have had no Teacher. They would have descended to face a multitude and to contend with a demon—not to conquer Satan, but to stand defeated by him before the crowd—for they would have had no Champion to espouse their cause and drive out the evil spirit. They would have gone down among Scribes and Pharisees to be baffled with their knotty questions, and to be defeated by their sophistries, for they would have had no Wise Man who spoke as never man spoke, to untie the knots and disentangle the snarls of controversy.

They would have been like sheep without a shepherd, like orphan children left alone in the world. They would have, from that day on, have reckoned it an unhappy day on which they saw the Transfiguration—because having seen it, having been led to high thoughts by it, and excited to great expectations—all had disappeared like the foam upon the waters, and left nothing solid behind. Alas for those who have seen the image of the spirits of just men made perfect, and beheld the great Lord of all such spirits—and then have found themselves alone and all the high companionship forever gone.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, there are some in this world, and we ourselves have been among them, to whom something like this has actually occurred. You have been under a sermon, or at a Gospel ordinance, or in reading the Word of God for awhile delighted, exhilarated, lifted up to the most sublime regions. And then afterwards when it has all been over, there has been nothing left of joy or benefit, nothing left of all that was preached and for the moment enjoyed. Nothing, at any rate, that you could take with you into the conflicts of everyday life.

The whole has been a splendid vision and nothing more. There has been neither Moses, nor Elijah, nor Jesus left. You did remember what

you saw, but only with regret, because nothing remained with you. And, indeed, this which happens sometimes to us, is a general habit of that portion of this ungodly world which hears the Gospel and perceives not its reality. It listens with respect to Gospel histories as to legends of ancient times. It hears with reverence the stories of the days of miracles. It venerates the far-off ages and their heroic deeds—but it does not believe that anything is left of all the vision, anything for today, for common life, and for common men.

Moses it knows, and Elijah it knows, and Christ it knows—as shadows that have passed across the scene and have disappeared. But it knows nothing of any one of these as abiding in permanent influence over the mind and spirit of the present. All come and all gone—all to be revered, all to be respected, but nothing more. There is nothing left, so far as they are concerned, to influence or bless the present hour. Jesus and His Gospel have come and gone, and we may very properly remember the fact, but according to certain sages there is nothing in the New Testament to affect this advanced age, this enlightened nineteenth century. We have got beyond all that.

Ah, Brethren, let those who can be content to do so, put up with this worship of moral relics and spiritual phantoms. To us it would be wretchedness itself! We, on the other hand say, blessing the name of the Lord that we can say it, that there abides with us our Lord Jesus. At this day He is with us, and will be with us even to the end of the world! Christ's existence is not a fact confined to antiquity or to remote distance. By His Spirit He is actually in His Church. We have seen Him, though not with eyes. We have heard Him, though not with ears. We have grasped Him, though not with hands. And we feed upon His flesh, which is meat, indeed, and His blood, which is drink, indeed. We have with us at this very day Jesus our Friend, to Whom we make known our secrets, and who bears all our sorrows.

We have Jesus our interpreting Instructor, who still reveals His secrets to us, and leads us into the mind and name of God. We have Jesus still with us to supply us with strength, and in His power we are still mighty. We confess His reigning Sovereignty in the Church, and we receive His all-sufficient succor. The Church is not decapitated, her Head abides in vital union with her—Jesus is no myth to us—whatever He may be to others. He is no departed shade, He is no heroic personification—in very deed there is a Christ, and though others see Him not, and even we with these *eyes* see Him not, yet in Him believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Oh, I trust it will never be so with us, that as we go about our life work our religion shall melt into fiction and become nothing but mere sentiment, nothing but thought, and dream, and vision. But may our religion be a matter of FACT, a walking with the living and abiding Savior. Though Moses may be gone, and Elijah may be gone, yet Jesus Christ abides with us and in us, and we in Him, and so shall it be forever more.

Now, there was a second thing that might have happened to the disciples. When they lifted up their eyes they might have seen Moses only. It would certainly have been a very sad exchange for what they did see, to have seen only Moses. The face of Moses would have shone, his person would have awed them, and it would have been no mean thing for men of humble origin like themselves to walk down the mountain with that mighty king in Jeshurun who had spoken with God face to face, and rested with Him in solemn conclave by the space of forty days at a time. But yet who would exchange the sun for the moon? Who would exchange the cold moonbeams of Moses and the Law for the sunny rays of the Savior's Divine affection?

It would have been an unhappy exchange for them to have lost their Master whose name is Love, and to have found a leader in the man whose name is synonymous with Law. Moses, the man of God, cannot be compared with Jesus, the Son of God. Yet, dear Brethren, there are some who see Moses only. After all the preaching that there has been in the world, and the declaration of the precious every Sunday. After the clear revelations of Scripture and the work of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts, yet we have among us some who persist in seeing nothing but Moses only. I mean this—there are some who will see nothing but shadows—mere shadows, still.

As I read my Bible I see there that the age of the symbolical, the typical, the pictorial, has passed away. I am glad of the symbols, and types, and pictures—for they remain instructive to me. But the age in which they were in the foreground has given way to a clearer light, and they are gone forever. There are, however, certain persons who profess to read the Bible and to see very differently. They set up a new system of types and shadows—a system, let me say, ridiculous to men of sense, and obnoxious to men of spiritual taste. There are some who delight in outward ordinances—they must have rubric and ritual, vestments and ceremonies, and this superabundantly, morning, noon and night!

They regard days, and seasons, and forms of words and postures. They consider one place holy above another. They regard a certain caste of men as being priestly above other Believers, and their love of symbols is seen in season and out of season. One would think, from their teachings, that the one thing needful was not "Jesus only," but custom, antiquity, outward performance, and correct observance! Alas, for those who talk of Jesus, but virtually see Moses, and Moses only. Ah, unhappy change for the heart if it could exchange spiritual fellowship with Jesus for outward acts and symbolical representations.

It would be an unhappy thing for the Christian Church, if she could ever be duped out of the priceless gifts which faith wins from her living Lord in His fullness of Grace and Truth—to return to the beggarly elements of carnal ordinances. Unhappy day, indeed, if Popish counterfeits of legal shadows should supplant Gospel fact and substance. Blessed be

God, we have not so learned Christ. We see something better than Moses only.

There are too many who see Moses only, inasmuch as they see nothing but Law, nothing but duty and precept in the Bible. I know that some here, though we have tried to preach Christ crucified as their only hope, yet whenever they read the Bible or hear the Gospel, feel nothing except a sense of their own sinfulness. And, arising out of that sense of sinfulness, a desire to work out a righteousness of their own. They are continually measuring themselves by the Law of God. They feel their shortcomings, they mourn over their transgressions, but they go no further. I am glad that they see Moses—may the stern voice of the Lawgiver drive them to Jesus, the Law Fulfiller.

But I grieve that they tarry so long in legal servitude, which can only bring them sorrow and dismay. The right of Sinai, what is it but despair? God revealed in flaming fire, and proclaiming with thunder His fiery Law—what is there to save the soul? To see the Lord who will by no means spare the guilty, but will surely visit transgression with eternal vengeance, is a sight which never should eclipse Calvary—where Love makes recompense to Justice. O that you may get beyond the mount that might not be touched, and come to Calvary where God in vengeance is clearly seen, but where God in mercy fills the Throne. Oh, how blessed is it to escape from the voice of command and threat and come to the blood of sprinkling, where “Jesus only” speaks better things!

Moses only, however, has become a sight very common with some of you who write bitter things against yourselves. You never read the Scriptures or hear the Gospel without feeling condemned. You know your duty and confess how short you have fallen of it. And therefore you abide under conscious condemnation and will not come to Him who is the Propitiation for your sins. Alas, that there should be so many who with strange perversity of unbelief twist every promise into a threat, and out of every gracious word that drips with honey manage to extract gall and wormwood.

They see the dark shadow of Moses only. The broken tablets of the Law, the smoking mount and the terrible trumpet are ever with them, and over all an angry God. They had a better vision once, they have it sometimes now. For now and then under the preaching of the Gospel they have glimpses of hope and mercy. But they relapse into darkness, they fall again into despair because they have chosen to see Moses only. I pray that a change may come over the spirit of their dreams, and that yet like the Apostles they may see “Jesus only.”

But, my Brethren, there was a third alternative that might have happened to the disciples. They might have seen Elijah only. Instead of the gentle Savior, they might have been standing at the side of the rough-clad and the stern-spirited Elijah. Instead of the Lamb of God, there might have remained to them only the lion who roared like the voice of God’s own majesty in the midst of sinful Israel. In such a case, with such a leader, they would have gone down from the mount, and I know that if

John had said, “Command fire from Heaven,” Elijah would have consumed his foes.

The Pharisees, like the priests of Baal, would have found a speedy end, Herod’s blood, like Ahab’s, would have been licked up by dogs and Herodias, like another Jezebel, would have been devoured of the same. But all this power for vengeance would have been a poor exchange for the gracious Omnipotence of the Friend of sinners. Who would prefer the slayer of the priests to the Savior of men? The top of Carmel was glorious when its intercession brought the rain for Israel—but how poor it is compared with Gethsemane, whose pleadings bring eternal life to millions! In company with Jesus, we are at Elim beneath the palm tree. But with Elijah we are in the wilderness beneath the stunted juniper.

Who would exchange the excellency of Olivet for the terrors of Horeb? Yet I fear there are many who see Elijah only. Prophecies of future woe fascinate them rather than thoughts of present salvation. Elijah may be taken representatively as the forerunner of Christ, for our Lord interpreted the prophecy of the coming of Elijah as referring to John the Baptist. There are not a few who abide in the seeking, repenting, and preparing state, and come not to “Jesus only.” I am not, myself, fond of even using the term “preparing for Christ,” for it seems to me that those are best prepared for Christ who most feel themselves unprepared.

But there is no doubt a state of heart which prepares for faith—a sense of need, a consciousness of sin, a hatred of sin—all there are preparations for actual peace and comfort in Christ Jesus. And oh, how many there are who continue year after year merely in that preliminary condition, choosing the candle and refusing the sun. They do not become Believers, but are always complaining that they do not feel as yet fit to come to Christ. They want Christ, they desire Christ, they would gladly have Christ—but they stay in desire and longings, and go no further. They never get so far as to behold “the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”

The voice from Heaven to them they always interpret as crying, “The axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.” Their conscience is thrilled, and thrilled again by the voice that cries in the wilderness, “Prepare you the way of the Lord.” Their souls are rent and torn by Elijah’s challenge, “If the Lord is God, follow Him—but if Baal, then follow him.” But they remain still halting between two opinions, trembling before Elijah and not rejoicing before the Savior. Unhappy men and women! So near the kingdom, and yet out of it! So near the feast, and yet perishing for want of the living bread. The Word is near you all, (how near!), and yet you receive it not.

Remember, I pray you, that merely to prepare for a Savior is not to be saved. That to have a sense of sin is not the same thing as being pardoned. Your repentance, unless you also believe in Jesus, is a repentance that needs to be repented of. At the girdle of John the Baptist the keys of Heaven did never hang. Elijah is not the door of salvation. Preparation for Christ is not Christ. Despair is not regeneration, doubt is not repentance.

Only by faith in Jesus can you be saved—but complaining of yourselves is not faith. “Jesus only” is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. “Jesus only” is the sinner’s Savior. O that your eyes may be opened, not to see Elijah, not to see Moses—but to see “Jesus only.”

You see, then, these three alternatives, but there was also another—a fourth thing might have happened when the disciples opened their eyes—they might have seen Moses and Elijah with Jesus, even as in the Transfiguration. At first sight it seems as if this would have been superior to that which they did enjoy. To walk down the mountain with that blessed trio—how great a privilege! How strong might they have been for the accomplishment of the Divine purposes! Moses could preach the Law and make men tremble. And then Jesus could follow with His Gospel of Grace and Truth. Elijah could flash the thunderbolt in their faces, and then Christ could have uplifted the humbled spirits.

Would not the contrast have been delightful, and the connection inspiriting? Would not the assemblage of such different kinds of forces have contributed to the greatest success? I think not. It is a vast better thing to see “Jesus only,” as a matter of perpetuity, than to see Moses and Elijah with Jesus. It is night, I know it, for I see the moon and stars. The morning comes. I know it comes, for I see no longer many stars, only one remains, and that the morning star. But the fall day has arrived, I know it has, for I cannot even see the morning star. All those guardians and comforters of the night have disappeared. I see the sun only.

Now, inasmuch as every man prefers the noon to midnight and to the twilight of dawn, the disappearance of Moses and Elijah, indicating the full noontide of light, was the best thing that could happen. Why should we wish to see Moses? The ceremonies are all fulfilled in Jesus. The Law is honored and fulfilled in Him. Let Moses go! His light is already in “Jesus only.” And why should I wish to retain Elijah? The prophecies are all fulfilled in Jesus, and the preparation of which Elijah preached, Jesus brings with Himself. Let, then, Elijah go, his light, also, is in “Jesus only.”

It is better to see Moses and Elijah *in* Christ, than to see Moses and Elijah *with* Christ. The absence of some things betokens a higher state of things than their presence. In all my library I do not know that I have a Lennie’s English Grammar, or a Mayor’s Spelling Book, or a Henry’s First Latin Exercises. Nor do I regret the absence of those valuable works, because I have got beyond the need of them. So the Christian wants not the *symbols* of Moses, or the *preparations* of Elijah, for Christ is all—and we are complete in Him. He who is conversant with the higher walks of sacred literature and reads in the golden book of Christ’s heart, may safely lay the legal school book away.

This was good enough for the Church’s infancy, but we have now put away childish things. “We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of

sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Why you are no more a servant, but a son! And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”

My Brothers and Sisters, the principle may be carried still further, for even the most precious things we treasure here below will disappear when fully realized in Heaven. Beautiful for situation was the temple on Mount Zion, and though we believe not in the sanctity of buildings under the Gospel, we love the place of solemn meeting where we are accustomed to offer prayer and praise. But when we enter into perfection we shall find no temple in Heaven. We delight in our Sundays, and we would not give them up. O may England never lose her Sundays! But when we reach the Jerusalem above, we shall not observe the first day of the week above the rest, for we shall enjoy one everlasting Sunday.

No Temple, because all Temple. And no Sunday, because all Sunday in Heaven. Thus you see the losing of some things is *gain*—it proves that we have got beyond their help. Just as we get beyond the nursery and all its accessories, and never regret it because we have become men, so do Moses and Elijah pass away—but we do not miss them, for “Jesus only” indicates our manhood. It is a sign of a higher growth when we can see Jesus only. My Brethren, much of this sort of thing takes place with all Christians in their spiritual life.

Do you remember when you were first of all convicted and awakened, what a great deal you thought of the preacher, and how much of the very style in which he spoke the Gospel? But now, though you delight to listen to his voice, and find that God blesses you through him, yet you have sunk the thought of the preacher in the glory of the Master! You see no man except “Jesus only.” And as you grow in Grace you will find that many doctrines and points of Church government which once appeared to you to be all important—though you will still value them—will seem but of small consequence compared with Christ Himself. Like the traveler ascending the Alps to reach the summit of Mont Blanc. At first he observes that lord of the hills as one horn among many, and often in the twisting of his upward path he sees other peaks which appear more elevated than that monarch of mountains.

But when at last he is near the summit, he sees all the rest of the hills beneath his feet, and like a mighty wedge of alabaster Mont Blanc pierces the very clouds. So, as we grow in Grace, other things sink and Jesus rises. They must decrease, and Christ must increase—until He alone fills the full horizon of our soul—and rises clear and bright and glorious up into the very Heaven of God. O that we may thus see “Jesus only!”

II. Time hastens so rapidly, this morning, that I know not how I shall be able to compress the rest of my discourse into the allotted space. We must in the most rapid manner speak upon WHAT REALLY HAPPENED.

“They saw no man, save Jesus only.” This was all they wanted to see for their comfort. They were sorely afraid—Moses was gone, and he could give them no comfort. Elijah was gone—he could speak no consolatory word.

Yet when Jesus said, "Be not afraid," their fears vanished. All the comfort, then, that any troubled heart wants, it can find in Christ. Go not to Moses, nor Elijah—neither to the old Covenant, nor to prophecy—go straight to Jesus only. He was all the Savior they wanted.

Those three men all needed washing from sin. All needed to be kept and held on their way, but neither Moses nor Elijah could have washed them from sin, nor have kept them from returning to it. Jesus only could cleanse them, and did. Christ could lead them on, and did. Ah, Brethren, all the Savior we want we find in Jesus only. The priests of Rome and their Anglican mimics officiously offer us their services. How glad they would be if we would bend our necks once again to their yoke! But we thank God we have seen "Jesus only," and if Moses has gone, and if Elijah has gone, we are not likely to let the fools of Rome come in and fill up the vacancy. "Jesus only," is enough for our comfort, without either Anglican, Mosaic, or Roman priest-craft.

He, again, was to them, as they went afterwards into the world, enough for a Master. "No man can serve two masters," and albeit, Moses and Elijah might sink into the second rank, yet might there have been some difficulty in the follower's mind if the leadership were divided. But when they had no leader but Jesus—His guidance, His direction and command were quite sufficient. He, in the day of battle, was enough for their Captain. In the day of difficulty, enough for their direction. They wanted none but Jesus. At this day, my Brethren, we have no Master but Christ. We submit ourselves to no vicar of God. We bow down ourselves before no great leader of a sect, neither to Calvin, nor to Arminius, to Wesley, or Whitfield. "One is our Master," and that one is enough, for we have learned to see the wisdom of God and the power of God in Jesus only.

He was enough as their power for future life, as well as their Master. They needed not ask Moses to lend them official dignity, nor to ask Elijah to bring them fire from Heaven. Jesus would give them His Holy Spirit, and they should be strong enough for every enterprise. And, Brethren, all the power you and I want to preach the Gospel, and to conquer souls for the Truth, we can find in Jesus only. You want no sacred State prestige, no pretended Apostolic succession, no prelatric unction—Jesus will anoint you with His Holy Spirit, and you shall be plenteously endowed with power from on high, so that you shall do great things and prevail. "Jesus only."

Why, they wanted no other motive to constrain them to use their power aright. It is enough incentive to a man to be allowed to live for such a One as Christ. Only let the thought of Christ fill the enlightened intellect, and it must conquer the sanctified affections! Let but Jesus be well understood as the everlasting God who bowed the heavens and came down and suffered shame, and ignominy, that He might redeem us from the wrath to come. Let us get but a sight of the thorn-crowned head and those dear eyes all red with weeping, and those sweet cheeks bruised and battered by the scoffers' fists.

Let us but look into the tender heart that was broken with griefs unutterable for our sakes—and the love of Christ must constrain us—and we shall thus, “judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not, therefore, live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.” In the point of motive, Believers do not need the aid of Moses. That you ought to do such a thing because otherwise you will be punished will but little strengthen you. Nor will you be much aided by the spirit of prophecy which leads you to hope that in the millennial period you will be made a ruler over many cities.

It will be enough for you that you serve the Lord Christ. It will be enough for you if you may be enabled to honor Him, to deck His crown, to magnify His name. Here is stimulus sufficient for martyrs and confessors—“Jesus only.” Brethren, it is all the Gospel we have to preach—it is all the Gospel we want to preach—it is the only ground of confidence which we have for ourselves. It is all the hope we have to set before others. I know that in this age there is an overwhelming desire for that which has the aspect of being intellectual, deep and novel. And we are often informed that there are to be developments in religion even as in science. And we are despised as being harsh men, certainly not thinking men, if we preach today what was preached two hundred years ago.

Brethren, we preach today what was preached eighteen hundred years ago, and wherein others make alterations, they create deformities, and not improvements. We are not ashamed to avow that the old Truth of Christ alone is everlasting. All else has gone or shall go, but the Gospel towers above the wrecks of time—to us “Jesus only” remains as the sole topic of our ministry, and we want nothing else. For “Jesus only” shall be our reward—to be with Him where He is—to behold His glory, to be like He when we shall see Him as He is! We ask no other Heaven. No other bliss can our soul conceive of. The Lord grant we may have a fullness of this, and “Jesus only” shall be throughout eternity our delight.

There was here space to have dilated at great length, but we have given you the heads of thought rather than the thoughts themselves. Though the Apostles saw “Jesus only,” they saw quite sufficiently, for Jesus is enough for time and eternity, enough to live by and enough to die by.

III. I must close, though I would gladly linger. Brethren, let us think Of WHAT WE DESIRE MAY HAPPEN to all now present. I do desire for my fellow Christians, and for myself, that more and more the great object of our thoughts, motives, and acts may be “Jesus only.” I believe that whenever our religion is most vital it is most full of Christ. Moreover, when it is most practical, downright, and according to common sense, it always gets nearest to Jesus. I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but “Jesus only.”

I can rest in some degree in the externals of religion, its outward escarpments and bulwarks, when I am in health. But I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when

my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments—enjoyments rich, rare, celestial—they are always connected with Jesus only. Other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy, too, but the most sublime, the most inebriating, the most Divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only.

In fact, I find if I want to labor much, I must live on Jesus only. If I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only. If I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only. If I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only. If I pant to learn the mysteries of Heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that anything which we add to Christ lowers our position. I believe that the more elevated our soul becomes the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the region of the perfect—the more completely everything else will sink, die out—and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be first and last, and midst and without end, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian!

There are others here who are not yet believers in Jesus, and our desire is that this may happen to them, that they may see “Jesus only.” “Oh,” says one, “Sir, I want to see my *sins*. My heart is very hard and very proud. I want to see my *sins*.” Friend, I also desire that you should, but I desire that you may see them not on yourself, but on Jesus only. No sight of sin ever brings such true humiliation of spirit as when the soul sees its sins laid on the Savior. Sinner, I know you have thought of sins as lying on *yourself*, and you have been trying to feel their weight—but there is a happier and better view still.

Sin was laid on Jesus, and it made Him to be covered with a bloody sweat. It nailed Him to the Cross. It made Him cry, “Lama Sabachthani.” It bowed Him into the dust of death. Why, Friend, if you see sin on Jesus you will hate it, you will bemoan it, you will abhor it. You need not look evermore to sin as burdening *yourself*—see Jesus only—and the best kind of repentance will follow. “Ah, but,” says another, “I want to feel my *need* of Christ more.” You will see your need all the better if you look at Jesus only. Many a time an appetite for a thing is created by the sight of it. Why, there are some of us who can hardly be trusted in a bookseller’s shop because though we might have done very well at home without a certain volume, we no sooner see it than we are in urgent need of it.

So often is it with some of you about other matters, that it becomes most dangerous to let you see. Now, because you will want, as soon as you see a sight of Jesus, to know what He is to sinners, what He makes sinners, what He is in Himself, it will tend to make you feel your need of Him more than all your poring over your poor miserable self. You will get no further there, look to “Jesus only.” “Yes,” says another, “but I want to read my title clear, I want to *know* that I have an interest in Jesus.” You will best read your interest in Christ by looking at Him. If I want to know whether a certain estate is mine, do I look into my own heart to see if I

have a right to it? Or do I look into the archives of the estate? I search testaments and covenants.

Now, Christ Jesus is God's Covenant with His people, a leader and commander to the people. Today I personally can read my title clear to Heaven, and shall I tell you how I read it? Not because I *feel* all I wish to feel, nor because I *am* what I hope I yet shall be—but I read in the Word of God that “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” I am a sinner, even the devil cannot tell me I am not. O precious Savior, then You have come to save such as I am! Then I see it written again, “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved.” I have believed, and have been baptized. I know I trust alone in Jesus, and that is believing. As surely, then, as there is a God in Heaven I shall be in Heaven one day!

It must be so, because unless God is a liar, he that believes must be saved. You see, it is not by looking *within*, it is by looking to *Jesus only* that you perceive, at last, your name engraved on His hands. I wish to have Christ's name written on my heart, but if I want assurance, I have to look at *His* heart till I see my name written there. O turn your eyes away from your *sin* and your *emptiness* to His righteousness and His fullness. See the bloody sweat drops as they fall in Gethsemane. See His heart pierced and pouring out blood and water for the sins of men upon Calvary! There is life in a look at Him! O look to Him, and though it is Jesus only, though Moses should condemn you, and Elijah should alarm you, yet “Jesus only” shall be enough to comfort and enough to save you.

May God grant us Grace, every one of us, to take for our motto in life, for our hope in death, and for our joy in eternity, “Jesus only.” May God bless you for the sake of “Jesus only.” Amen.

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HOPE IN HOPELESS CASES

NO. 821

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 19, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“Bring him here to Me.”
Matthew 17:17.*

OUR real text will be the entire narrative, but as it seems necessary to select some one sentence, we have chosen that before us as the true hinge of the story. The kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, while on earth, was so extensive as to touch the confines both of Heaven and Hell. We see Him at one moment discoursing with Moses and Elijah in His Glory, as though at Heaven's gates, and lo, in a few hours we see Him confronting a foul spirit, as though defying the infernal pit. There is a long journey from Patriarchs to demons, from Prophets to dumb devils, yet mercy prompts Him and power supports Him so that He is equally glorious in either place!

What a glorious Lord He was even while in His humiliation! How glorious is He now! How far His goodness reaches! Truly He has dominion from sea to sea—to the extremes of human condition His empire reaches. Our Lord and Master hears with joy the shout of a Believer who has vanquished his foe, and, at the same hour, He bows His ear to the despairing wail of a sinner who has given up all confidence in self and is desirous to be saved by Him. At one moment He is accepting the crown which the warrior brings Him from the well-fought fight. At another moment He is healing the broken in heart, and binding up their wounds.

There is a notable difference between the dying scene of the triumphant Believer as he enters into rest, and the first weeping repentance of a Saul of Tarsus as he seeks mercy of the Savior whom he has persecuted! And yet the Lord's heart and eyes are with both. Our Lord's transfiguration did not disqualify Him for casting out devils, nor did it make Him feel too sublime and spiritual to grapple with human ills. And so, at this hour, the glories of Heaven do not take Him off from the miseries of earth, nor do they make Him forget the cries and tears of the feeble ones who are seeking Him in this valley of tears.

The case of the deaf and dumb demoniac, which we read in your hearing, and to which I call your particular attention this morning, is a very remarkable one. *All* sin is the evidence that the soul is under the dominion of Satan. *All* unconverted persons are really possessed by the devil in a certain sense—he has established his throne within their hearts, and there he reigns and rules the members of their body. “The spirit, which

now works in the children of disobedience” is the name which Paul gives to the Prince of Darkness. But these possessions are not alike in every case—and the casting out of Satan, though always effected by the same Lord—is not always worked after the same fashion.

We bless God, many of us, that when *we* lived in sin, we were not given over to a furious delirium of it—there was method in our madness. We claim no credit for this, but we do thank God for it—that we were not whirled along like rolling things before the tempest—but were restrained and kept within the bounds of outward propriety. We are also grateful, that when, being aroused and alarmed, we fell under the iron rod of Satan, we were not all brought into that utter despair—that horror of great darkness, that inward torment and agony—which some are made to endure.

We are grateful that when Jesus came to save us, although we were much hindered by Satan, yet there was none of the foaming of pride and wallowing of obstinate lust—the tearing of raging desperation of which we have read in memorable instances—but the Lord opened our hearts *gently* with His golden key, entered into the chamber of our spirits and took possession. For the most part, the conquests which Jesus achieves in the souls of His people, though worked by the same power, are more quietly accomplished than in the case before us. For this let thanks be rendered to the God of Grace.

But every now and then there are these strange, out-of-the-way cases—persons in whom Satan seems to run riot and to exert the utmost force of his malice—and in whom the Lord Jesus displays the exceeding greatness of His power, when, in almighty love He dethrones the tyrant and casts him out, never to return again. If there should be only one such person here this morning, I shall be justified in looking after him, for what man is there among you, who, having a hundred sheep, if one of them should go astray, does not leave the 99 in the wilderness, and go after that which is gone astray?

I ask the prayers of such as have, in years gone by, been brought to Jesus and are now rejoicing in Him, that we may, this morning, find out the far-off wanderers, and may, by the Holy Spirit’s anointing, liberate those that are bound with fetters of iron—that they may become, today, the Lord’s freed ones—for if the Son shall make them free, they shall be free indeed! I shall, by my Lord’s help, first enlarge upon the deplorable case. Then we shall meditate upon the one Resource. And then we will conclude by admiring the sure result.

I. First, let us look, so far as time permits, into the details of the DEPLORABLE CASE before us. We understand the physical miracles of Christ to be types of His *spiritual* works. The wonders which He worked in

the natural world have their analogies in the spiritual world—the *outward* and *natural* is the symbol of the *inward* and *spiritual*.

Now the demoniac who was brought by his father for healing is not so distinctly representative of a case of gross sin, though the spirit is called a foul one, and Satan is everywhere defiling. But it is an instance of the great horror, disturbance of mind and raving despair caused by the Evil One in some minds to their torment and jeopardy. You will observe, concerning it, that the disease appeared even now and then in overwhelming attacks of mania in which the man was utterly beyond his own control.

The epileptic fit threw the poor victim in all directions. So have we seen melancholy persons in whom despondency, mistrust, numbing despair have raged at times with unconquerable fury. They have not so much *entertained* these evil guests as been *victims* to them. As Mark puts it, “The spirit takes him.” So have such forlorn ones been captured and carried off by Giant Despair. The fairies have scourged them onward over dry places, seeking rest and finding none. They have refused to be comforted, and like sick men, their souls abhor all manner of meat. They displayed no power to struggle with their melancholy—resistance did not suggest itself to them! They were taken off their feet and carried clean out of themselves in a rapture of woe.

Such cases are not at all uncommon. Satan, knowing that his time is short and perceiving that Jesus is hastening to the rescue—lashes his poor slave with excess of malice—as if by any means he may utterly destroy his victim before the Deliverer arrives. The poor patient before us was filled at times with a terrible anguish—an anguish which he expressed by foaming at the mouth, by wallowing upon the ground, and by crying out. At times in his dreadful falls he bruised himself, and his delirium led him to dash himself against anything which stood before him, so causing to himself new injuries. None can tell but those who have felt the same, what are the pains of conviction of sin when aggravated by the suggestions of the enemy.

Some of us have passed through this in our measure, and can declare that it is Hell upon earth. We have felt the weight of the hand of an angry God! We know what it is to read the Bible and not find a single promise in it that would suit our case—but rather to see every page of it glowing with threats—as though curses like lightning blazed from it! Even the choicest passages have appeared to rise up against us as though they said, “Intrude not here. These comforts are not for you! You have nothing to do with such things as these.” We have bruised ourselves against doctrines, and precepts, and promises, and even the Cross itself!

We have prayed and our very prayer has increased our misery! Even against the Mercy Seat we have fallen, judging our prayers to be but babbling sounds obnoxious to the Lord. We have gone up with the assembly

of God's people and the preacher seemed to frown upon us, and to rub salt into our wounds, and aggravate our case! Even the reading, and the hymns, and the prayers appeared to be in league against us! And we went home to our retirement more desponding than before. I hope none of you are passing through such a state of mind as this, for it is, of all things, next to Hell itself, one of the most dreadful!

In such a plight men have cried out with Job, "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit. I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me? When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint, then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions so that my soul chooses strangling and death rather than life. I loathe it. I would not live always: let me alone, for my days are vanity."

Thanks be unto God, the issues out of this slavery are often such as make angels sing for joy, but while the black night endures it is a horror of darkness indeed! Put a martyr upon the rack, or even fasten him with an iron chain to the stake and let the flames kindle about him—if his Lord shall smile upon him, his anguish will be nothing compared with the torture of a spirit scorched and burned with an inward sense of the wrath of God! Such a man can join in the lament of Jeremiah, and cry, "He has set me in dark places, as they that are dead of old. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out. He has made my chain heavy. Also, when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. He has bent His bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to enter into my heart. He has filled me with bitterness. He has made me drunk with wormwood."

The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity, but who can bear a wounded spirit? To groan over unforgiven sin. To dread its well-deserved punishment. To fear the everlasting burnings—these are things which make men suffer with an emphasis—and make them think life is a burden. We learn from the narrative that the evil spirit, at the times when it took full possession of the man, sought his destruction by hurling him in different directions. "Sometimes it casts him into the fire, and sometimes into the water."

So is it with deeply distressed souls. One day they seem to be all on fire with earnestness and zeal, with impatience and anxiety! But the next day they sink into a horrible coldness and apathy of soul from which it appears to be utterly impossible to arouse them. All sensitive yesterday, all insensible today! They are uncertain. You know not where to find them. If you deal with them as for a spirit that is in danger from the fire of *insolence*, you have lost your pains, for in the next few minutes they will be in danger from the water of *indifference*. They fly to extremes! They are like

the souls fabled to be in “purgatory,” of whom legends say that they suffer by turns in an oven and in cells of ice!

You would suppose from the way in which they speak, today, that they felt themselves to be the blackest of sinners. But in a short time they deny that they feel any sort of repentance for sin! You would imagine, to hear them talk at one time, that they would never cease to pray till they found the Savior. But by-and-by they tell you that they cannot pray at all, and that it is but a mockery for them to bend the knee! They ring all the changes—they are more fickle than the weather! Their color comes and goes like that of the chameleon! They are all fits and starts, convulsions and contortions.

He were more than human who could put up with them for a month, for they vary oftener than the moon. Their malady laughs us to scorn. Their trouble baffles all our consoling efforts. Only Jesus Christ, Himself, can deal with them! It is well that we can add that He has a peculiar art in dealing with desperate diseases and finds His delight in healing those whom all others have left for lost. To add to the difficulties of this deplorable case, this child was deaf, so our Lord tells us in Mark, “Come out of him, you deaf and dumb spirit.” There was, therefore, no way of reasoning with him at all! Not a sound could pass through that sealed ear.

With other men you might speak, and a soft word might calm the perturbations of their mind. But no word, however gentle, could reach this poor tormented spirit—he was, to sound and sense alike, impervious! And are there not such, still, to whom words are wasted breath? You may quote promises. You may supply encouragements. You may explain doctrines, but it is all nothing—they end where they began! Like squirrels in revolving cages, they never go anywhere. Oh, the twists and turns, the convolutions and the windings of poor tormented minds!

It is easy enough, certainly, to tell them to believe in Jesus. But if they understand you, it is in such a dark manner that you had need to explain again—and that explanation you will have to explain still further. To cast themselves simply upon the blood of sprinkling, and to rest upon the finished work of Jesus is, of all things, most plain—the very child’s A B C cannot be plainer—and yet, for all that, it is not plain to them. They will appear to comprehend you and then start aside at a tangent. They will appear to be convinced, and for a time to give up their doubts and fears—but meet them half-an-hour afterwards and you will find you have been speaking to a wall—addressing yourself to the deaf. Oh, lamentable case! The Lord of mercy look on such, for hopeless is *man’s* help! Glory be to God, He has laid help upon One that is mighty—who can make the deaf to hear—causing His voice to ring with sweet encouragements in the death-like stillness of the dungeons of despair!

Next to this it appears that the afflicted one was dumb, that is to say, incapable of articulate speech by reason of the demon possession. Since he cried out when the devil left him, it would seem to have been a case in which all the instruments of speech were present, but articulation had not been learned. There was utterance of an incoherent sort—the noise-making apparatus was there—but nothing intelligible came forth except the most heartrending cries of pain. Such dumb ones abound—they cannot explain their own condition—if they talk to you it is incoherent talk. They contradict themselves every five sentences—you know that they are speaking what they believe to be true—but if you did not *know* that, you might think that they were telling you lies which confound each other.

Their experience is a string of contradictions, and their utterance is even more complicated than their experience. It is very hard and difficult to talk with them very long—it wears out one’s patience—and if it wears out the patience of the hearer, how burdensome must it be to the unhappy speaker? They pray, but they dare not call it prayer—it is rather the chattering of a crane or a swallow. They talk with God what is in their poor, silly hearts, but ah, it is such a confusion and mixture that when it is done they wonder whether they have prayed or not. It is the cry, the bitter anguishing cry of *pain*, but it is untranslatable into words. It is an awful groan, an unutterable yearning and longing of the spirit, but they scarcely know, themselves, what it means.

You are weary with the details of this dolorous case, but I have not yet concluded the tale of woe. If any of you have never experienced the like, thank God for it, but at the same time pity and pray for those who are passing through this state of mind. And invoke, now, silently, the hope of the great Healer, that He would come and deal with them, for their plight is past the art of man. The father told Jesus that his son was pinning away. How could it be otherwise, with one borne down by such a mass of disorders and so perpetually tormented that the natural rest of sleep was constantly broken?

It was not likely that his strength would long be maintained in a system so racked and torn. And, mark you, despair of mind is an exceedingly weakening thing to the soul. I have known it even weaken the body till the worn-out sufferer has said with David, “My moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” To feel the guilt of sin. To fear the coming punishment. To have a dreadful cry in one’s ears of the “wrath to come.” To fear death and to expect it any moment. Above all, to disbelieve God and write bitter things against Him—this is a thing to make the bones rot and the heart wither.

Read John Bunyan’s “Grace Abounding,” and behold a picture there, drawn to the life, of a soul that was left as a heath in the desert so that it could not see when good came to it. You see a mind tossed up and down

on 10,000 waves of unbelief, never resting at any time but perpetually disturbed and distracted with surmises, suspicions, and forebodings. If these attacks always continued, and were not sometimes intermitted—if there were not little pauses, as it were, between the fits of unbelief—surely man would utterly fail and go to his home a prey to his own cruel unbelief!

The worst point in the case was all this had continued for *years*. Jesus asked how long he had been in this case, and his parent replied, “From a child.” Sometimes God permits, for purposes which we do not understand, the deep distress of a tempted soul to last for years. I cannot tell for how many years, but certainly some have had to battle with unbelief on the very confines of the grave, and only at eventide has it been light to them. When they thought they must die in the dark, the Holy Spirit has appeared to them and they have been cheered and comforted.

The Puritans were apt to quote the remarkable experience of Mrs. Honeywood as an instance of the singular way in which the Lord delivers His chosen. She, for year after year was in bondage to melancholy and despair, but she was set at liberty by the gracious Providence of God in an almost miraculous way. She took up a slender Venice glass, and saying, “I am as surely damned as that glass is dashed to pieces,” she hurled it down upon the floor, when, to her surprise, and the surprise of all, I know not by what means, the glass was not so much as chipped or cracked! That circumstance first gave her a ray of light, and she afterwards cast herself upon the Lord Jesus. Sometimes extraordinary light has been given to extraordinary darkness. God has brought up the prisoner out of the innermost ward where his feet had been fast in the stocks, and after years of bondage He has at last given perfect and delightful liberty!

One thing more about this case. The disciples had failed to cast the devil out. On other occasions they had been successful—they said to their Master, “Even the devils are subject unto us.” But this time they were utterly foiled. They did their best. They appear to have had some faith or they would not have attempted the task, but their faith was not at all equal to the emergency. Scribes and Pharisees gathered around them and began to mock them. And if there had been power in all the company of the Apostles to have worked the deed, they would gladly have done it. But there they stood, defeated and dismayed—the poor patient before them racked and tormented—and they unable to give him the slightest ease.

Ah, it becomes a painful case when an anxious soul has gone to the House of God for years and yet has found no consolation! When the troubled spirit has sought help from ministers, from Christian men and women! When prayers have been offered and not answered! When tears have been shed and have been unavailing! When books which have been consolatory to others have been studied without results! When teachings

which have converted thousands fail to create a good impression! And yet there are such instances in which all human agency is put to the rout—and when it seems as impossible to comfort the poor troubled one as to calm the waves of the sea or hush the voice of the thunder cloud.

Hearts are to be met with, still, in which the evil spirit and the Holy Spirit are brought into distinct conflict—in which the evil spirit displays all his malignity and brings the soul to the uttermost pitch of distress—in which, I trust, the Holy Spirit will display His saving power and lead the soul out of its prison to praise the name of the Lord! I thought I heard from some ungodly person a kind of whisper to himself, “I thank God I know nothing about these things.” Pause before you thank God for this, for evil as this is and to be deplored, it were better that you *had* all this than remain altogether without *spiritual* sensibility! It were better to go to Heaven burnt and branded, scourged and scarred every step of the road than to slide gently down to Hell as many of you are doing—sleeping sweetly while devils carry you along the road to perdition!

It is little, after all, to be for a season tormented and troubled by disturbance within, if it shall ultimately, by God’s interposition, end in joy and peace in believing! But it is beyond measure a dreadful thing to have, “Peace, peace,” sung in one’s ears where there is no peace, and then forever to discover one’s self a castaway in the pit from which there shall be no escape! Instead of being thankful, I would rather ask you to tremble. Yours is that terribly prophetic calm which the traveler frequently perceives upon the Alpine summit. Everything is still. The birds suspend their notes, fly low and cower down with fear. The hum of bees among the flowers is hushed. A horrible stillness rules the hour, as if death had silenced all things by stretching over them his awful scepter.

Perceive you not what is surely at hand? The thunder is preparing! The lightning will soon cast abroad its mighty fires! Earth will rock! Granite peaks will be dissolved! All nature will shake beneath the fury of the storm. Yours is that solemn calm today, O Sinner! Rejoice not in it, for the tempest is coming! The whirlwind and the tribulation is near which shall sweep you away and utterly destroy you! Better to be molested of the devil, now, than be tormented by him forever!

II. I have thus brought before you a very dolorous subject, but now, secondly, and may the Holy Spirit help us while I remind you of THE ONE RESOURCE. The disciples were baffled. The Master, however, remained undefeated and cried, “Bring him here to Me.” We ought to use the means so far as the means will go. We are bound, further, to make the means more effectual than they ordinarily are. Prayer and fasting are prescribed by our Lord as the means of stringing up ourselves to greater power than we should otherwise possess.

There are conversions which will never be worked by the agency of ordinary Christians. We have need to pray more, and by self-denial to keep our bodies more completely under and so to enjoy closer communion with God before we shall be able to handle the more distressing cases. The church of God would be far stronger to wrestle with this ungodly age if she were more given to prayer and fasting. There is a mighty efficacy in these two Gospel ordinances. The first links us to Heaven, the second separates us from earth. Prayer takes us into the banqueting house of God. Fasting overturns the surfeiting tables of earth. Prayer gives us to feed on the bread of Heaven and fasting delivers the soul from being encumbered with the fullness of bread which perishes.

When Christians shall bring themselves up to the uttermost possibilities of spiritual vigor, then they will be able, by God's Spirit working in them, to cast out devils, which today, without the prayer and fasting, laugh them to scorn. But for all that, to the most advanced Christian, there will still remain those mountainous difficulties which must be directly brought to the Master's personal agency for help. Still He tenderly commands us, "Bring them hereto Me." To make the text appear practical, let me beg you to remember that Jesus Christ is still alive. Simple as that truth is, you need to be reminded of it.

We very often estimate the power of the Church by looking to her ministers, her ordinances and her members—but the *power* of the Church does not lie there—it lies in the Holy Spirit and in an ever-living Savior. Jesus Christ died, it is true, but He lives and we may as truly come to Him today as did that anxious father in the days of our Lord's earthly sojourn. Miracles have ceased, it is said—so natural miracles have—but *spiritual* miracles have not! *We* have not the power to work either the one or the other. *Christ* has the power to work any kind of wonder and He is still willing and able at this present hour to work *spiritual* miracles in the midst of His Church. I delight to think of my Lord as a *living* Christ to whom I can speak and tell Him of every case that occurs in my ministry!

He is a *living* Helper to whom I may bring every difficulty that occurs in my own soul and in the souls of others. O think not that He is dead and buried! Seek Him not among the dead! Jesus lives! And living, is as able to meet with these cases of distress and sorrow as when He was here below. Remember, too, that Jesus lives in the place of authority. When He was here He had power over devils—but up yonder He has greater power, still—for here on earth He veiled the splendor of His Godhead, but up yonder His Glory beams resplendent—and all Hell confesses the majesty of His power!

There is no demon, however forceful, who will not tremble if Jesus does but speak or even so much as look at him. Today Jesus is the Master of hearts and consciences. He, by His secret power, can work upon every one

of our minds. He can depress us or He can exalt us! He can cast down or He can lift up! There cannot be a case which shall be difficult to Him. We have but to bring it to Him! He lives—and He lives in the place of power—and He can achieve the desire of our hearts.

Moreover, Jesus lives in the place of observation and He still graciously interposes. I know we are tempted to think of Him as of one far away who does not behold the sorrows of His Church, but I tell you, Brothers and Sisters, Christ's honor is as much concerned at this moment in the defeat or victory of His servants as it was when He came down from the mountaintop. From the battlements of Heaven Jesus looks, today, upon the work of His ministers—and if He sees them foiled He is jealous for the honor of His Gospel and is as ready to interpose and win the victory now as He was then! We have but to look up to our Lord!

He sleeps not as Baal did of old. He is not callous to our woes, nor indifferent to our griefs. Blessed Master, You are able to succor and strong to deliver! We have but to bring the matter which distresses us before You and You will deal with it, now, according to Your compassion. We should also remember, for our warning, Jesus Christ expects us to treat Him as a living, powerful, interposing One and to confide in Him as such. We do not know what we miss through lack of faith. We conceive that certain persons are in a *hopeless* condition and thus we dishonor Christ and injure them. We leave some cases and give them up instead of presenting them, constantly, to Him! We limit the Holy One of Israel! We grieve His Spirit and vex His holy mind!

But if, as children trust their father, we would trust in Jesus unstaggeringly with an Abrahamic faith, believing that what He has promised He is able also to perform, then would we see even cases as that before us soon brought into the light of day! We would see the oil of joy given instead of mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Now I earnestly urge parents and relatives, and any who have children or friends in distress of mind, to make a point of taking their dear ones to Jesus. Do not doubt Him—you vex Him if you do. Do not hesitate to come and tell Him, this morning, the position of your beloved one.

Hasten to Him! Lay the sick one before Him and even if, while in prayer, the case should become worse instead of better, hesitate not—you are dealing with the infinite Son of God! You need not fear, you must not doubt! God grant us Divine Grace in all things in our daily troubles, and especially in soul affairs, to bring all matters to the Lord Jesus.

III. Lastly, and with brevity, THE SURE RESULT. When the child, or the man, or whichever he may have been, was brought before our Lord, the case looked thoroughly hopeless. He was deaf and dumb—how could the Master deal with him? Beside that, he was foaming and wallowing—

what opening did there seem for the Divine power? I cannot wonder that his father said, "If you can do anything, have compassion upon us."

In most other instances the voice of Jesus calmed the spirit. But that voice could not reach the *mind*, for the ears were sealed. Never was there before the Savior a more thoroughly far-gone case. It was, to all appearances, hopeless! And yet the cure was Divinely certain, for Jesus, without hesitating for a moment, said to the unclean spirit, "You foul spirit, you deaf and dumb spirit, I charge you, come out of him." Christ has power to charge devils with authority. They dare not disobey. "And return no more unto him," said the Savior.

Where Jesus heals He heals forever. Once bring the soul out of prison, it shall not go back again. If He says, "I forgive," the sin is forgiven. If He speaks peace, the peace shall be like a river that never ceases running until it melts away into the ocean of eternal love! The cure was hopeless in itself, yet absolutely *certain* when Jesus put forth His healing hand. O, you who are broken down and desponding this morning, there is nothing that *you* can do, nor that *I* can do! But there is nothing which *JESUS* cannot do! Only go yourself, this morning, to Him and with a word He will give you peace—a peace that shall never be broken again but shall last till you enter into eternal rest!

Nevertheless the word of Christ, though sure to win its way, was stoutly opposed. The devil had great wrath, for he knew that his time was short. He began to rend and tear, and put out all his devilish force upon the poor child. And the poor creature, foaming and wallowing, fell down as if he were dead, under a terrible excitement. So often will it happen that at first the voice of Christ will make the spirit more troubled than before—not because Jesus troubles us—but because Satan revolts against Him. A poor tempted creature may even lie down in despair as dead, and those around may cry, "He is dead!" But then shall come the healing hand of tenderness and love, at whose touch the spirit shall survive.

Ah, Soul, if you should judge yourself to be as one dead. If your last hope should expire. If there should seem, now, to be nothing before you but a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation, it is *then* that Jesus will interpose! Learn the lesson that you cannot have gone too far from Christ! Believe that your extremities are only extremities to *you* and not to *Him*! The highest sin and the deepest despair, together, cannot baffle the power of Jesus! If you were between the very jaws of Hell, Christ could snatch you forth. If your sins had brought you even to the gates of Hell, so that the flames flashed into your face—if *then* you looked to Jesus—He would save you! If you are brought to Him when you are at Death's door, yet, still, eternal mercy will receive you!

How is it that Satan has the impudence to make men despair? Surely it is a piece of his infernal impertinence that he dares to do it. Despair?

When you have an Omnipotent God to deal with you? Despair? When the precious blood of the Son of God is given for sinners? Despair? When God delights in mercy? Despair? When the silver bell rings, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”? Despair? While life lasts, while Mercy’s gate stands wide open? While the heralds of Mercy beckon you to come, even though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool! Though they are like crimson they shall be white as snow!

I say again, it is infernal impertinence that has dared to suggest the idea of despair to a sinner! Christ unable to save? It can never be! Christ outdone by Satan and by sin? Impossible! A sinner with too many diseases for the Great Physician to heal? I tell you that if all the diseases of men were met *in* you, and if all the sins of men were heaped *on* you, and if blasphemy and murder and fornication and adultery—and every sin that is possible or imaginable had all been committed *by* you—the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, could cleanse you from all that! If you will but trust my Master—and He is *worthy* to be trusted and *deserves* your confidence—if you will but trust Him, He will save you even now!

Ah, why delay? Why raise questions? Why debate? Why deliberate, mistrust and suspect? Fall into His arms—He cannot reject you for He has, Himself said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Yet, poor Wretch, I despair of converting you unless the Master does it! It is mine to tell you this, but I know you will not hear it, or, hearing it, you will reject it unless Christ shall come with power by His Spirit!

O may He come today and say to the evil spirit within you, “Come out of him, you foul spirit, and go no more into him. Let such a one be free for I have redeemed him with My most precious blood.” O pray, dear Friends, that weak as my words have been this morning—disconnected as my thoughts have been—yet, nevertheless, God the blessed Spirit may bless them to the unfastening of bars of iron, and that gates of brass may be opened and captive ones brought forth to liberty! The Lord bless such for His name’s sake. Amen.

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A DESPERATE CASE—HOW TO MEET IT

NO. 549

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 10, 1864,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“Then came the disciples to Jesus apart and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove, therefore, to yonder place. And it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Nevertheless this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting.”
Mathew. 17:19-21.

THE narrative, of which our text forms a part, describes a scene which took place immediately after the Transfiguration of our Lord. Not to divorce it, therefore, from its connection, let us glance at the antecedents of the case, that nothing may be lost by negligence, but that, perhaps, we may gain something by meditation.

How great the difference between Moses and Christ! When Moses had been forty days upon the mountaintop, he underwent a kind of transfiguration so that his face shone with exceeding brightness when he came down among the people. He was obliged to put a veil over his face, for they could not bear to look upon his glory. Not so our Savior! He had been transfigured with a greater Glory than Moses could ever know, and yet as He came down from the mount, whatever radiance shone upon His face, it is not written that the people could not look upon Him, but rather they were amazed, and running to Him, they saluted Him. The glory of the Law repels, for the majesty of holiness and justice drive the awed spirits away from God. But the greater Glory of Jesus attracts—though He is holy and just and righteous, too—yet blended with these there is so much of Truth and Grace that sinners run to Jesus, amazed at His goodness, attracted by the charming fascination of His love and they salute Him, become His disciples and take Him to be their Lord and Master.

Some of you may just now be blinded by the dazzling brightness of the Law of God. You feel its claims on your conscience, but you cannot keep it in your life. It is too high—you cannot attain to it. Not that you find fault with the Law—on the contrary it commands your most profound esteem. Still you are in no wise drawn by it to God—you are rather hardened in your heart and you may be verging towards the inference of desperation—“As it is impossible for me to earn salvation by the works of the Law, I will continue in my sins.” Ah, poor Heart! Turn your eyes away from Moses, with all his repelling splendor and look to Jesus, yonder, crucified for sinful men! Behold His flowing wounds and thorn-crowned head! He is the Son of God and He is greater than Moses. He bears the wrath of God and therein He shows more of God’s Justice than Moses’ broken tablets could

ever do. Look to Him and as you feel the attraction of His love, fly to His arms and you shall be saved!

How different the spirit of Moses and Jesus! When Moses comes down from the mountain, it is to purge the camp. He seems to grasp the fiery sword. He breaks the golden calf. He smites the idolaters. And when Jesus comes down from the mountain He finds a strife in the camp as Moses did—He finds His own Apostles worsted and beaten—just as Aaron had been defeated by the clamors of the people. But He has not a word of cursing. There is a gentle rebuke—“O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?”

His actions are actions of mercy—no breaking in pieces, but *healing*. No cursing, but *blessing*—love sits smiling on His brow as He touches the poor wretch who is almost dead with diabolical possession and restores him to life and health. Go, then, to Jesus! Leave the Law and your own self-righteousness, for these can do nothing but curse you! Fly to Jesus, for no matter who you are, there are pardons on His lips. There are blessings in His hands. There is love in His heart. And He will not refuse to receive even you!

How much of condescension there is in the manner of Christ! Our Lord, we have told you, had been very glorious on the mountain's top with Moses and Elijah. Yet, when He comes down into the midst of the crowd He does not ignore the cry of the poor man, nor refuse to touch Him who was possessed with a devil. Observe my Master's condescension, for He deigns attention and yet His manner softens into pity and presently it melts into a gracious sympathy, as if this were the only channel through which His peerless power could flow. Then remember He is the same to-day as He was then—

**“Now, though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.”**

He is as willing now to receive sinners as when it was said of Him, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” He is just as ready to receive you, poor Sinners, as when He was called, “The friend of publicans and sinners.” Come to Him! Bow at His feet! His love invites you still. Believe that the Transfigured and Glorified Jesus is still a loving Savior, willing to pardon and forgive.

Once again, what choice instruction there is in the history! After Jesus had been absent for some time, He came back. You may ask for what purpose He had retired. Evidently He went up into the mountain to pray. It was while He was praying (and I have no doubt, fasting, likewise) that the fashion of His countenance changed. By His own personal devotion and by the Father's special revelation, He had thus come back, as it were, with great refreshment, to carry on His ministry. And we become witnesses of a remarkable power which He immediately showed forth and of no less remarkable counsel which He pertinently spoke to His disciples when they felt their own weakness. Thus we have before us, in our text, a peculiar case—a patient who utterly baffled the skill of all His disciples—healed at once by the great Master! And we have a reason given why the Apostles themselves were not able to deliver him.

Let us look for a little time at this very sad case—not so singular either, I think, but that we may find the like round about us. Then let us notice the scene around the case—the father, the disciples, the scribes. Afterwards we shall joyfully observe the Savior’s coming into the midst and deciding all the difficulty. And, lastly, we shall attend to the reason He gives in private to His disciples, why they, before His coming, were utterly powerless to achieve the work.

I. First, we have before us a VERY PECULIAR CASE. It appears that the disciples had cast out devils of almost all sorts. Wherever they had gone, up to now, this was their uniform testimony, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us.” But now they are baffled. They seem to have encountered a devil of the worst kind. There are grades in devilry as there are in human sin. All men are evil, but all men are not alike evil. All devils are full of sin, but they are not all sinful to the same degree.

Do we not read in Scripture, “Then goes he and takes unto him seven other spirits more wicked than himself?” It may be there is a gradation in the wickedness of devils and perhaps, also, in their power to fulfill their wicked impulses. We can scarcely think that all the devils are as Satan. There seems to be one chief arch-spirit, one great Diabolus, who is an accuser of the Brethren—one mighty Lucifer who fell down from Heaven and has become the Prince of the powers of darkness. In all his hosts it is probable that there is not his like. He stands first and chief of these fallen morning stars. The rest of the spirits may stand in different grades of wickedness, a hierarchy of Hell.

This poor wretch seems to have been possessed of one of the worst, most potent, violent and virulent of these evil spirits. I believe, Brethren, that here we have a picture of a certain class of individuals who are not only desperately sinful, but subject to extraordinary impulses which carry them to infernal lengths and depths of infamy. They are incapable of restraint, a terror to their kinsfolk and a misery to themselves. All men are sinful, as I have said before, but the power of depravity in some men is much stronger than in others. At least if it is not intrinsically stronger, yet it certainly has manifestations in some which we have never perceived in common among men.

Let us try and pick out the case according to the narrative. How frequently, dear Friends, too frequently, alas, have we seen young people who have answered to the description here given! They have had a early development of wickedness. When Jesus asked the father, “How long has he been in this way?” the answer was, “Of a child.” I remember having once known such a child, over whom paroxysms of passion came in which his face would turn black. When he was able to run about and was sent to a public school, a flint-stone, a club, a brick-bat, anything which might come next to hand, he would throw, without a moment’s thought, at anyone who vexed him.

His knife would be drawn from his pocket and open in an instant. The young assassin has often been prevented from stabbing others by a careful hand and watchful eye which guarded him. We have noticed this, I say, in some of the very young. They begin to lie early and to thief soon

and the young lip even assays to swear, while the anxious mother cannot understand where the child could have learnt it. You have protected such a child from all contamination and seemed to shut him in and girdle him about with holy influences. And yet, in these desperate instances, as soon as ever the child could know right from wrong, he has deliberately chosen the wrong with a violence of self-will and recklessness of consequence altogether unusual. Some such cases we have seen.

O, may God grant it may never be your lot or mine, to be the parents of such children! Yet such there have been and such men there are who have grown up now and the youthful passions of their childhood have become developed. And you may find them with the low forehead and the dark scowling eye, if you will, in our prisons. Or if you see them in the streets, you may hopefully wish that they may be in prison before long, for they are unsafe abroad. Of a child they seem to have been possessed with this chief of devils and to have been carried captive by him at his will.

This lad seems also to have been afflicted with what is here called lunacy, which was, indeed, only a form of epilepsy. He was constantly subjected, it seems, to epileptic fits—for I think we can hardly understand lunacy to mean anything short of occasional madness. Attacks of such outrageous violence would come upon him that there would be no enduring him. He would then dash himself into the fire, or if water were near he would attempt self-destruction by plunging into it. We have met with persons of this kind, perfectly outrageous and beyond all command when fits of evil came upon them. I will instance cases which I have observed.

I know a man now, he may be here this morning—if he is, he will recognize his own portrait. At times he is as reasonable as anyone I could wish to associate with. He enjoys listening to the Word of God. He is, in some respects, an amiable, excellent and respectable man. But occasionally fits of drunkenness come upon him in which he is perfectly powerless under the influence of the demon. And while it lasts, it matters not—even when he knows he is wrong—a thousand angels could not drag him from it. He is thrown into the water of self-destruction and he will continue in it.

You may urge him and reason with him and you may think, oh, how often have some thought who love him—“he will never do that again, he is too sensible a man—he has been too well-taught. The Word of God has had such an effect upon him that he will never do it again.” Yet he does. He repeats the old paroxysms and has done so for twenty or thirty years. And, if he lives, unless Sovereign Grace prevents it, he will die a drunkard as sure as he is a living man—and go from his drink to damnation.

Another case, which I likewise draw from life. The man is kind, tender and generous—generous to a fault. He has a home—he *had* one, I ought to say—he had a home and he was the light of it. No one ever suspected him—that is, in his better times—of any grievous faults. But sometimes—and this has been concealed by many an indulgent friend—sometimes an attack of lasciviousness comes upon him and at such seasons it matters not what the temptation may be, nor how foul the vice may be, the man runs into it!

If you should meet him in the street and talk with him and argue with him, it would be all time and labor thrown away. No, I have known him to break up his home and cross the sea to go to another land, that he might indulge his vile passions without rebuke, or the restraint of associating with former friends. He will come back again, broken-hearted, wondering that he ever could be such a fool. But he will go again. It is in him. The devil is in him, and unless God casts it out, he will do the same again, deliberately choosing his own damnation. Though he knows it, yet so possessed of the love of sin is he that when the fit comes upon him, this diabolical epilepsy, he falls into sin with his whole might and power.

I might go on describing cases of the kind, but you will not need that I should picture any more. It could only be to vary the different forms of sin. However, let me try one more. A lad had as good a father as ever child could have. He was bound apprentice. It became whispered in a few weeks that little moneys were missing. The father was very grieved. So, indeed, was the master and the matter was quietly hushed up. A little while after, the same thing occurred. The indentures were cancelled and nothing more was said of it. But the father was sorely perplexed. He looked out for some other situation for the boy where he might, perhaps, recover his character.

After a time it was precisely the same again. Bad companions had got hold of him, or rather, he had become a ringleader among other bad companions. Well, something else must be tried. It was tried. He has had twenty situations and they have all been thrown up from the very same cause. And now, what do you think is his treatment of his parents? Instead of being grateful for the repeated kindness and long-suffering shown to him, he will break out sometimes into such dreadful passions that even the lives of his parents are scarcely safe. And when he has been in his old haunts a little more than usual, he is really so terrible a being that his mother who loves him and who weeps over him, would almost as soon see a fiend from Hell as see him!

When he comes home, everything goes wrong. Confusion is in the house and terror in every heart—he acts precisely as if he were a madman. They have said, “Send him to Australia, or send him to America”—where they do send many of that sort—but if he goes there he will turn up, sooner or later, at the foot of the gallows. He is desperately set on evil and nothing turns him aside. He tears and foams at the mouth with passion. His whole heart goes forth outrageously after anything like vice and there appears to be not one redeeming trait in his character. Or, if there is, it only seems to be subjected to the power of his lusts. He devises means to be more mighty to do mischief in the world.

What dreadful cases these are! Why am I talking of them? Dear Friends, I have taken them because it has been laying upon my heart to encourage and comfort you who are constrained to carry a daily cross in having such relations and such children as these. It is one of the heaviest afflictions which can come upon you.

In the case before us, the child was both deaf and dumb—not, I suppose, through any organic effect—but through the epilepsy and the Sa-

tanic possession. So we have often seen children. Shall I look them in the face this morning, as I stand here? Are there not children now who are positively deaf to all spiritual sounds? They have been pleaded with, but it is in vain. They know the Truth of God, they know the whole Truth, but they do not know the *power* of it. They are never absent from family prayer, nor in any prayer are they ever forgotten by their parents. They come to this place. They attend our classes. They go to revival services.

Now and then there is something like a little emotion, but it does not come to much. They are precisely similar to the deaf adder which cannot be charmed, charm we ever so wisely. Others of the family have been converted. Nearly all the household has now been brought to Christ. Lydia has had her heart opened. God has been pleased to call young Timothy. But this one remains—and after much anxiety, much effort, much labor—no good has been achieved. Granite seems as soft as their heart and the ear of the deaf as much alive to rebuke as is their conscience. This, again, is a very sad case.

I meet sometimes, too, with cases of another kind—persons who are beset with very high doctrine who have got the devil in them—puffing up their fleshly minds with a vain conceit of sound understanding and degrading their carnal profession with a loathsome impurity of heart and life. You will talk with them. They will tell you they wish to be saved—would give their right arm to be saved. But it is not in their power. You bid them believe in Jesus. They have no sense, they tell you, of the need of a Savior. They are not in a fit state to believe. When God's time comes, the thing will occur. They love high doctrine. They will hear nothing else!

But then their Sunday, if there is a temptation which comes across their path, will be spent anywhere but in the worship of God. And during the week they give way to all sorts of sins. Whatever temptation comes, they go after it. The comfort they get from their religion, which they wrap about them like a cloak, is this—that no ministers speak the truth except one or two—and that the truth is fatalism. All they have to do is to be carried along like dead, inanimate logs down the stream and they are not at all responsible. Or if they are responsible, it is merely to maintain with unflinching hardihood their own crude sentiments.

I have seen some of these people—good people in their way, too—of whom I have thought that the conversion of drunkards was more hopeful than theirs! That damnable fatalism, which by some is put instead of the predestination of the Scriptures, has locked them up—put them in an iron cage! And so they are beyond the reach of help, going on still in their sin, rejecting the Gospel of Christ, while convinced they are connoisseurs of its choicest mysteries. Now, Brothers and Sisters, why are such cases as these permitted? Why does the Lord allow the devil to fill the soul with sin? I think it is, first, to show that there is a *reality* in sin. If we were all moral and outwardly respectable, we should begin to think sin was but a fancy. These daring sinners show us the reality of it.

It is to manifest the reality of Divine Grace. For when these are saved, then it is we wonder and we are compelled to say, "There is something in this. If such a hard, iron nature yet melts before the power of Divine Love,

there must be a majesty in it.” It is to humble us, too—to throw us on our back and let us see how utterly powerless human agency is. When you cannot get in the thin end of the wedge, much less the whole wedge—when the plowshare breaks on the edge of a hard rock—when the edge of the sword turns against the armor, then it is to draw yourself out of *self* to *God*. You see it is a deadly evil where only Omnipotence can help.

Your soul says, “Lord, put out Your arm! Now do it and the Glory shall be Yours.” This is probably the chief reason—it is in order that God may get great Glory to Himself. He lets the devil have it all his own way. “There,” He says, “pick your own ground, fight in your own territory, maneuver in your own way and, with a word, I will crush your power.” He gives Satan great advantage, lets him entrench himself firmly in the soul from youth up, so that the victory may be splendid to the greatest degree.

We have thus before us, for our sorrowful contemplation, the ease of one whose disease mocks the physician, laughs at all human endeavors and defies the watchful care of mild and gentle treatment to mitigate its force, or ameliorate its fearful symptoms.

II. Now turn we with passing glance to LOOK AT THE SCENE AROUND. The company is made up of five sorts of people. There are the scribes—cynics, I think, to a man—“We told you so! We told you so!” they say. “Your Master pretended to give you power to cast out devils. No such thing! You cannot cast out devils. Those whom you healed were not truly possessed. Little enough was ever the matter with them. They were fanciful and they believed in you through enthusiasm. The dupes of credulity! Your incantations bewitched them and so they got better. But you cannot cast out a devil—you cannot cast that devil out.”

“Now then,” says one of the scribes to Andrew, “cast it out. Come, Philip, try what you can do!” And inasmuch as after all trying, the devil would not go out—“Ah, just so!” they say, “they are impostors. There is nothing in it.” Just recall, Friends, to your own memories—have you not seen men of that kind? “Ah yes,” they say, “the Gospel converts one sort of people, such as always go to places of worship, the more intelligent and respectable of the community. But, you see, it is no good in these tough cases. These hardened ones—it cannot touch them. They are beyond its power.” “Aha!” they say, “where is the boasted might of this Great Physician? He can heal your finger-aches! But He does not know how to make these foul diseases fly.”

Then here is the poor father, all dejected. “I brought him to you—I knew you did cast out devils and I thought you could cast my son’s devil out, and he would be healed. I am disappointed in you all. Yet I do think your Master can do it, but I am not sure that even He can. If such excellent Apostles as you are have tried so hard and have failed, I do not think there can be any chance for me. I am full of unbelief. O, I wish I had never brought my child here at all, to make a public spectacle of him, that he might be a witness to your failures.” That is the poor father. Perhaps that poor father is here this morning and he is saying, “Ah, I do believe, but still I am full of unbelief. I have brought my daughter. I have brought my child under the sound of the Word. I have prayed and wrestled with God

in prayer and my child is not saved.” “I brought my husband,” says one good woman, “but he is just as full of Satan as ever he was. I must give it up in despair.”

And then there are the disciples and they look pitiable, indeed. “Well,” they say, “we do not know how to account for it. We cannot tell you how it is. We have said the same in this case that we were apt to say in others.” “Why,” says one of them, “when I went abroad and just said, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of him,’ the unclean spirit always did come out in every other case. I cannot comprehend this. I must give it up.” “We all must give it up,” say the Apostles. “For some unknown cause this seems to be quite out of the catalog of cases which we are commissioned to cure.”

And so we sometimes hear dejected ministers, after preaching long at such hard shells as these! They say, “Well, we cannot understand it. ‘The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.’ Oh, it must be that these are fore-ordained unto damnation! We must give it up.” That is how unbelieving ministers talk—or at least the most part of ministers in their season of misgiving and chagrin. And then there is the general crowd. They are neither this way nor that. They say they will see fairly. “Come, clear the ring out. If Jesus Christ is not an impostor—if He is God—certainly He can heal this poor man.”

Now, here is the test and the ordeal. “If that man is not healed, we,” say the crowd, “will not believe. But, if he is, then we will believe that Jesus Christ is sent of God.” O dear Friends, how often we have thought of those very hard cases in this way. There are hundreds of undecided people looking on and saying, “Ah, if So-and-So were converted, then I should say there was something in it. If truly he could have a new heart and a right spirit then I, too, would turn to God with full purpose of heart.”

There was a fifth party there and that was the devil himself. Oh, how triumphant was he! “Ah,” he seemed to say, “try your exorcism! Go on with your words! Preach at him! Pray at me! Weep over me—do what you will, you cannot get me out.” There he seems to stand entrenched within the stronghold of the poor tortured heart. “Do your best, do your worst, I am not afraid of you. I have got this man and I will keep him! I have so fixed myself in him that no power shall ever be able to heal him.” So we seem to hear that vile shriek of Hell over some men, “Yes,” says he, “I will trust him to go into Spurgeon’s Tabernacle. I know that thousands there have felt the power of the Holy Spirit in making new men of them. This is a case I can trust. There is nothing will ever touch him. The great hammer has knocked the chains off of many, but it cannot touch his chains. They are harder than iron, I have no fear for him.”

And perhaps he is gloating his thoughts now with the torments of the man in another world. Ah, you foul Fiend! If our Master should come here this morning, you should sing another tune! If He should say, “Come out of him, you foul spirit,” you will go back howling to your vile den! For His voice can do what our voice never could have done! And may we not easily realize such a scene enacted in this congregation? You have the scoffers, you have the anxious parent, the ministry confessedly powerless in the

matter. The crowd looking on and the devil rejoicing that such cases are quite beyond human strength. What more can you want to vivify the picture before your imagination?

III. But look! THE MASTER COMES. Ah, the Master comes! And immediately the scene changes! The lieutenants and the captains who began the battle did not understand the art of war. They were precipitant and hasty. The right wing was broken. The left began to reel. The center almost fails. The trumpets of the adversary begin to sound a victory. Here they come—their dread artillery in front. What will become of the army now? Hold! Hold! What is it that I see? A cloud of dust. Who comes galloping there? It is the Commander-in-Chief. “What are you doing?” says he, “What are you doing?”

In a moment he sees this is not the way to fight. He comprehends the difficulties of the case in an instant. “Forward there! Forward there! Backward there!” The scale is turned. The mere presence of the commander-in-chief has changed the whole face of the field. And now, you adversaries, you may turn your backs and fly. It was so in Jesus’ case exactly. His lieutenants and captains—the Apostles—had lost the day. He comes into the field, comprehends the state of the case. “Bring him here to Me,” says He, and the poor wretch, foaming and tormented, is brought to Him and He says, “Come out of him, you unclean spirit.” The thing is done. The victory achieved. The undecided receive Christ as a Prophet. The scoffers’ mouths are shut. The trembling father rejoices and the poor demoniac is cured.

And yet when Jesus Christ came to cure this poor man he was in as bad a state as he well could be. No, the very Presence of the Savior seemed to make it worse. As soon as ever the devil perceived that Christ was come, he began to rend and tear his poor victim. As quaint old Fuller says—“Like a bad tenant—whose lease is out, he hates the landlord and so he does all the damage he can, because he has got notice to quit. Often just before men are converted, they are worse than ever. There is an unusual display of their desperate wickedness, for then the devil has great wrath, now that his time is short.”

The struggles of this child are appalling. The devil seemed as if he would kill him before he could be healed. And after attacks of the most frightful kind, the poor youth laid upon the ground pale and still as a corpse, insomuch that many said, “He is dead.” It is just the same with many conversions of these desperate sinners. Their convictions are so terrible. Frequently the work of the devil within them in keeping them from Christ is so furious that you would give up all hope. You say, “That man will be driven mad! Those acute feelings, the intense agony of his spirit will rob him of all mental power and then in abject prostration, he will die in his sin.”

Ah, dear Friends, this again is only a piece of Satan’s infamy. He knew and knew right well that Christ could set that poor young man free, and therefore he sets upon him with all his might to torment him while he may. Have I any such desperate cases among my hearers this morning—one who has been as a son of Belial among the children of men? Is the

devil tormenting you today? Do you feel tempted to commit suicide? Are you urged to some mad freak of yet greater sin in order to drown your griefs and strangle your conscience? O poor Soul, do no such thing, for my Master will soon stoop over you and take you by the hand and lift you up, and your comfort shall begin, because the unclean spirit is cast out.

“Ah, He means to destroy me,” says the soul under conviction. No, Soul, God does not destroy those whom He convinces of sin. Men do not plow fields which they have no intention to sow. If God plows you with conviction He will sow you with Gospel comfort and you shall bring forth a harvest to His Glory! As a woman at her work first plies the needle with its sharp prick and then draws the thread after it, so in your case the sharpness of sorrow for sin will be speedily followed by the silver thread of joy and peace in believing.

And oh, mark it! The vision just now, up there on the mountain of Glory, resolved itself into “Jesus only.” His peerless radiance eclipsed every other. So, too, it is “Jesus only,” down here in the valley. His matchless Grace can encounter no rival. Keep this forever in your mind’s eye—it is the *Master* who did it all! His appearance on the scene removed all difficulties. In such extreme cases there will be and there must be a most eminent display of God’s power. And that power may be unassociated with means. Under any circumstances it will be the Lord alone doing it, to the praise and Glory of His Grace.

IV. Now, we come to the last, and perhaps the most important part of the sermon. The riddle is perplexing. “WHY COULD NOT WE CAST HIM OUT?” Let the Master tell us the reasons why these cases thwart our power. The Savior said it was want of *faith—want of faith*. No man may expect to be the means of the conversion of a sinner without having faith which leads him to believe that the sinner will be converted. Such things may occur, but it is not the rule. If I can preach in faith that my hearers will be saved, they will be saved. If I have no faith, God may honor His Word, but it will be in no great degree—certainly He will not honor me.

Abandoned sinners, if converted by means, are usually brought under the power of Divine Grace through ministers of great faith. Have you observed there were persons who heard all the small fry of the Whitfield age. They had listened to this preacher and to that. Under whom were they converted? Under Mr. Whitfield, because Mr. Whitfield was a man of masterly faith! He believed that the lost could be reclaimed—that the worst diseases could be healed—that the most heinous, abandoned, profligate, blasphemous sinners could be saved! He preached to them as if he expected the deaf would be charmed by the Gospel melody and the dead would be quickened at the commanding call of the great Redeemer’s name.

At Surrey Chapel, over yonder, in Rowland Hill’s day, some of the grossest blackguards and biggest scamps who ever infested London were saved. Why? Because Rowland Hill preached the Gospel to big sinners and believed the fact of big sinners being converted. The respectable people of his day said, “Oh, yes! It is only the tag, rag and bob-tail who go to hear Mr. Hill.” “Just so,” said Mr. Hill, “and welcome tag and welcome rag

and welcome bob-tail! They are the very people that I want!” “What is the good of such people as they are, going to hear the Gospel? Why does Mr. Hill try to preach to harlots and thieves?” they said. “They are just the very people,” said Mr. Hill, “I believe that these people can be saved.”

It was want of faith in the others. For if a man has faith as a grain of mustard seed, let it be ever so little, yet, if it is true, it is mighty in proportion to its power. Mr. Hill had the power of faith and he was the means of the conversion of very great sinners. A few years ago it was utterly hopeless to try and reclaim fallen daughters of sin. But a few men had faith that it could be done and it has been done. And I will now be so bold to say that if there is a great sinner here, such as I tried to describe just now, some gross case of infernal possession—if that person is not saved it is for the want of faith in our case. If we have brought that person before God and have been anxious about his salvation and God has not heard that prayer it is because we could not believe it possible that such a case could be saved. If God gives you the power to *believe* that *any soul* will be saved, it will be saved. There is no doubt about that.

Still, our Savior added, “Nevertheless this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting.” What did He mean by that? I believe He meant that in these very special cases the ordinary preaching of the Word will not avail and ordinary prayer will not suffice. There must be an unusual faith and to get this there must be an unusual degree of prayer. And to get that prayer up to the right point, there must be, in many cases, fasting as well. No doubt there is something special about the admonition to prayer from the association in which it stands. One sort of Christians will use formal supplications. And the petitions they ask are founded upon a sense of propriety, without any glow of feeling.

Another sort will wait for the Spirit to move them. And when certain impulses stimulate their minds, they rejoice in a sense of liberty. Yet I show unto you a more excellent way. There are those who watch unto prayer, wait before the Lord, seek His face, and exercise patience till they get an audience. Such disciples continue in their retirement until they have that experience of access for which they crave.

And what is fasting for? That seems the difficult point. It is evidently accessory to the peculiar continuance in prayer, practiced oftentimes by our Lord and advised by Him to His disciples. Not a kind of religious observance, in itself meritorious, but a *habit*, when associated with the exercise of prayer unquestionably helpful. I am not sure whether we have not lost a very great blessing in the Christian Church by giving up fasting. It was said there was superstition in it. But, as an old Divine says, we had better have a spoonful of superstition than a bowl full of gluttony.

Martin Luther, whose body, like some others, was of a gross tendency, felt as some of us do that in our flesh there dwells no good thing in another sense than the Apostle meant it. And he used to fast frequently. He says his flesh was likely to grumble dreadfully at abstinence—but fast he would—for he found that when he was fasting it quickened his praying. There is a treatise by an old Puritan, called, “The soul-fattening institution of fasting,” and he gives us his own experience that during a fast he has

felt more intense eagerness of soul in prayer than he had ever done at any other time.

Some of you, dear Friends, may get to the boiling-point in prayer without fasting. I do think that others cannot and probably if we did, sometimes, set apart a whole day for prayer for a special object, we should at first feel ourselves dull and lumpish and heavy. Then let us resolve, "Well, I shall not go down to my dinner. I shall stop here. I feel anxious for a praying frame of mind and I will keep alone." And if when the time for the evening meal came on we should say, "I feel a little of the cravings of hunger, but I will satisfy them with some very slender nutriment—a piece of bread, or something of the kind—and I will continue in prayer."

I think that very likely towards evening our prayers would become more forcible and vehement than at any other part of the day. We do not exactly recommend this for those who are weak. There are some men with little or no encumbrance of flesh about them. But others of us of a heavy make, with sluggishness for a temptation, have to cry out because we are rather like stones on the ground than birds in the air. To such, I think, we can venture to recommend it from the words of Christ.

At any rate I can suppose a father here setting apart a day of prayer, going on, wrestling with God without any intermission—pleading with Him till, as it was said of the famous martyr of Brussels—he would so pray that he forgot everything except his prayers. And when they came to call him to meat, he made no answer, for he had got out of all earthly things in his wrestling with the angel, that he could not think of anything besides. Such a man taking up the case of a gross sinner, I believe, would be the means of that sinner's conversion. And the reason why some are never brought to Christ, is, speaking after the manner of men, because we have not got the qualified men to deal with them—for, "this kind goes not out save with prayer and fasting."

When we have prayed and have reached the point of true faith, then the sinner is saved by the mighty power of God, and Christ is glorified! I think I have some in this house who are ready to say, "Well, if such is the case, I will try it. I will take the Master at His word." Brother, Brother, if half-a-dozen of us joined together, it might be better. No, "If two agree as touching any one thing," it would be done. Let some of us put it to the test upon some big sinner and see whether it does not come true. I think I may fairly ask you, who are lovers of souls, who have eyes which do weep and hearts which can feel, to try my Master's prescription and see if the most unmanageable devil which ever took possession of a human heart is not driven out as the result of prayer and fasting, in the exercise of your faith. The Lord bless you in this thing and may He bring us all to trust in Jesus by a saving faith. To Him be Glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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THE SECRET OF FAILURE

NO. 2454

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 1, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 25, 1886.**

*“Then the disciples came to Jesus privately, and said, Why could we not cast it out? So Jesus said to them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Move from here to there and it shall move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”
Matthew 17:19-21.*

*“And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could we not cast it out? So He said to them, This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.”
Mark 9:28, 29.*

I put these two texts together for this reason. Those of you who are acquainted with the Revised Version know that the 21st verse in the 17th chapter of Matthew is left out. There seems to be little doubt that it was inserted in certain copies by persons who thought that it ought to be there because it was in Mark's narrative. It is put in the margin of the Revised Version, but it is left out of the text. It is, therefore, very satisfactory to find that the omission from Matthew's account makes no real difference because we have the words in the 29th verse of the 9th of Mark, “This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.” Only there is this fact to be noticed—in the Revised Version this verse runs, according to Mark, “This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer.” Whether the fasting was originally there, or not, I cannot tell, but putting together the two accounts in Matthew and Mark, we believe we have a full and true report of what the Master did actually say on this occasion.

I. Observe then, dear Friends, at the outset, without any further preface, that **WE MAY BE THE SERVANTS OF GOD AND YET WE MAY OCCASIONALLY BE DEFEATED.** Those nine disciples who remained at the foot of the mountain when the Savior took the other three to behold His Transfiguration, had, each of them, a true commission from the Lord Jesus Christ. They were nine of His chosen Apostles. He had elected them in His own good pleasure and there was no doubt about their being really called to the Apostleship. They were not only elected, but they were also qualified, for on former occasions they had healed the sick, they had cast out devils and they had preached the Word of Christ with great power. Upon them rested miraculous influences and they were able to do great wonders in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—they were not only qualified to do this, but they had actually performed many marvels of healing.

When they went forth, girded with Divine power, they healed the sick and cast out devils everywhere, yet, on this occasion you perceive that they were completely baffled and beaten! A poor father had brought to them his epileptic son who was also possessed with an evil spirit—and they could neither cast out the evil spirit nor heal the epileptic boy. They came, as it were, to a great difficulty which quite nonplussed them. And the scoffing scribes were there, ready enough to take advantage of them and to say in scorn and contempt, “You cannot cure this child, for the power you have received from your Master is limited! He can do some strange things, but even *He* cannot do all things. Perhaps He has lost His former power and now, at last, a kind of devil has appeared that He cannot master. You see, you are mistaken in following Him—your faith has been fixed upon an impostor and you had better give it up.”

Oh, how ready the evil spirit is to suggest dark thoughts if we cannot always be successful in our work of faith and labor of love! I believe that it was for this very reason that our Lord gave us this record of the defeat of the nine Apostles in order to let us feel that it is not so great a wonder if, sometimes, we have to come back and say, “Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” It is no new thing that we should be made a laughingstock to the enemies of the Cross of Christ because we cannot do what we have formerly done and are beaten in the very field where before we have achieved great and notable victories for our Master!

Brothers, why do you think that the Lord allows His servants to be beaten at all? Well, of course, the chief reason in *this* case was—and of that we will speak presently—because God gives the victory to *faith*—and if we will not believe, neither shall we be established. If we fall, as those disciples probably had fallen, into an unspiritual frame of mind and a low state of Grace, our commission will not be worth much, our former qualifications will be of little value and all successes we have had in earlier days will not take away the effect of present failures. We shall be like Samson who went out and shook himself as he had done before, but the Spirit of God had departed from him—and the Philistines soon overcame him—those very Philistines whom, if his Lord had still been with him, he would have smitten hip and thigh with great slaughter. If we are to do the Lord’s work and to do it successfully, we must have faith in Him! We must look beyond ourselves, we must look beyond our commission, we must look beyond our personal qualifications, we must look beyond our former successes, we must look for a present anointing by the Holy Spirit and, *by faith*, we must hang upon the living God from day to day.

Apart from that, however—which we will dwell upon directly—I think our Lord intends that we should often have something fresh come across our path *to keep us from getting into ruts*. It is a very bad thing for anyone when even the Christian life gets to be merely mechanical. You know what state of things that is—you may have come here to this service just as a matter of course, almost without thinking what you were doing! I have known many persons, in the public worship of God, sing simply because the time for singing has come—and they frequently prove that they are singing only in a mechanical fashion, for they sit down before the hymn has come to an end—showing that they are not sufficiently inter-

ested to find out how it closes. So we may kneel, apparently in prayer, and not really be praying, for the mind is gadding to and fro. The minister, also, can get into a way of preaching that is almost like a parrot repeating by rote what it has been taught to say.

This will not do, Brothers and Sisters! The Lord will not have us always moving in ruts, so He does what men do, sometimes, in our roads when they put great blocks of timber to turn travelers off from one side of the road on to the other. In that way, this lunatic child was put right in the disciples' road so that they should not go on sleepily doing the same work without heart and without thought. This strange case wakes them up—they have something to deal with, now, that is very different from that they have had before! It is not a common fever, or even an ordinary case of Satanic possession, but it is a dreadful demoniac who is now before them, foaming, raging and wallowing in their presence—and altogether beyond their power to heal. This wakes them up and the Lord permits us, sometimes, to have trouble in the Church, or a shock in the family, that we may wake right up and not go on mechanically with little or no spiritual life in us.

Next, it was to make the disciples *see the infinite superiority of their Master*. Had he been there, there would have been no devil that would have nonplussed Him! Whatever needed to be accomplished, He spoke, and it was done. The soft utterance of His voice, the gentle uplifting of His hand, no—the very glance of His eye, or the willing in His mind was sufficient to work His marvelous cures! But the disciples had to come to Him and say, "We could not do it. We could not cast it out." No, and it is still the same—we cannot, but He can—therefore let us worship before the Omnipotent Christ, to whom nothing is difficult, much less impossible!

Then they were driven to *wish for more of His company*. They were made to see that they could not do without Him. Soldiers, without their ever-victorious Captain, driven before the enemy, they now felt that their strength must lie in Him and that they must stay close to Him and entreat Him not to leave them again.

This experience also *drove them to Him in prayer*. They now need their Master and they begin to cry to Him! "Why could we not cast it out?" was now their humiliating confession and enquiry! And there was, within the heart of their question, this earnest prayer, "O Master, help us to cast out devils again! Take not Your Spirit from us, but renew in us our former strength and give us even more." I am sure that anything that makes us often come back to our Lord must be a blessing to us. It is very humiliating to have so long preached in vain—to have gone to that village so many times and yet to see no conversions—to visit that lodging house so often and apparently to have made no impression upon the careless inhabitants, or to have gone into that dark prison and told the story of the Cross, only to find that the hearer is just as dark and, possibly, just as brutal as ever!

It seems as if our hearts must break when we are really in earnest, yet we cannot achieve the blessed purpose that we feel sure must be dear to the Savior's own heart! But it may be that our failure has much of Divine instruction in it and it may be the preface and preparation for future

success that shall greatly honor the Lord Jesus Christ! This was a part of the training of the twelve. They were now at college, with Christ as their Tutor. They were being prepared for those grand days when they should do even greater things than He had done, because He had gone back to His Father and had received still greater power—and had given it to them. “It is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth.” It is good for you, young Brothers in college, when you go to your first pastorate, to get battered about—to have all manner of troubles, to go through fire and through water! It will make men of you! You will be all the grander and the better servants of God in later years, when your own weakness shall have driven you back upon the Divine strength and you shall have learned to trust, not in man, much less in yourself, but to cast yourself confidently on God!

II. The next thing to be learned from this narrative is that when Christ’s servants get baffled, they should make haste to their Master and ask Him this question, which His disciples put to Him, “Why could we not cast it out?” That is to be our second division. **WHEN WE ARE BAF- FLED, THERE MUST BE A CAUSE** and it is well for us to try and find it. We must go to the Master and ask, “Why could we not cast it out?”

This enquiry, if it leads up to a correct answer, is evidently a very wise one, for *every man ought to try to know all he can about himself*. If I am successful, why is it that I succeed? Let me know the secret, that I may put the crown on the right head. If I do *not* succeed, let me know the reason why, that I may, at any rate, try to remove any impediment, if it is an impediment of my own making. If I am a vessel that is not fit for the Master’s use, let me know why I am not fit, that I may, as much as lies in me, prepare myself for the great Master’s service. I know that if I am fit to be used, He is sure to use me—but if He does not use me, it will most probably be because there is some unfitness in me. Try to know, Brothers and Sisters, why you get baffled in holy service, for it will be wise to know.

Probably, *it may tend very greatly to your humiliation*. It may make you go, with tears in your eyes, to the Mercy Seat. You may not yet know all that is in your own heart—there may be a something which to you seems to be a very trifling affair—which is grieving your God and weakening your spiritual power. It may seem to you to be a little thing, but in that little thing may lie the eggs of so much mischief that God will not tolerate it and He will not bless you until you are altogether clear of it! It will be wise and be right, therefore, even though it is to your sorrow and regret, that you should find the answer to the question, “Why could we not cast it out?”

For whatever may be the reason of your failure, *it may be cured*. In all probability it is not a great matter, certainly not an insuperable difficulty to the Lord. By the Grace of God this hindrance may be taken away from you and no longer be allowed to rob you of your power. Search it out, then! Look with both your eyes and search with the brightest light that you can borrow, that you may find out everything that restrains the Spirit of God and injures your own usefulness.

I would at the present time earnestly put into the mouths of a great many people this question, “Why could we not cast it out?” Let the

Church of God get to the windows of her sanctuaries, look out and say, "Why do not these thousands of people come to hear the Gospel that we preach?" There is all the harlotry in our streets—why has not the Church of God swept that away? The vilest sin is rampant—sin of which we dare not speak, it is so vile—how is it that we cannot cast this out? And all this social discord, this complaining and confusion, this aiming at the disruption of everything—what have we been doing that all this unrest has come? Why could we not cast these vile forces out?

Then, perhaps, in your family there is a son and you cannot bring him, even, to *respect* religion. It is not so very long ago since you nursed him on your knee—you did not *dream* then that he would live to be an opponent of the Christ in whom your soul delights! There are, in your family, certain evils that you pray against and yet they remain there. Father, you are responsible for your family and you cannot get rid of your responsibility. Mother, much responsibility for your children's characters must lie with you—if they are not what you would have them to be, oh, ask the question, "Why could we not cast the evils out of them?" That question each teacher may ask concerning his class—and each worker concerning his sphere of labor. I ask it concerning my hearers, when I remember some of them who have made a profession of religion and then have foully fallen. And others who have backslidden into coldness or lukewarmness and many who, after years of preaching, remain just the same as ever! What devil is this that has got into them? Why cannot we cast it out?

I will tell you another time when you may well ask this question. It is when you realize the evil that is within your own heart. There are certain sins there that have cost you much pain and they are not yet cast out. In your life, they have no rightful place—in your heart of heart, they have no welcome place, for you desire your heart to be clean before God. Still, those sins come. Perhaps, in your case, a hasty temper is the demon that takes possession of you. Or possibly you have a spirit tending to despondency. I do not know what your particular sins are, but do you not sometimes ask the question, "Why could we not cast them out?" We have got rid of some sins, "bag and baggage"—they never torment us now. It is long since we had a temptation to certain forms of sin—we sent them adrift in the name of the Lord. But there are certain others of these demons that hide away in dens and caves and corners—and we cannot rout them out. Why could we not cast them out? It is a question that may be asked from so many quarters and so many points—and it ought to be pressed home. I have put it to you, but let each one's own conscience get alone with Christ and ask Him, "Why am I baffled and defeated? Why cannot I cast this evil out?"

III. Now, in the third place, consider OUR LORD'S ANSWER, upon which I cannot dwell very long because our time is short.

The first answer that the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples was, "Because of your unbelief." He told them that their failure was due to *their lack of faith*. He did not say, "Because of the devil and his peculiar character, and the strength of his entrenchment within the poor sufferer's nature." No, He said, "Because of your unbelief." They might have said and it would have been true, "This demon has been long in possession." The

father said that the affliction came upon him when he was a child. You know that it is not easy to turn out a devil that has lived in any place, say, for 20 years. He says, "I have been in possession three, seven, 21 years and I am not leaving. Does not even the law of the land give me a right to remain after I have held undisputed possession so long? I am not leaving and, especially, I am not going for anything you say or do!" So, the long duration of a sin makes it all the more difficult matter to deal with it. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." It is a difficult thing to cast out evils of long standing. Still, if we have faith, there will be no difficulty in overcoming even those sins that have held possession of the sinner for a great length of time.

Moreover, in this case there was the strength of this devil as well as the length of his possession. He took this poor child and threw him into the fire or into the water, and hurled him to and fro at his cruel and wicked pleasure. He did this even before the disciples' eyes! Yes, but if they had had faith, they would have understood that though Satan is strong, Christ is far stronger! The devil is mighty, but God is Almighty! If the disciples had only believed, they might have overcome the demon by the power of Christ!

In addition to the length and the strength of this possession, there was a tremendous fury shown by this evil spirit. The child was not simply vexed as in ordinary cases of epilepsy, but he was tremendously tossed and torn. And I think there was, in this case, a feature of sullenness, also. It was apparently so, at any rate, for it was a dumb spirit. The child could not or did not speak—whatever happened to him, he was always silent. When people can speak of their troubles of soul, when they can tell you their grief of heart and ask your prayers, you can get on with them. But here was one who could not speak, yet there was the devil rending and tearing him. It was a horrible case, yet the failure did not lie in the child—it lay mainly, as the Savior put it—in the disciples' lack of faith—"Why could we not cast it out?" "Because of your unbelief."

You see, the lack of faith breaks the connection between us and Christ. We are like the telegraph wire which can convey the message as long as the electricity can travel along it—but if you break the connection, it is useless. Faith is our connection with Christ! Break the connection and then what can we do? It is by faith that God works in us and through us! But if unbelief comes in, we are unfit for Him to work with us. Would you have God to bless the man who will not believe in Him? Would you have God to set His seal to the works of the unbelieving? That cannot be! The first condition of success in any work for God must be hearty faith in the God for whom we are working. "Trust Me," He says, "and I will do anything for you." If we distrust Him, what can happen to us but what happened to the children of Israel whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

Now, you know that even the body of a child of God is precious in His sight, for there is faith in him, and he is precious in the sight of the Lord. But as for those who have no faith, Paul calls their bodies carcasses! "Whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." If you have no faith in God why, what are you? Like brute beasts—"carcasses." But faith gives God some-

what of His due—it trusts Him and God says, “I will never let you trust Me beyond what I will do for you. If you trust Me, I will be as good as your faith.” Would you have Him change a condition which is so natural, so proper, so beneficial for ourselves? O Brothers and Sisters, we shall do great things when God gives us more faith!

Looking now upon the condition of our times and upon the work allotted to each one of us, I feel that what we need is more faith. Never mind how firmly fixed are the mountains of iniquity—they will move if faith is strong. Never mind how deep have gone the roots of the sycamore tree—it shall be plucked up by its roots if faith is strong. O Brothers and Sisters, we do not half believe! Drive the sword up to the hilt! Believe in God to the uttermost—dare and venture—and yet find no daring and no venturing in it as you simply trust your God as a child trusts his father! Many of us must feel, Brethren, that we have often failed because of our unbelief.

I must not dwell longer on that point because I want you to notice that the Savior added that, in some cases, *faith must rise to prayer* and must manifest itself mainly *by* prayer, or else it will do nothing. I am afraid that these disciples were so satisfied with their commission, their qualifications and with what they had already done, that they proceeded to work upon this epileptic child without prayer. The Savior says, “This kind—this sort of devil—this peculiarly furious kind of demon—will not go out by the exercise of ordinary faith. It must be faith that rises into prayer.” You will frequently meet with persons to whom you desire to be blessed, but you never will be blessed to them till, first of all, you pray for them. And it may be that you will have to pray long and earnestly—and that the praying will have to rise to wrestling and the wrestling may have to be continued all night, as in the case of Jacob—and you may have to go to God as often as the importunate widow went to the unjust judge. It may be that there are cases in which God will not yield to your faith until your faith works in prayer and then, when prayer has worked to its utmost, you shall get the blessing!

I think that I can understand some of God’s reasons for acting thus. First, He wants to make us see the greatness of the mercy, so He occupies our thoughts with the greatness of the distress that needs to be relieved and with this impossibility of that distress being relieved except by His own power and Godhead. That experience does us good, dear Friends, does it not? It makes us feel that the mercy, when it does come, will be remarkably precious to us.

The Lord also intends to excite our desires and that, likewise, does us good. To be all aglow with holy desires is, in itself, a healthy exercise. Then the Lord means to create in us unity of action. One Brother finds that he cannot get on alone, so he will call in another to help him in prayer—and much holy united supplication will be called forth by the very desperateness of the case which cannot be met by simple faith, or even by the prayer of one! Let us always seek the united prayers of many Brothers and Sisters. You remember that man who was carried by four and let down from the roof into Christ’s Presence? Oh, I wish that in your houses, Brothers and Sisters, you met frequently, in twos and threes for united prayer! I should like to hear of little bands formed of Christian

men and women who pledged themselves to pray, four at a time, for somebody possessed by a devil of the kind that will not go out by ordinary means and must be ejected by four of you. Get together and say to yourselves, "We will not rest until this soul, and that soul, shall have the devil cast out and shall sit, clothed, and in their right mind, at Jesus Christ's feet." "This kind"—these certain kinds of devils are not to be driven out except by special, importunate, continued, united prayer! They can be cast out if you only believe and pray—there is never a devil but will have to go if you have faith enough and prayer enough to drive him out!

But then my text says, "*By prayer and fasting.*" Our Lord Jesus Christ never made much of fasting. He very seldom spoke about it and when the Pharisees exaggerated it, He generally put them off by telling them that the time had not come for His disciples to fast because the Bridegroom was still with them—and while He was with them their days were to be days of joy. But, still, Holy Scripture does speak of fasting. In certain cases it advises fasting and there were godly men and godly women, such as Anna, the Prophetess, who "served God with fasting and prayer night and day." I do not mean to spiritualize this away. I believe, literally, that some of you would be a great deal the better if you did occasionally have a whole day of fasting and prayer. There is a lightness that comes over the frame, especially of bulky people like myself—we begin to feel ourselves quite light and ethereal. I remember one day of fasting and prayer in which I realized to myself, spiritually, the meaning of a Popish picture which I have sometimes seen, of a saint floating in the air! Well, that, of course, was impossible and I do not suppose that, when the picture was painted, it was believed in its *literal* sense. But there is a lightness, an elevation of the spirit above the flesh that will come over you after some hours of waiting upon God in fasting and prayer. I can advise Brothers and Sisters, sometimes, to try it—it will be good for their health and it certainly will not harm them. If we only ate about half what is ordinarily eaten, we would probably, all of us, be in better health! And if, occasionally, we put ourselves on short commons, not because there is any virtue in that, but in order to get our brains more clear, and to help our hearts to rest more fully upon the Savior, we would find that prayer and fasting have great power.

But I will take the fasting in another sense, for I believe that this, also, is what is meant by our Lord Jesus. Suppose that we have such cases as these to pray for—a Church full of discord, a nation or an individual full of sin! We might say to one another, "We will appoint such-and-such a time for prayer." Fast or not, according as your body would be the better or the worse for it. To some, it would be mischievous and injurious to fast, but say to yourselves, "We are going to take a whole day to ourselves. Two or three of us have agreed to devote an evening, or a whole night if it is a hard case, and we are going to meet together for no purpose but just to pray about that one matter. And if that does not do, we will meet again." I have often heard of instances in which persons who knew that they were thus made especially the object of some remarkable occasions of prayer, have been impressed by the fact, or, if not by the fact, yet the outcome of that special, particular, marked season of prayer

has been that, before long, they have been brought to Christ. There is a kind of devil that will not go out by ordinary prayer—there must be added to that pleading something by which our zeal shall be yet further increased—there must be “prayer and fasting.”

I think, also, that I may spiritualize this expression, now, and say that when your mind gets into such a condition that you begin to sorrow over a lost soul. When you realize the meaning of that agonizing cry of Jeremiah, “Oh that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”—it is *then* that the devil will have to go. When your soul is clothed in sackcloth and ashes and you go mourning without the light of the sun, saying, “I could die rather than that soul should die! I could wish myself accursed rather than that soul were accursed! I put myself in the dust before God, even in the dust of self-abasement on account of that soul, that I may win it to Christ,” then that sort of devil will have to go out! Starving him out by starving yourself and making your own spirit wretched and miserable for the poor sinner’s sake, you will make that devil find the person untenable any longer as a lodging place.

Permit me to say just one thing more. I believe that the devil of drunkenness will not go out of some men unless some of you Christian people, who pray for them, and talk with them, will practice fasting in the matter of total abstinence. I mean this—not that it is wrong for you to take what you do take, but that there are some souls that you cannot win unless you say to them, “For your sakes we are going to give up what might be lawful to us, that we may save you from the public house and all its temptations. Come, Jack, I intend to take the pledge. I never was drunk and probably never will be, but I will sign the pledge for your sake.” There are some devils that will not go out till you act like that. And, Brothers, we ought to do *anything* that may result in the saving of a soul. We ought to deny ourselves *anything* of which we can deny ourselves if it is necessary to bring one single person to the Cross of Christ!

Let us see to it that we are quite clear in this matter, for there are still many devils that will not go out without prayer and fasting. Well then, say, “I will not fast to please the devil, or to please other people, but I will fast to *spite* the devil and to get him out of that man. I will fast from anything so that I may but bring him to the feet of Jesus that he may be saved.” We who love the Lord are, I trust, all agreed on that matter, that no cost on our part should be spared to win a soul from the dominion of Satan and bring him into the glorious liberty of the children of God!

O you who are not saved, see how concerned we are about you! It seems nothing to you to lose your souls, but it seems everything to us—and it was everything to Christ! You would not suffer even a little self-denial that you might be saved, yet Christ *died*—so highly did He value the souls of sinners—rather than that you should perish! Oh, may that love of His make you begin to love yourselves so as to trust Him, and love Him, and find, in Him, eternal life! God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MARK 9:2-29.**

Verses 2-4. *Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James and John, and lead them up into an high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. And His clothes became shining, exceedingly white as snow; such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. In the midst of all His sorrow and humiliation, our Lord let out some gleams of His Glory, to remind us who He was even while He was here in the depths of His grief. He was still none other than the all-glorious Lord of Heaven and earth, whose clothes, if He chose to make them so, would be whiter than snow, and brighter than the sun! Let us think of Him with great love and gratitude as we see what Glory He willingly laid aside for our sakes, and see how low He stooped who was, in Himself, immeasurably high.*

5, 6. *And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. For he knew not what to say; for they were sorely afraid. Peter had enough wit left to wish to stay where he was and, sometimes, when we are with our Lord in the mount, we can only say, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us stay where we are! Let our union and communion with Yourself continue forevermore!"*

7, 8. *And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a Voice came out of the cloud, saying, This My beloved Son. Hear Him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no one any more, save Jesus only with themselves. Moses is gone and Elijah is gone, but Jesus remains. And it is much the same with us, now, and we are quite content that all others should go that we may have "only Jesus." If He is with us, we have the best company in the world!*

9, 10. *And as they came down from the mountain, He charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen till the Son of Man was risen from the dead. And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean. You see the great modesty and patience of our Lord. Though these three favored Apostles might see His Glory and afterwards bear witness concerning it, yet for the time being they must hold their tongues. All this Glory and only three men to see it, and these three must be quite silent! Our Lord seeks not honor from men—neither ought. His mind was even then occupied with thoughts of His great Sacrifice. When He spoke to Moses and Elijah, His theme was, "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." And when He spoke with these three eyewitnesses of His majesty, the subject of His converse was His own death and Resurrection. That was the object on which His heart's affection was set.*

11-13. *And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elijah must first come? And He answered and told them, Elijah verily comes first, and restores all things; and now it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nothing. But I say unto you, That Elijah is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatever they wished as it is written of him. Notice that even when our Savior was answering His disciples' question about Elijah and John, the ruling passion being strong upon Him, He introduced into that answer something about His own death. That subject is always before His eyes—He never forgets it—*

He is, in a sense, undergoing His passion even as He descends the Mount of Transfiguration.

14. *And when He came to His disciples, He saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning them.* What a descent for Christ, from the peace and quiet of the Hill of Communion with the glorified, to the noise and tumult of a surging multitude and the mocking question of the jeering scribes!

15. *And straightaway all the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him.* I think there must be some truth in the common tradition that the face of our Lord Jesus still shone with the light of the Transfiguration. It does appear so to me from these words, "All the people, when they beheld Him, were greatly amazed." Surely, it was not an amazement at the mere fact of seeing Him whom they had so often seen, but His face, I doubt not, glowed as the face of Moses did when he came down from the mount! Only observe that when the face of Moses burned with the reflected glory of God's Presence, the people could not bear to look upon him, but when the face of Christ shone with supernatural splendor, they, "were greatly amazed, and running to Him saluted Him." There is an attractive glory about the Christ of God! Oh, for such a sight of His face at this moment that we should all run to Him and salute Him!

16. *And He asked the scribes, What are you discussing with them?* There had been a skirmish between the scribes and the disciples of Christ, and the scribes were winning the day. But when the Captain had come, the tide of battle was soon turned.

17, 18. *And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto You my son, which has a dumb spirit; and wherever he takes him, he tears him: and he foams and gnashes with his teeth, and pines away: and I spoke to Your disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.* It was an aggravated case of epilepsy, attended with possession by an evil spirit. The disciples could not cast out this devil, and the scribes had, therefore, attacked their faith in the Master, Himself, while He was away.

19. *He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.* Unbelief is a great trouble to Christ. I never read that He said to the poor or to the sick, "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?" I never read that He expressed any weariness of human ignorance, or scarcely even of human sin, but when it is a matter of *unbelief*, then it stings Him and He cries, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring Him to Me."

20, 21. *And they brought him to Him: and when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tore him and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. And He asked his father, How long is it since this came unto him? And he said, Since he was a child.* And having begun with that sorrowful subject, the father, with the painful eloquence of pity, went on to tell the tale of woe—

22. *And oftentimes it has cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.* Here was unbelief, it is true, but there was with it a pitying entreaty that

meant more faith than it could express! Men do not usually beg where they expect nothing! And they do not make pitiful entreaties with tears unless they have some hope. Even though it was almost covered up, the Savior still fastened on that one utterance of unbelief—"if."

23. *Jesus said to him, If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes. "It is not, 'If I can,' but, 'If you can.'"*

24. *And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief!* There was faith, even though it was mixed with unbelief. It was a faith that made him pray, as I have already told you, and the Lord Jesus Christ found out where the faith was. He had, as it were, broken the great black lump of dead coal that looked to be nothing but unbelief and there was the living light of faith burning in the very center of it!

26. *When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, You dumb and deaf spirit, I charge you, come out of him and enter no more into him.* That is Christ's way of curing! Our Lord does not save sinners as some say that He does, just for a short time, and then let His work all grumble back to nothingness. This would be unworthy of Himself and unworthy of that gracious Spirit by whom He works! No, if He casts out a devil, he shall enter no more into the one he formerly tormented.

26. *And the spirit cried, and convulsed him greatly, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.* As old Thomas Fuller says, the devil knew that he had to go out, so, like a bad tenant, he did all the mischief he could before he left. Satan often acts in this fashion—just when Christ has come to cast him out, he drives the poor soul into deeper despair and, perhaps, into greater sin than he ever fell into in all his life.

27. *But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.* He was not dead, though many thought he was, and said so. Christ does not cure and then kill—He cures so that we shall never die! No, no, poor Sinner, the last pangs of despair shall not destroy you! The fiercest, bitterest assaults of Satan shall not cause you to die! Christ will take you by the hand and you shall arise.

28-29. *And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, Why could we not cast it out? So He said to them, This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.*

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

ONE LOST SHEEP

NO. 2083

DELIVERED ON LORD' S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 28, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“How think you? If a man has an hundred sheep and one of them is gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine and go into the mountains and seek that which is gone astray? And if he should find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoices more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.”
Matthew 18:12, 13.

THIS passage occurs in a discourse of our Savior against despising one of those little ones that believe in Him. He foretells a dreadful doom for those who, in their contempt for the little ones, cause them to stumble. And He forbids that contempt by a variety of forcible arguments upon which we cannot now dwell. There is a tendency, apparent at this present time, to think little of the conversion of *individuals* and to look upon the work of the Holy Spirit upon each separate person as much too slow a business for this progressive age.

We hear grand theories of a theocracy of a kind unknown to Holy Scripture—a semi-political dominion of the Lord over masses wherein the individuals are unregenerate. We listen to great swelling words about the uplifting of *nations* and the advancement of the race. But these lofty ideas do not produce facts, nor have they any moral power. Our “cultured” teachers are weary of the humdrum work of bringing individual souls into light. They want to do it wholesale, by a far more rapid process than that of personal salvation. They are tired of the units—their great minds dwell upon “the solidarity of the race.”

I am bold to assert that if ever we despise the method of *individual* conversion we shall get into an unsound order of business altogether and find ourselves wrecked upon the rocks of hypocrisy. Even in those right glorious times when the Gospel shall have the freest course, when it shall run the most quickly and be the most extensively glorified, its progress will still be after the former manner of the conviction, conversion and sanctification of individuals. Individuals who shall each one believe and be baptized according to the Word of the Lord.

I fear lest in any of you there should be even the least measure of despising the one lost sheep because of the large and philosophical methods which are now so loudly advocated. I would not have you exchange the gold of individual Christianity for the base metal of Christian Socialism. If the wanderers are to be brought in, in vast numbers, as I pray they may be, yet must it be accomplished by the bringing of them in *one by one*. To attempt *national* regeneration without *personal* regeneration is to dream of erecting a house without separate bricks. In the vain attempt to work in the gross, we may miss the practical result which would have followed

working in detail. Let us settle it in our minds that we cannot do better than obey the example of our Lord Jesus given us in the text and go after the one sheep which has gone astray.

Our text warns us that we are not to despise one person, even on account of evil character. The first temptation is to despise one because he is only one. The next is to despise one because that one is so little. The next and perhaps the most dangerous form of the temptation, is to despise one because that one has gone astray. The individual is not in the right path. He is not obeying the Law, nor reflecting credit on the Church but doing much that vexes the spiritual and grieves the holy. But we are not, therefore, to despise him. Read the eleventh verse—"The Son of man is come to save that which was lost."

In the Greek, the word "lost" is a very strong word—we may read it, "that which is destroyed." It does not mean "that which is nonexistent," as you can clearly see. But that which is destroyed as to usefulness to the shepherd, as to happiness to itself, and as to working out the intent for which it was created. It means any that are so effectually destroyed by sin that their existence is a greater calamity than their nonexistence. But even if they are now dead in trespasses and sins, and even offensive in character—must we not despise them. The Son of Man did not despise such, since, "He has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Many a soul that has been so destroyed as to be lost to itself, lost to God, lost to his people, lost to anything like hope and holiness, the Lord Jesus Christ has saved by His gracious power. He values each one. This is the lesson which I would teach this morning to the utmost of my power. May the Holy Spirit teach it also.

In considering the words of our Lord which are now before us, I beg you to notice, first, that the Lord Jesus herein shows peculiar interest in *one* lost soul. Secondly, He puts forth special exertion for the rescue of this lost one. And thirdly He displays a special rejoicing when the lost one is restored. When we have thought of all this, we shall then observe, fourthly, that He sets us a very striking example—herein teaching us to care for *each* soul destroyed by sin.

I. First, then, in the words before us, OUR SAVIOR SHOWS PECULIAR INTEREST IN ONE LOST SOUL.

Note in the commencement, that for the sake of those lost ones, our Lord assumes a special Character. The eleventh verse puts it, "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." He was not originally known as "the Son of Man," but as "the Son of God." Before all worlds, He dwelt in the bosom of the Father and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." But in order to redeem *men*, the Son of the Highest became "the Son of Man." He was born of the Virgin and by birth inherited the innocent infirmities of our nature and bore the sufferings incident to those infirmities. Then did He also take upon Himself our sin and its penalty and therefore died upon the Cross.

He was in all points made like unto His Brethren. He could not be the Shepherd of men without becoming like they were and therefore the Word condescended to be made flesh. Behold the stupendous miracle of incar-

nation! Nothing can excel this marvel—Immanuel, God with us! “Being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” O lost One, conscious of your loss, take heart today when the name of Jesus is named in your hearing. He is God but He is Man—and as God and Man He saves His people from their sins.

Next to this, to show how Jesus values one lost soul, He makes a very wonderful descent. “The Son of Man is come.” He was always known as “The Coming One.” But as to the salvation of the lost He has actually come. For judgment He is “the Coming One” still. But for salvation we rejoice that our Savior has already come. Quitting the assemblies of the perfect, He has been here as the Friend of publicans and sinners. From being the Lord of angels, He has stooped to be “a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Yes, He has come. And not in vain. Those who preached the coming Savior had such a joyous message to deliver that their feet were beautiful upon the mountains and their voices were as heavenly music.

But as for us who preach that He has come, and coming He has finished the work which He undertook to perform—surely ours is the choicest of messages. Our Lord Jesus has completed the atoning sacrifice and the justifying righteousness by which lost men are saved—happy is the preacher of such tidings and blessed are your ears that hear them! The Good Shepherd has performed all that is necessary for the salvation of the flock which His Father has given into his Hands. Beloved, let us take heart. Lost as we are, Christ has come to save us. He has come to the place of our ruin and woe. His coming and seeking will not be in vain. Brothers and Sisters, how greatly ought we to value the souls of men when Jesus, for their sake, becomes Man and comes into this sinful world among our guilty race that He may work the salvation of the lost!

Note here that He does this for those that are still straying. I have marked, in looking at the Greek text, that it is written, “He seeks that which goes astray.” The Shepherd seeks while the sheep strays—seeks it because it strays and needs seeking. Full many of the Lord’s redeemed are even now going astray and even now is the Shepherd going after them. The Savior seeks those who are even now sinning. That He should have a love to those who are repenting I can well understand. But that He should care for those who are willfully going astray is far more gracious. Jesus seeks those whose backs are towards Him, who are going further and further away from the fold. Herein is Divine Grace most free, most full, most sovereign.

Indeed, it is so. Though you harden yourself against the Lord, though you refuse to turn at His rebuke, yet if you are His redeemed, His eyes of love mark you. In all your willful wanderings He follows you. He sees you, He seeks you! Oh that you may yield, by His Grace, and find that He saves you! O you that are now in the flock, think of the love of Christ to you when you were outside the fold. When you had no wish to return. When, seeing Him pursuing you, you only ran faster to escape His almighty love! Let us sing together—

“Determined to save,

He watched over my path,

***When, Satan's blind slave,
I sported with death."***

Notwithstanding all my rebellion and all my willful transgression, He still loved me with His heart and pursued me with His Word. Oh, how *we* ought to love *sinners*, since Jesus loved *us* and died for us while we were yet sinners! We must care for drunkards while they still pass round the cup. Swearers even while we hear them swear. And profligates while we mourn to see them polluting our midnight streets. We must not wait till we see some better thing in them, but feel an intense interest for them as what they are—straying and lost. When the sheep is torn with the thorns of the waste places and is sick and worn to skin and bones with long wanderings and hunger, we must seek its restoration—though we see in it no desire to submit itself to the Shepherd's care and rule. Such was our Savior's love to *us*—such must be our love to lost ones.

The Shepherd takes a peculiar interest in the lost—not only as now straying—but as having already gone very far away. Carefully consider these words—"If he should find it." That "if" tells its own tale.

The sheep had become so terribly lost that it was not likely to be found again—it had wandered into so dense a thicket, or strayed into so wild a region that it seemed scarcely within the bounds of hope that it would ever be discovered and brought back. We do not often meet with an "if" in reference to the work of Christ. But here is one—"If he should find it." This does not show weakness in the Shepherd but the desperate danger of the sheep. I have often heard it said by those who come to confess Christ and to acknowledge His love to them, that they are struck with wonder that they, above all others, should be doing any such thing. When we sit at the Lord's Table the feast is very wonderful. But the greatest wonder is the guest, when I am there. How humbly do we each one sing—

***"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter where there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"***

But it is so. The Good Shepherd is today seeking many whose salvation seems highly improbable if not utterly impossible. Herein is love that He should go after those whose finding is by no means a certainty, nor even a probability! Very improbable, almost impossible, is the task He undertakes! Yet in such He takes a deep interest.

Moreover, those toward whom our Lord has these thoughts of love have often sinned so as to have brought themselves into the deadliest danger. "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Saving implies ruin, peril, jeopardy—yes, destruction already in a measure present. Are not many now playing with the fire of Hell? What is that unquenchable fire, but sin, in its nature and results? Men are trifling on the brink of eternal woe—"Their foot shall slide in due time." Playing with edged tools is nothing in danger compared with sporting with your lusts. And many are doing so.

Yet, despite their danger, Jesus seeks them. Do you see those sheep heedlessly feeding near the den of the wolf? In a little while the monster

will devour them. They are far away from home and rest and safety. They have no desire to return. But they are resolved to roam yet further from the fold. The Lord Jesus comes after such desperately deluded ones. Until you pass the iron gate the Gospel will invite you to return. If you are but one inch this side of Hell, love will pursue you and mercy will follow you. Our glorious David, while a lamb still lives, is able to rescue it from the jaws of the lion and the paws of the bear. Though, like Jonah, a soul may have descended into the deeps and may lie out of all *human* reach, yet a word from Jesus can bring it up from the lowest pit. Glory be to the blessed name of the Almighty Savior, He is able to save to the uttermost—His power to save the lost is such that none are too vile for His salvation!

If we rightly consider the parable before us, we shall see that He takes a special interest in these stray sheep because they are His own. This man did not go after wild beasts, nor after other men's sheep. But he had a hundred sheep of his own and when he had counted them, he missed *one*. The hireling, whose own the sheep are not, would have said, "We have nearly the hundred—we need not be particular about an odd one." But these hundred sheep belonged to the Shepherd Himself. They were His own by choice, by inheritance, by Divine gift, by glorious capture and by costly purchase. He could not accept ninety and nine for a hundred. "None of them is lost," says He. "Those that You gave Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition. That the Scripture might be fulfilled."

Jesus could not endure to report a loss upon the flock handed over to Him of the Father. Ninety-nine is not a hundred, and the Savior will not consider it such. For well He knows that, "it is not the will of your Father which is in Heaven, that one of these little ones should perish." Dear Friends, since Jesus takes such an interest even in one stray soul, you must not think it little that *you* should be called to care for a single soul. Do not think that a little congregation of forty or fifty is too few to be worthy of your best efforts. Should your class, through various circumstances, get down to a very small number, do not, therefore, give it up.

No, no! Value one soul more than a world's purchase. The full company of the redeemed is far from being made up as yet and the Lord has much people in this city not yet brought to His feet. Therefore, never dream of ceasing your labors. Rest not till the hour shall come—

***"When all the chosen race
Shall meet around the Throne;
Shall bless the conduct of His Grace,
And make His glories known."***

II. Secondly, may the Spirit of God help me while I remind you that OUR LORD PUT FORTH SPECIAL EXERTION TO SAVE ONE SOLITARY INDIVIDUAL.

Observe in the parable—for it is a parable, though briefly told—that we see the Shepherd leaving happier cares. He felt himself at home with His attached and faithful flock. They had not gone astray and they gathered about Him and He fed them and took pleasure in them. There is always a great deal to do with sheep—they have many diseases, many weaknesses, many needs. But when you have an attached, affectionate flock about

you, you feel at home with them. So the Great Shepherd describes Himself as leaving the ninety and nine, His choice flock—the sheep that had fellowship with Him and He with them.

Yes, he leaves those in whom He could take pleasure to seek one that gave Him pain. I will not dwell upon how He left the Paradise above and all the joy of His Father's house and came to this bleak world. But I pray you remember that He did so. It was a wonderful descent when He came from beyond the stars to dwell on this beclouded globe to redeem the sons of men. But, remember, He still continually comes by His Spirit. His errands of mercy are perpetual. The Spirit of God moves His ministers who are Christ's representatives, to forego the feeding of the gathered flock and to seek, in their discourses, the salvation of the wandering ones in whose character and behavior there is nothing to cheer.

My Master's heart is full of care for all that love Him. He wears their names engraved on the jewels of His breastplate. But yet His heart is always going forth afar—after those who have not yet been brought to Him. And after those who once were in His fold but have gone aside and quit the flock. He leaves the happy and the holy and gives His best thoughts to the lost.

Our Lord goes out to seek these. It is not merely a sending forth of thought—it is a marching forth of power. His Divine Grace is going forth, I trust, this day beyond the company whom He has called by His Grace, to those other sheep who are not yet of His fold, whom also He must bring in. He would not have His Church expend all her care on the flock which He has led into her green pastures but He would have her go after those who are not yet in her blest society.

According to the text, the Shepherd goes into the mountains—among difficulties and dangers. He will do and dare for the saving of the lost—no hardships can daunt His mighty love. You know through what dark ravines He passed in saving men. You have heard what climbing He had after proud souls and what condescension for despairing ones. A sheep in the East is more light of foot than our sheep. It will leap like a gazelle and climb the mountains like a chamois. And so are sinners very swift in transgression and very daring in presumption. They leap in their iniquities where the children of God would shudder to follow them even in thought. They make nothing of leaps of profanity which would curdle the blood of him that has been taught the fear of God at the feet of Jesus Christ.

Yet the Lord Jesus went after these desperadoes. What difficulties He conquered, what sufferings He endured, what mountains He leaped over—that He might seek and save! O Brethren, the same heart is in Him still—He goes forth continually in the preaching of the Word. With many a sigh and many a groan on the part of His chosen ministers, He goes among the mountains to seek that which has gone astray. I pray that He may accept the effort of His unworthy servant this day and bring some lost one home by means of this sermon.

To show His exertion for the lost, our Lord describes Himself as seeking with persevering diligence. He looks this way but sees nothing. He shades

His eyes with His hand and looks steadily! He thought He saw His sheep. There is surely a living object upon the hillside! He gazes intently. No, it does not stir—it is a white rock! Possibly the lost sheep is in yonder gully! It is a long way to go but He is so intent on His purpose that He is soon there. But the sheep is not to be seen. Where can it be? He travels on with swift foot, for He does not know what may become of His sheep while He delays. Every now and then He stops—He thinks He hears a bleating. Surely it is the voice of His sheep! He is mistaken. His love makes His ear the father of sounds which are not sounds at all. He has neither seen nor heard it these long hours.

But He will continue seeking till He finds it. The concentrated omniscience of Christ is set upon a soul that goes astray, looking after it in all its evil desires and evil emotions—watching the growth of anything that looks like repentance—and observing with sorrow the hardening of its heart. This is what our Lord is doing for those redeemed with His blood, who as yet have not been carried back to the fold. He puts forth a gracious exertion of eye and mind as well as of foot and hand towards His wandering sheep.

At the last He saves—completely saves. He has not come to make the salvation of His people *possible*. But to save them. He has not come to put them in the way of saving themselves but to save them. He has not come to half-save them. But to save them altogether. When my Lord comes forth in the majesty of His Sovereign Grace to save a soul, He achieves His purpose, despite sin and death and Hell. The wolf may grind his teeth but the Shepherd is the wolf's Master. The sheep itself may, for a long time, have wandered and at the last may struggle against Him. But He grips its feet and throws the creature on His shoulders and bears it home. For He is resolved to save it. The sheep is glad to be so borne, for with a touch the Shepherd molds its will to His more perfect will. His Grace is the triumphant energy by which the lost one is restored.

The salvation of a single soul is a mass of miracles. I have heard of a fire which consumed the shop of a jeweler and a number of costly treasures of gold and silver and precious stones were found among the ruins, caked into a conglomerate of riches. What a salvage! Such is the salvation of a single man—it is a mass of priceless mercies melted into one inestimable ingot—dedicated to the praise of the glory of His Grace who makes us to be “accepted in the Beloved” and “saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.” When I think of the energy which is put forth by the Lord to save a single lost soul I feel stirred in my heart and I desire that your hearts should be stirred also—that we may put forth all our strength to go and find the Lord's lost ones. Let us co-operate with Him in His great labor of seeking that which is lost, Oh, that the Holy Spirit may put such a spirit within us and keep it there!

III. I am compelled to pass onward somewhat hurriedly. Notice, in the third place, that our Lord FEELS A SPECIAL REJOICING AT THE RECOVERY OF A WANDERING SHEEP. Do not make a mistake here. Do not suppose that our Lord loves the one soul that has wandered more than the ninety and nine who have been preserved by His Grace from going

astray. Oh, no! He thinks ninety-nine times more of ninety-nine than of one. For His sheep are each one equally precious to Him. We must not suppose that He looks upon any one soul of His redeemed with a tenderness ninety-nine times greater than He gives to another.

But you will see the meaning of the passage by an illustration from your own experience. You have a family and you love all your children alike. But little Johnny is very ill. He has a fever and is likely to die—*now* you think more of him than of all the rest. He recovers and you bring him downstairs in your arms and just then he is the dearest child of the whole company. Not that he is really more valued than his brothers and sisters, but the fact that he has been so ill and was likely to die has brought him more before your mind and caused you more anxiety. Therefore you have more joy in him because of his recovery.

The great deeps of Christ's love are the same to all His flock, but on the surface there is sometimes a holy storm of joy when any one of them has been newly restored after wandering. Learn the occasion of this demonstrative joy. The wandering one has caused great sorrow. We were all grieved that our Brother should become a gross backslider—that such an earnest Christian as he seemed to be—should disgrace his profession. Our Lord is still more grieved than we are. When the erring one comes back we feel a new joy in him. In proportion to the sorrow felt over the wanderer is the joy manifested when he is restored. Moreover, great apprehensions were aroused. We feared that he was not the Lord's and that he would go back unto perdition. We trembled for him. That black dread is all over now—the sheep is safe—the doubtful one is saved and restored to the fold. In proportion to the weight of the apprehension is the intensity of the relief.

The Shepherd had exercised, also, great labor over the lost one. He went up among the mountains to find His sheep. But now His labor is fully rewarded, for He has found His lost sheep. He remembers no more His travel and travail for joy that the sheep is safe. Besides, in this newly-restored one, there are marks of salvation which cause joy. He has been torn with the briars but he is resting now. See how he lies down in the tender grass! He was weary and worn and almost dead with his wanderings. But now, how happy he is in the presence of his Shepherd! How closely he keeps to his Shepherd's footsteps! All this goes to make the shepherd glad!

The Shepherd rejoices when He brings back the lost sheep because He makes that rescue an occasion and opportunity for having a special gala day. He wishes all His sheep to learn His delight in them all by seeing His delight in one. I know it is so in the Church. I bless the Lord when He keeps the feet of His saints—I bless Him every day for preserving Grace. But when some grievous wanderer is restored—then we bless Him more emphatically. Then we have music and dancing. The elder Brother wonders what these overflowing joys can mean—but everybody else can see good reason for special mirth when the lost one is found.

Shepherds and their flocks cannot have holiday every day. But when a lost one has been recovered, they feel such mutual delight in each other

and such a common delight in the saving of the lost that they seize upon the occasion for rejoicing. I want you all to recognize that. If you love the Church of Christ you are bound to keep a feast day when fallen ones are raised up. And that you may hold that festival, you are bound to put out all your strength to bring in the lost one.

IV. Now we come to the tug-of-war, that is, to look upon our Divine Shepherd as HE SETS US A STRIKING EXAMPLE.

We may view this text as our personal missionary warrant. Today we are called upon to think of missions. And as I think it idle to preach about missions in a big high-flying style. I have purposed to say something commonplace but practical. Brethren, we are all of us to be missionaries for Christ and the text presents a warrant for each one to work earnestly as a soul-winner.

What shall we do, then, to imitate our Lord? The answer is—Let us go after *one* soul. I cannot make a selection for you this morning, but I entreat all who are workers together with God to go after the *ones*. There is a kind of knack in speaking to individuals—everybody does not possess it. But every Believer should labor to acquire it. Seek the souls of men one by one. It is far easier work to me to speak to you all than it would be to take each one and speak to him personally of his soul. And yet such speaking to you one by one might be more successful than this sermon to you in the mass. I entreat you—as the great Shepherd goes after one, do not think you will demean yourself by going after one poor man, or woman, or child. But do it now.

Listen again—let that one be somebody that is quite out of the way. Try and think of one who has grievously gone astray. It may be there is one such in your family, or you meet with one such in the course of trade. Think carefully of that one soul and reflect upon its sin and danger. You would like to pick out a hopeful case, in order that you might feel sure of success. Take another course this time—seek the one which is going astray and seems hopeless. Follow your Lord's example and go after one who is the least likely to be found. Will you try this plan? If you do not, you will be quitting the way of your Lord.

“I have a class and a work,” one says. Yes. I want you for a little while to leave the ninety and nine. I pray that you may feel called to look after some one greatly depraved person, or some utterly neglected child. Keep up your ninety-and-nine class, if you possibly can, but at all hazards, go after the one. Make an unusual effort—go out of your way. Let ordinary service be placed second for the time being. It will be a healthy change for you and perhaps, a great relief. Perhaps you will come back and do more good with the ninety and nine after you have been away a little while with the straying one. You are getting a little moldy. And you are just a wee tired of the monotony of your work.

Every Sunday the same girls, or the same boys and the same form of lesson. Well, cut the whole concern for a little and go after the one sheep that has gone astray. “You are giving us odd advice, Mr. Spurgeon.” If it is not in my text, then do not follow it. But if it is in our dear Master's words, I trust you will carry it out bravely. When you go after that ONE,

have all your wits about you. Go and seek—and that you cannot do unless you are alert. Follow up the straying one. Did you say that you would wait till he called at your house? Is that your notion of seeking lost sheep? Is that the way of sportsmen in the autumn? Do they sit in the drawing room till the pheasants fly by the window? That would be poor sport—

***“O come, let us go and find them,
In the paths of death they roam.”***

Go after them, for so our Shepherd did. He braved the mountain’s slippery side. I do not suppose the Shepherd had any greater love for mountain tracks than you have. But up the rough tracks He climbed, for the sheep’s sake. Go after sinners into their poverty and wretchedness, until you find them.

Here is one thing to cheer you. If you should win such a soul as that, you will have more joy, a great deal more than in saving those for whom you regularly labor—more joy over that lost one than over the ninety and nine hopeful ones. It will be such a support to your faith, such a boost for your joy, such a bright light to your labor to have won such a guilty one. I should not wonder but what you will talk about it for many a day and it will be a source of strength to you when things are not quite as you would desire. Such converts are our crown of rejoicing. May I especially recommend that you make a trial of this extra sheep-seeking? If you do not succeed you will have done no harm. For you will have copied your Lord and Master. But you *will* succeed, for He is with you, and His Spirit works through you.

I would remind you that even under the old Law, you would be bound to do this thing. Turn to the twenty-third chapter of Exodus and read the fourth and fifth verses. “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the ass of him that hates you lying under his burden and would forbear to help him, you shall surely help with him.” You are bound to do good even to your enemy. Will you not serve your best friend? If your enemy’s ox or ass needed to be taken back to him, you are bound to do it. How much more when the sheep belongs to Him whom you love with all your heart! Prove your love to Jesus by laboring to take Him back His strays!

Turn to the twenty-second of Deuteronomy, first to fourth verses, and there you will find another bit of the Law. “You shall not see your brother’s ox or his sheep go astray and hide yourself from them: you shall in any case bring them again unto your brother.” Oh, will you not bring in the stray sheep of your greater Brother, “the First-born among many Brethren”? “And if your brother is not near unto you, or if you know him not, then you shall bring it unto your own house and it shall be with you until your brother seeks after it and you shall restore it to him again.”

If you cannot get a soul to Christ, at any rate get it to yourself. If you cannot lead it immediately to conversion, show it some hospitality within your own doors by ministering such comfort as you can. Do what you can to cheer the poor heart till Christ comes after it. “You shall not see your brother’s ass or his ox fall down by the way and hide yourself from them:

you shall surely help him to lift them up again.” How easy it is to hide ourselves! That is the expression used by Moses—“you shall not hide yourself from them.” When you know that people are very wicked, the usual plan is to wish them well but keep out of their way. Prudence makes you hide yourself from them. The whole street may swarm with harlots, but then you have gone to bed and the door is shut. What has their sin to do with you? There are many drunken men about. But you do not drink to excess—what has their drinking to do with you? That is what is meant by hiding ourselves from them. How easily that can be done!

Take an illustration which is worth the telling. A vessel, the other day, was crossing the Atlantic and it fell in with that disabled emigrant ship, The Danmark. Suppose the captain had kept on his course. He might have looked another way and resolved not to be detained. He might have argued, “I am bound to do the best for my owners. It will hinder me greatly if I go pottering about after this vessel. I had better go by and not see it. Or make haste to port and send out help.”

It could have been done and nobody would have been the wiser, for the ship would have gone down soon. The captain of that vessel was a man of a nobler breed. He did not hide himself, nor turn the blind eye towards the vessel in distress. But what did the captain do? All honor to him, he came near and took the ship in tow. This was not all—he found that she could not keep afloat and he resolved to take those hundreds of emigrants on board his own ship. But he could not carry them and his cargo, too. What then?

The decision was greatly to his honor. Overboard goes the cargo! God’s blessing rest on the man! Into the sea went the freight, and the passengers were taken on board and carried to the nearest port. He could have easily hidden himself, could he not? So can you, you Christian people, as you call yourselves. Can you go through this world and always have a blind eye to the case of lost sinners? Can you come in and out of this Tabernacle and never speak to the strangers who throng these aisles? Will you let them go to Hell unwarned and uninstructed? Can you hide yourselves from them? How dare you call yourselves Christians! How will you answer for it at last? Brothers, Sisters—let us shake off this inhuman indifference and deny ourselves rest, ease, credit—that we may save poor sinking souls. Overboard with cargo cheerfully that you may, in the power of the Holy Spirit, save souls from death.

Once more—this text is the great missionary warrant for all the Church of God. We are to go, as the Savior did, to seek and to save that which was lost. And we are to do this not on account of the *numbers* of the heathen but for *one* of them. I grant you there is a great power in the argument of numbers—so many hundreds of millions in China—so many hundreds of millions in India. But if there were only one person left unsaved in any part of the world it would be worth while for the entire Christian Church to go after that one person! For He who is greater than the Church, as the Bridegroom is greater than the bride, quit Heaven—yes and quit the sweet society of His own Beloved that He might go after the ONE that had gone astray.

Do not care, therefore, about numbers—save the smallest tribes. Have an eye to the hamlets in England. I believe that the scattered cottages of our land are in a worse condition than the villages. Care for the ones. Your Lord did so, and here is your warrant for doing the like.

Next, notice that we ought never to be moved by the supposed superiority of a race. I have heard it said that it would be far better to try and convert the superior races than to consider the more degraded. Is it not better to bring in the educated Brahmins than the wild hill-tribes? “What a fine sort of people these are, these philosophical Hindus! If we could win them they would be worth converting!” That is not at all according to the mind of Christ. The Shepherd sought a lost sheep and when He had found it, it was no great spoil for Him for it was so worn out as to be nothing but a destroyed sheep. Yet He went after that one poor animal. Let us feel that the degraded Africans, the dwarfs of the woods, the cannibals of New Guinea and all such are to be sought quite as much as more advanced races. They are men. That is enough.

Once more—the motive for missionary enterprise must never be the excellence of the character of the individuals. The shepherd did not go after the sheep because it never went astray nor because it was docile—but because it *did* go astray and was *not* docile. The sin of men is their claim upon the Church of God. The more sin, the more reason for Divine Grace. Oh that the Church would feel it to be her duty, if not to go to the most degraded first, yet not to leave them to the last! Where you seem least likely to succeed, there go at once—for there you will find room for faith. And where there is room for faith, and faith fills the room, God will send a blessing.

Dear friends, as you cannot, all of you, go abroad to the heathen—though some of you ought to do so—I ask you to do what you can do. Contribute to the collection which is for the support of mission work. Here is a small opportunity. And if you do not avail yourselves of it, you are not likely to do the greater thing to which I have invited you. The Lord bless you! Amen.

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THE LORD WITH TWO OR THREE

NO. 1761

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 1883,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Where two or three are gathered together in My name,
there am I in the midst of them.”
Matthew 18:20.*

WE have, in the verses preceding, the text a mention of the first *Church Meeting* of which I remember to have found mention in the New Testament. The Savior declares of His assembled people, “Verily I say unto you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven.” A few Believers, gathered out of the world, have met in the name of the Lord Jesus to attend to the affairs of His household here below. It is a case of *discipline*. A Brother has trespassed against another Brother. The offended one has sought him out privately and by personal expostulation has endeavored to bring him to a better mind, but he has failed. He has then taken with him two or three Brethren of the Church and they have together pleaded with the offender that he would do that which is right, but he is obstinate—even in the presence of two or three witnesses he persists in his trespass and refuses to be won over by kindly entreaty.

It only remains that they shall tell it to the Church. The Church is grieved. It hears the case patiently and waits upon God in prayer. It asks guidance and, at last, finding that there is no help for him, removes the member of the body who is not in true sympathy with the rest and is acting as if he had not the life of God in him. This being done, according to Christ’s rule—justly, impartially, lovingly, with prayer—that which is done by a few men and women assembled here below, is registered in the court above. What they have bound on earth is bound in Heaven. What they have loosed on earth is also loosed in Heaven. It is a happy privilege when they can loose the bound one! When repentance is expressed, when the backslider is restored, when the Church has reason to believe that the work of the Spirit is truly in the heart of the offender, then the bond is loosed on earth and it is also loosed in Heaven. The meetings of God’s servants for the necessary discipline of the Church are not trifling meetings, but there is a Divine Power in them, since what they do is done in the name of Jesus Christ their Lord. Oh, that Church Meetings were more generally looked at in this solemn light!

Next, we are introduced to the *Prayer Meeting*. In the 19th verse we read, “Again I say unto you, that if two of you,” *two of you*, “shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven.” It is a very little meeting. It could not be smaller to be a meeting at all. There are only two there, but they are two praying Believers. They are two of the Lord’s own servants, whose great

concern is His kingdom! They are two earnest persons who very greatly desire the prosperity of the Church. They are two of kindred spirit, agreeing in love to God and the Truth. And they have talked over the matter, considered it—and they feel moved by the Spirit of God to unite their supplications about one important subject.

Will they meet together and pray in vain? As they are only *two*, will not the meeting fail to count with God? Assuredly not! The Lord Jesus Christ has left them this gracious promise, that if they shall agree on earth touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of His Father which is in Heaven! They are only two, but this suffices to secure them the promised healing. Perhaps the exact petition which they offer may not apparently be answered. Remember that God often hears the *prayer of our prayers* and answers *that* rather than our prayers themselves—by which I mean, that there is an inner soul within true prayer which is the quickening life of true supplication. The body of prayer may die, but the soul of prayer lives and abides forever.

If I am asked what my inmost heart prays for, I should reply the heart of my prayer is—“The will of the Lord be done.” Is not this the essence, quintessence and extract of the prayer by which our Savior taught us how to pray? He bade us say, “Your will be done in earth as it is in Heaven.” Is not this the finale of His own prayers, the entreaty of His passion, His deepest and yet His highest pleading? “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Now we want the will of the Lord to be done—we do not desire it to remain as a secret decree, but actually to be fulfilled—and it is ours, as it were, with the finger of prayer, to turn the folded leaves, one by one, and exhibit them to the light of fact so that the purpose of God may become an accomplished thing in answer to the prayer of His people.

Do we mean anything more than this by our prayers? I think that when well instructed, this is neither more nor less than what we intend. And if it is really so and we come together, delighting ourselves in the Lord, He will most certainly give us the desire of our hearts. When we come together with our wills sanctified into the likeness of the Divine will, then our prayers succeed till they become no presumption even if we dare to say with Luther in one of his bold prayers, “Oh, my Lord, let *my* will be done this time!” He ventured to speak thus because he felt sure that his will must be in accordance with the Divine will. Only *there* do you stand on solid ground! Only *there* may you plead without any reserve for special blessings.

The Prayer Meeting is not a farce, waste of time, or mere pious amusement. Some in these times think so, but such shall be lightly esteemed. Surely they know not the Omnipotence that lies in the pleas of God’s people! The Lord has taken the keys of His royal treasury and put them into the hands of faith. He has taken His sword from the scabbard and given it into the hands of the man mighty in prayer. He seems at times to have placed His sovereign scepter in the hands of prayer. “Ask Me concerning things to come: concerning My sons, command Me.” He permits us to speak with such boldness and daring that we overcome Heaven by prayer and dare to say to the Covenant Angel, “I will not let You go unless You

bless me.” If one Jacob can prevail over a wrestling Angel, what can two do? What a victory would come to two who joined in the same wrestling! “One of you shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.”

There is an accumulated power in united supplication—two do not only double the force, but multiply it tenfold! How soon the gate of mercy opens when two are knocking! God grant to each one of us a praying partner! When John pulls the oar of prayer, let James join him in the hearty tug. Better still, may we always believe in our Father’s Presence at our Prayer Meetings, so that we may find the words of Jesus true when He says, “It shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven.”

Now, thirdly, we come to a promise which includes *every meeting of any sort* or kind which is for Christ’s Glory. So long as it is a sacred meeting of saintly men and women for the purposes of devotion or service—for the purposes of prayer or praise, or whatever else may be most suitable for the occasion, here is the promise for them—“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” This sanctions the Church Meeting; this prospers the Prayer Meeting! Over-shadowing every gracious assembly of the chosen we see the great Shepherd of the sheep, who here expressly says, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Now, first, we shall mention with regard to these meetings, *matters not essential*. Then, secondly, we shall carefully mention *a matter most essential*. And, thirdly, we shall dwell upon *an assurance most encouraging*.

I. First, let us speak of MATTERS NOT ESSENTIAL. At the outset, we know that *numbers are not essential*, for “where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I.” It is very important in a large Church that there should be large gatherings for prayer, for it would be an evidence of a slighting of the ordinance of united supplication if a fair proportion of the members did not come together for that holy and blessed exercise. But still, where that cannot be—where the Church, itself, is small—where, for different reasons which we need not here recapitulate, it is not possible for many to gather together—it is a very encouraging circumstance that numbers are *not essential* to success in prayer. “Where *two or three* are gathered together.”

The number is mentioned, I suppose, because that is about the smallest number that could make a congregation. We can hardly call it a congregation where the minister has to say, “Dearly Beloved Roger, the Scripture moves us in different places,” as we have heard was once done by a clergyman—truly it was an assembly of two and so was within the number—and, under the circumstances, might find the Lord present. But two out of a large Church would have been a wretched sign of decline. If two were all that met out of a great Church, it would be a sadly little company and the blessing might be withheld. Two or three are mentioned, not to *encourage absence*, but to cheer the faithful few who do not forget the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is.

Still, the number has this advantage, that it is the readiest congregation to be gathered. It is not difficult to make up two or three. A husband and wife—there are two. A husband and wife and a child—there are three.

Or there may be two unmarried sisters, or a widow and child—two can be easily made up. Where there are no children, there may be a husband and a wife and a servant—and these are three. Where there is no wife, perhaps there are two brothers, or a brother and a sister, or perhaps three sisters. And where there is no relation, but a man lives alone, it is not impossible, surely, in the most deserted region for him to find one other or two others with whom he can meet. It is a very handy congregation because it can meet in a bedroom. It can meet in a kitchen. It can meet in a closet—it can meet anywhere because it is so small.

It is also easily hidden away. In persecuting times, two or three could get together in a corner, a cave, a cellar, or an attic. For that matter, two or three may be in *prison* together, and they can pray in one narrow cell or they can do what Latimer and Ridley did when they stood back to back at the stake and lifted up their hearts as one man. That was brave praying, when the two bishops stood to burn with devotion as well as to burn with fire for Christ's sake! I am sure that Jesus was in the midst of them when they met upon the firewood. Two people may meet in the street or in the field. They can get together in the corner of an omnibus or a train and unite their supplications. Two or three make a congregation which is among the small things, but who shall dare despise what God has blessed? I commend to you the frequent practice of praying by twos and threes.

There was a minister who had a little society which he called the "Aaron and Hur Society." It consisted of two—one to hold up his right hand and one to hold up his left, while, like Moses, he was on the mountain pleading for Israel. We need this institution multiplied to any extent. We need the twos and threes as well as the one separately praying—and then a blessing will come. But numbers are not important at all. We need say no more about them except this—I like to note that the text puts it, "two or three," for, as one remarks, that is much better than, "three or two." For if "three or two" are gathered together, they are getting smaller! But if it is "two or three," they are evidently upon the increase. If they have only increased from two to three, they have advanced fifty per cent and that is something!

If this congregation were to do that, where should we all be able to meet on the Sabbath? On week nights I would encourage you to try to increase till we fill the upper gallery as well as the rest of the building. "Two or three." It is a growing congregation—but still, numbers are not essential to good speed in prayer. Next, *the rank of the people is not important*. Does it say, "Where two or three ministers are gathered together in My name"? By no means, no! Ministers may expect the Lord to be in the midst of them, but they have no special promise as ministers—they must come before the Lord as plain Believers. The "two or three" may be unable to utter a word by way of teaching the great congregation, but this is not mentioned in the promise.

Does it say, "Where two or three instructed Christians, advanced in experience, are met together"? No! There is no such limit expressed or implied. In the matter of prayer, no special need is set apart for those who

are eminent in Grace. We do not read, "Where two or three full-grown Believers are met." Much less does it say, "Where two or three rich people are met together." No distinction is made! If they are the people of God and if they are the little ones whom the Lord has been describing—humble and lowly in spirit—where two or three of such are met together in the Redeemer's name, "There," says Jesus, "am I in the midst of them." It may be that a poor man and his wife are praying together before retiring for the night. The Lord is there. A couple of servants unite their supplications in the kitchen. The Lord is there.

Two or three little boys have come out of school and they love the Lord—and so they have met in a corner to pray. The Lord is there. Do you remember how Luther was encouraged while he and Melancthon, too, were down in the dumps about the Lord's work? They were dreadfully downcast, but as Luther passed by a room, he heard the voices of children and he stopped. Some women, the wives of good men, had gathered with a few holy children and they were praying the Lord to let the Gospel spread in the teeth of the Pope and all his friends from below! Luther went back and said, "It is all right. The children are praying to God. The Lord will hear them. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has He ordained strength."

So you see in the promise of the Divine Presence there is *nothing* said about numbers and nothing about rank. Neither is a word said as to *place*, except that it says, "Where two or three." "Where" means anywhere! In any place where two or three are met together in Christ's name there He is! Not only in the cathedral, but in the barn. Not only in the Tabernacle, but in the field. "Where" means everywhere! In the loneliest place, in the far-away forest, in an upper room, or on board ship, or in an hospital—

***"Jesus, wherever Your people meet,
There they behold Your Mercy Seat.
Wherever they seek You, You are found,
And every place is hallowed ground.
For You within no walls confined,
Inhabit the humble mind.
Such always find You where they come,
And going, take You to their home."***

Christ will be with you anywhere when you are with Him in prayer!

Have you ever read how the Covenanters, when the times of peace came on and they could worship in Church buildings, yet, nevertheless, often looked back with sadness to the glorious days they had in the mosses and on the bleak hillsides when they were hunted by Claverhouse's dragoons and the Lord covered them with the skirts of His garments? See the preacher reading his text by the lightning flash and hear his voice sounding, afterwards, amid the thick darkness! The saints who had gathered together to hear the Word of God had an overpowering sense of His Presence which nothing could excel! We may meet for prayer *anywhere* and expect Jesus to be in the midst of us! The place is not essential even in the least degree.

When I see people running out every morning to church, it savors of a superstition which ought to have died out long ago. When you look into the church, you will find no great number assembled—generally the rector and one or two of the family make up the company. But if the whole parish came trooping out to church, I would say that they had better stay at home and pray with their families! Family prayer is a better institution than the tinkling of a bell every morning and the collecting of people in a church! Have a bell of your own and be your own priest! Open your Bible and pray with your children—that will be a more acceptable sacrifice than if you plod, in your superstition, half-a-mile to a so-called “sacred” place to enjoy the voice of a supposed priestly man! Dedicate your parlor; consecrate your sitting room; make your kitchen into a Church for God—for there is no sacredness in bricks, mortar, stone and stained glass!

The outside of a Church is as holy as the inside. Far ought such an age as this to be from the revolting superstition which makes the houses of the godly to be common and unclean in order to magnify the parish church! May we get back to the simplicity of Christ! “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father.” The time is coming, yes and now is, when in every place God seeks *spiritual* worshippers who worship Him in spirit and in truth. And will you please notice this—that as numbers and rank and place are all non-essentials, so also is the *time*! There may be—there *ought* to be to us from holy habit—an hour of prayer. But though that hour is especially and rightly the hour of prayer—for he that has no appointed time for prayer may probably forget to pray—yet still that pious custom must never degenerate into superstition as though Heaven’s gate were opened at a certain quarter of an hour and shut during all the rest of the day! Meet whenever you please!

No time will be unseasonable. All hours are good—from 12 o’clock at night to 12 o’clock the next night—and so onward. The hour of prayer is the hour of need, the hour of opportunity, the hour of desire, the hour when you can come together. Let every hour, according as occasion permits you, become the hour of prayer! I have heard it said, sometimes, in the country, “Well, we cannot get our people together for a Prayer Meeting because they are busy at the harvest.” If the preacher were to get up at four o’clock in the morning and hold a meeting for prayer out in the field, itself, while yet the dew is on the grass—would it not be a wonderful thing for him and for his flock? Suppose the people cannot come to pray at six o’clock in the evening, make it seven, make it eight, make it nine, make it ten!

Perhaps the young folks had better be in bed at so late an hour and there may, thus, be legitimate objections to some hours for public gatherings, but yet, twos and threes may sit up as late as they like to pray and no policeman will come round and tell them to go to bed! Our rulers do not ring the curfew! The Lord our God does neither slumber nor sleep—He is always waiting to be gracious. And, once more, there is nothing said, here, about *the form which the meeting is to take*. “Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” “They are go-

ing to break bread together.” Very well, they are quite at liberty to do so. And if they have met in the Lord’s name, He will be in the midst of them.

“But they are going to hear a sermon.” All right, so they may. Preaching is an ordinance of God and He will be in the midst of them. “But they are neither going to hold the communion, nor to hear a sermon—they are going to pray.” Quite right! The Lord will be in their midst. “But they are not going to pray, that is to say, vocally. They are going to read Scripture and sit and think on it.” Quite right! The Lord will be in the midst of them. “But they are not even going to read, or sing, or pray vocally—they are going to sit still.” The Lord will be in the midst of them if they meet in the name of Jesus. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Do not be the dupes of those who say, “This one particular form of service is the only one.” Christ has not put it so! And we will not be brought into any bondage by those who call themselves, “Brethren,” and are the most unbrotherly brothers that ever lived! They tell us that we are all wrong—we cannot expect to have the Lord with us. To answer these is not difficult. “Dear brothers, we are not at all grieved by your talking as you do, for we know *you* are wrong, since *we have the Lord with us*. It does not matter at all to us what you say so long as we enjoy *His* company and see the prosperity which He gives to us. So long as we do not quarrel with one another once every few years, we are not anxious to follow you in your methods which are illustrated by your bitter feuds.

“As long as we do not split up into the most miserable sections of sectarians that ever disgraced the name of Christ, we shall not be greatly wounded by any remarks which you have to make. Condemn and welcome, for your condemnations are mere wind! May your abjurations be blessed to us and may they ease your minds, also, by relieving your minds of a little of your bitterness! We believe that *any* form which true worship takes is a form which the Lord Jesus Christ not only tolerates but sanctions if His Spirit is there. But if you meet without that Spirit of God, even though you should think yourselves Infallibly correct in the form which your meeting assumes, that form will be of very little use to you. I bless God for the grand liberty of worship which is given here! I bless God that He has not laid down this regulation and that, but has left His people to His own free Spirit.”

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” So much on non-essentials.

II. But now, secondly, there is A MATTER WHICH IS MOST ESSENTIAL and that is, that they should be gathered in *Christ’s name*. Does not this mean that the gathering must be that of Christians met together as Christians to have fellowship with Jesus Christ and so with one another? Does it not mean that they must be met together in obedience to His will, as they understand it, to carry out His will as they find it in the New Testament and as the Spirit of God opens up that New Testament to them? Does it not mean, also, that they must be met together distinctly for the

Lord's purposes?—to honor Christ, to bring glory to His name, to worship Him?

They must be met together not to a kind of mystic, invisible, unknown Christ, but in His name, for Christ has a name—a distinct Personality, a Character—and that must be known, loved and honored, or else we have not met in His name. Are we not to meet because He bids us meet and because we have His authority for meeting, His authority for breaking bread, His authority for Baptism, His authority for prayer, His authority for praise, His authority for the ministry of the Word, His authority for reading the Scriptures, His authority for mutual edification, or whatever form of worship seems most suitable? We meet not to carry out our own devices, but to carry out that which is appointed us by our Lord Himself.

And does not this gathering into His name mean that we are, first, to be known by His name, and then to get close to one another by drawing more and more near to Him? The way to be gathered together is to be gathered by Him and to Him. If all press to the center, they all press to one another. If each man's aim is personal fellowship with Christ, personal knowledge of Christ, personal trust in Christ, personal adoration of Christ, personal service to Christ and the getting of a personal likeness to Christ, then we are all coming together. While our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, we also have fellowship with all the saints. This should be the great objective of all our gatherings, to be brought more fully into Christ—and all of us must, meanwhile, believe that Jesus is in the midst and we must come together unto Him.

You do not meet, tonight, to listen to a certain preacher, but because through that preacher you have been helped to get nearer to the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, you are glad to hear his voice and glad to worship God with those friends with whom you have fellowship in Christ. You do well to come where you have found Christ before—and you do well to stay away from any gathering where you have *not* found Christ. Some, as they go out of the place where they usually worship, are sadly compelled to cry, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." Do not go where Jesus is not present! And if you are distinctly obliged to say, "I have heard sermon after sermon almost without mention of His name. I have gone for months together and I have not had a sweet thought of heavenly fellowship arising out of the service"—then do not go there again.

Do not go to any Church or Meeting House merely because you have been in the habit of going. If your father used to live in Islington, but has now moved, you do not think it necessary to go and call at his empty house, do you? Go where the Lord has met with you and where you may expect that He will meet with you again! Sabbaths are too precious to be thrown away by sitting still to be starved. Even a cow does not care to be tied up in an empty stall! And a horse does not run to an empty manger. Seek the Lord Jesus and do not rest till you find Him. We must gather into His name and get closer and closer to Him, or else the Lord's Day will run to waste—and barrenness will devour our souls.

III. Now, as usual, I have taken up too much time with the first two heads, for the last is the most important and that is, AN ASSURANCE MOST ENCOURAGING—"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." First then, very briefly, *how is the Lord Jesus there?* Notice the exact words. Catch the gracious sense. He does not say, "I *will be* there." He says, "I *am* there." He is the first at the gathering! "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I." Not, "I will be," though that is true, but He puts it in a more Divine fashion—"There am I." Jesus is there already before another arrives! He is the first in the congregation, the first in the assembly and they come gathering to Him! He is the Center and they come to Him. "There am I."

How is He there? As we, His people, meet, He is there because He is in every one of us. It is a blessed thing to see Christ in His people. Did you ever try to do that? I know some who try to see the old man in Christ's people. It does not take them long to see the body of sin and death—and it is not a refreshing sight when they see it. But oh, to see Christ in His people—what a charming sight it is! And I think, with regard to every child of God that I know, that I can see a little more of Christ in him than I can see in myself. I cultivate the practice of endeavoring to see my Lord in all His people, for He is there and it is irreverent not to honor Him.

He is with them and is in them—why should we doubt it? That is something worth remembering. If so many temples of the Holy Spirit come together, why, surely, the Holy Spirit, Himself, is there—and the place where they stand is holy ground! Jesus is in their thoughts, in their objectives, in their desires—yes, and in their groans, in their sorrows, in their spirits, in their inmost souls. Where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He in the midst of them!

And, next, He is with us in His Word. When the Book is opened, it is not mere words, it is the living and "incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever." And Christ is in it as the Immortal Life, the secret life-germ in every seed that we sow! Christ is the Way if we teach men the road to Heaven. Christ is the Truth if we preach the doctrines of Grace. Christ is the Life if we enjoy and feed upon His precious name. Where His Word is preached, there He is, for it shall not return to Him void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto He has sent it. Christ is in His ordinances. He has not dissociated Himself from Baptism which is the blessed symbol in which His death, burial and Resurrection are clearly set forth.

He has not separated Himself from that other ordinance in which we behold His passion and see the way in which we become partakers of it, by feeding upon His body and His blood. He has promised to be with us even to the end of the world in the keeping of those Divine memorials of His Incarnation and Atonement, His life and His death. And then the Lord Jesus Christ is with the assembly by His Spirit. The Spirit is His Representative, whom He has sent as the Comforter to live with us forever. You must have felt Him, sometimes, convincing you of sin, humbling you and bowing you down—then cheering you, comforting you, enlightening you, guiding you, relieving you, sustaining you, sanctifying you! Oh, what light He brings! What life He brings! What love He brings! What joy He brings!

When the Spirit of God is in the midst of God's people, what merry days they have! What days of Heaven upon earth! Does not this fact that Christ is among His people show us that He must be Divine? How can He be everywhere in all the assemblies of His people unless He is the Omnipresent God? There may be professing Christians who feel a kind of fellowship with Socinians, but I have none. I will not call them Unitarians, for I am as truly a Unitarian, myself, as any of them can be! I no more believe in three gods than I believe in 30 gods! There is but one God to me and, therefore, I am in that sense a Unitarian—and Socinians have no right to the name merely because they deny the Godhead of our Lord Jesus. We believe Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be one God! But Jesus Christ is God and whoever casts that Truth of God away, casts away eternal life! How can he enter into Heaven if he does not know Christ as the everlasting Son of the Father? He must be God since He has promised to be in thousands of places at one time—no mere man could do that.

Next, *where is the Lord in the assembly?* He has promised to be with His people, but where is He? "There am I *in the midst of them.*" Not up in the corner, but here in the midst of them is the Lord! He is the Center to which all saints gather. He is the Sun in the heavens lighting all. He is the Heart in the midst of the body giving life to all the members. "In the midst of them." Is not this delightful? The Lord Jesus Christ does not come into the assembly of His people to bless only the minister. No, you are all equally near in proportion to the Grace of nearness you have received. He is in the midst of you! He is in the center of all hearts! Like the center of a wheel, from which all the spokes radiate, Jesus Christ is the middle of the company. Armies place the king or some great general in the heart of the host, in the place of honor and command—so, as our army marches to battle—our King is in the center. The King is in the midst of the saints in all His Glory and His Presence is their strength and their assurance of victory. Glory be to our present Lord—He is in the midst of us right now!

And if He is in the midst of His people, *what will He do?* Why, He is there to sanction every little gathering of His people—to say to the twos and threes—"You are not Dissenters, for you have met with Me. You are not Nonconformists—you are conformed to Me and I am one with you. You are the Established Church—you two or three. I have established you in My everlasting love. Those that meet in My name I have established them and I have endowed them—and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against them! I sanction your assemblies if you are My people." He is there to bless those who supplicate and adore. But, mark you, the text does not say this in so many words—and do not *you* say it, Brothers and Sisters, next time you pray. Did I not hear you say, "Lord, You have said, 'Where two or three are met together in My name, there am I in the midst of them, *and that to bless them and do them good*'"? That last little bit is your own—that addition is *not* in the Bible, for it is not the Lord's way to say what never needs be said.

What other blessing do we need than Christ in the midst of us? If He is there, the blessing is not what He gives—*He Himself is the blessing!* It is not what He *does*—it is Himself! It is not even what He says—*it is Himself.*

Oh, blessed be His name for what He gives! And blessed be His name for what He does! And blessed be His name for what He says! But still more blessed be His name because He *Himself* loved us and gave *Himself* for us—and now comes, *Himself*, into the midst of His people!

Now, dear Friends, if Christ Himself is in the midst of His people, He will bring us peace, just as He did when He dropped into the assembly of the 11, the doors being shut. He stood and said, “Peace be unto you!” And when He had said that, He showed them His hands and His side. It was Himself, His own peace and His own Person which made His disciples glad. Then He said, “As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you.” This was His own commission from His own lips to His own servants and, having said this, He breathed on them and said, “Receive you the Holy Spirit.” Thus His own breath and His own Spirit coming upon them made them strong for service—and that is what He means when He says, “I am in the midst of them.”

Does not this make our meetings delightful—Christ in the midst of us? Does not this make our meetings important? How one ought to strain a point to be there! If we have ever met with Christ, we shall not bear to be away. We shall long to meet Him again and count it a great denial if we must be absent. Does not this make our meetings influential? The gatherings of God’s people are centers of influence. When the gathering contains but two or three, if Christ is there, the eternal power and Godhead are present! And out of this Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. Where even two or three are met together and He is in the midst of them, “there breaks He the arrows of the bow, the sword, and the shield, and the battle.” He will make His power known and the glory of His Grace shall go forth out of those little companies even to the ends of the earth—

***“Where two or three, with sweet accord,
Obedient to their Sovereign Lord,
Meet to recount His acts of Grace,
And offer solemn prayer and praise,
‘There,’ says the Savior, ‘will I be,
Amid this little company—
To them unveil My smiling face,
And shed My glories round the place.”***

“Oh, but,” you say, “the pulpit is the great power of God, is it not?” I answer, it is so because of the prayers of God’s people. One may speak, but what of that, unless the rest shall *pray*? Preaching is God’s ordinance—His battle-ax and weapons of war. But, as far as the Church is concerned, the arm that wields these weapons must be the prayer of the whole body of the faithful—the gathering together of the saints in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is,” but come together as often as you have opportunity—not neglecting other duties—but balancing them, one with the other! He says, “Seek you My face.” Let your cry be, “Your face, Lord, will we seek.”

When Sir Thomas Abney was Lord Mayor of London, in the middle of the banquet which takes place on the first night, he disappeared for a quarter-of-an-hour. And when he came back, he said to the friends

around him that he had been keeping a particular engagement with a most intimate friend and so he had retired for a while. That appointment was to have family prayer with his household in the Mansion House. And that gathering for prayer he would not have given up on any account whatever. Say to all other things, "You must stand back. I have a particular appointment—I must meet the Lord Jesus Christ with two or three of His people. He says that He will be there and I should not like Him to say, 'Where is My servant? Where is My son? Where is My daughter? Are they absent when I am here?'"

It is such a blessing to get to know the Lord Jesus personally. I heard the other day of a famous infidel, an agnostic—that is, an ignoramus, a person who knows nothing—and he went to a certain house to meet an elderly lady of considerable literary renown. He was told that she believed in the Word of God and was a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus. And so he thought that he would have a word with her before he went away. "Madam," he said, "I have been astonished to hear one thing of you. I hear that you believe in the Bible." "Yes, Sir," she said, "every Word of it." "And pray, Madam," he said, "however came you to believe in that Book?"

She replied, "One of the principal reasons that I have for believing in the Book is that I am intimately acquainted with the Author of it." That was a blessed answer! Faith gets to know Christ and so, knowing Christ, and meeting Him in the midst of His people, it becomes armed against all unbelief and goes forth in its panoply conquering and to conquer. So will it be with you, Beloved, if you meet the Well-Beloved alone in your closets—and if you add to this a frequent attendance at the holy assembly. I pray you, do not let us have to complain that one of you is away! Come always. My heart will rejoice if our meetings are filled with men and women who there seek communion with Jesus! Come, for Jesus is with us! Come, for it would be most unseemly for Him to be here and you away.

I pray you come and make this house like Heaven, which is thronged with shining ones who rejoice because Jesus is in their midst! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Matthew 18*.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—168, 988, 785.**

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LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

NO. 145

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 18, 1857,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
Matthew 19:19.***

Our Savior very often preached upon the moral precepts of the Law. Many of the sermons of Christ—and what sermons shall compare with them?—have not what is now currently called “the Gospel” in them at all. Our Savior did not every time He stood up to preach declare the depravity of man or the doctrine of election, or of limited atonement, or of effectual calling, or of final perseverance. No, He just as frequently spoke upon the duties of human life and upon those precious fruits of the Spirit which are begotten in us by the grace of God.

Mark what I have just uttered. You may have started at it at first but upon diligent reading of the four Evangelists you will find I am correct in stating that very much of our Savior’s time was occupied in telling the people what they ought to do towards one another. And many of His sermons are not what our precise critics would in these times call sermons full of unction and savor. For certainly they would be far from savory to the sickly sentimental Christians who do not care about the practical parts of religion.

Beloved, it is as much the business of God’s minister to preach man’s duty as it is to preach Christ’s atonement and unless he does preach man’s duty he will never be blessed of God to bring man into the proper state to see the beauty of the atonement. Unless he sometimes thunders out the Law and claims for his Master the right of obedience to it, he will never be very likely to produce conviction—certainly not that conviction which afterwards leads to conversion.

This morning I am aware my sermon will not be very unctuous and savory to you that are always wanting the same round of doctrines—but of this I have but little care. This rough world sometimes needs to be rebuked and if we can get at the ears of the people it is our business to reprove them. I think if ever there was a time when this text needed to be enlarged upon it is just now. It is so often forgotten, so seldom remembered, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

I shall notice, first of all the *command*. Secondly, I shall try and *bring some reasons for your obedience to it*. And afterwards I shall draw *some suggestions from the Law itself*.

I. First then, THE COMMAND. It is the second great Commandment. The first is, “You shall love the Lord, your God,” and there the proper standard is, “you shall love your God *more than yourself*.” The second Commandment is, “You shall love your neighbor,” and the standard there

is a little lower but still pre-eminently high, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is the command. We can split it into three parts. *Whom am I to love?* “My neighbor.” *What am I to do?* I am to love him. *How am I to do it?* I am to love him *as myself*.

First, whom am I to love? I am to love my neighbor. By the word “neighbor” we are to understand any person who is near us. It comes from two old words, nae or near, (near) and buer, (to dwell) persons residing, or being near us and if anyone in the world is near us he is our neighbor. The Samaritan, when he saw the wounded man on the road to Jericho, felt that he was in his neighborhood and that therefore he was his neighbor and he was bound to love him. “Love your neighbor.” Perhaps he is in riches and you are poor and you live in your little cottage side-by-side with his lordly mansion.

You see his estates, you mark his fine linen and his sumptuous raiment. God has given him these gifts and if He has not given them to you, covet not his wealth and think no hard thoughts concerning him. There will ever be differences in the circumstances of man, so let it be. Be content with your own lot if you can not better it but do not look upon your neighbor and wish that he were poor as yourself. And do not aid or abet any who would rid him of his wealth to make you rich. Love him and then you can not envy him. Perhaps, on the other hand, you are rich and near you reside the poor.

Do not scorn to call them neighbors. Do not scorn to own that you are bound to love even them. The world calls them your inferiors. In what are they inferior? They are your equals really, though not so in station. “God has made of one blood all people that dwell on the face of the earth.” You are by no means better than they. They are men and what are you more than that? They may be men in rags, but men in rags are men and if you are a man arrayed in scarlet you are no more than a man. Take heed that you love your neighbor even though he is in rags and scorn him not, though sunken in the depths of poverty.

Love your neighbor, too, *albeit that is of a different religion*. You think yourself to be of that sect which is the nearest to the truth and you have hope that you and your compeers who think so well shall certainly be saved. Your neighbor thinks differently. His religion, you say, is unsound and untrue. Love him for all that. Let not your differences separate him from you. Perhaps he may be right, or he may be wrong. *He* shall be the right in practice who loves the most. Possibly he has no religion at all. He disregards your God, he breaks the Sabbath. He is confessedly an atheist—love him still. Hard words will not convert him, hard deeds will not make him a Christian. Love him straight on. His sin is not against *you* but against *your God*.

Your God takes vengeance for sins committed against Himself and you leave him in God’s hands. But if you can do him a kind turn, if you can find anything whereby you can serve him, do it—be it day or night. And if you make any distinction make it thus—“Because you are not of my religion, I will serve you the more, that you may be converted to the right. Whereas you are a heretic Samaritan and I an orthodox Jew, you are still

my neighbor and I will love you with the hope that you may give up your temple in Gerizim and come to bow in the temple of God in Jerusalem." Love your neighbor, despite differences in religion.

Love your neighbor, *although he oppose you in trade*. It will be a motto hard to introduce upon the exchange, or in trade. But nevertheless, it is one I am bound to preach to you that are merchants and tradesmen. A young man has lately started a shop which you are afraid will damage you. You must not hurt him, you must neither think nor say anything to injure him. Your business is to love him, for though he opposes you in your business, he is your neighbor. There is another one residing near you who is indebted to you. If you should take from him all that he owes you, you will ruin him. But if you let him keep your money for a little, he may weather the storm and succeed in his endeavors.

It is your business to love him as you love yourself. Let him have your money, let him try again and perhaps you shall have your own and he shall be helped, too. With whomsoever you have dealings in your business, he is your neighbor. With whomsoever you trade, be he greater or less than you, he is your neighbor and the Christian Law *commands* that you shall love your neighbor. It does not merely say that you are not to hate him but it tells you to love him. And though he should thwart your projects, though he should prevent your obtaining wealth, though he should rob you of your custom—yes, though he should obscure your fame—you are bound to love him as yourself. This Law makes no exception. Is he near you and have you any dealings with him? Thus says the Law, "You shall love him."

Again—you are bound to love your neighbor *though he offend you with his sin*. Sometimes our spirits are overwhelmed and our hearts are grieved when we see the wickedness of our streets. The common reaction with the harlot or the profligate is to drive them out of society as a curse. It is not right. It is not Christian. We are bound to love even *sinner*s and not to drive them from the land of hope but seek to reclaim even these. Is a man a rogue, a thief, or a liar? I cannot love his roguery, or I should be a rogue myself. I cannot love his lying, or I should be untrue—but I am bound to love *him* still and even though I am wronged by him—yet I must not harbor one vindictive feeling.

As I would desire God to forgive me, so I must forgive him. And if he so sins against the Law of the land that he is to be punished (and rightly so), I am to love him in the punishment. For I am not to condemn him to imprisonment vindictively but I am to do it for his good, that he may be led to repent through the punishment. I am to give him such a measure of punishment as shall be adequate, not as an atonement for his crime but to teach him the evil of it and induce him to forsake it. But let me condemn him with a tear in my eye because I love him still. And let me, when he is thrust into prison, take care that all his keepers attend to him with kindness.

And although there is a necessity for sternness and severity in prison discipline, let it not go too far, lest it merge into cruelty and become wanton instead of useful. I am bound to love him though he is sunken in vice

and degraded. The Law knows of no exception. It claims my love for him. I must love him. I am not bound to take him to my house. I am not bound to treat him as one of my family. There may be some acts of kindness which would be imprudent, seeing that by doing them I might ruin others and reward vice. I am bound to set my *face* against him as I am just but I feel I ought not to set my *heart* against him for he is my Brother.

And though the devil has besmeared his face and spits his venom in his mouth, so that when he speaks he speaks in oaths and when he walks, his feet are swift to shed blood—yet he is a man. And as a man he is my Brother and as a Brother I am bound to love him. And if by stooping I can lift him up to something like moral dignity, I am wrong if I do not do it. I am bound to love him as I love myself. Oh, I would to God that this great Law were fully carried out. Ah, my Hearers, you do not love your neighbors, you know you do not. You do not hardly love all the people who go to the same Chapel. Certainly, you would not think of loving those who differ from you in opinion—would you? That would be too strange a charity.

Why, you hardly love your own brothers and sisters. Some of you today have daggers drawn against them that hung on the same breast. Oh, how can I expect you to love your enemies if you do not love your friends? Some of you have come here angered at your parents and here is a brother who is angry with his sister for a word she said before he left home. Oh, if you cannot love your brothers and sisters you are worse than heathen men and publicans. How can I expect you to obey this high and mighty command, “Love your neighbors”? But whether you obey it or not, it is mine to preach it and not shift it to a gainsaying generation’s taste.

First, we are bound to love and honor all men, simply because they are men. And we are to love, next, all those who dwell near us, not for their goodness or serviceableness towards us but simply because the Law demands it and they are our neighbors. “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

2. But, now, what am I to do to my neighbor? *Love* him—it is a hard word—*love* him. “Well I believe,” says one, “I never speak an unkind word of any of my neighbors. I do not know that I have ever hurt a person’s reputation in my life. I am very careful to do my neighbor no damage. When I start in business I do not let my spirit of competition overthrow my spirit of charity. I try not to hurt anybody.” My dear Friend, that is right as far as it goes—but it does not go the whole way. It is not enough for you to say you do not hate your neighbor—you are to *love* him. When you see him in the street it is not sufficient that you keep out of his way and do not knock him down. It is not sufficient that you do not molest him by night, nor disturb his quiet.

It is not a negative, it is a *positive* command. It is not *the not doing*, it is the doing. You must not injure him, it is true, but you have not done all when you have not done that. You ought to love him. “Well,” says one, “When my neighbors are sick round about. If they are poor, I take a piece from the meat for dinner and send it to them, that they may have a little food and be refreshed. And if they are exceedingly poor, I lay out my money and see that they are taken care of.” Yes, but you may do this and

not love them. I have seen charity thrown to a poor man as a bone is thrown to a dog and there was no love in it. I have seen money given to those who needed it with not one-half the politeness with which hay is given to a horse.

“There it is, you want it. I suppose I must give it to you, or people will not think me liberal. Take it, I am sorry you came here. Why don’t you go to somebody else’s house? I am always having paupers hanging on me.” Oh, this is not loving our neighbor and this is not making him love us. If we had spoken a kind word to him and refused him he would have loved us better than when we gave to him in an unkind manner. No, though you feed the poor and visit the sick you have not obeyed the command. Only when your heart goes with your hand and the kindness of your life bespeaks the kindness of your soul, “You shall love your neighbor.”

And now someone may say, “Sir, I cannot love my neighbor. You may love yours, perhaps, because they may be better than mine. But mine are such an odd set of neighbors and I try to love them and for all I do they do but return insults.” So much the more room for heroism. Would you be some feather-bed warrior, instead of bearing the rough fight of love? Sir, he who dares the most—shall win the most. And if rough be your path of love, tread it boldly and still go on—loving your neighbors through thick and thin. Heap coals of fire on their heads and if they are hard to please, seek not to please *them* but to please *your Master*. And remember if they spurn your love, your Master has not spurned it and your deed is as acceptable to Him as if it had been acceptable to them. “You shall love your neighbor.”

Now if this love for our neighbor were carried out—love, real love—it would prohibit all *rash anger*. Who is ever angry with himself? I suppose all wise men are now and then and I suspect we should not be righteous if we were not sometimes angry. A man who is never angry is not worth a button. He cannot be a good man who will often see things so bad that he must be angry at them. But, remember, you have no right to be more angry with your neighbor than you are with yourself. You are sometimes vexed with yourself and you may sometimes be vexed with him if he has done wrong.

But your anger towards yourself is very short-lived—you soon forgive your own dear self. Well, you are bound just as soon to forgive him and though you speak a rough word, if it is too rough, withdraw it and if it is but rough enough, do not add more to it to make it too much so. State the truth if you are obliged to do it, as kindly as you can. Be no more stern than there is need to be. Deal with others as you would deal with yourself. Above all, harbor no revenge. Never let the sun set on your anger—it is impossible to love your neighbor if you do that.

Revenge renders obedience to this command entirely out of the question. You are bound to love your neighbor—then *do not neglect him*. He may be sick, he may live very near to your house and he will not send for you to call on him. He says, “No, I do not like to trouble him.” Remember, it is your business to find him out. The most worthy of all poverty is that which never asks for pity. See where your neighbors are in need. Do not

wait to be told of it but find it out yourself and give them some help. Do not neglect them. And when you go, go not with the haughty pride which charity often assumes. Go not as some superior being about to bestow a benefaction.

But go to your Brother as if you were about to pay him a debt which nature makes his due and sit by his side and talk to him. And if he is one that has a high spirit, give him not your charity as a charity. Give it to him in some other way, lest you break his head with the very box of ointment with which you had intended to have anointed him. Be very careful how you speak to him—break not his spirit. Leave your charity behind you and he shall forget that—but he will remember well your kindness towards him in your speech.

Love to our neighbors puts aside every sin that is akin to covetousness and envy and it makes us at all times ready to serve, ready to be their footstool, if so it must be, that we may be so proved to be the children of Christ. “Well,” says one, “I cannot see that I am always to forgive. You know a worm will turn if it is trod upon.” And is a worm to be your example? A worm will turn but a Christian will not. I think it foul scorn to take a worm for my example, when I have got Christ. Christ did not turn—when He was reviled, He reviled not again. When they crucified Him and nailed Him to the tree, He cried, “Father, forgive them.” Let love, unconquerable love, dwell in your bosom. Love which many waters cannot quench, love which the floods cannot drown. Love your neighbors.

3. And now we have done with this command when we have noticed *how we are to love our neighbor*. It would be a good thing if some ladies loved their neighbors as much as they loved their lap-dogs. It would be a fine thing for many a country squire if he loved his neighbors as much as he loved his pack of hounds. I think it might be a high pitch of virtue if some of you were to love your neighbors as much as you love some favorite animal in your house. What an inferior grade of virtue, however, that appears to be! And yet it were something far superior to what some of you have attained to.

You do not love your neighbor as you love your house, your estate, or your purse. How high then is, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” the Gospel *standard*? How much does a man love himself? None of us too little, some of us too much. You may love yourself as much as you please but take care that you love your neighbor as much. I am certain you need no exhortation to love yourself. Your own case will be well seen to, your own comfort will be a very primary theme of your anxiety. You will line your own nest well with downy feathers if you can. There is no need to exhort you to love yourself. You will do that well enough. Well, then, as much as you love yourself, love your neighbor. And mark, by this is meant—your enemy—the man who opposes you in trade and the man of another class. You ought to love him as you love yourself.

Oh, it would turn the world upside down, indeed, if this were practiced. A fine lever this would be for upsetting many things that have now become the custom of the land. In England we have a caste almost as strong as in Hindustan. My Lord will not speak to anyone who is a little beneath

himself in dignity. And he who has the next degree of dignity thinks the tradesman infinitely below him. And he who is a tradesman thinks a mechanic scarcely worth his notice. The mechanics according to their grades have their castes and classes, too. Oh, for the day when these shall be broken down! When the impulse of the one blood shall be felt and when as one family each shall love the other and feel that one class depends upon the other!

It were well if each would strive to help and love the other as he ought. My fine lady, in your silks and satins, you have gone to Church many a day and sat side by side with a poor old woman in her red cloak who is as good a saint as you could be. But do you ever speak to her? Never in your life! You would not speak to her, poor soul, because you happen to be worth more hundreds of pounds a year than she is shillings. There are you, Sir John, you come to your place and you expect everyone to be eminently respectful to you, as indeed, they ought to be, for we are all honorable men and the same text that says, "Honor the king," says also, "Honor all men."

And so we are bound to honor everyone of them. But you think that you, above all men, are to be worshipped. You do not condescend to men of mean estate. My dear Sir, you would be a greater man by one-half if you were not to appear so great. Oh, I say again, blessed be Christ, blessed be His Father for this Commandment and blessed be the world when the Commandment shall be obeyed and we shall love our neighbors as ourselves!

II. And now I shall have to give REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD OBEY THIS COMMAND.

The best reason in all the world is that with which we will begin. We are bound to love our neighbors because *God commands it*. To the Christian there is no argument so potent as God's will. God's will is the Believer's Law. He does not ask what shall it profit him, what shall be the good effect of it upon others but he simply says, does my Father say it? Oh, Holy Spirit, help me to obey not because I may see how it shall be always good for me but simply because You command. It is the Christian's privilege to do God's Commandments, "hearkening to the voice of His Word." But some other reason may prevail more with others of you who are not Christians.

Let me remark, then, *that selfishness itself would bid you love your neighbors*. Oh, strange that selfishness should preach a suicidal sermon but yet if self could speak, it might if it were wise, deliver an oration like this. "Self, love your neighbor, for then your neighbor will love you. Self, help your neighbor, for then your neighbor will help you. Make to yourself, O Self, friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you need help they may receive you into abiding habitations. Self, you want ease—make yourself easy by treating everybody well. Self, you want pleasure—you can get no pleasure if those around you hate you. Make them love you, dear Self—and so shall you bless yourself." Yes, even if you are selfish, I would you were so pre-eminently selfish and so wisely selfish that you would love others to make yourselves happy.

The shortcut to be happy yourself is to try to make others happy. The world is bad enough but it is not so bad as not to feel the power of kindness. Treat servants well. There are some of them that you can't mend at all but treat them well and as a rule they will treat you well. Treat your masters well. Some of them are gruff and bad enough but as a class they know good servants and they will treat you well. There, now, if I would wish to be happy, I would not ask to have the wealth of this world nor the things that men call comforts. The best comforts that I should desire would be loving ones round about me and a sense that where I went I scattered happiness and made men glad. That is the way to be happy and selfishness itself might say, "Love your neighbor," for in so doing you do love yourself. For there is such a connection between him and you that in loving him the stream of your love returns into your own heart again.

But I shall not assail you with such a paltry motive as that. It is too poor for a Christian. It should be too base even for a man. Love your neighbor in the next place, *because that will be the way to do good in the world*. You are philanthropists. Some of you subscribe to missionary societies. You subscribe to the society for orphans and other charitable projects. I am persuaded that these institutions, though they are excellent and good things, are in some respects a loss. For now a man gives to a society one-tenth of what he would have given himself and where an orphan would have been kept by a single family, ten families join together to keep that orphan and so there is about one-tenth of the charity.

I think the man who has the time is bound to give nothing at all to societies but to give himself. Be your own society. If there is a society for the sick, if you have enough money, be your own sick society. If you have the time, go and visit the sick yourself. You will know the money is well spent then and you will spare the expense of a secretary. There is a society for finding soup for the poor. Make your own soup. Give it yourself and if everyone who gives his half-a-crown to the society would just spend half-a-sovereign to give the soup away himself, there would be more done. Societies are good. God forbid that I should speak against them. Do all you can for them—but still I am afraid that they sometimes thwart *individual effort* and I know they rob us of a part of the pleasure which we should have in our own charity—the pleasure of seeing the gleaming eye and of hearing the grateful word when we have been our own social worker.

Dear Friends, remember that man's good requires that you should be kind to your fellow creatures. The best way for you to make the world better is to be kind yourself. Are you a preacher? Preach in a surly way and in a surly tone to your Church, a pretty Church you will make of it before long! Are you a Sunday-School teacher? Teach your children with a frown on your face, a fine lot they will learn! Are you a master? Do you hold family prayer? Get in a passion with your servants and say, "Let us pray." A vast amount of devotion you will develop in such a manner as that! Are you a warden of a jail and have prisoners under you? Abuse them and ill-treat them and then send the chaplain to them. A fine preparation for the reception of the Word of God!

You have poor around you—you say you wish to see them elevated. You are always grumbling about the poverty of their dwellings and the meanness of their tastes. Go and make a great stir at them all—a fine way that would be to improve them! Now, just wash your face of that black frown and buy a little of the essence of summer somewhere and put it on your face and have a smile on your lip and say, “I love you. I am no cant but I love you and as far as I can I will prove my love to you. What can I do for you? Can I help you over a stile? Can I give you any assistance, or speak a kind word to you? Methinks I could see after your little daughter. Can I fetch the doctor for your wife now she is ill?”

All these kind things would be making the world a little better. Your jails and gallows and all that never made the world better yet. You may hang men as long as you like. You will never stop murder. Hang us all, we should not be much the better for it. There is no necessity for hanging any—it will never improve the world. Deal gently, deal kindly, deal lovingly and there is not a wolf in human shape but will be melted by kindness. And there is not a tiger in woman’s form but will break down and sue for pardon if God should bless the love that is brought to bear upon her by her friend. I say again, for the world’s good, love your neighbors.

And now, once more, love your neighbor, *for there is a great deal of misery in the world that you do not know of*. We have often spoken hard words to poor miserable souls. We did not know their misery but we should have known it, we should have found it out. Shall I tell you, my Friend landlord, you went yesterday to get a warrant against a poor woman that has got three children. Her husband died a long while ago. She was three weeks late in her rent. The last time, to pay you, she sold off her late husband’s watch and her own wedding ring. It was all that she had that was dear to her and she paid you. And you went to her the next week and she begged a little patience and you think yourself highly exemplary because you had that little patience.

“The woman,” you have said, “I dare say, is good for nothing. And if not, it is no particular business of mine whether she has got three children, or none—rent is rent. And business is business.” Out she goes directly. Oh, if you could have seen that woman’s heart when she stood penniless and houseless and knew not where to send the children for the night, you would have said, “Never mind, my good woman, stay there. I cannot turn a widow out of house and home.” You did not do it yourself, did you? No but you sent your agent to do it and the sin lay on you just as much for all that. You had no right to do it. You had a right in the eye of man’s Law. But God’s Law says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

A young man called upon you a little time ago. He said, “Sir, you know my little business. I have been struggling very hard and you have kindly let me have some things on credit. But through the pressure of the times, I don’t know how it is, I seem to be very hard up. I think, Sir, if I could weather the next month I might be able to get on well. I have every prospect of having a trade, yet if I could but have a little more credit, if you could possibly allow it.” “Young man,” you have said, “I have had a great

many bad debts lately. Besides you do not bring me any good security. I cannot trust you.”

The young man bowed and left you. You did not know how he bowed in spirit as well as in body. That young man had a poor old mother and two sisters in the house and he had tried to establish a little business that he might earn bread and cheese for them as well as for himself. For the last month they have eaten scarcely anything but bread and butter and the weakest tea has been their drink and he has been striving hard. But someone poorer than he seemed to be, did not pay him the little debt that was due to him, and he could not pay you. And if you had helped him, it might have been all well with him. And now what to do he cannot tell.

His heart is broken, his soul is swollen within him. That aged mother of his and those girls, what shall become of them? You did not know his agony, or else you would have helped him. But you ought to have known. You never should have dismissed his case until you had known a little more about him. It would not be business-like, would it? No, Sir, to be business-like is sometimes to be devil-like. But I would not have you business-like when it is so. Away with your business! Be Christian-like. If you are professors, seek to serve God in obeying His command—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

“No,” says another, “but I am always very kind to the poor.” There is a lady here who has got a tolerable share of money to spare and to her, money is about as common as pins. And she goes to see the poor. And when she gets in, they set her a chair and she sits down and begins to talk to them about economy and gives them a tolerably good lecture on that. The poor souls wonder how they are to economize any more than they do—they eat nothing but bread and they cannot see that they can get anything much cheaper. Then she begins to exhort them about cleanliness and makes about fifty impertinent remarks about the children’s clothes.

“Now,” says she, “my good woman, before I leave you I will give you this tract. It is about drunkenness. Perhaps you will give it to your husband.” If she does he will beat her, you may depend upon it. “Come now,” she says, “here is a shilling for you.” And now, My Lady thinks, “I love my neighbor.” Did you shake hands with her? “No, Sir.” Did you speak lovingly to her? “Of course not. She is an inferior.” Then you did not obey this command, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Shall I tell you what happened after you left? That woman as soon as ever you were gone began to cry. She started off to the minister for consolation. She said to him, “Do you know, Sir, I am very thankful to God that I have had a little relief given me this morning but my spirit was almost broken. Do you know, Sir, we used to be in better circumstances.

“This morning Mrs. So-and-So came and talked to me in such a way as if I had been a dog. Or as if I had been a child and though she gave me a shilling I did not know what to do. I wanted the shilling bad enough, or else I really think I should have thrown it after her. She did talk in such a way I could not bear it. Now, if you come to see me, Sir, I know you will speak kindly to me and if you give me nothing you will not abuse me and

find fault with me. Oh,” she said, my heart is broken within me, I cannot bear this, for we have seen better days and we have been used to different treatment than this.”

Now, My Lady, you did *not* love her. Your shilling, what was the good of it if you did not put a little love on it? You might have made it as good as a golden sovereign if you had spread a little love upon it. She would have thought far more of it. “Love your neighbors.” Oh! would to God that I could always practice it myself and would that I could impress it into everyone of your hearts. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.

And now the last argument I shall use is one especially appropriate to the Christian. Christian, your religion claims your love—Christ loved you before you loved Him. He loved you when there was nothing good in you. He loved you though you insulted Him, though you despised Him and rebelled against Him. He has loved you right on and never ceased to love you. He has loved you in your backslidings and loved you out of them. He has loved you in your sins, in your wickedness and folly. His loving heart was still eternally the same and He shed His heart’s blood to prove His love for you. He has given you what you want on earth and provided for you an habitation in Heaven.

Now Christian, your religion claims from you that you should love as your Master loved. How can you imitate Him, unless you love, too? We will leave to the Mohammedans, to the Jew and to the infidel, cold-heartedness and unkindness—it were more in keeping with their views. But with you unkindness is a strange anomaly. It is a gross contradiction to the spirit of your religion and if you love not your neighbor, I see not how you can be a true follower of the Lord Jesus.

And now I conclude with just a weighty suggestion or two and I will not weary you. My text suggests first, *the guilt of us all*. My Friends, if this is God’s Law, who here can plead that he is not guilty? If God’s Law demands I should love my neighbor, I must stand in my pulpit and confess my guilt. In thinking of this text yesterday, my eyes ran with tears at the recollection of many a hard thing I had spoken in unwary moments. I thought of many an opportunity of loving my neighbor that I had slighted and I labored to confess the sin. I am certain there is not one of all this immense audience who would not do the same if he felt this Law applied by the Spirit in power to his soul.

Oh, are we not guilty? Kindest of spirits, most benevolent of souls, are you not guilty? Will you not confess it? And then that suggests this remark. If no man can be saved by his works unless he keeps this Law perfectly, who can be saved by his works? Have any of you loved your neighbor all your life with all your heart? Then shall you be saved by your own deeds if you have not broken any other commandment. But if you have not done it and you cannot do it, then hear the sentence of the Law—you have sinned and you shall perish for your sin. Hope not to be saved by the mandate of the Law.

And oh, how this endears the Gospel to me! If I have broken this Law and I have—and if I cannot enter Heaven with this Law broken, precious is the Savior who can wash me from all my sins in His blood! Precious is

He that can forgive my want of charity and pardon my want of kindness—can forgive my roughness and my rudeness, can put away all my harsh speaking, my bigotry and unkindness and can through His all-atoning sacrifice give me a seat in Heaven, notwithstanding all my sins! You are sinners this morning—you must feel it—my sermon, if blessed of God, must convince you all of guilt. Well, then, as sinners, let me preach to you the Gospel. “Whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus shall be saved.”

Though we have broken this Law, God shall forgive us and put a new heart and a right spirit into our bosom—whereby we shall be enabled to keep the Law in the future—at least to an eminent degree and shall, by-and-by, attain to a crown of life in glory everlasting.

Now, I do not know whether I have been personal to anyone this morning. I sincerely hope I have. I *meant* to be. I know there are a great many characters in the world that must have a cap made exactly to fit them or else they will never wear it. I have tried as near as I could to do it. If you will not say, “How well that applied to my neighbor,” but just for *once* say, “How well it applied to *me*,” I shall hope that there will be some good follow from this exhortation. And though the Antinomian may turn away and say, “Ah, it was only a legal sermon,” my love to that precious Antinomian. I do not care about his opinion.

My Savior preached like that and I shall do the same. I believe it is right that Christians should be told what they should do and that worldlings should know what Christianity will lead us to do. So that the highest standard of love, of kindness and of Law should be uplifted in the world and kept constantly before the people’s eyes.

May God bless you and be with you, for Jesus’ sake!

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THE FIRST, LAST—AND THE LAST, FIRST NO. 2221

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 13, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 12, 1891.

*“But many who are first will be last, and the last, first.”
Matthew 19:30.*

*“So the last will be first, and the first, last.”
Matthew 20:16.*

We must be saved if we would serve the Lord. We cannot serve God in an unsaved condition. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” It is vain for them to attempt service while they are still at enmity against God. The Lord wants not enemies to wait upon Him, nor slaves to grace His Throne. We must first be saved—and salvation is all of Grace. “By Grace are you saved through faith.” After we are saved and as the *result* of salvation, we serve. Saved—we serve! He that is saved becomes a child of God and *then* he renders a child-like service in his Father’s house. That service is also all of Grace! He serves not under the Law of the old commandment, “This do, and you shall live,” for he is not under the Law, but under Grace. Therefore, sin shall not have dominion over him, but Grace shall have dominion over him—and he shall seek to serve the Lord and please Him all the days of his life. When we are saved, we must never forget that we are saved that we may *serve*—made free from sin, that we may become servants of God. David says, “O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds.” Because our bonds are loosed, we are under new bonds, bonds of *love* which bind us to the service of the Most High.

Now, when we come thus to be servants, we must not forget that we are saved men and women, for if we begin to fancy that while we serve, we are working to *win life by our merits*, we shall get upon legal ground. And a child of God on legal ground is going backwards—he is departing from his true standing before God. But remember, “You are not under the Law, but under Grace.” But if you begin to forget your indebtedness to your Savior, not only for eternal life, but for everything you are, have and do, you will be like the Galatians who began in the Spirit, but sought to be made perfect by the flesh. You will be like the young man whose question we have just read—“What do I lack?” You will be like Peter, who puts in a sort of claim for reward—“Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed You; what shall we have therefore?” You will be like the men who had worked in the

vineyard from early morning and who murmured because the penny was given to those who had only worked for a single hour.

Christ will not have His servants under bondage to a legal spirit! Wherever He spies it out, He strikes it on the head, for both the service and the reward are all of Grace. The service, itself, is given us of God and God rewards the service which He, Himself, has given! We might almost speak of this as an eccentricity of Grace. God gives us good works and then rewards us for the works which He, Himself, has given! So all is of Grace from first to last and must never be viewed with a legal eye. Into this subject I want, on this occasion, to conduct you.

I dare say that you have heard sermons from this text, but probably not preached from it in its connection. I like to take the text as it stands and get from it a bit of exposition for my own heart, which I may pass on to you, for, remember, although the text away from its connection may be true, yet it is not the truth which God there intended to teach us and it becomes us to look about us to see what comes *before* the text and what comes *after*, in order that we may catch the exact meaning of the Holy Spirit in giving the words.

I. I shall begin by dwelling upon this remark—IN THE SERVICE OF OUR LORD FREE GRACE IS MANIFESTED. It may not strike you as being upon the surface of the text, but it lies on the very surface of the whole connection—in the service of our Lord, Free Grace is manifested. Think that over.

It must be so, in the first place, because, although it is rewarded, *all our service is already due to God*. Under the Law of God we are bound to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. There can be nothing beyond that. All that we can do, we are already bound to do under the Law. Works of supererogation must be impossible, since the Law comprehends all holiness and condemns every form of sin. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants—we have done no more than it was our duty to do. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, if there is a service to which we are called, and for which a reward is promised, it must be a service of Grace. It cannot be any other. Under the Gospel, the same thing is true—all that we can do is *already* due. “You are not your own; for you are bought with a price.” There is no faculty, there is no capacity, there is no *possibility* of your nature which is not redeemed and which does not belong to Christ by virtue of the ransom price which He has paid for it!

You will gladly and gratefully acknowledge the obligation to do all that lies in you for Him who loved you and bought you with His precious blood—

**“Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow.”**

surely they are all already due to my Lord in repentance and gratitude! All the zeal of missionaries, all the patience of martyrs, all the faith of confessors, all the holiness of godly men is Christ’s by right and, therefore, there can be no reward for them, seeing that they are already His due! If there is a service for which a reward is given to us, it is a service granted to us of Grace, that we may receive Grace thereby.

But, next, there is this reflection—*all our services is in itself unacceptable*. When all comes to all, it is still, in and of itself, a thing so mean and poor, so imperfect and defiled, that it could not claim any reward! Job was made to feel this in the day of his humiliation. He said, “If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life.” If it were possible for us to stand before God in any merit of our own, we feel so certain that we have come short of the Glory of God and that in many things we have offended, that we would tear off our righteousness from us and throw it away as filthy rags, even the best of it! “I count all things but loss,” says Paul, “that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith.” If, then, we are so conscious of our failures, shortcomings, and transgressions—and if we have to cry for mercy even on our holy things and to confess sin in them—how can we suppose that any reward that may be given can be otherwise than of Grace, seeing that the whole service, itself, must be of Grace?

Think again. *The ability to serve God is the gift of God’s Grace*. I refer not only to *mental* ability, but to the capacity which men of substance have to help the cause of God by their generous gifts. It is God who gives the power to get wealth, as it is He who gives the brain to think and the mouth to speak. “What have you that you did not receive?” If any here present are serving God with gifts and graces, I am sure that they must acknowledge that those were *given* to them. They did not win them themselves. Or, if some of them are acquirements, yet the power to acquire was given them of Him from whom comes every good gift and every perfect gift. Thus the *ability* to serve God is the gift of Grace!

Beloved, *the call to serve God in any special way is also of Grace*. If we are called to the ministry, remember how Paul puts it—“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” If our kings put upon their coins, “*Dei gratia*”—kings, by the Grace of God—well, well, let them say so—but we can put it on our *lives*. “Sunday school teachers, by the Grace of God.” “Street preachers, by the Grace of God.” “Students in the College, by the Grace of God.” “Preachers of the Gospel, by the Grace of God.” It is God who calls us to our several sacred employments! Our ordination, if it is an ordination at all, is from that great Shepherd and Bishop of souls who went up into a mountain and called unto Him whom He would and made them to be His first messengers. Before He left them, He gave them that great commission which is still binding upon all His followers, “Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

It is of Grace that we are put into any sphere of service! And what a Grace it is to be permitted to do anything for Him! His shoelaces we are not worthy to unloose! His shoes we are not worthy to bear. Though it is a menial’s work, it is a monarch’s work to do anything for Christ! Blessed be His name if He will let me be *anywhere* in His service, though it were but as a dishwasher in the kitchen! The kitchen is in the palace and Christ’s kitchen maids are maids of honor! He that serves God, reigns. To serve

Him on earth is to be glorified! To serve Him in Heaven will be a part of our endless glory. Surely this, then, is by Grace!

Still further, *every opportunity of serving God is a gift of Grace*. I am sure that when I have been shut out from the pulpit by sickness, I have thought it a great Grace from God to be permitted to creep into the pulpit once more. When one's hand has been unable to hold a pen, we count it a Grace to be able to write, again, some loving words that may be blessed to men. I think that it is God's Grace that puts people in your way to whom you may speak privately. It is God's Grace that brings those children to the Sunday school to you, that you may teach them. If we were wide awake, we should see, all day long, opportunities of usefulness—and we should be saying, "Blessed be God who puts me, by Providence, where I can be of some little service to Him and bring forth some fruit to His praise!" It is all of Grace! These Providential openings and the spirit and the power to avail ourselves of them, come as gifts from God!

Another thing I know—when you have the call to a work and the opportunity, still *it is a gift of Grace to be in a right state of mind to do your Lord's service*. Do you ever feel sluggish and dull? Would you not always be so if His Spirit did not quicken you? Are you not sometimes frostbitten so that your soul seems like a great iceberg? Would the waters ever flow unless the Spirit came with melting power? Do you not thank God, dear Brother, that you have had gracious occasions in which the Lord has made you like Naphtali, "a hind let loose"? When you have given forth goodly words, from whom has come the unction? Where did the power come from? You have spoken—ah, that is a poor thing! But *God* has spoken *through* you—ah, that is a *grand* thing! Is not that wholly the work of Grace? Every tear of sympathy that the preacher sheds when he is wooing men to Christ. Every heartthrob and all the anguish of his soul when he would gladly compel them to come in—the whole bearing and carriage of a Grace-taught minister or teacher—all this is of Grace and unto God must be the Glory for it. It is not under Law that we are working, for the Law of God provides no strength, no tone, no savor. It is Grace that makes us work, for it gives us the strength with which to work. "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God. Also unto You, O Lord, belongs mercy: for You render to every man according to his work." You give him strength proportioned to his need and the guidance necessary because of the difficulties of his task. Here is Grace! Is it not so?

You will be sure to join with me in the next point without a single objection—*success in holy service is wholly of the Lord*. If we were so wicked as to attribute to ourselves the sowing, and to ourselves the watering, apart from Grace, yet we would not dare to attribute to ourselves the increase! "I have planted," said Paul. "Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Would a single persuasion of ours prevail with man's hard heart if the Holy Spirit did not convince him of sin and make him repent? Would the preaching of the Gospel in our poor way ever enlighten a single eye if Jesus Christ were not seen in His own light? Could we comfort the broken-hearted, could we proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound if the Spirit of God were not upon us?

Why, if we did make the proclamation, would it not fall flat to the ground, apart from the work of God, who does all things through us and by us?

We are laborers together with Him. We lift our hand and God lifts His. We speak and He speaks. We would gladly lay hold of men's hearts, but He *does* lay hold of them! We would weep them to Christ, but He brings them weeping to Christ and saves them to eternal life! Blessed be His name! After many years of prophesying in His name, dare any of us say that we have made the dry bones to live? After having long given the invitation, do we say that we have persuaded one to come to the wedding feast apart from the Lord's Divine working? Do we take *any* of the glory of a saved soul to ourselves? It were treason! It were blasphemy! We dare not commit such a sin. Our work, if it succeeds at all—if it is worth calling a *good* work—is all of Grace!

And if, my dear Friends, any of you are called to suffer for Christ's sake, *the honor of suffering is a special gift*. If you have been reviled, if you have lost position, if you have suffered those moderate martyrdoms which are possible in a free country like this, then, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you." But take no credit to yourself. You are elevated to the peerage of suffering—it is your King who brought you there. You have His gracious permission to pass through great tribulation. That were nothing to you if you had not washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

You owe your patience, your courage, your steadfastness, *your all* to the Spirit of God. You would have long since been carried away by the fear of man, which brings a snare—you would have long since been a traitor to the Truth of God and to your Lord if He had left you. It is your duty to be faithful. When you are faithful, it is not in yourself that you are so. He works all our works in us and He must have the praise of them. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Work it out to the very fullest! Be thorough with it. "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." God will reward you, but your steadfastness, your diligence, your patience—all these are the work of the Grace of God and you know it! If you, indeed, possess them, you ascribe them all to Him.

Now, then, we have established this, I think, beyond all contradiction among spiritual men—that in the service of the Lord, Free Grace is magnified.

II. So we take another step and we say, as our second head, **THEREFORE THE LORD HAS HIS OWN WAY OF MEASURING WHAT WE DO.** You see that in the case of these persons who had toiled in the vineyard, their master measured their work after his own fashion. He did not go by the regular way of pay as so much an hour, but, inasmuch as it was all of Grace, this great householder made the reward to be after his own measure—a penny for one hour and a penny for 12 hours! He made the last equal to the first! So shall it be—"The last will be first, and the first, last." This is because we are dealing here, not with a legal paymaster, but with

a God of Grace who measures our service, which itself is all of Grace, by His own measurement, and not by ours.

He will reward every worker, but not as we judge. He will do no man any injustice, even in the Omnipotence of His Grace. He will be able to say to every worker, “Friend, I do you no wrong.” He will do no wrong to any of His servants, whoever they may be, rest sure of that, but still He will reply, “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?” And He will reward His workers in His own royal, yet gracious way.

So, then, *He will not reward us as according to the time spent, or surface covered.* Some may be Christians for 30 or 40 years and may never be among the first. It is not the length of your service, good as that is, that will be God’s gain! There may be some who shall come to Christ and go home to Heaven in a single year and yet shall bring great honor to their Master. It is not the length of time in which you are engaged in the lord’s service. Neither is it the space that is apparently covered. Some seem to do a great deal, skimming over a wide surface, but it is not this that the Master measures—neither by the hour, nor yet by the acre. That might be a loyal way of measurement, but His gracious way of measurement is not so.

And *He will not measure out the reward according to our ability*, whether it is mental ability, ability of substance, or ability of opportunity, for some of us might come in for a large share and others might come in for a very little if this were the rule. But this is not the way the Master measures! If to one man He gives the gift of speech, to another the great gift of diving deeply into the meaning of His Words, to another experience and so on, yet the reward to the persons holding these various gifts will not be in proportion to the gifts they have, but after quite another rule.

The reward will not be according to the judgement of men. A Brother has served God in his way, and his brethren think much of him and appoint him to an office. He is a deacon, or an elder, or, perhaps, he becomes a pastor. It is a high reward to be allowed thus to increase our opportunities of usefulness, but we shall not, at last, be rewarded according to the height of office. That is not the standard in this Kingdom where Christ rules.

Above all, *no man shall be measured by his own judgement*, otherwise I know some friends who would have a very grand reward. They are free from sin! They are perfect, they say, but their Master knows, if they do not, whether that is true or not. Another says, “I have done this and I have done that.” But it is not what you *say* that you have done, that will gauge your Master’s reward to you. There are some that speak very loudly of what they have accomplished. I do not think that their brethren, for the most part, think the more of them for thinking so much of themselves. I believe that those who have lower opinions of their own capacity and usefulness are much more honored in the presence of the saints of God. No, our self-judgment, our tall talk, our loud profession and so forth, will not be the measure with which we shall be rewarded, otherwise those who said, “We have borne the burden and heat of the day,” would have had two-pence, at least, if not three-pence, or, perhaps, even a shilling in pro-

portion to those poor creatures whom the master made equal to them, though they had only come in at the 11th hour!

Our reward will not be according to the impression made among men. We may have made our mark upon our age, neighborhood and surroundings. Some men's names will go down to posterity. Others have no fame at all. It will be found of some men that their lives are written and emblazoned everywhere. Others will live in the little circle of their family, but not beyond that narrow range. But God will not measure so. The godly housewife, with four or five children trained for God in her cottage, may be reckoned of God among the first. And the able speaker in his pulpit, who has thousands hanging on his lips, may be reckoned of God among the last. God has His own ways of measuring up men's works.

But let me add that *we shall not be rewarded even according to our success.* To some men, success is meted out in large measure—that success which really is not their own, but is the fruit of other men's labors. A man preaches the Gospel with many tears for years and sees little fruit. He dies. Another man, of earnest spirit, follows him and gathers in the old man's sheaves. The former man planted; the other man entered into his labors. To whom shall the reward be given? The success is not due to him who seems to have achieved it. You remember that old Romish legend which contains a great truth? There was a brother who preached very mightily and who had won many souls to Christ and it was revealed to him, one night, in a dream, that in Heaven he would have no reward for all that he had done. He asked to whom the reward would go and an angel told him that it would go to an old man who used to sit on the pulpit stairs and pray for him. Well, it may be so, though it is more likely that both would share their Master's praise. We shall not be rewarded, however, simply according to our apparent success.

Neither shall we be put down as one of the last because of no success. God intends that some men shall never succeed, according to the rule of success that appertains among men, for He sent even His servant Isaiah to go and make the people's hearts hard and their ears dull of hearing! And He sent Jeremiah to weep over a nation to whom his tears brought no repentance and no reformation! He may send you, like Noah, to preach for 120 years and never get a soul beside your own family into the ark! But if you are faithful, that is well pleasing in His sight. Here lies the good pleasure of God. I do not suppose that it will happen that you are to do all the plowing and all the sowing and there should never be an armful of sheaves for you in all your life—though, if it should be thus, and you shall have been, at the last, found faithful to the commission that your God has given you, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward! But the reward is not measured out according to *man's* rule of success.

Let me tell you what I think is a rule with God. It is a many-branched kind of rule. Some men stand first because of their strong *desire*. Oh, they would have saved the people if they could! They would have persuaded men to be Christians if they could. They would have laid down their lives to do it! They preached their very hearts out in their desire for their Hearers' salvation. Their souls ran over at their lips while they talked with

men. God knows their desires and He takes the will for the deed and, “so the last will be first.”

God also measures *proportions*. The Brother never had more than one talent, but he did as much with it as some with ten, yet it did not seem to come to much in his eyes. He was always mourning because he was so little. He thought that he was like one of those coral insects at the bottom of the sea, just making a little bit of coral which never came above the waves—but it was part of a great whole that would afterwards rise into a fairy island of the sea! Our Lord will measure, not according to what a man has *not*, but according to what a man *has*.

And here is one who has little to commend him except his *spirit*. He waits upon God. He is very gracious. He trembles at God’s Word. He speaks with His whole heart very reverently, very tenderly, desiring always to be silent if God would have him silent, and only to speak when God would move him to speak. His delight is to do the Lord’s will and nothing but the Lord’s will—and he is quite content to be *nothing*. Indeed, he cries for that—

**“Oh to be nothing, nothing,
Only to lie at His feet.”**

Now, God may put that man among the first, whereas the self-contained man, who works sincerely for God, may, nevertheless, have to go into the back rank and be among the last.

Here is one, again, who, whatever he does, does it with thoroughness. He does not attempt many things, but he does one thing. It is all that he can do and he throws his whole soul into it and works at it like some Eastern artist working at a cameo for a prince. All his life is put into that little bit of a thing and, it may be, that our great King will count him first, while another who did much in a slovenly, slurring style and was thought to have done a great deal, will have all his work rejected, for it is not up to the Prince’s mark and He will not adorn His palace therewith.

I think, dear Friends, that God will measure our work very much by our *thought of Him* in it. If we did it all *to Him*. If we did it all *for Him*. If He was always in our mind in the doing of it and we did not think of our friends, nor of our own reputation, God would be more likely to honor us, for He will put those who think much of Him among the first, and others among the last. “Them that honor Me,” says the Lord, “I will honor.”

And especially, again, if all that we do is baptized with *love*. Why, see that woman who brought her alabaster box, and broke it, and poured the precious ointment of spikenard upon Christ’s head! She is put among the first and Christ makes honorable mention of her wherever the Gospel is preached! Some that did much have to go among the last, for they had not such love as she had.

Some work for God with great *faith*—and the Lord loves to see us working in faith. To do a great deal of work with a great deal of unbelief is to do very little, after all, for if a prayer that is unbelieving does not prosper, preaching or teaching that is unbelieving is not likely to do so. Put faith into your work and, maybe, you will be among the first.

I am sure that God measures much of our work according to the *prayer* we expend over it. Oh, yes, it was a fine sermon! You could tell how

the preacher had worked at it—you could see how he had polished up that phrase and how he had cut that sentence into dice-pieces to make it sound great—but you could also see that he had never prayed over it. A sermon that is prayed over is worth 10,000 that are merely prepared, or copied, or that spring out of a man's mind without being worked by the Holy Spirit in his heart. Oh, to pray down the sermon and then to pray up the sermon and pray it all over, resting upon God, alone!

God will often look upon our work in *giving*, not according to how much we give, but I think that the Lord's rule is to take notice of *how much we have left*. That woman who gave all her living, gave more than all the rich men gave, because she had nothing left. It was but two mites that make a farthing, but then it was all her living and so she goes into the front rank! My lord has given a thousand pounds and we are very much obliged to him. He must go into the back rank, for all that, for he has so much left.

And then, it may be, that they will take the first place *who did not get any reward* for what they did. Our Lord tells us that when we are making a feast, we should call in the blind, and the halt, and the lame. Why? "For," He says, "they cannot recompense you." He speaks of the Pharisees, again, and says, "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." You will not be paid twice! If you have done something for Christ—for instance, defended the faith—and you are denounced for it and traduced for it, very well, you have not had your pay for it. There remains the recompense for unrewarded services. It is a grand thing when, by the Grace of God, you have something standing in God's Book, not of law, but of Grace! You helped a poor man and he was not grateful. Oh, be so thankful that he was not grateful, because if he had been grateful, maybe you would have had your reward!

When those you relieve are very kind afterwards, and speak well of you, and do you some good service in return, it is very nice. Of course it is. Well, but you are *paid*. But those who have done good and suffered for it. Those who, for the best thing that they did have had the worst return—who have rendered kindness and have only received unkindness as the result—it may be that the Lord will say of them, "These were last, but they shall be first." Whereas many that stood first in men's esteem and in the gratitude they received, will have to go last.

III. Now, my time almost fails me, but you must bear with me on my third head, for here is the practical part of Free Grace in our service. Therefore WE HAVE INSTRUCTIONS AS TO OUR SPIRIT AS WORKERS. If the work is all of Grace and if God has a way of measuring up that work, which is not at all according to the Law, but of His own Grace, then there are two things to be observed. First, do not be proud. Secondly, do not be discouraged.

Do not be proud, for many that are first shall be last. Suppose, my dear Friend, that you really are first and are doing a great deal for God—will you be proud? Why, *you are only a greater debtor!* You owe all the more to that Grace which has enabled you to be of some service in the Kingdom of your Lord! Lie low at your Lord's feet and be very humble.

Next, remember that though you may think that you are first, *you may, even now, be among the last*. Your assessment of your service may not be

the Divine assessment at all. You may think that you are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” but, in God’s repute, you may be, “Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Your work may be like very big trusses of hay, loads of straw and stacks of stubble! And yet, when God comes to try it, it may be all burned down to a handful of ashes, whereas the friend, of whom you think so little, may only have built a small portion, but he has built it of gold, silver and precious stones. Let us also remember that, even if it is true that we are among the first, we may, if we get proud of it, *find ourselves among the last*. Oh, how some of God’s greatest servants have been shriveled up when they began to swell out with pride and vanity! God blessed them as long as they were feeble, weak and leaned upon His strength, but when they were strong and relied on themselves, there came a dreadful failure.

There is one thing which is absolutely certain. *If you are among the first, you will reckon yourself to be among the last*. He that is best, thinks himself worst. What a description Paul gives of himself in the 7th Chapter of Romans! “Oh,” says one, “I heard a person say that Paul was not a converted man when he wrote that!” Let me tell you that he had been in the third Heaven when he wrote that bit of deep experience. He had so much likeness to his Lord that he excelled every other man then living, except, perhaps, John! And if it had not been for his extraordinary holiness, he would never have been able to pen those tremendous groanings wherein he says, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

The man who thinks that he is holy has never seen the holy God. If he had—if he had ever beheld Him, he would say with Job, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes.” The superlative perfection of the Lord God and the absolutely perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ are such that if a man has ever had communion with these, he shrinks into nothing in his own esteem! He that is really first is always the man who is willing to be accounted last. Paul, though he is not a whit behind any of the Apostles, yet calls himself less than the least of all saints and describes himself as having been the chief of sinners. Ah, Beloved! A low idea of self is one of the labels with which God marks the best of His possessions! Therefore, do not be proud.

In the next place, do not be discouraged. If you feel that you are last, *God’s measure is not yours*. Though you may think that you are last, He may not think so at all. Though you say, “I am not worthy to be an Apostle,” yet He may think you worth putting into the apostleship. God’s idea of your worthiness and your own may greatly differ—and His estimate is the true one!

Besides, suppose that you *are* last, yet “*He gives more Grace*.” Christ has come, not only that we may have life, but that we may have it “more abundantly.” Do not be content with what you have! “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” Covet still more the best Graces. God is able to do for us “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” Go in for great things. Has not the Lord said, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” I spoke to a man of God this morning and I told him how God had graciously en-

abled me to draw near to Him in prayer and of the glorious way He had granted my requests. My Friend said, "Yes, and He has made your mouth bigger than it used to be." Is it not so? The faculty of believing prayer grows by being used! The more you ask, the more you *may* ask and the more you have asked, the more you *will* ask. The capacity to receive is increased by receiving. God grant that it may be so with us if we are last!

Remember, too, that if you really are among the least useful, yet a *right spirit may compensate* for your poverty and make your little service very precious. If you cannot get a wide sphere, do not want it. A young minister said to an old one, "Ah, Sir, I preach only to about 100 people. I wish that I could get where I could gather a thousand." His friend answered, "Young man, a hundred people are quite enough for you to be accountable for. And if you faithfully discharge your duty to their souls, you have quite enough to do." Wish for a larger sphere if you are capable of filling it, but remember that the best preparation for greater usefulness is to be faithful in your present position.

My last word to God's children is this— what does it matter, after all, whether we are first or whether we are last? Do not let us dwell too much upon it, for *we all share the honor given to each*. When we are converted, we become members of Christ's living body. And as we grow in Grace and get the true spirit that permeates that body, we shall say, when any member of it is honored, "This is honor for *us*." If any Brother shall be greatly honored of God, I feel honored in his honor. If God shall bless your Brother and make him 10 times more useful than you are, then you see that He is blessing you—not only blessing him, but you! If my hand has something in it, my foot does not say, "Oh, I have not got it!" No, for if my hand has it, my foot has it—it belongs to the whole of my body. If my mouth alone eats, yet it does not eat for my mouth, alone, but it eats for my brain, my hand, my backbone—for every part of me.

So, when you get to feel your oneness with Christ, and your oneness with His people, your only thought will be, "Let God be glorified; let Him be magnified. It does not matter whether I am first or last." You will stand up and say, "That Brother who was converted only a week or two ago, got his penny and I am glad of it." Here is another, who has done very poor work, but you will thank God that he got his penny. He is one of the family. It all comes from the same hand and it will all come home to the same house. We are something like men in a great shop where there are different people serving. One young man has a counter where ladies come and he serves them—and he takes a lot of money in the day. Another counterman, at the back, sells goods that take a deal of trouble to dispose of and upon which there is but a trifling profit. Does the master praise the men of the shop according to the quantity of money each takes? The one who is put in the back place and sells poor goods is just as diligent and just as worthy in his master's sight as the others! Suppose that they are all members of one family—when they meet at night, one will say, "I took in so much." Another will say, "I took 10 times as much as that," but they are all glad because it all goes into the firm—it is all a part of the same concern. Go then, dear Brothers and Sisters, and work away for Christ!

And do not envy one another, but all be glad to be permitted, in this work of Grace, to take any part or any portion for your Lord.

One thing more, and I am done. I have only been talking to God's people all this while because you that are not saved cannot serve Him. What a miserable position yours is! You are out of the pale of service. God will receive nothing of you till you come to Christ. The only way to bring sacrifice is to bring it through the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ! "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Much less shall you be accepted as servants there. I beseech you, by the thought of the Grace of which I have been speaking, to rest not until you can say that Christ has saved you, made you a partaker of His Grace and sent you forth into His royal service. The Lord bless you! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Matthew 19:16-30; 20:1-16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—639, 663, 235.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

There can be very little variety in the notes published week by week concerning MR. SPURGEON'S illness. His condition varies from day to day and almost from hour to hour. And yet, as week follows week, he remains practically the same. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." This long waiting is very wearisome to the one who suffers and also to those who watch by him, but the Lord will not permit the suffering or the watching to continue one moment longer than is necessary for the accomplishment of His purposes of love and mercy. Prayer and patience must, therefore, continue to have their perfect work until they give place, in the Lord's good time, to praise and thanksgiving. Prayer has been so graciously heard and answered in the preservation of the life dear to so many, that we cannot do otherwise than continue our supplications. (After the above was written on Tuesday, MR. SPURGEON was carried downstairs and wheeled in the garden for half-an-hour—this may prove to be the turning point towards his recovery. God grant it)!

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

EARLY AND LATE

NO. 664

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 10, 1865,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“For the kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. . . And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace. . . Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ ”
Matthew 20:1, 3, 5, 6.

WE have frequently observed that we do not think it right to neglect the context of Scripture. We have no right to tear passages of Scripture from their context and make them to mean what they were not intended to teach. And therefore I have, in the reading given you, according to my ability, what I think to be the immediate design of the present parable. It is a rebuke to those who fall into a legal spirit and begin calculating as to what their reward ought to be in a kingdom where the legal spirit is entirely out of place since its reward is not of debt, but of Divine Grace. I think I may now, without any violation of propriety, dwell upon one very distinct fact in connection with the parable. It is not right to violate the drift of the parable, but having already observed it and made it as clear as we can, we believe that we are now authorized to make use of one of the main circumstances mentioned in it.

This morning I intend to call your attention to the fact that the laborers were hired at different periods of the day, by which doubtless we are taught that God sends His servants into His vineyard at different times and seasons. Some are called in early youth and others are not led to enter into the service of the Master until declining years have brought them almost to the eventide of life. I must, however, ask you to remember that they were all *called*—by the mention of which the Savior would teach us that no man comes into the kingdom of Heaven of himself. Without exception, every laborer for Jesus has been called in one sense or another and he would not have come without being so called. They are all called.

Were a man what he should be, he would need no pressing and invitation to come to the Gospel of Christ. But since human nature is perverted and men put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, darkness for light and light for darkness, man needs to be called by the outward word. He needs to be invited, persuaded and entreated. He needs, to use the strong expression of the Apostle Paul, to be told that as though God did beseech him by us, we should pray him, in Christ’s place, to be reconciled to God. No, further than this, although some men come to work in a legal spirit in the vineyard through this common call of the Gospel, yet no man in spirit

and in truth comes to Christ without a *further* call, namely, the effectual call of God's Holy Spirit.

The general call is given by the minister—it is *all* that he can give. If the preacher attempts to give the particular call as some of my hyper-Calvinistic Brethren do—confining the Gospel command to a certain character and trying to be, themselves, the discoverers of God's elect and to make that *particular* which is always *universal*—if the preacher acts thus and virtually endeavors to give the particular call—he makes a sorry mess of it and usually fails altogether to preach the Gospel of glad tidings to the sons of men.

But when man is content to do what he can do, namely, preach the commandment, “that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,” and that, “God commands all men everywhere to repent,” then there comes with the general call to the chosen of God a particular and special call which none but the Holy Spirit can give, but which He gives so effectually that all who hear it become willing in the day of God's power and turn with full purpose of heart unto the Lord! In what sense is it true that many are called but few chosen if none are to be called by the preaching of the Word but those who are chosen? There are two callings—the one is *general* to all who hear of Jesus and many who are thus called are not chosen. The other is *personal* and peculiar to the *elect*—“for whom He did predestinate, them He also *called*.”

To return to our point. All in the vineyard are in some sense called. There is not a solitary exception to this rule in the entire Christian Church. The doctrine of freewill has not a single specimen to show to prove itself. There is not a sheep in all the flock that came back to the shepherd unsought. There is not a single piece of money which leaped again into the woman's purse—she swept the house to find it—no, I will go further and say there is not even a single prodigal son in the entire family who did ever say, “I will arise and go unto my Father,” till first the Father's Grace, veiling itself in the afflicting Providence of a mighty famine, had taught the prodigal the miserable results of sin as he fed the swine and gladly would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but could not do so.

I want you to notice another fact before I come to the subject now in hand, and that is that all those who are called are said to have been *hired*. Of course in a parable no word is to be construed harshly—we are to give the meaning according to the drift. But still, I think we may say that there is this likeness between hiring a servant and the engagement of a soul to Christ—a man hired has no right to serve another—he serves the master who has hired him. When a soul is called by Grace into the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, he cries, “O Lord, other lords have had dominion over me, but now You only will I serve.” He plucks off the yoke of sin, its pleasure, its custom, and he puts upon him that yoke of which the Master says it is easy, and he bears that burden which Jesus tells us is light.

A hired servant must not work for another—he works for his master. And so a man who is called by Grace lives not for any sinister object or motive, but to his Master only. A hired servant, again, does not work on his own account—he is not his own master. And, “you are not your own,

you are bought with a price.” Henceforth, though he calls no man “Master” on earth, yet he remembers that one is his Master in Heaven, to whom all his service is due. There is a compact between the hired man and his master and there is a solemn compact of spirit between the true Believer and his Lord. We have devoted ourselves to His service. We have given up all liberty of self-will, and therefore our will is at the government of our Lord and all our powers and passions are to be, we *hope* will be, through God’s Grace, obedient to Him who has hired us into the vineyard.

Now the word “hired” was used in order to bring in the idea of reward. It was used to suit Peter’s view of the case. It was used in order that his legal question of, “What shall we have, therefore?” might be clearly brought out and its folly shown in the light of that Sovereign Grace which does as it wills with His own. Yet for all that, Believers are hired in an evangelical sense—they do not serve God for nothing—they shall not work without a reward. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.” We shall have our reward for what we do for the Master and though it is not wages in the sense of *debt*, yet verily I say unto you there shall not be a single true-hearted worker for God who shall not receive of his Master most blessed wages of Grace in the day when He comes to take account of His servants.

Now to the point—the master calls these hired servants of his at different hours of the day. And, in the second place, distinguishing Grace shines forth in each case and is illustrated and made more manifest in its varieties of glorious compassion and loving-kindness by the different hours at which the chosen ones are called.

I. ALL ARE NOT CALLED BY GRACE AT THE SAME TIME. Some, according to the parable, are called early in the morning. Thrice happy are these! The earliest period at which a child may be called by Divine Grace would be difficult for us positively to define. Because children are not all the same age *mentally*, though their *physical* age may be the same, we dare not limit the Holy One of Israel as to the chosen period of operation. As far as our observation, Grace works upon some little ones at the very dawn of moral consciousness. There are, no doubt, precocious children whose intellect and affections are very much developed and very deeply sanctified even so early as two or three years of age.

Such children usually are intended by the Master to be taken Home at once. There are interesting biographies extant, which prove that holiness may bloom and ripen in the youngest heart and many anecdotes are treasured up in such collections as “Janeway’s Token for Children,” of children whom I might call infants with strict propriety, out of whose mouth God ordained praise and did, through them, quiet the enemy and the avenger.

Little prattlers, whose tongues it would have been supposed could only have talked of toys, have been able to speak with an apparent profundity of knowledge of spiritual, and especially of heavenly things. It is certain that some have worked their day’s work for the Master in their mother’s arms. They have spoken of the Savior in tones which have melted a mother’s heart and gone to a father’s conscience and then they have been taken home. “Whom the gods love die young,” said the heathen, and

doubtless it is no small privilege to be so soon admitted into Glory. Only *shown* on earth and then snatched away to Heaven—too precious to be left below!

Precious child, how dear were you to the good God who sent you here and then took you Home! Fair rose bud, yet in the perfection of your young beauty taken to be worn by the Savior on His bosom! How can we mourn your translation to the skies?—

***“No bitter tears for you are shed,
Blossom of being seen and gone!
With flowers alone we strew your bed,
O blest departed one!
Whose all of life, a rosy ray,
Blushed into dawn and passed away.”***

“Early in the morning,” would also include those who have passed the first hour of the day, but who have not yet wasted the second opening hour. I mean those hopeful lads and girls who, perhaps, would rather I should call them youths—those who have reached their teens—have over-leaped infancy and childhood and are growing up in the heyday and vigor of youth. Youngsters still more at home in the playground than in the work field—fitter, as Satan tells them—to be sporting in the marketplace than busy in the vineyard. Such as these, to the praise of Divine love, are often hired by the landowner.

It is worth while to warn some of our Brethren who seem to be exceedingly dubious of boyish and girlish piety—to warn them against indulging harsh and suspicious doubts. We have remarked, and I think those who have watched our membership carefully will have remarked it, too, that among all the slips and falls which have caused us sorrow, we have had but little sorrow from those who were added to us as boys and girls. There are those preaching the Gospel this day with acceptance and power whom these hands baptized into Jesus Christ very early in their boyhood, and there are among us honored servants of God who have served this Church well, who, while they were yet at school, were joyful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ!

With our earliest intellects some of us got an understanding of the things of the Kingdom of God. Our Bible was our child’s primer, our spelling book—the guide of our youth and the joy of our earliest years. We thank God that there are Timothys still among us and those not few and far between! And young Samuels, who, being brought as infants to the Lord’s House, have from that day forth worn the linen ephod and served, after their fashion, as priests unto God, serving Him with all their hearts! Happy those who are called early in the morning! They have peculiar reasons for blessing and praising God—

***“Grace is a plant, wherever it grows,
Of pure and heavenly root.
But fairest in the youngest shows,
And yields the sweetest fruit.”***

Let us spend a minute in thinking of their happy case who are saved in boyhood. Early in the morning the dew still twinkles on the leaves, the maiden blush of dawn remains and reveals an opening beauty which is lost to those who rise not to see the birth of day. There is a beauty about early piety which is indescribably charming and unutterably lovely in

freshness and radiance. We remark in childhood an artless simplicity, a child-like confidence which is seen nowhere else. There may be less of knowing, but there is more of *loving*. There may be less of reasoning, but there is more of simply *believing* upon the authority of Revelation. There may be less of deep-rootedness, but there is certainly more of perfume, beauty and emerald verdure!

If I must choose that part of the Christian life in which there is the most joy, next to the land Beulah, which I must set first and foremost by reason of its lying so near to Canaan, I think I would prefer that tract of Christian experience which lies toward the rising sun which is sown with orient pearls of love and cheered with the delicious music of the birds of hope. Early in the morning, when we have just risen from slumber, work is easy. Our occupation in the vineyard is a cheerful exercise rather than a toil such as those find who bear the burden and heat of the day. The young Christian is not oppressed with the cares and troubles of the world as others are—he has nothing else to do but to serve his God.

He is free from the embarrassments which surround so many of us and prevent our doing good when we would consecrate ourselves wholly to it. The lad has nothing to think of but his Lord. There are his books and his lessons, but he can be fervent of spirit in the midst of them. There are the companions of his childhood, but in guilelessness and simplicity he may be of service to them and to God through them. Give me, I say, if I would have an auspicious time to work for Jesus—give me the blessed morning hours when my heart is bounding lightest and joy's pure sunbeams tremble on my path—when my glowing breast lacks no ardor and my happy spirit wears no chain of care!

One would prefer early conversion because such persons have not learned to stand idle in the marketplace. A fellow, you know, who has been for hours standing with his hands in his pockets, talking with drunken men and so on, is not worth much at the eleventh hour! No, even by the middle of the day it has become so natural to him to prop the walls that he is not likely to take to work very readily. Begin early with your souls! Break in the colts while they are young and they are likely to take well to the collar. There are no workers like those who commenced work while they were yet children.

What a promise of a long day there is for young Believers! The sun has just risen and he has to travel to his zenith and to descend again. There is ample room and time enough, though none to spare. If God, in His Providence, permits it so to happen, that youngster yonder has twelve hours' work before him—what may he not accomplish? For a grand and glorious life, early piety, if not *essential*, is certainly a very great advantage! To give those first days to Jesus will spare us many sad regrets, prevent us acquiring many evil habits, and enable us to achieve good success through the Holy Spirit's blessing. It is well to begin to fly while yet the wings are strong, for if we live long in sin the wings may be broken and then they will flap wearily through the rest of our days, even when Divine Grace shall call us.

Let it be the desire of parents here to have their children converted as children! And oh, may God cast that desire into the hearts of some of you

young people that are here this morning—that before you reach one-and-twenty, before you are called men—you may be perfect men in Christ Jesus—that while you are yet children you may be children of God! May you, as “newborn babes, receive the sincere milk of the Word,” and the Lord grant that you may “grow thereby.” Happy, happy, happy souls, whom the Master, thus by distinguishing Grace, brings “early in the morning!”

The landowner went out again at the third hour. This may represent the period in which we have mounted above being children and youths and are entitled to be called men. Suppose we settle the first hour as extending over the earliest seven or eight years of age? Then the second hour runs on from that to twenty-one or thereabouts. And then we have a good length of time between twenty and thirty and onwards to reckon as the third and fourth and fifth hours. There are some whom Divine Grace renews at the third hour. This is late! One-and-twenty is grievously late, when you consider how much of early joy is now impossible—how much of sinful habit has now been acquired—how many opportunities for usefulness are now gone past recall.

A quarter of the day has flown away forever when we reach the third hour. It is the best quarter of the day, too, that has gone past recall. The first meal of the day is over—that blessed breaking of the fast with Christ is no more possible. A very precious meal is that, when the Savior gives us the morning portion, the manna which melts when the sun is up. Blessed is the child’s feeding upon Jesus—truly, I remember when I was awakened like Elijah from under the juniper tree and fed on such dainty fare that to this day the flavor abides with me! The man of one-and-twenty has lost that first meal, breakfast is all over. Christ will say to him as He will to some others, “Come and dine,” and that is precious—but the daintiest meal is over, the first early enjoyment—the first early rapture can never be known.

I have no doubt there are many here who think that to be converted at one-and-twenty is very *soon*—but why one-and-twenty years given to Satan? Why a fourth of man’s existence devoted to evil? Besides, it may not be a fourth—it may be one half—no, in how many cases it is the whole of life! The sun goes down before it is yet noon and the idler in the marketplace has no hope of ever being a worker in the vineyard! Death, who comes when God wills, and gives us no notice, may cut down the flower before it has fully opened.

“In the morning it is like grass that grows up, in the evening it is cut down and withers.” It is late, it is sadly late! It is a sad thing to have lost those bright days in which the mind was least engaged, in which it was the most susceptible of forming godly habits. It is a sad thing to have learned so much of sin as one may have learned by one-and-twenty! It is a sad thing to have seen so much of iniquity, to have treasured up in one’s memory so much defilement. Twenty years with God—one might have been in such a time a good scholar in the kingdom! But twenty years in the world one begins to be like scarlet that has been lying in the dye till it is stained through and through. It is late, but we thank God that it is not *too* late. No, it is not too late even for the grandest of purposes.

Not only is this period of life not too late for salvation, but it is not too late to do much for Jesus Christ! Some of us, when we were one-and-twenty, had finished five years of Christian ministry and had been the means of bringing many souls to the Cross of Christ. But if others are led by Grace to *begin* then, why there is a good period still remaining if God, in Providence, spares our lives. The young man is now in all his strength and vigor, his bones are full of marrow and his heart is full of fire. We ought to have acquired a good degree of education and be prepared to acquire more. Now he is just in the time when he should work.

His plans of life are not settled as yet. He is probably not married. As yet there are no children about him to have been injured by his ill example. He has an opportunity of rearing up a household in the fear of God. He is commencing business. He has an opportunity of so conducting that business that there may never need to be a time when he shall have to tack about and steer another course. He may, if called by God's Grace at twenty-one, begin an honorable career in which there needs not be an angle or a curve. He may go straight to the harbor's mouth! He may steer and mark upon the sea of life one shining furrow which shall reach in a direct line, from the present moment, straight to the lights of Heaven! He may reach it with his sail full and a priceless cargo on board to the praise of the glory of Divine Grace! It is late—it is very late in some respects—but oh, it is not too late to serve the Master well and to win a crown of great reward, the gift of Divine love.

There is abundance of work to do for us who are in this third, fourth, and fifth hour of the day. In fact, I suppose the Church must look to us for its most active work. After this period and the next, a man frequently becomes rather a recipient from the Church than a donor to it in the matter of activity. Its fresh blood, its energy, its warmth of heart, its ready action, must, to a great extent, come from the young men who are converted. Oh, you of twenty-one, I would to God that you were all born from Heaven! You maidens, in your early beauty—may the Master in His infinite mercy bring you in! Oh, could you know the sweetness of His love you would not need persuading! Could you understand the joy of true religion you would not want entreating! There is more hallowed mirth enjoyed in *secret* with the Lord Jesus Christ than in all the merriment the world can yield.

One ounce of Christ's love is better than a ton of the world's flatteries. The world offers bubbles with fair hues, bright to look upon, but vanishing at a breath. But Christ gives real treasure, enduring as eternity. The world's gold is all base money—it glitters, but it is not precious. There may be less glitter about the things of God, but there is a "solid joy and lasting pleasure," which, "none but Zion's children know." May the Master come this morning to your hearts and by my simple words may He call you at the third hour of the day into the vineyard!

The landowner's kindness was not exhausted, and therefore he went out at the sixth hour. We find him going into the market at high noon. Half the day was over. Who is going to employ a man and give him a whole day's wages when twelve o'clock has come? He will not do too much if you hire him at six—what will he do if you engage him at twelve? Half a day's

work! That is a poor thing to seek or to offer. The Master, however, seeks and accepts it. He promises, "Whatever is right, I will give you." And there are some found who at the sixth hour enter into the vineyard and, being saved by Grace, begin their work for Jesus.

This may represent the period of life in which man is supposed to be in his prime—when he is past forty and onward. This is sadly late, very sadly late. Sadly late in a great many respects—not only because there is so little time left, but because so very much of energy and zeal and force—which should have been given to God, has been wasted. It has, to some extent, been used to fight against God. Forty years of hardness of heart! That is a long time for Divine patience. Forty years of sin! That is a long season for conscience to mourn over. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," said God. In the wilderness they hardened their hearts all that time. And He swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest.

What a blessing for you of forty and unconverted, that He has not sworn so terrible an oath concerning you—that still His long-suffering lingers, still His patience bears with you, still does He say to you—"Go, work, My son. Go work this day in My vineyard." It is sadly late, because it has become more than natural to you to walk in the way of sin. You will have so much to contend with in the future as the result of the past. Putting the ship of the soul about is not such easy work as turning a vessel by her helm—only a Divine hand can steer a soul upon the tack of Divine Grace. You will need much Grace to conquer those corruptions which have had forty years to take root in you! You have a tenant in your house who is in possession, and you will find that possession to be nine points of the law—it will be a hard ejection for you to effect—so hard, indeed, that only a "stronger than he" can cast him out.

To your dying day the recollection of evil things which you heard during these forty years of unregeneracy will stick to you. You will hear the echoes of an old song just when you are trying to pray. Some deed which you regret and mourn over will come to check you just when you are about to say, "Abba, Father," with an unstammering tongue. It is late, it is very, very late, this sixth hour, but it is not too late! It is not too late for some of the richest enjoyments—you can yet dine with Jesus! He can yet manifest Himself to you as He does not to the world. You may have yet much time to serve Him.

It is not too late to be distinguished among His servants. Take John Newton—he was called in the middle of the day, but John Newton left his mark in God's vineyard—a mark that will never be forgotten! I suppose Paul could not have been much less than of that age when he was called by Sovereign Grace. No, the most of the Apostles were probably very little short of this age when Mercy met with them—still they did a glorious day's work. If saved by Grace in middle life, my Brother, you must work harder! You must let the time past suffice you to have worked the will of the flesh and now you must redeem the time, because the days are evil. Why, a man converted at forty should go double quick march to Heaven—there should not be a moment lost!

Work the engine at high pressure and give two strokes for every one that might be given by younger men and younger minds. Seek, in Divine strength, to do twice as much in the time, since you have only half the time to do a life's work. I know you wish to win crowns for Christ. Then be up and doing, Beloved. You are saved by Grace and by Grace alone. You pant to honor Christ because of His free love to you—cannot you endeavor to honor Him as much in the remnant which remains as others do in the whole length of their life? You may, by zeal and prudence, and discretion and perfect consecration yet serve the Master well.

The landowner went out at the ninth hour, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Nobody thinks of engaging day-laborers at three o'clock in the afternoon! A day's work to be done from three till six! It shows you that this Gospel hiring is nothing like a legal hiring—it must be *all* of Grace—or a man would not think of doing such a thing. Well now, three o'clock in the afternoon, that is from sixty to seventy. The prime of life has gone. It is late, it is sadly late, very sadly late. It is late because all the powers of the man are now weak. His memory begins to fail. He thinks his judgment better than ever it was, but probably that is only his own opinion. Most of the faculties lose their edge in old age. He has acquired experience, but still there is no fool like an old fool.

A man who has not been taught by Divine Grace learns very little of any value in the school of Providence. Sixty thousand years would not make a man wise if Divine Grace did not teach him. Now think of it, is it not late? Here is the man—if he is converted now—what is there left of him? He is just a candle end. He may give a little light, but it is almost like a snuff burning in the socket. All those sixty years, seventy years—have been spent—where? Cover it all up. Let us go backward as Noah's sons did and cover it all up. And oh, may almighty Grace cover it, too! The fact is terribly appalling—sixty, seventy years spent in the service of Satan! Oh what good the man might have done! Had he but served his God as he served the world, what good he might have done!

He has made a fortune, has he? How rich he might have been in faith by this time. He has built a house! Yes, but how he might have helped to build the Church. The man has been playing at card-houses. He has been like boys by the sea-shore building castles of sand which must all come down, and must come down very soon, too, for I hear the surges of the dread tide of Death—it is rolling in even now! Those teeth which have fallen out, those pains and rheumatics and so on, all show that *this* is not his rest. The tabernacle is beginning to crumble about the man and the warning is loud which reminds him that he must soon be gone and leave his wealth and his house!

And so, if this is all, in the end it will turn out that he has done nothing—he has piled up shadows, heaped together thick clay and that is all he has done—when he might, if he had believed in Jesus, have done so much for God and for the souls of men! What evil habits he has acquired! What can you ever make of this man? If he is saved, it will be so as by fire. He is called and he shall enter Heaven, but oh, how little can he do for the Master, and what strong corruptions will he have to wrestle with, and

what an inward conflict even till he gets to Heaven! It is late, it is very late, but oh, blessed be God! *It is not too late!*

We have had within these walls persons who have long passed the prime of their days who have come forward and said, "We will cast in our lot with you because the Lord is with you." We have heard their joyous story of how the old man has become a babe, and how he that was hoary with years has been born again into the kingdom of Christ! It is not too late! Did the devil say so? The gate is shutting—I can hear it grating on the hinges—but it is not shut! The sun is going down, but he is not lost beneath the horizon yet. And if the Master calls you, only run faster because it is so! And when you are saved, serve Him with all your might amid strength because you have so little time to glorify Him here on earth and short space in which to show your sense of deep indebtedness to His surpassing love.

The day is nearly over, it has come to the eleventh hour, five o'clock! The men have been looking at their watches to see whether it will not soon be six. They are longing to hear the clock strike. They hope the day's work will soon close. Look! The landlord goes out into the marketplace among those hulking fellows who are still loitering there and he pitches upon some and asks them, "Why have you been standing here idle all day? Go and work! And whatever is right I will give you."

At the eleventh hour they come in—half-ashamed to come—hardly liking the others to see them. They are ashamed to begin work so late. Still they did steal in somewhere. And there were generous laborers who looked over the tops of the vines and said to them, "Glad to see you, Friends! Glad to see you, however late." There were a few, I dare say, among the laborers, at least there are if *this* is the vineyard, who would even stop their work and begin to sing and praise God to think that their fellows had been brought in at the eleventh hour! Now the eleventh hour must be looked upon as any period of life which is past threescore years and ten—how late it may extend I cannot tell.

There is an authentic instance of a man converted to God at the age of a hundred and four, during the last Irish revival, who walked some distance to make a confession of his faith in Jesus Christ. And I recollect a case of one converted in America by a sermon which he had heard, I think, eighty-one years previously! He was fifteen when he heard Mr. Flavel at the end of a discourse, instead of pronouncing the blessing, say, "I cannot bless you. How can I bless those who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ? 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha.'" And eighty-one years or more afterwards that solemn sentence came to the man's recollection when he was living in America and God blessed it to his conversion!

There have been some to whom the eleventh hour has been the very hour of death. Some, I say, but how many or how few is not for me to know. There is one instance we know in Scripture, it was the dying thief. There is but one. God, however, in His abundant mercy can do as He wills to the praise of the glory of His Grace and at the eleventh hour He can call His chosen. It is very late, it is very very, very late, it is sorrowfully late, it is dolefully late—but it is not *too late*—and if the Master calls you, come!

Though an hundred years of sin should make your feet heavy so that your steps are painfully limping—if He calls you it is late but not too late, and therefore come!

Have you ever thought of how the thief worked for his Lord? It was not a fine place for working, hanging on a cross, dying, just at the eleventh hour. But he did a deal of work in the few minutes. Observe what he did. First, he confessed Christ—he acknowledged Him to be Lord, confessed Him before men. In the second place, he justified Christ—“This Man has done nothing amiss.” In the next place he worshipped the Lord Jesus, calling Him, “Lord.” He even began to preach, for he rebuked his fellow sinner! He told him that he should not revile One who was so unrighteously condemned. He offered a petition which has become a very model of prayer—“Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

At any rate, I wish I could say of myself what I can say of the thief—he did all he could. I cannot say that of myself. I am afraid I cannot say it of any of you. I do not know anything the thief could have done on the cross which he did not do. As soon as ever he was called, he seems to have worked in the vineyard to the utmost extent of his ability. And so let me say to you, if you should be called at the eleventh hour, my dear Hearer, though you are well-stricken in years and aged, yet for Jesus Christ’s sake out of great love for all the great things which He has done for you, go your way and praise Him with all your might!

II. My time has gone and I wanted to have shown that **DISTINGUISHING GRACE SHONE RESPLENDENTLY IN EVERY INSTANCE.** Those called in the early morning have delightful reason for admiring Sovereign Grace, for they are spared the ills and sins of life. I must content myself, however, by repeating concerning them the lines of Ralph Erskine—

***“In heavenly choirs a question rose,
That stirred-up strife will never close—
What rank of all the ransomed race,
Owes highest praise to Sovereign Grace?
Babes there caught from womb and breast,
Claimed right to sing above the rest;
Because they found the happy shore,
They never saw nor sought before.”***

What distinguishing Grace is that which called us when we were young! Here is electing love! “When Ephraim was a child, then I loved him and called My son out of Egypt.” Some of us, in time and in eternity, will have to utter a special song of thankfulness to the love which took us in our days of folly and simplicity and conducted us into the family of God. It was not because we were better disposed children than others, or because there was naturally anything good about us—we were willful, heady and high-minded, proud, wayward and disobedient as other children are—and yet Mercy separated us from the rest and we shall never cease to adore its sovereignty!

Look at the Grace which calls the man at the age of twenty, when the passions are hot, when there is strong temptation to plunge into the vices and the so-called pleasures of life. To be delivered from the charms of sin when the world’s cheek is ruddy, when it wears its best attire and to be taught to prefer the reproach of Christ to all the riches of Egypt—this is mighty Grace for which God shall have our sweetest song!

To be called of the Lord at forty, in the prime of life! This is a wonderful instance of Divine power for worldliness is hard to overcome and worldliness is the sin of middle age. With a family about you, with much business, with the world eating into you as does a canker, it is a wonder that God should, in His mercy, have visited you then and made you a regenerate soul! You are a miracle of Divine Grace and you will have to feel it and to praise God for it in time and eternity!

Sixty, again. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? If so, then you who are accustomed to do evil may learn to do well.” And yet *you have* learned—you have had a blessed Schoolmaster who sweetly taught you and you have learned to do well. Though your vessel had begun to rot in the waters of the Black Sea of sin, you have got a new Owner and you will run up a new flag and you will sail round the Cape of Good Hope to the islands of the Blessed, in the Land of the Hereafter!

But what shall I say of you that are called when you are aged? Ah, you will have to love much, for you have had much forgiven. I do not know that you may be in thankfulness a whit behind those of us who are called in our early youth. We have much to bless God for and so have you. We are at one extreme and you are at the other. We would love much because we have been spared much sinning and you must love much because you have been delivered from much sinning. Not to go through the fire is a theme for song—but to traverse the flame and not be burned!—to walk the furnace and to be delivered from its vehement fire! Oh, how you should find words with which to express your gratitude!

Called early or called late. Called at midday or called at early noon, let us together, since we have been called by Grace alone, ascribe it all to the Lord Jesus! And moved by the mighty constraints of His love, let us work with body, soul and spirit—work for Him till we can work no longer—and then praise Him in the rest of Glory! I pray you, Brethren, suffer no idleness to creep over you. If you have sought to extend the Redeemer’s kingdom, do it more. Give more, talk more of Christ, pray more, labor more!

I often receive the kind advice, “Do less.” I cannot do less. Do less? Why, better rot altogether than live the inglorious life of doing less than our utmost for God! We shall, none of us, I am afraid, kill ourselves with working too hard for Jesus—it were such a blessed act of suicide that if there is a sin that is venial, it would certainly be that! I am not afraid that you are likely to perpetrate such an enormity! Work for the Master! Labor for the Master! We must spend and be spent, and wear ourselves out for Him! Make no reserve for the flesh to fulfill the lusts of it! And oh, how happy shall we be if we may be privileged to finish the work and hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.”

May the Lord bless you for Christ’s sake. Amen.

[This sermon was originally titled, *Early and Late, Or Horae Gratiae*].

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 19:27-20:29.

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FROM TWENTY-FIVE TO THIRTY-FIVE NO. 2517

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 16, 1897.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 11, 1885.

“And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way.”
Matthew 20:3, 4.

No parable teaches all sides of the Truth of God. It is wrong to attempt to make a parable run on all fours—it is intended to convey some one lesson—and if it teaches that, we must not attempt to draw everything else out of it. This parable sets forth the great God as a householder going forth to find men to work for Him, but let no man imagine that God needs any of us! He was perfect—perfectly happy and perfectly glorious—long before wings of angels moved in space, or before space and time even existed! God was always and still is self-contained and all-sufficient and if He chooses to make any creatures, or to preserve or use any of the creatures He has formed, that is not because He needs them, or is in the least degree dependent upon them. If God comes forth in wondrous Grace to call any of us to work in His vineyard, it is not because He needs us, but because we need Him. He does not set us to work because He needs workers, but because we need work. He calls us not because He requires us, but because we require to be called.

Let no man, therefore, attach great importance to himself, as though God's cause or Kingdom depended upon him. It may be that we fancy, sometimes, in our little sphere, that if we were gone, there would be a great gap, but the Lord did very well without us before we were born and He will do just as well when we are dead and gone. His work never really suffers, after all. Workers die, but the work lives on. If any man, therefore, should be so boldly wicked as to suppose that God will be robbed of any of His Glory if he stands out against Him, or that God will suffer because he does not intend to serve Him, he is greatly mistaken! The loss of glory will be your loss, Sir, not God's, and the loss of benefit will be your loss, not God's. If He were hungry, He would not tell you, for the cattle upon a thousand hills are His and the world with the fullness thereof. He can effect His eternal purposes without our help and He can as easily effect them even if we choose to resist Him.

He is infinitely greater than we are, so that what I shall have to say to you at this time about our going to work for God in His vineyard is not to be understood as though we could do anything meritorious in the eyes of our Maker, or as if He had any need of us. He is great and glorious, whatever we may be, and it is for our joy, our safety, our everlasting

happiness that we should become His servants. It is necessary for the right ordering of our lives, that our hearts may be in tune to yield the music of joy, that we should be tuned by obedience to His will and that we should learn to serve Him. My prayer is that, this very hour, some who have never known our Savior may find Him making Himself known to them and engaging them in His service.

I. I shall begin by asking, first, HOW MAY THE LORD BE SAID TO GO OUT?

Please notice what it says in the first verse of this chapter, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning.” Then it says in our text, “He went out about the third hour.” In the fifth verse, “Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hours.” And in the sixth verse, “And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle.” How may God be said to go out?

This language is used, first, to teach us that *the impulse to serve God always comes from God to us*. It never comes from within ourselves, first of all. If any man wills to serve God, there was another will which moved his will, or else his will would never have moved towards God. Out of the various men who are mentioned here, no one went to the vineyard, either early in the morning or later in the day, and *requested to be employed*. The householder came out into the marketplace and engaged his men. At the third hour, the sixth hour and the ninth hour, not one had come of his own free will, but in every case the first overture was from the householder—“He went out to hire laborers into his vineyard.” And at the eleventh hour, though the day was coming to its close, and the sun was almost down, yet even then, men were not wise enough to wish to conclude the day in the right service, but they still remained, as they had been all day, idling in the marketplace until the generous employer came out and expostulated with them and induced them to enter the vineyard. No man ever comes to God till God first comes to him, so it is my earnest desire that the impulses of Divine Grace may be, even now, felt in many hearts! God the Holy Spirit is able to work upon the judgment, the understanding, the affections, the fears, the hopes, the will of men—and as He works upon them, He makes men willing, in the day of God’s power, so that they turn to Him and enter into His service. That is, I think, the first meaning of God’s going out.

But, next, it means that *there are times and seasons when God seems especially to display His Grace*. There are such seasons, I believe, whenever the Gospel is preached. In this one Church and under one ministry for nearly 32 years, we have almost continually enjoyed the converting power of God’s Grace. There has been a greater increase, sometimes, or a little diminution now and then, but, for the most part, the unbroken stream of blessing has run on at much the same rate all the while. It never was deeper, nor was the current more strong than now, for which we praise the Lord with all our hearts. But it has usually happened with Churches that there are certain seasons when men are brought to Christ in large numbers. The Word comes home with unusual power, there is a sudden flight of the arrows of conviction and the wounded cry out, “What

must we do to be saved?" Then is a great outpouring of the healing balm and the wounds of sin are cured, the bleeding of the pierced conscience is stanchd. When God comes out, as it were, from His hiding place, to deal thus with the souls of men, it is a time of revival!

Personally, *to most men, there is a time of God's going forth when they are specially moved to holy things.* It happens to some in childhood. While they are yet young, God speaks with them as He did with Samuel. Perhaps even on their little bed at night He appears to them, and says, "Samuel, Samuel," and then helps them to answer, "Here am I, for You did call me." To others, God comes a little farther on, when it is the second hour of the day, while yet they are in the heyday of their youth. It was the great privilege of some of us for the Lord to call us while we were yet young men. And it is a great blessing when God comes to us at that important period of our history. To others He appears when they are advanced in life and, blessed be God, He comes also to some when the day is well-near closed—when the furrows of care are on their brows and the snows of age are on their heads! He comes with power, by the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, and He speaks to them and they yield to His speaking and give themselves up to be His servants for the rest of their life. Pray, dear children of God, that the Divine Householder may come into this marketplace, even now, and may speak to young and old effectually by His Grace! If the householder in the parable had sent his servants to call these men, it is possible that *none* of them would have gone into the vineyard. But inasmuch as he came, himself, and spoke personally to them, they went at his bidding. And this I know, that I, poor creature that I am, may stand and speak with all my might, but I have no keys of human hearts at my belt. I may speak to the ear, but I can get no farther. But if my Lord shall come in all the splendor of His Omnipotent Grace, He shall not call in vain, for He has the keys of human hearts! "He opens, and no man shuts." And when He speaks effectually, men fly to Him like doves to their dovecotes. Oh, that it might be so with many here!

Thus I have answered the first question—How may the Lord be said to go out?

II. The second one is—WHAT IS THE HOUR HERE MENTIONED? "He went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace."

I have heard or read a good many sermons to the young, or I have heard *of* them, sermons to those who are called by God early in the morning. And I know there have been a great many sermons to those who have reached the 11th hour. So I thought that, in this discourse, I would specially address those who have come to the *third* hour. What kind of people are those who are at the third hour? What is the third hour? Let us calculate a little. To the Jews there were always 12 hours in the day, whether it was summertime or winter, so that the hour altered every day—a very difficult way of computing time, for, as the day lengthened or shortened, they still divided the daylight into 12 hours Well, dear Friends, think of human life as a period of 12 hours and then form a calculation of what each hour must be. Take the whole of life roughly at 70,

72, 73, 74, or 75, as you like. Then you have to leave out the very earliest hours—that period of life in which God does not call children to intelligent faith because they have not yet understanding enough to be capable of intelligent faith. Strike off a little for that and I should give the first three hours of life to be over at about 20, 21, 22, 23, or 24, if you please. And I should say that the third hour of life would range from 25 to thirty-five. That is the period in which the man has come to perfection and in which the woman has reached the fullness of her strength. There will be little growing after this—if not the zenith of life, yet certainly a considerably-developed period of life has now been reached. Very earnestly do I pray the Master to come out to you who have come to the third hour of your day and to say to you in the language of the text, “Go you, also, into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.”

Now, my Friend—between 20 and 40 years of age—I want you to become the servant of my Lord and Master, first, *because already you have wasted some of the best hours of the day*. There are no hours of the day like the early morning, when the dew is upon everything and the smoke of care and trouble has not yet dimmed the landscape. Give me for enjoyment the earliest hours of a summer’s morning, when the birds are singing at their sweetest and all nature seems to be gemmed with her wedding jewels, her most delightful ornaments! There is no time for work like the first hours of the day and there is no time for serving the Lord like the very earliest days of youth. I recollect the joy I had in the little service I was able to render to God when first I knew Him. I was engaged in a school all the week, but there was Saturday afternoon—and that Saturday afternoon, though I might rightly have used it for rest—and though I was but a boy, myself, was given to a tract-district and to visiting the very poor within my reach. And the Sabbath was devoted to teaching a class, and later on, addressing the Sunday school. Oh, but how earnestly I did it all! I often think that I spoke better, then, than I did in later years, for I spoke so tremblingly that my heart went with it all!

And when I began to talk a little in the villages on Sunday and afterwards every night in the week, I know that I used to speak, then, what came fresh from my heart. There was little time for gathering much from books—my chief library was the Word of God and my own experience, but I spoke out from my very soul—no doubt with much blundering, much weakness and much youthful folly, but oh, with such an intense desire to bring men to Christ! I remember how I felt that I would cheerfully lay down my life if I might but save a poor old man, or bring a boy of my own age to the Savior’s feet! There is nothing in later life quite like those early morning works! Yet, my Friend, you have let that period pass away. You are 25, you are 30, are you even 35 and still unsaved? Then, do not waste any more precious time! Go at once to the Crucified, my adorable Lord and Master! There He stands with a crown of thorns about His brow. Give Him, at least, the rest of your days and beg Him to pardon you for having lived so long without loving and serving Him.

Besides, I must plead with you at this age that you come to Christ *because already habits of idleness are forming upon you*. “No,” you say, “it

is not so.” I mean, *spiritual* idleness! You have not done anything yet for Christ! You have not even looked to see what you could do! You have not meditated upon what place in the vineyard you could occupy—whether you could trim the vines, or water them, or gather the grapes, or tread the wine vat. No, you have done *nothing* as yet and what I am afraid of is that soon you will get settled down into this do-nothing style—and you will go back to the dust from whence you sprang, having achieved nothing for Him who gave Himself that He might save us from our sins! Do not stay in that condition a moment longer! The wax is not very soft, now, it is beginning to harden. Before yet it has quite set, let the stamp of Sovereign Grace be pressed upon it that your life may yet bear the impress of Christ!

Moreover, *Satan is very ready with his temptations* and, you know, he always—

**“Finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do.”**

You have not gone into any gross open sin, I hope. Perhaps you have been kept, like the young man in the narrative we read, quite pure and clean outwardly. Well, but do you not see that—so good a fellow as you are in your own estimation—you are extremely likely to be assailed by Satan? And if he can get you to indulge the lusts of the flesh, or some other vain and sinful pleasure, he will take great delight in ruining you! Oh, how I wish that I could get you enlisted into my Lord’s army! Here, take the shilling. I mean, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and accept Him as your Savior! Become His faithful servant! I wish I could put a hoe into your hands, or a pruning knife, or something with which you could be induced to go into the vineyard of my Master, to serve Him!

You who have reached 25, or 30, or 35, I want you to come to Christ *because your sun may go down at noon*. Such things do happen. This morning, as I looked over this congregation, I remembered an old friend who used to sit not far from here and who went to Heaven a few weeks ago. And there used to sit another child of God, a dear friend who went Home but a very little while ago. I will not now go in thought round the whole place, but I look upon it often with the remembrance of where they used to sit who are now with God. One after another has gone—some very old people, but among those who have been called away there have been many who were quite young. I should have expected that they would have been here, at *my* funeral and yours, but instead thereof, they have been carried to an early grave. With good hope, thank God, the most of them whom I remember—carried with gladness to their tomb because we knew that, through the Grace of God, they were ripe for Glory! But what if the call should come for you, dear Friend, before you have begun to serve your God? No, it must not be so, must it? Is there not something in your heart that seems to say, “By the Grace of God, it shall not be so! I will seek Jesus even now and give myself to Him who gave Himself for *me*.”

For, once again, it seems to me that if God will spare you, there is a *fair opportunity of work yet before you*. As I look all round here at men and women in the prime of life and know that many of them are not yet

converted to God, I feel, dear Friends, that Satan must not have you and the world must not have you and sin must not have you, but Christ *must* have you. He is such a glorious Savior and Lord that I would gladly have all the world at His feet! He deserves so much that if all kings fell down before Him and all princes called Him blessed, He deserves it well! And, if you will do so, it shall be but right. What a life you may yet lead! What usefulness, what happiness, what blessedness may yet be your portion! If you could look through a telescope that could reveal what you might be if your heart were consecrated to God, what a Heaven below and what a Heaven above awaits you! I feel sure that you would now yield to the calling of the Great Householder and enter His vineyard before you left this building!

III. Now let me try to answer a third question. WHAT WERE THESE MEN DOING TO WHOM THE HOUSEHOLDER SPOKE? “Standing idle in the marketplace.”

I shall not enlarge upon this point, but I must say a little about some who are standing idle. *In a literal sense, many are altogether idling.* There are, still, many Christian men and Christian women—no, I do not mean Christian men and Christian women, but those who *ought to be Christians*, who are really idle. Sometimes, when I have been by the seaside, at Mentone and elsewhere, I have seen a great many well-to-do folk who had nothing the matter with them. They were perfectly well, yet they were idling their time away day after day. And I have almost thought to myself, “If they were thrown into the Mediterranean, who would lose anything by them?” Are there not plenty of people just like that even among those who come to our places of worship? They consume so much bread and meat and if they are not careful, they will get consumed, one of these days, for they do no good to anybody!

What a pity it is that a man who stands nearly six feet in his shoes should be doing nothing and that a woman who is made for love and kindness should not be scattering that love and kindness on all sides and serving the Lord! To those of you who are of the ages from 30 to 40, who yet are idle, I wish to say, with all earnestness, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Come to Him by faith. Confess your idleness and all your other sins! Seek His Grace and mercy and then enter His vineyard and serve Him while you may.”

There are also others *who are laboriously idle*, wearied with toils which accomplish nothing of real worth. The man who is spending all his life in his business, living simply to get money, has but trifling goals, for temporary objects engross him. He who lives for God, for Christ, for the good of men, lives for an objective worthy of an immortal being, but he who lives only for his own aggrandizement, lives for such a temporary and trifling objective that he may be said to be idle though he wears himself to death with his labor! Ah, Sir, if this is all you do, the Master thinks you are idle! You are doing nothing for Him, nothing worth the doing, nothing that can be written in the roll and record of history as a great feat done by a soul redeemed with the blood of Christ! O you laborious idlers, I pray that you may be made to go and work in the Master’s vineyard!

There are *some who are idling because of their constant indecision*. They are not altogether bad, but they are not good. They do not serve the devil unless it is by neglecting to serve God. Though they are idle, they are full of good intentions—but so they have long been. If they were now what they resolved to be 10 years ago, there would be a great change in them. But no. And, apparently, in 10 years' time they will be as they are now. That is to say, if God spares them. They will get no farther, for they are of the sort that "resolve and re-resolve," and yet remain the same. I almost wish that they would say that they would be lost, sooner than say that they will be saved and yet not mean it, for, if they said that they would be lost, they would recoil from it with horror after having said it! But now they play with God, with eternity, Heaven and Hell, and say, "I will, I will, I will." And always it is, "I will," yet they never will to make that, "I will," a thing of the present moment. Sirs, if a house were on fire and you were in the upper story, it would be a pity to say, "I will escape, by-and-by, when the flames have reached another story, but I must wait a little while." No, you would be eager to escape at once, I am sure that you would! And wisdom dictates that a man should not always parley and say, "I will," and yet never come up to the mark. Wisdom dictates that, by the Grace of God, we should say, "I have reached the end of my indecision. I will begin to live for God, if He will give me spiritual life. I will cast off the works of darkness if God will give me spiritual light. I will lay myself at Jesus' feet and cry, 'Save me, O Lord, for I long to escape from my sin and to be an idler no longer!'"

IV. I will not say more upon that point, but go on to the next question—WHAT WORK WOULD THE LORD HAVE THESE IDLERS DO—

"Go you also into the vineyard."

One would think, from what you hear from some men, that the service of God was a very difficult, dreary, dismal, hard, toilsome business. But it is not so. *The work which the Lord would have us do is very proper and fit for us*. He would have us recognize that we are sinners and He, therefore, would have us come and be washed. And when we are washed, He would have us realize that it is our joy, our duty, our privilege, our delight, to show forth the praises of Him who has thus saved us. The service of God is the most fit employment for a man to be engaged in—it never degrades him, it never wearies him, for in the service of God we gain fresh strength. And the more we serve Him, the more we can serve Him.

Beloved Friends, the Lord invites you to *a service in which He will give you all the tools and all the strength you need*. When He sends you to His vineyard, He does not expect you to go home to fetch a basket of tools. God does not expect sinners to find their own Savior and He never sends His soldiers on a warfare at their own charges. He who yields himself up to be a servant of God shall find himself singularly prepared and specially helped to do all that God asks him to do.

More than that, if you will come into God's vineyard, dear Friend, *you shall work with God and so be ennobled*. That seems to me the most wonderful thing about our service, that we are "workers together with God." To bend the tendril of that vine and find an almighty hand softly

working with our own—to take the sharp pruning knife and cut off the too-luxuriant branch and feel that there is a knife sharper than ours cutting as we cut—to take a spade and dig about the vine, and all the while to feel and know that there is a secret Worker digging deeper than we are digging and so making what we do effectual! Happy men who thus have their God working with them! Beloved, if you are building for God and you lift the trowel, or the hammer and feel that there is another hand lifting another trowel and another hammer—building with you and building by you—you are divinely honored! You are of the nobility of Heaven if God works with you and it is to that position He invites you when He says, “Go you also into the vineyard.”

Young men of 25, or 30, let me tell you that *if you engage in this work, it shall be growingly pleasant to you*. The little difficulties at the commencement shall soon be gone. The service of God may seem, at first, like swimming against the stream, but afterwards you shall discover that there is a pleasure, even, in the opposing element, for the live fish always prefers to swim up the stream. You shall find a delight in your difficulties, a sacred joy in that which seems at first so arduous to you and, as you live and labor for your Lord, it shall become joy upon joy to serve Him and glorify His holy name!

And, dear Friends, *this work shall be graciously rewarded at the last*. The Lord will give you, according to His Grace, a reward here and a reward hereafter! Not of debt, mark you—I am preaching no legal sermon, asking the young man to work that he may *win* Heaven thereby, but I ask you, first, to believe in Jesus and so to become the servants of the living God, and then out of gratitude, to spend yourselves and to be spent for Him. If you do so, verily, I say unto you, you shall not lack a reward either here or hereafter!

I will close when I have reminded you that though I have been speaking to men who have reached the third hour—from 25 to thirty-five—we must remember that the householder went out, again, at the sixth hour—say, 35 to forty-five. He called those whom he found then and when he called them, they went into the vineyard. You men who are between 35 and 50, in the very strength of your days, Christ will not refuse to employ you if you will come at His call!

Then the householder went out again at the ninth hour, say, fifty, fifty-five, sixty—or farther on, sixty-five. It was getting late, but still they could do a good stroke of work if they threw all their energies into it. No man needs despair of doing a life-work even now. If you cannot do long work, you can do strong work. There are some men who begin work very late, but they go at it with such vigor and earnestness that they get through a good deal. I do not see why you should not, at any rate, come in now! Old men have done great things in the past—if they have not the vivacity of youth, they have more wisdom. If they have not all the strength, they have more prudence. There is a place for you to fill, my good Brother and Sister, though so many years have flown over your head. If you come to Christ even now, He will use you in His vineyard.

Ah, but, best of all, the householder went out even at the eleventh hour! He might have said, “It is of no use to go out *now*, for if I bring

them in, there is only one hour left for them to work.” Still, as I have told you, it was not because *he* needed men, but because *they* needed the money, that he employed them. So, to show that he did not need them at the first hour and did not need them at the third, or the sixth, or the ninth hour, much less could he need them at the eleventh hour, yet he would still go out! There they are! I see them—they are a pack of old men and old women. You would not engage them, I am sure. You would say, “They will take half their time talking and the other half wiping the sweat from their brows—and do nothing! There is not any strength left in the poor old souls—they had better have an almshouse, a basin of gruel and sit by the fireside.”

But this good householder’s engagement of the men was not for his own sake, *but for their sakes*. He felt that he might as well engage these as he had done the rest, so he said to them, “Here, it is the eleventh hour, but go and work in my vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.” I feel it a great joy to have been called to work for my Lord in the early hours of my life’s day. And I hope, by-and-by, to be able to say, “O God, You have taught me from my youth and up to now I have declared Your wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not until I have showed Your strength unto this generation and Your power to everyone that is to come.” I do not think my Lord will turn His old servant out. When I get old, you may become tired of me, but He will not! He will hear my prayers—

“Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord.”

It is the best and the happiest thing of all, if we have served our Lord from our youth, but dear aged Friend, if you have missed that privilege, to your own grief and sorrow, if you are now an old man unsaved, or an old woman unsaved, yet even now the Lord invites you! He calls you! He bids you come and welcome! And if you do but come to Him, He will give you your penny, too, even as He gives it to those who have begun their working day so early!

If I remember rightly, there was a man who was converted at the age of 103. He was sitting under a hedge, I think in Virginia, and he remembered a sermon that he had heard Mr. Flavel preach at Plymouth. And recalling a striking part of it, he turned to God and found peace and pardon. He was spared to live three more years and when he died, this inscription was put over his grave, “Here lies a babe in Grace, aged three years, who died, according to nature, aged 106.” Do you remember that venerable friend who was baptized here about six months ago? Dear old man, I had often seen him in distress of mind, oh, so sorrowful! I must confess that I sometimes avoided going where he was because I could not cheer him up, and he was rather inclined to pull one down to his own level, he was so sad—a dear good soul and a true child of God, but always doubting his evidences. One day, when I sat to see enquirers, he came. He said that he wished to be baptized that he might confess his faith in Christ. He was not sure that he was a child of God, but he knew that he had no hope but in the precious blood of Christ.

He was a very old man. Did I think that he was too old? No, I did not. Bless him! I was glad to see him. He was baptized at 86 and that day he

was so happy! Those who knew him never saw him so joyful. He was trusting in the precious blood and he had obeyed his Master's command. He had about three months of the days of Heaven upon earth in which, if you saw the old man, you must have noticed how bright he was. He walked with God and then he went Home. We had not our old member long, had we? No, but there sits in this place, if she has been able to get here, tonight, a Sister who joined this Church when she was about sixteen, and she has been a member 76 years and is still among us! Think of the difference between these two—one makes a confession of faith for 76 years, and another for only two or three months! Yet they shall both receive their penny! I am sure we do not grudge the penny to the Brother who came in at eighty-six. We are glad that he should have the full tale of blessing here and hereafter. Still, dear Friends, do not wait as long as he did. And if you have waited until now, make haste and get to Christ at once! May His Holy Spirit lead you and guide you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
MATTHEW 19:13-30; 20:1-16.

All sorts of persons are invited to come to Christ, whatever their age may be. We begin here with the children.

Matthew 19:13-15. *Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto Me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. And He laid His hands on them, and departed there.* The principal difficulty of children in coming to Christ frequently lies in their friends. Their parents or their other relatives think they are too young, and discourage them. Oh, that we all had a right idea of the possibility of the conversion of little children! No, not only of the possibility, but that we *looked* for it, *watched* for it and *encouraged* young children to come to Christ! You know that in the parable I am going to read presently, we are told that the householder "went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." What a privilege it is to be brought to Christ early in the morning—that is, while we are yet children.

16. *And, behold, one came and said unto Him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* This was not a child, but a young man, who had come to riper years.

17-20. *And He said unto him, Why do you call Me good? There is none good but One, that is, God: but if you will enter into life, keep the Commandments. He said unto Him, Which? Jesus said, You shall do no murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness, honor your father and your mother and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The young man said unto Him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?* Externally, in the letter, very likely this young man had kept these Commandments and, so far he was to be commended, yet internally, in their spirit, he had not kept one of them. Our Savior did not tell him that he had failed, but He took him on

his own ground. "You say that you love your neighbor as yourself; I will give you a test to prove whether you do."

21, 22. *Jesus said to him, If you will be perfect, go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in Heaven: and come and follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.* See, then, that often with men—with young men—the great hindrance in coming to Christ may be the world. They may have riches, or they may have a great craving for riches—and this may stand in the way of their coming to the Savior. If any man loves riches better than he loves Christ, he cannot be saved!

23, 24. *Then said Jesus unto His disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* Somehow or other—

**"Gold and the Gospel seldom agree,
Religion always sides with poverty"**

because a man's possessions are so liable to get into his heart. He is apt to turn them into idols and to make devotion to them the great objective of his life. As long as he does so, he cannot be saved.

25-27. *When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who, then, can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed you; what shall we have, therefore?* Always too fast is this impetuous Peter; ever ready to put in a good word for himself if he can.

28, 29. *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That you which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the Throne of His Glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone that has forsaken houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.* He shall find himself a gainer by his losses for Christ's sake! If he has lost friends, he shall find better and truer friends in the Church of God. If he has lost possessions, he shall get a *spiritual* wealth that shall be better to him than houses and lands.

30. *But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*

Matthew 20:1, 2. *For the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.* That was the usual wage of the time, the daily pay of a Roman soldier.

3, 4. *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way.* You notice that the first laborers made a bargain with the householder. He agreed with them for a penny a day and then sent them into his vineyard. So our Lord seemed to say to Peter, "If you are going to make a bargain concerning your service, you will not find it pays. You are saying, 'We have forsaken all, and followed You; what shall we have, therefore?'" That

spirit will not do! Christ is not to be served by hirelings! The moment the idea comes in that we *deserve* to have anything at His hands, we spoil all our service and those who might be first come to be last if they once get that notion into their heads. This parable shows that it is so.

5-9. *Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They said unto him, Because no man has hired us. He said unto them, Go you also into the vineyard; and whatever is right, that shall you receive. So when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. This was the gift of Grace, through the generosity of the employer.*

10-12. *But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have worked but one hour, and you have made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. They put forth their claim on the ground of deserving, so they had what they had bargained for, but they had no more. They were engaged first, but because they had the hireling spirit they were put last.*

13-15. *But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do you no wrong: did not you agree with me for a penny? Take that what is yours and go your way: I will give unto this last, even as unto you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is your eye evil, because I am good? God will have us know that in dealing with us when we are His servants, He is under no obligation to us. If He chooses to give a reward, the reward is not of debt, but of His Sovereign Grace. We are bound to serve Him by the fact that He is our Creator, altogether apart from any reward, and we must not talk of dealing with Him on terms of reward! It is too high a style for us, poor worms, to assume in the Presence of Almighty God! It we talk so, He will soon put us down into our right place.*

16. *So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—201, 508, 538.

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

GOOD NEWS FOR THE AGED NO. 2602

A SERMON
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, DECEMBER 30, 1855.

*“And about the eleventh home he went out and found others standing idle.”
Matthew 20:6.*

WE have come to the end of another year. Better is the end of a year than the beginning thereof. A year is begun with fear and trembling—it closes with joy and thankfulness. In the beginning of the year, we are like the sailor when he leaves port, hoists his sails and goes out on the broad sea toward a distant country. At the end of the year, we are sometimes like that mariner when he casts his anchor overboard and lies still in the haven. We have come into harbor, now, at the end of the year and here we rest and gratefully review our voyage.

But, in coming to the end of another year, we have some solemn things to talk about, as well as some on which to congratulate ourselves. This is to be our subject and may God make it both solemn and profitable for the winding-up of the old year. “And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle.” These words are taken from the parable of the householder who went out early and hired laborers into his vineyard. And who went out again at the third hour, and the sixth hour, and the ninth hour and, at last, went out at the eleventh hour and did the same. And when the laborers came to be paid, he gave to those who were hired at the eleventh hour the same pay as to those whom he had hired at the beginning of the day. We shall note, in our text, first, the *Sovereignty of Divine Grace*. Secondly, *the mercy of God*. And afterwards we will endeavor to make a solemn application of the passage to both old and young.

I. First, in our text, we have DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY VERY PROMINENT.

When we say Divine Sovereignty, we mean that God has the same rights which an absolute monarch has, that, just as a sovereign, under the old Jewish laws, or under the Medes and Persians, had a right to do entirely as he willed with his subjects, and there were none that could stop his hand, or say, “What are you doing?” even so, God, only in an infinitely higher and much more righteous sense, is absolute Monarch in this world and has undoubted right to do with everyone of us just whatever He pleases. The Apostle Paul wisely asked, “Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?” That Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty—alas, too much discarded—must be proclaimed, however men may bite their

lips, and however angry they may be to hear themselves humbled in the dust and Jehovah God exalted as their Master!

This parable shows the Sovereignty of God *with regard to the calling of certain persons*. The householder went out early in the morning and called so many. He went out at the third hour and called more. He went out at the sixth, the ninth and the eleventh hours and still he found more persons unemployed. Did he find them expecting or seeking work? No. He found them “standing idle in the marketplace.” They were not working, nor doing anything. He found them standing idle and so, just as he pleased, he said to some of them, “Go and work in my vineyard.” There is such a thing as Divine Sovereignty with regard to the choice of persons who are to be saved. If one man is saved and not another, God has made the difference and God has the *right* to make the difference. If my brother shall enter Heaven and I shall be sent to Hell, God has a right to save my brother and He would be righteous in my damnation, for I deserve it. And if my brother does not deserve to be saved—as he does not—yet God has a right to give salvation to him and to withhold it from me, if so it pleases Him. My soul falls down in abject submission at His feet! I have no rights when I come before the Almighty. I have no claims on Him. I have so sinned and so erred that if He had sent my soul to Hell, I should have richly deserved it. God has a right to do as He wills with His creatures and He exhibits this right in His choice of those whom He calls to work in His vineyard.

But, again, Divine Sovereignty is exhibited *in the time when the householder called his people*. Some were called early in the morning. Some at the third hour, some at the sixth, some at the ninth, some at the eleventh. The man who was called at the eleventh hour did not grumble and say, “Why did you not call me in the morning?” The man who was called in the morning, though it is said that he afterwards murmured because he did not have more pay than the last who were hired, yet, if he had been in his right mind, would have been thankful to the householder that he had given him the honor of working in his vineyard and had called him so early into it. It is a mercy to be effectually called by Grace at any time and we must not dictate to God when He shall give us His Grace. God exercises His Sovereignty in calling and converting sinners when He pleases. We have some in our churches who have been Christians ever since they were four or five years of age. And we have others who were not converted until they were 60 or seventy. God calls His people out of the world and from the service of sin and Satan at all periods of life—and thus He exhibits His Divine Sovereignty in saving men when He pleases.

How often have I heard legal preachers assert that if a man is not saved before he is thirty, it is not likely that he will be saved at all! And that if a man has attended the House of God for 30 years and is not saved, there is just a possibility, but hardly a probability, that He ever will be saved. That is all nonsense, or something worse, because God is God—He saves whom He wills and He saves them when He wills! Our Lord said to Nicodemus, “The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and to here it goes:

so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” God is just as able to convert a man with gray hairs on his head as He is to convert a man of thirty—there is no difference. We all stand before Him as sinners and if He pleases to save a gray-headed man, He can do so. Men talk in the way I mentioned just now in order to stir up the young to seek Christ, but they little know that while such language has little or no effect upon the young, on the other hand it often depresses the spirits of the old and makes them think, “Surely, then, our hour of mercy is passed and we cannot be saved.” And yet these same preachers quote Dr. Watts and say—

***“Life is the time to serve the Lord,
The time to insure the great reward!
And while the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return.
Life is the hour that God has given
To escape from Hell and fly to Heaven!
The day of Grace, and mortals may
Secure the blessings of the day.”***

Yes, Beloved, as long as a man is living in this world, and I also am living, I will preach the Gospel to him! And if I could find “the wandering Jew”—if such a being ever existed—and he were nearly 2,000 years of age, I would still preach the Gospel even to him—and if he trusted Christ as his Savior, he would find mercy and salvation!

So Divine Sovereignty shows itself, first, in the calling of certain persons, and, next, in the time when those persons are called.

And, once again, there will be Divine Sovereignty *in the ultimate reward of those who are called*. The householder gave to every man a penny. The one who was hired at the eleventh hour came in fresh to his work and did just a little hoeing, or digging, or pruning, or something of that sort—and there was a penny for him. In comes another man, who wipes the sweat from his brow, and says, “Ah, I have been hard at work these 12 hours”—and there was a penny for him! Neither more nor less for one or the other—a penny for each one who came to work in the vineyard. Thus God shows His Sovereignty in His distribution of rewards. When some of the laborers murmured against the good man of the house, he answered one of them, and said, “Friend, I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a penny? Take what is yours and go your way. I will give unto this last, even as unto you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is your eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last, for many are called, but few chosen.” Those who came last received just as much as those who came first.

I am not quite sure whether that doctrine is true, which is called the Doctrine of Degrees of Glory. I have heard it preached very frequently, but I never yet saw any Scripture warrant to back it up. The text that the advocates of this doctrine usually bring forward is the passage, “One star differs from another star in glory.” But anyone who can read English and who turns to that passage, will see that the Apostle is not speaking of degrees of glory in Heaven, but of different kinds of glories in the *stellar* heavens. And besides, stars may differ without varying in degree of glory, for one may be red, another green, a third yellow and yet all may be alike

bright. Even so, though all the saints will differ in some respects, I do not see why there should necessarily be degrees of glory. There may be degrees of glory, but, so far as I can judge by reading the Scripture, I cannot see the slightest evidence to prove the doctrine to be true.

What is the glory of a saint? Is it not Christ's righteousness? And shall I, the least of all saints, have less of Christ's righteousness than the greatest? Is not the glory of the saint the love of his Master? And will my Master love a poor old woman who lived up three pairs of stairs and died without ever having been heard of, less than He loves the most popular minister? Ah, Beloved, there are degrees of Grace, *here*, but we know not that there will be any degrees of glory! Why should a poor creature, lying on a sick bed, who for years has trusted in her Savior, have less glory than another who has been allowed to toil in His service? Why, it is an honor for us to be busy in good works here—we do not need to be honored for honor and, because God has given us a little more honor, here, to have an eternal difference made between us and others of His people. No, Beloved, every man who worked in the vineyard had a penny, and every saint will, in God's own time, be in Heaven! He will be with Christ and like Christ. How can he be more one with Christ than another is? All Believers are blood-washed, all are equally justified, all shall be equally sanctified! And as their persons shall be all pure, so do we believe that their Heaven will be equal, or, if not, Scripture certainly gives no countenance to the idea of degrees of glory.

In this matter of eternal rewards, God will display His Sovereignty. There shall be some old man who has lived to be ninety and who was saved only in the last year of his life—and when he enters Heaven, he will sit as much beside Christ as one like Timothy, who was called in his early youth, preached the Gospel during a long course of usefulness, and died with honors on his head! There shall be a poor wretched sinner, like the thief who was saved when he hung upon a cross, and he will sing as sweet, and as loud, and as strong as the Apostle Paul, or the Apostle Peter, “for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek”—between one man and another—“for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.” Thus He displays His Sovereignty in choosing the persons who shall be saved, in selecting the time when they shall be saved and in their ultimate reward.

II. This brings us to consider THE GREAT MERCY OF GOD EXHIBITED IN HIS SOVEREIGNTY.

This householder went out to hire men for his vineyard because he needed them, didn't he? Yes, but God does not go to hire men and bring them into His vineyard because He needs them. There is not a man in this world that God could not do without. “Oh,” you hear persons say, sometimes, “suppose Mr. So-and-So were to die? What would the Church do?” Why, do as it did before—live on its God! For—

***“When all created streams are dry,
His fullness is the same.”***

And when He calls any of His servants away, He can work out His eternal purposes quite as well without us as He does with us! The householder in the parable needed men, but God is altogether independent of them

and herein is the mercy of God manifested—that He goes out to find men to come into His vineyard when He positively can do without them! Does He need any of us? What? He who guides the stars and keeps them revolving in their orbits by the motions of His fingers—does He need an insignificant atom like one of ourselves to serve Him? What? He whom all the hosts of angels worship and before whose Throne the cherubim do veil their faces with their wings—does He need a tiny creature like man to give Him homage and reverence? If He did need men, He could soon create as many mighty kings and princes as He pleased to wait upon Him—and He could have crowned heads to bow before His footstool and emperors to conduct Him through the world in triumph.

But He needs not men. He can do without them if He pleases. O you stars! You are bright, but you are not the lamps which light the way of God—He needs you not. O sun! You are bright, but your heat warms not Jehovah. O earth! You are beautiful, but your beauty is not needed to gladden His heart! God is glad enough without you. O lightning! Though you write His name in fire upon the midnight darkness, He needs not your brightness! And wild ocean! You are mighty, but though you sing His deep praise in your solemn chorus, your storms do not add to His Glory. Winds! Though you attend the march of God across the pathless ocean. Thunders, though you utter God's voice in terrible majesty and track the onward progress of the God of armies, He needs you not! He is great without you—great beyond you, great above you and, as He needs you not, He needs *us* not!

Then look at the mercy of God, *to come after any of us*. To come after me, to come after you, my Sister, my Brother. Admire His Grace. Look at the householder in this parable. He comes early in the morning. He comes late in the evening and he comes many times between. In like manner, God is untiring in His mercy. The householder rose up early to go out and find some men to work in his vineyard. So does God. How early He goes to some! Blessed be His dear name, there were some of us who were lit to our slumbers while we were young, by the lamps of the sanctuary. We can recollect when, in our midnight watches, like young Samuel of old, the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and we answered. "Here am I, Lord." Oh, we can remember when our grandmother Lois, and our mother Eunice taught us out of the Scriptures! When we were dandled on the lap of piety, when the breath of sacred song was breathed by us and an atmosphere laden with the perfume of Heaven was always around us! We inhaled it even from our infancy. Ah, hear this, you sons of Grace, God came to some of you very early, but, Beloved, He does not get tired. He came for some early in the morning and they would not go. He came after them in the preaching of the Gospel and they spurned all that the minister said. But when God is determined to save, He does not tire, but continues seeking even to the eleventh hour!

And now, O you gray-headed men, God has come after some of you! All your coming to God's sanctuary from your earliest days have been of little or no use up to now. Yet now, I beseech you, consider that He comes to you even at this eleventh hour, for the Lord's mercy is untiring, His Grace is immutable! Having set His heart upon a man, if He does not

come at the first hour, He shall come, some time or other. Divine Mercy will sweetly dispose Him to come. Blessed be the name of our God, there have been some who have come into our churches who would not have been taken into any army in the whole world, for they were made, by old age, too feeble to fight. Their eyes had begun to be dim. Father Time had written his name on their brows, their hair had become whitened and they came leaning on their staff to tell us what they knew of the Lord's redeeming love. Some of the sweetest tales I have ever heard have been told me by gray-headed sinners, saved in their last days, just when they were trembling on the borders of the grave! Do you think you see such a scene? The poor old sinner is tottering along—another minute he will be in Hell! Hear the voice of God, "Gabriel, stop that man! One more step and he will be in the Pit!" Down flies Gabriel, catches him in his arms and stops him for a moment, while the Holy Spirit whispers to him, "Flee from the wrath to come!" And, starting backward, he looks at the Pit wherein he had almost fallen and he hears hollow Time sinking down into eternity—yet he is saved!

Surely, there will not be any man in Heaven who will bless God more than the gray-headed man who is called at the eleventh hour! Blessed be the name of God that such sinners are brought in—poor decrepit old creatures past labor and good for nothing—yet they are saved. Yes, even those who have worn themselves out in the service of Satan, God is willing to receive! The devil's hacks, Christ will not cast away! They who have nothing left that is of any use in the world, Jesus Christ graciously receives at the eleventh hour! He says to them, as the householder said to the men in the marketplace, "Why stand you here all the day, idle?"

Do you not, Beloved, admire the stupendous, amazing, astonishing Grace of God which thus reclaims men at the eleventh hour? There is a young man in a very poor position in life. You come to him and say, "Come to my house and be my son. I will wash you clean, I will give you warm clothes, I will make you rich." But he turns away and does despite to your invitations. He insults you to your face, mocks at your friends, breaks your holy days and thoroughly despises you. When you look at him, again, he is beginning to enter middle age. You go to him and say, "Will you come to me, now, and be my son?" "No," he says, "I will not." Do you not think that by the time he was 40 or 50 years old, you would be quite tired of him? And suppose it possible that, when he was 70 or 80 years of age, he should come and knock at your door and ask to be adopted as your son—would you not go to him and say, "What? You have the impudence to come now, while these forty, fifty, sixty years you have refused to accept my invitation! You vile ingrate, I will have nothing to do with you! Do you think I am going to have you, now, when there is nothing left of you that is worth having? Go back to where you have been all these years! Those you served when you were young, you may serve now that you are old! You had the pleasures of sin when you were young, go and have it now! It is a fine thing to make an almshouse of your religion, coming to me to take care of you when you are so old that you cannot take care of yourself! Be off with you!"

You and I might act like that, but the Lord does not. He not only does not turn a gray-headed old sinner away, but He goes after him, Himself, or else he would not come! Though He has sent His servants, and the man has rejected them time after time, He says, "He will not come unless I go after him Myself." So He goes to the poor palsied man, who can be of no service to Him, and says, "Come unto Me! Even you have I loved with an everlasting love, and I will save even you! You shall be delivered from going down to the Pit, your eyes shall be saved from tears and your feet from falling." There is Divine Sovereignty! There is unparalleled mercy!

III. Now may God help us while we ENDEAVOR TO MAKE A SOLEMN APPLICATION OF THIS SUBJECT, first, TO THE OLD!

It would be presumption in a young man to speak to the aged if he spoke to them simply as a young man. But, as a preacher, I am God's ambassador, and if God has sent me, no man may despise my youth, nor is it to be considered in the least degree, nor do I consider it, myself. I speak with the same authority that the most aged minister can command, for I have the same commission that he has and he has no better message than mine. [This sermon was preached in Brother Spurgeon's first full calendar year as a preacher in London. He was 21 years of age.—EOD.] Old man, come here and let me give you a solemn address, to warn you of the wrath to come!

Gray-headed man, I beseech you, first of all, *remember how many years you have wasted*. Look back upon your misspent life and count your years over and over again. What do you say of your sixty, seventy, perhaps eighty years? Your harvest is past, your summer is ended and you are not saved! In your youth, oh, how much you might have done, then! In your middle age, oh, how your vigor might have been spent in doing good to your fellows! Even some of your old age, how has it been misspent and misused! Weep, I beseech you, weep bitterly! Let your cheeks, furrowed with the ravages of time, feel, for a moment, the solemn scalding tears of regret, because you have wasted all those years!

Remember, also, that *you can never get them back again*. Long as you may live, you can never get one of them back! They have winged their way behind you, they are with the years beyond the flood and though you toil now, you can never recover the time you have lost—it is gone beyond the hope of rescue. Could you count out at once the price of a kingly ransom, you could not have back again even an hour! Consider then, my aged Friend, how much of your time has already run to waste and how many years have rolled away and you are still unsaved.

Consider, next, *suppose you are saved now, what a very little you can do for God!* At the most, you can have but a few short years in which to serve the Lord. Death is at your gates—those gates are tottering beneath the battering-ram of age. Death is already besieging you! The walls of your town of Mansoul are shaking beneath the devastating engines of decay. In all probability you have not more than a few years to live and, perhaps, not more than a few months, or weeks, or even *days*—and then you must be gone the way of all flesh.

Consider, too, O aged man, if you are put into the vineyard at this eleventh hour, *how little you can do for others!* You cannot preach the

Gospel now—your eyes are, perhaps, too dim even to read God’s Word to others. Your voice has lost melody. The windows out of which lust once looked have become darkened and you cannot hope that the fire of life shall light them up again. Consider how little you can do, even if you are saved, now—how much less, if your salvation is still postponed and you are not delivered from sin for years to come! Consider what is gone, you hoary heads, and turn unto the Lord even now!

O aged Sinner, *consider how much trouble has been lost upon you!* The vinedresser said of the barren fig tree, “I will dig about it and fertilize it.” How have you been dug about and fed! Another 104 sermons you have heard during the past year and yet you are unsaved! For 50 years, for 60 years you have attended the sanctuary every Sabbath, yet, as oil from a slab of marble, the Word has run off you! Thousands of sermons have left you as dead as ever and myriads of warnings have all sunk, as it were, into the sea like a pebble hurled into it, which is lost and gone. In all your Sabbaths, you have secured no merchandise for Heaven! You have toiled hard enough for this world and now where is all that you have gained? You have put your treasures into a bag full of holes! You have, “sown the wind,” and you shall, “reap the whirlwind,” unless you speedily repent and seek the Lord.

Consider, once more, old man, *how long and how much you have provoked your God.* Call to remembrance the sins of your youth. How often has that hand of yours which now is quivering with death’s touch, grasped the wineglass of the drunk in your youth! Look back upon your manhood—has it not been devoted to Satan and blackened with enormities of guilt? And now, up to this time, you have still provoked your God to smite you! His long-suffering arm has not crushed you and His mercy has kept back the sword of Justice, but can you expect such gracious treatment as that much longer? Will God be merciful forever? Will He be kind throughout eternity? And if His mercy should fail, will not His justice make short work with your soul?

And yet, if that thought does not stir you up to repentance, consider, once more, *if you should be unsaved, how horrible is the place appointed for you!* How fearful must be the doom which you shall receive! You are not a young sinner—he would be damned. You are an old sinner—how increasingly awful must be your doom! You are not one who has sinned because of mere youthful passion, but you have sinned when passion has died away and when prudence has taken possession of your soul. You have sinned when the heat and passion of youth have died. You have sinned, therefore, worse than a young man can have done! O old man, may a child warn you? I am sure I love you with all my heart and even now my young eyes weep for you. Have you never seen an old man led by a little child when he was blind? It may be that, though you are blind, a little child shall lead you to the Savior. It is a child who now speaks to you. O gray-headed man! Would it not be to you an eternal source of misery if I, a youth, were saved and you, who are aged, wert lost? Oh, when you see a young Christian, do not the tears run down your cheeks? When you see a child in Grace, does the penitential sigh never start from your bosom? I think if I were old like you and saw some

young child saved, I would wring my hands in misery, and say, "O Lord, is such a child a Christian and yet I am unsaved, I am unforgiven, I am still unpardoned?" Quake, quake, quake, O aged sinner! Be afraid, be afraid, be afraid, O unregenerate old man! Let your knees knock together, let your blood curdle in your veins, let your heart quiver, let your flesh be ready to creep at the thought that you will be lost and that, as the Lord God lives, there is but a step between you and death—between you and Hell!

But there are THE YOUNG and they are, perhaps, smiling, and saying, "Ah, all that is good advice for old age! It is quite right that old people should be religious, but why should we think about such things? We have not come to our 11th hour." What did you say, young man? "I said, I had not come to my 11th hour yet." What did you say? *Will you repeat that sentence?* No, you dare not, for you do not know when your 11th hour may be. Does any man know which will be his 11th hour? Do any of you know how many more days you may have to live? I do not and nor do you. Do any of my friends conceive that the time of his death is a long way off? No, Beloved, there is such a thing as death in the Chapel pew! The angel of death may be, this moment, coming in at that door and flapping his black wings across this place to find someone who is marked for destruction—and before you shall have entered your house, your soul may have departed and you may have gone from this stage of existence!

Consider then, I say, for you are all, if you are uncalled by Grace, like the man in the 11th hour, standing idle in the marketplace. Consider, if you are ever so young, have you not already given too much time to Satan and the world? I do not like the devil well enough to think that he ought to have the first 20 years of a man's life. Consider, young man—has not Satan had more than enough service from you? Will not the time past of your life suffice you to have worked the will of the Gentiles in serving divers lusts and passions? Do you think it will give you any comfort, on your deathbed, to reflect that you were, for many years, living in sin and not saved early? And do you not know that religion is so sweet that we might well seek it, even for its sweetness, if it were not necessary for our souls security? Ah, you men of the 11th hour, for such you all are—may our Master come to you even at this moment! And if He finds you idle, may He say, "Go you, also, and work in My vineyard!"

I will conclude with just a few words of encouragement to the eldest man and the oldest woman among us. Think not that you are beyond the pale of hope because you are aged. Do not believe Satan when he says to you, "Oh, you are too old a sinner to be saved." Tell him that he is a liar and that he does not know anything about it, for there are none too old to be saved! God will have mercy on all those that come to Him. He takes no objection to youth. He takes no objection to old age. Hear this, you aged sinners! If you are now under a sense of sin, if you are desirous of being saved, there is mercy in the Lord Jesus even for you! And O beloved Friends, one and all of you, are you this night crying out for mercy? Are you desirous of pardon? Do you feel that life is short and death is sure? Do you know that, in a few short days, or months, or years, a few narrow boards shall hold your body and your soul shall have gone from

it into eternity? Do you wish for a Guide across the trackless desert which leads to Heaven or to Hell? Do you desire a Conductor to lead you into Paradise? Do you desire angelic wings to lift you up to the Celestial City? Do you seek for Christ's blood to cleanse you, for God's Grace to sanctify you? Then there is mercy for you! There is mercy for all who feel their need of it and ask the Lord for it! The viler the wretch, the more welcome he is! The worse the character, the more reason he should go to the Lord Jesus! It is Free Grace that we preach—and the vilest, most guilty, oldest, youngest sinner—anybody who feels his need of a Savior is welcome to that Savior now! The Lord give you Grace to seek Him! Remember that the least prayer will be heard, the weakest desire, the feeblest groan will be acknowledged in Heaven—and little as you may think that you shall ever find mercy, you most assuredly shall if you seek it through Christ!

Farewell! Adieu, old man! I know not who you are, but it was laid on my heart to seek you, and I have sought you. O poor old man, you are like one who once lost himself in a pine forest! The snow fell thickly around him. It was dark, damp, cold. The howling of the wolf could be heard by him in the distance and he feared that during the darkness of the night, he would be consumed. There remained but one protection for him and that was that he should light a fire, by which he might warm himself and frighten away the wild beasts. He gathered together the pinewood and the dry, sere leaves, wherever he could find them, and he took out his matchbox. He tried to strike one match, but it was good for nothing. He tried another, and another, and another! Once he thought he had a light and carefully held it in his fingers, seeking to bring it to the little kindling he had laid beneath his pile of wood—but it died out, to his bitter disappointment. For some time he kept on striking his matches. He did so carelessly at first, but, as the number diminished, he struck each one more carefully, till he came to the last two.

He struck the first of the two—he put it under his pinewood—it flamed a moment and then a gust of wind blew it out. And now he came to his last match. The wolf was howling, the wild wind was whistling, the snow was falling, the night was darkening! He feared that he must be there all night without a fire! Already his stiff joints began to freeze. His fingers were well-nigh frozen! You may guess how that man cowered on the earth, to strike, within the circle his frame might make, his last match. You may imagine how earnestly he put up his prayer to God that he might succeed the last time. "O Lord, let this last match succeed," he cried! And anxiously did he look at it time after time, lest it, too, might fail.

So, there is the gray-headed old man—he has his last match in the box. He has struck 69 of them all to no effect and now he has got to the seventieth. O God, if You do not strike the 70th for him, he is lost forever! If You do not give him the light from Heaven, fire from above, he must perish forever!

He strikes that match. On it depends his life—it is his last one—yet he strikes it. Ah, glorious! The flame has caught! It blazes! He sits down and

cheers himself. He is saved! He is saved! God grant that that last match may succeed with you, too, O old man!

God bless you, dear Friends! A happy new year to everyone of you! Many of them to those of you who are bound for Heaven—and a new year in Heaven to those whom God may take away before another year comes round! Adieu!

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 20:1-7.**

(This Exposition is reprinted from Mr. Spurgeon's last literary work, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. The Sermon and Exposition combined show the harmony between almost his earliest and his very latest proclamation of the Gospel).

Verses 1, 2. *For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.* The Kingdom of Heaven is all of Grace and so is the service connected with it. Let this be remembered in the exposition of this parable. The call to work, the ability and the reward—are all on the principle of Grace and not upon that of merit. This was no common man that is an householder—and his going out to hire laborers into his vineyard was not after the usual manner of men—for they will have a full day's work for a full day's wage. This householder considered the laborers rather than himself. He was up before the dew was gone from the grass and found laborers and sent them into the vineyard. It was a choice privilege to be allowed to begin holy service so early in the morning. They agreed with the householder and went to work on his terms. They might well be content, since they were promised a full day's hire and were sure to get it. A penny a day represented the usual and accepted wage. The householder and the laborers agreed upon the amount—this is the point which has to be noted further on. Young Believers have a blessed prospect—they may well be happy to do good work, in a good place, for a good Master, and on good terms.

3, 4. *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and said unto them; Go you, also, into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way.* Having indolence, and grieving that he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, he hired more workers about the third hour. They would work only three-quarters of a day, but it was for their good to cease from loafing at the street corner. These are like persons whose childhood is past, but who are not yet old. They are favored to have a good part of their day of life available for hallowed service. To these, the good householder said, "Go you, also, into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you." He pointed to those already in the field and said, "Go you, also," and he promised them not a definite sum, as he did those whom he first hired, but he said, "Whatever is right I will give you." They went their way to their labor, for they did not wish to remain idlers and, as right-minded men, they could not quarrel with the householder's agreement to give

them whatever was right. Oh, that those around us, who are in their rising manhood, would at once take up their tools and begin to serve the great Lord!

5. *Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.* Had it been altogether and alone a business transaction, the householder would have waited to begin a new day and would not have given a whole day's wage for a fraction of a day's work. The entire matter was alone of Divine Grace and, therefore, when half the day was gone, about the sixth hour, he called in laborers. Men of forty and fifty are bid to enter the vineyard. Yes, and about the ninth hour, men were engaged. At sixty, the Lord calls a number by His Grace! It is wrong to assert that men are not saved after forty—we know to the contrary and could mention instances. God, in the greatness of His love, calls into His service men from whom the exuberance of useful vigor has departed—He accepts the waning hours of their day. He has work for the weak as well as for the strong. He allows none to labor for Him without the reward of Grace, even though they have spent their best days in sin. This is no encouragement to procrastination, but it should induce old sinners to seek the Lord at once.

6, 7. *And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They said unto him, Because no man has hired us. He said unto them, Go you, also, into the vineyard and whatever is right, that shall you receive.* The day was nearly over—only a single hour remained—yet about the 11th hour he went out. The generous householder was willing to take on more workmen and give them hire, though the sun was going down. He found a group lingering at the loafers' corner—standing idle. He wished to clear the whole town of sluggards, so he said to them, “Why stand you here all the day idle?” His question to them may be read by making each word in its turn emphatic—then it yields a fullness of meaning. *Why* are you idle? What is the good of it? Why stand you *here* idle where all are busy? Why *all the day* idle? Will not a shorter space suffice? Why are you idle? You have need to work, you are able to do it and you should set about it at once. Why is any one of us remaining idle towards God? Has nothing yet had power to engage us in sacred service? Can we dare to say, “No man has hired us”? Nearly 70 years of age and yet unsaved? Let us bestir ourselves. It is time that we went, without delay, to till the weeds, prune the vines—do *something* for our Lord in His vineyard! What but rich Grace could lead Him to take on the eleven o'clock lingerers? Yet He invites them as earnestly as those who came in the morning and He will as surely give them their reward!

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

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

END OF VOLUME 44

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

NO. 77

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MAY 4, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?”
Matthew 20:15.***

THE householder says, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own?” and even so does the God of Heaven and earth ask this question of you this morning, “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?” There is no attribute of God more comforting to His children than the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all! There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all Creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne! On the other hand, there is no Doctrine more hated by worldlings, no Truth of God of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain Doctrine of the Sovereignty of the Infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His Throne! They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense his alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of Heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean. But when God ascends His Throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth—and when we proclaim an *enthroned* God and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter—then it is that we are hissed and execrated. And then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His Throne is not the God they love! They love Him anywhere better than they do when He sits with His scepter in His hand and His crown upon His head! But it is God upon the Throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His Throne whom we trust. It is God upon His Throne of whom we have been singing this morning. And it is God upon His Throne of whom we shall speak in this discourse! I shall dwell only, however, upon one portion of God’s Sovereignty and that is God’s Sove-

reignty in the distribution of His gifts. In this respect I believe He has a right to do as He wills with His own and that He exercises that right.

We must assume, before we commence our discourse, one thing certain, namely, that all blessings are *gifts* and that we have no claim to them by our own merit. This I think every considerate mind will grant. And this being admitted, we shall endeavor to show that He has a right, seeing they are His own, to do what He wills with them—to withhold them wholly if He pleases—to distribute them all if He chooses—to give to some and not to others—to give to none or to give to all, just as seems good in His sight. “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?”

We shall divide God’s gifts into five classes. First, we shall have *Temporal* gifts. Second, *saving* gifts. Third, *honorable* gifts. Fourth, *useful* gifts and fifth, *comfortable* gifts. Of all these we shall say, “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with *My* own?”

I. In the first place then, we notice TEMPORAL GIFTS. It is an indisputable fact that God has not, in temporal matters, given to every man alike. He has not distributed to all His creatures the same amount of happiness or the same standing in Creation. There is a difference. Mark what a difference there is in men personally (for we shall consider men chiefly)—one is born like Saul, a head and shoulders taller than the rest—another shall live all his life a Zaccheus—a man short of stature. One has a muscular frame and a share of beauty—another is weak and far from having anything styled comeliness. How many do we find whose eyes have never rejoiced in the sunlight, whose ears have never listened to the charms of music and whose lips have never been moved to sounds intelligible or harmonious? Walk through the earth and you will find men superior to yourself in vigor, health and fashion! And others who are your inferiors in the very same respects. Some here are preferred far above their fellows in their outward appearance and some sink low in the scale and have nothing about them that can make them glory in the flesh. Why has God given to one man, beauty, and to another, none—to one all his senses and to another but a portion? Why, in some, has He quickened the sense of apprehension, while others are obliged to bear about them a dull and stubborn body? We reply, let men say what they will, that no answer can be given except this, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” The old Pharisee asked, “Did this man sin or his parents, that he was born blind?” We know that there was neither sin in parents nor child, that *he* was born blind, or that others have suffered similar distresses, but that God has done as it has pleased Him in the distribution of His earthly benefits! And thus He has said to the world, “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?”

Mark, also, in the distribution of *mental gifts*, what a difference exists. All men are not like Socrates. There are but few Platos. We can discover but here and there a Bacon. We shall but every now and then converse with a Sir Isaac Newton. Some have stupendous intellects wherewith they can unravel secrets—fathom the depths of oceans—measure mountains—dissect the sunbeams and weigh the stars! Others have but shallow minds. You may educate and educate but can never make them great. You cannot improve what is not there! They have not genius and you cannot impart it. Anybody may see that there is an inherent difference in men from their very birth. Some, with a little education, surpass those who have been elaborately trained. There are two boys educated, it may be, in the same school, by the same master—and they shall apply themselves to their studies with the same diligence—yet one shall far outstrip his fellow. Why is this? Because God has asserted His Sovereignty over the intellect as well as the body! God has not made us all alike but diversified His “gifts.” One man is as eloquent as Whitefield. Another stammers if he but speaks three words of his mother tongue! What makes these various differences between man and man? We answer, we must refer it all to the Sovereignty of God, who does as He wills with His own!

Note, again, the differences of *men’s conditions in this world*. Mighty minds are, from time to time, discovered in men whose limbs are wearing the chains of slavery and whose backs are laid bare to the whip—they have black skins, but are in mind vastly superior to their brutal masters. So, too, in England. We find wise men often poor, and rich men not seldom ignorant and vain. One comes into the world to be arrayed at once in the imperial purple—another shall never wear anything but the humble garb of a peasant. One has a palace to dwell in and a bed of down for his repose, while another finds but a hard resting place and shall never have a more sumptuous covering than the thatch of his own cottage. If we ask the reason for this, the reply still is, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” So in other ways you will observe, in passing through life, how Sovereignty displays itself. To one man God gives a long life and uniform health so that he scarcely knows what it is to have a day’s sickness. While another totters through the world and finds a grave at almost every step, feeling a thousand deaths in fearing one! One man, even in extreme old age, like Moses, has his eyes undimmed. And though his hair is gray, he stands as firmly on his feet as when a young man in his father’s house. What, again we ask, is this difference? And the only adequate answer is, it is the effect of Jehovah’s Sovereignty. You find, too, that some men are cut off in the prime of their life—the very midst of their days—while others live beyond their threescore years and ten. One

departs before he has reached the first stage of existence and another has his life lengthened out until it becomes quite a burden. We must, I conceive, necessarily trace the cause of all these differences in life to the fact of God's Sovereignty! He is Ruler and King and shall He not do as He wills with His own?

We pass from this point—but before we do so we must stop to improve it just a moment. O you who are gifted with a noble frame, a comely body—boast not yourself therein, for your gifts come from God! O glory not, for if you glory, you become uncomely in a moment! The flowers boast not of their beauty, nor do the birds sing of their plumage. Be not vain, you daughters of beauty! Be not exalted, you sons of comeliness! And O you men of might and intellect, remember that all you have is bestowed by a Sovereign Lord. He created. He can destroy! There are not many steps between the mightiest intellect and the helpless idiot—deep thought verges on insanity! Your brain may, at any moment, be smitten and you may be doomed henceforth to live a madman. Boast not yourself of all that you know, for even the little knowledge you have has been given you. Therefore, I say, exalt not yourself above measure, but use for God what God has given you, for it is a royal gift and you should not lay it aside! But if the Sovereign Lord has given you one talent and no more, lay it not up in a napkin, but use it well. And then it may be that He will give you more. Bless God that you have more than others and thank Him, also, that He has given you less than others, for you have less to carry on your shoulders. And the lighter your burden the less cause will you have to groan as you travel on towards the better land. Bless God, then, if you possess less than your fellows and see His goodness in withholding as well as in giving!

II. So far, most men probably have kept up with us. But when we come to the second point, SAVING GIFTS, there will be a large number who will go from us because they cannot receive our Doctrine. When we apply this Truth regarding the Divine Sovereignty to man's *salvation*, then we find men standing up to defend their poor fellow creatures whom they conceive to be injured by God's Predestination! But I have never heard of men standing up for the devil—and yet if any of God's creatures have a right to complain of His dealings—it is *the fallen angels*. For their sin they were hurled from Heaven *at once* and we read not that any message of mercy was ever sent to them! Once cast out, their doom was sealed—while men were reprieved, redemption sent into their world—and a large number of them chosen to eternal life! Why not quarrel with Sovereignty in the one case as well as the other? We say that God has elected a people out of the human race and His right to do this is denied. But I ask, why not equally dispute the fact that God has chosen men and not

fallen angels, or His justice in such a choice? If salvation is a matter of right, surely the angels had as much claim to mercy as men! Were they not seated in more than equal dignity? Did they sin more? We think not. Adam's sin was so willful and complete that we cannot suppose a greater sin than that which he committed! Would not the angels who were thrust out of Heaven have been of greater service to their Maker if restored than we can ever be? Had we been the judges in this matter, we might have given deliverance to angels but not to men! Admire then, Divine Sovereignty. And love that decree whereas the angels were broken into shivers but God has raised an elect number of the race of men to set them among princes, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord!

Note again—the Divine Sovereignty in that *God chose the Israelite race and left the Gentiles for years in darkness*. Why was Israel instructed and saved, while Syria was left to perish in idolatry? Was the one race purer in its origin and better in its character than the other? Did not the Israelites take unto themselves false gods a thousand times and provoke the true God to anger and loathing? Why then, should they be favored above their fellows? Why did the sun of Heaven shine upon them, while all around the nations were left in darkness and were sinking into Hell by myriads? Why? The only answer that can be given is this—that God is a Sovereign—and “will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy and whom He wills, He hardens.”

So now, why is it that God has *sent His Word to us while a multitude of people are still without His Word*? Why do we each come up to God's tabernacle, Sabbath after Sabbath, privileged to listen to the voice of the minister of Jesus, while other nations have not been visited thereby? Could not God have caused His Light to shine in the darkness there, as well as here? Could not He, if He had pleased, have sent forth messengers swift as the light to proclaim His Gospel over the whole earth? He could have done it if He wanted. Since we know that He has not done it, we bow in meekness, confessing His right to do as He wills with His own!

But let me drive the Doctrine home once more. Behold how God displays His Sovereignty in this fact—out of the same congregation, those who hear the same minister and listen to the same Truth—one is taken and the other left. Why is it that one of my Hearers shall sit in yonder pew and her sister by her side, and yet the effect of the preaching shall be different upon each? They have been nursed on the same knee, rocked in the same cradle, educated under the same auspices. They hear the same minister, with the same attention—why is it that the one shall be saved and the other left? Far be it for us to weave any excuse for the man who is damned—we know of none—but also, far be it for us to take glory from God. We assert that GOD makes the difference—that the

saved sister will not have to thank herself, but her God. There shall even be two men given to drunkenness. Some Word of God spoken shall pierce one of them through, but the other shall sit unmoved, although they shall, in all respects, be equally the same both in constitution and education. What is the reason? You will reply, perhaps, because the one accepts and the other rejects the message of the Gospel. But must you not come back to the question, who made the one accept it and who made the other reject it? I *dare* you to say that the man made himself to differ. You *must* admit in your conscience that it is God, alone, to whom this power belongs! But those who dislike this Doctrine are, nevertheless, up in arms against us and they say, “how can God justly make such a difference between the members of His family? Suppose a father should have a certain number of children and he should give to one all his favors and consign the others to misery—should we not say that he was a very unkind and cruel father?” I answer you the cases are not the same. You have *not a father* to deal with, but *a Judge*. You say all men are God’s children. I demand of you to prove that! I never read it in my Bible. I dare not say, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” till I am regenerated! I cannot rejoice in the fatherhood of God towards me till I know that I am one with Him and a joint-heir with Christ! I dare not claim the fatherhood of God as an unregenerated man! It is not father and child—for the child has a claim upon its father—but it is King and subject! And not even so high a relation as that—for there is a claim between subject and King. A creature—a sinful creature, can have no claim upon God—for that would be to make salvation of works and not of Grace!

If men can merit Salvation, then to save them is only the payment of a debt and God gives them nothing more than He ought to give them. But we assert that Grace must be distinguishing if it is Grace at all. O, but some say is it not written that, “*He gives to every man a measure of Grace to profit withal*”? If you like to repeat that wonderful quotation so often hurled at my head, you are very welcome, for it is *no quotation from Scripture*, unless it is *an Arminian edition*! The only passage at all like it refers to the *spiritual* gifts of the Saints and the Saints, only. But I say, granted your supposition, that a measure of Grace is given to every man to profit withal, yet He has given to some a measure of Particular Grace to make that profit. For what do you mean by Grace, which I put out, to profit? I can understand a man’s improvement in the use of *grease*, but Grace improved and made use of by the power of man, I cannot comprehend! Grace is not a thing which I use—Grace is something which *uses me*! But people talk of Divine Grace, sometimes, as if it were something they could use—and not as an influence having power over them! Grace is something not which I improve, but which improves me, employs me,

works on me! And let people talk as they will about universal Grace, it is all nonsense—there is no such thing, nor can there be! They may talk correctly of universal *blessings*, because we see that the natural gifts of God are scattered everywhere, more or less, and men may receive or reject them. It is not so, however, with Divine Grace. Men cannot take the Grace of God and employ it in turning themselves from darkness to light. The light does not come to the darkness and say, use me. But the light comes and drives the darkness away. Life does not come to the dead man and say, use me and be restored to life. No, it comes with a power of its own and restores to life. The spiritual influence does not come to the dry bones and say, use this power and clothe yourselves with flesh. But it comes and clothes them with flesh and the work is done. Grace is a thing which comes and exercises an influence on us—

**“The Sovereign Will of God, alone,
Creates us heirs of Grace!
Born in the image of His Son,
A new-created race!”**

And we say to all of you who gnash your teeth at this Doctrine, whether you know it or not, you have a vast deal of enmity towards God in your hearts—for until you can be brought to know this Doctrine, there is something which you have not yet discovered which makes you opposed to the idea of God absolute, God unbounded, God unfettered, God unchanging and God having a free will, which you are so fond of proving that the creature possesses! I am persuaded that the Sovereignty of God must be held by us if we would be in a healthy state of mind. “Salvation is of the Lord alone.” Then give all the Glory to His holy name, to whom all Glory belongs!

III. We now come, in the third place, to notice the differences which God often makes in His Church in HONORABLE GIFTS. There is a difference made between God’s own children—when they are His children. Note what I mean—one has the honorable gift of *knowledge*, another knows but little. I meet, every now and then, with a dear Christian Brother with whom I could talk for a month and learn something from him every day. He has had deep experience—he has seen into the deep things of God—his whole life has been a perpetual study wherever he has been. He seems to have gathered thoughts, not merely from books, but from men, from God, from his own heart! He knows all the intricacies and windings of Christian experience—he understands the height, the depths, the lengths and the breadths of the love of Christ which passes knowledge. He has gained a grand idea, an intimate knowledge of the system of Grace and can vindicate the dealings of the Lord with His people!

Then you meet with another who has passed through many troubles, but he has no deep acquaintance with Christian experience. He never learned a single secret by all his troubles. He just floundered out of one trouble into another, but never stopped to pick up any of the jewels that lay in the mire—never tried to discover the precious jewels that lay in his afflictions. He knows very little more of the heights and depths of the Savior's love than when he first came into the world. You may converse with such a man as long as you like, but you will get nothing from him. If you ask why is it, I answer, there is a Sovereignty of God in giving knowledge to some and not to others! I was walking, the other day, with an aged Christian who told me how he had profited by my ministry. There is nothing that humbles me like that thought of yon old man deriving experience in the things of God, receiving instruction in the ways of the Lord from a mere babe in Grace. But I expect that when I am an old man, if I should live to be such, that some babe in Grace will instruct me! God sometimes shuts the mouth of the old man and opens the mouth of the child. Why should we be a teacher to hundreds who are, in some respects, far more able to teach us? The only answer we can find is in the Divine Sovereignty—and we must bow before it—for has He not a right to do as He wills with His own? Instead of being envious of those who have the gift of knowledge, we should seek to gain the same, if possible. Instead of sitting down and murmuring that we have not more knowledge, we should remember that the foot cannot say to the head, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of you, for God has given us talents as it has pleased Him.

Note, again, when speaking of honorable gifts. Not only knowledge, but *office* is an honorable gift. There is nothing more honorable to a man than the office of a deacon or a minister. We magnify our office, though we would not magnify ourselves. We hold there is nothing can dignify a man more than being appointed to an office in a Christian Church. I would rather be a deacon of a Church than Lord Mayor of London! A minister of Christ is, in my estimation, an infinitely higher honor than the world can bestow. My pulpit is to me more desirable than a throne—and my congregation is an empire more than large enough! An empire before which the empires of the earth dwindle into nothing in everlasting importance. Why does God give to one man a special call by the Holy Spirit to be a minister and pass by another? There is another man more gifted, perhaps, but we dare not put him in a pulpit because he has not had a special call. So with the deaconship. The man whom some would, perhaps, think most suitable for the office is passed by and another chosen. There is a manifestation of God's Sovereignty in the appointment to office—in putting David on a throne, in making Moses the leader of the

children of Israel through the wilderness, in choosing Daniel to stand among princes, in electing Paul to be the minister to the Gentiles and Peter to be the Apostle of the Circumcision. And you who have not the gift of honorable office must learn the great Truth contained in the question of the Master, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?"

There is another honorable gift, the gift of *utterance*. Eloquence has more power over men than all else besides. If a man would have power over the multitude, he must seek to touch their hearts and chain their ears. There are some men who are like vessels full of knowledge to the brim but have no means of giving it forth to the world. They are rich in all gems of learning, but know not how to set them in the golden ring of eloquence. They can collect the choicest of flowers but know not how to tie them up in a sweet garland to present them to the admirer's eyes. How is this? We say again, the Sovereignty of God is here displayed in the distribution of honorable gifts. Learn here, O Christian, if you have gifts, to cast the honor of them at the Savior's feet and if you possess them not, learn not to murmur! Remember that God is equally as kind when He keeps back as when He distributes His favors. If any among you is exalted, let him not be puffed up. If any is lowly, let him not be despised. For God gives to every vessel his measure of Grace. Serve Him after your measure and adore the King of Heaven who does as He pleases!

IV. We notice in the fourth place, the gift of USEFULNESS. I have often done wrong in finding fault with Brother ministers for not being useful. I have said you might have been as useful as I have been had you been in earnest. But surely there are others even more earnest and more efficient—others laboring as constantly, but with far less effect. And, therefore, let me retract my accusation and in lieu, thereof, assert that the gift of usefulness is the result of God's Sovereignty! It is not in man to be useful, but in God to make him useful! We may labor ourselves with all our might but God, alone, can make us useful. We can put every stitch of canvass on when the wind blows, but we cannot make the wind blow.

The Sovereignty of God is also seen in the diversity of ministerial gifts. You go to one minister and are fed with plenty of good food—another has not enough to feed a mouse! He has plenty of reproof but no food for the child of God. Another can comfort the child of God but he cannot reprove a backslider. He has not strength of mind enough to give those earnest home strokes which are sometimes needed. And what is the reason? God's Sovereignty. One can wield the sledge hammer but could not heal a broken heart. If he were to attempt it, you would be reminded of an elephant trying to thread a needle. Such a man can reprove, but he cannot apply oil and wine to a bruised conscience. Why? Because God has

not given to him the gift. There is another one who always preaches experimental divinity. And very rarely touches upon Doctrine. Another is all Doctrine and cannot preach much about Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. Why? God has not given him the gift of Doctrine. Another always preaches Jesus—blessed Jesus—men of the Hawker school—and many say, “Oh, they do not give us enough experience. They do not go into the deep experience of the corruption which vexes the children of God.” And we do not blame them for this. You will notice that out of the same man, he will at one time flow streams of living water, while at another time he will be as dry as possible. On one Sabbath you go away refreshed by the preaching and the next you get no good. There is Divine Sovereignty in all this and we must learn to recognize and admire it! I was preaching on one occasion last week to a large crowd of people and in one part of the sermon the people were very much affected. I felt that the power of God was there—one poor creature absolutely shrieked out because of the wrath of God against sin. At another time the same words might have been uttered and there might have been the same desire in the minister’s heart and yet no effect produced. We must trace, I say, Divine Sovereignty in all such cases! We ought to recognize God’s hand in everything. But I verily believe the present is the most godless generation that ever trod this earth! In our fathers’ days there was hardly a shower, but they declared that God caused it to fall. And they had prayers for rain, prayers for sunshine and prayers for harvest. As well when a haystack was on fire, as when a famine desolated the land—our forefathers said the Lord has done it! But now our philosophers try to *explain* everything and trace all phenomena to second causes. But Brothers and Sisters, let it be ours to ascribe the origin and direction of all things to the Lord and the Lord alone!

V. Lastly, COMFORTABLE GIFTS are of God. O, what comfortable gifts do some of us enjoy in the ordinances of God’s house and in a ministry that is profitable. But how many Churches have not a ministry of that kind? And why, then, have we? Because God has made a difference. Some here have strong faith and can laugh at impossibilities. We can sing a song in all ill weathers—in the tempest as well as in the calm. But there is another with little faith who is in danger of tumbling down over every straw! We trace eminent faith entirely to God. One is born with a melancholy temperament and he sees a tempest brewing even in the calm. While another is cheerful and sees a silver lining to every cloud, however black, and he is a happy man! And why is that? Comfortable gifts come from God. And then observe that we ourselves differ at times. For a season we may have blessed communion with Heaven and are permitted to look within the veil. But perhaps those delightful enjoy-

ments disappear. But do we murmur on that account? May He not do as He wills with His own? May He not take back what He has given? The comforts we possess were His before they were ours—

***“And should You take them all away,
Yet would I not repine,
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely Thine.”***

There is no joy of the Spirit—there is no exceedingly blessed hope—no strong faith—no burning desire—no close fellowship with Christ which is not *the gift of God* and which we must not trace to Him! When I am in darkness and suffer disappointment, I will look up and say He gives songs in the night. And when I am made to rejoice, I will say my mountain shall stand fast forever. The Lord is a Sovereign Jehovah. And, therefore, prostrate at His feet I lie and if I perish, I will perish there.

But let me say, Brothers and Sisters, that so far from this Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty making you to sit down in sloth, I hope in God it will have a tendency to humble you and so to lead you to say, “I am unworthy of the least of all Your mercies. I feel that You have a right to do with me as You will. If You crush me, a helpless worm, You will not be dishonored. And I have no right to ask You to have compassion upon me, save this, that I need Your mercy. Lord, if You will, You are able to pardon and You never gave Grace to one that needed it more. Because I am empty, fill me with the Bread of Heaven. Because I am naked, clothe me with Your robe. Because I am dead, give me life.” If you press that plea with all your soul and all your mind, though Jehovah is a Sovereign, He will stretch out His scepter and save and you shall live to worship Him in the beauty of holiness, loving and adoring His gracious Sovereignty! “He who believes,” is the declaration of Scripture, “and is baptized, shall be saved. But he that believes not shall be damned.” He that believes in Christ, *alone*, and is baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, shall be saved, but he who rejects Christ and believes not in Him, shall be damned!

That is the Sovereign decree and proclamation of Heaven—bow to it, acknowledge it, obey it and God bless you.

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

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

THE PRIVATE THOUGHTS AND WORDS OF JESUS NO. 2212

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 12, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 26, 1891

“And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again.”

Matthew 20:17-19.

You have this same story in Matthew, Mark and Luke, a little differently told, as would naturally be the case when the information came from three different observers. It will be to our edification to put the three accounts together, so as to get a complete view of the incident, for each Evangelist mentions something omitted by the others.

Our Lord firmly resolved to go to Jerusalem about a fortnight before the Passover, with the view of becoming, Himself, the Lamb of God's Passover. He had frequently left Jerusalem when His life had been in danger because His time was not yet come and He, thus, set us the example of not willfully running into danger, or braving it with foolhardiness. But now that He felt that the hour of His s

Sacrifice was near at hand, He did not hesitate, or seek to avoid it, but He resolutely set out to meet His sufferings and His death. When He was in the highway that led to Jerusalem, He marched in front of the little band of His disciples with so vigorous and bold a step—and with such a calm, determined air of heroism upon Him, that His followers were filled with astonishment (Mark 10:52).

Here are the very words—“And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid.” Knowing that, according to His own account, He was going to suffering and death and, being well assured, from their own observation, that He was about to encounter the most furious opposition, they were amazed at His dauntless courage and wondered what made Him so resolved! We also read that “they were afraid,” afraid for themselves, in a measure, but most of all afraid for Him. Would not His daring lead to conflict with the powers then in authority and might not terrible things happen both to Him and to them? It was not altogether timidity, but awe which came over them—His manner was so majestic and sublime. That

lowly Man had a something about Him which commanded the trembling reverence of His disciples. After all, meekness is imperial—and commands far more reverence than anger or pride.

His followers felt that great events were about to transpire and they were deeply sobered and filled with awe-struck apprehension. In the Presence of their Lord, who seemed to be leading a forlorn hope to a fierce battle, they were afraid. They were amazed at His courage and afraid for the consequences. They were also amazed at Him and afraid because of their own unfitness to stand in His Presence. Do we not know what this feeling is? Then it was that He took the 12 aside and began to tell them what things should happen to Him. The conversation was private. At this time we will go aside with the chosen Apostles for a little while and hear what their Lord would say to *us*, even as He aforetime said it to them. May the good Spirit bless our meditation!

I shall have three things to speak of and the first will be *our Lord's private communings*. This will give us an insight, secondly, into *our Lord's private thoughts*. And when we have looked into these a little, as far as our dim eyes are able, we will then notice, in the third place, *our Lord's dwelling on the details of His passion*, for into those details He went with singular impressiveness. Let us not forget our need of the Holy Spirit's illumination while we come near to a place so holy as this of "The Revelation of the Passion."

I. First, then, our LORD'S PRIVATE COMMUNINGS. He did not say all things to all men. He spoke certain matters only to His disciples. To the outside world it was given to hear the parable, but to the disciples was it given to know the explanation. Not even to all the disciples did our Lord make known the whole of His teachings. He had an elect out of the elect! First came 12 out of the many and then came three out of the twelve. These three were admitted to special manifestations which the other nine did not share. As if to carry the principle of election to the utmost extent, one was chosen out of the three, who enjoyed a peculiar personal love and leaned his head upon his Lord's bosom, as the other two never did. We are happy to be admitted, by the key of Inspiration, into the inner chamber of our Lord's private conferences.

On this occasion, *our Lord's communings were with the leaders of His band*. Those who have to lead others need more instruction than the rest. It needs more Grace to lead than to follow. No man can give out what he has not received. If you are to be a fountain of living waters to others, you must, yourself, be filled from the fullness of God. Dear Brothers and Sisters, you whom the Lord has chosen to be vessels of mercy to others, take care that you wait much upon Him yourselves, and are much with Him in secret retirement. Live near to God, that you may bring others near. I remember sitting, one rainy day, in an inn, at Cologne, looking out of a window upon a square. There was not much to see, but what was to see I did see, as I occasionally looked up from my writing.

I saw a man coming to a pump that stood in the middle of the square and from that pump he filled a vessel. A little while after, I saw the same man again filling his buckets. All that morning I saw no one else, but only

that one water-loving individual, filling his buckets again and again. I thought to myself, "What can he be? Why is he always drawing water?" Then I perceived that he was a water carrier, a bearer of water to families in the adjoining streets. Well might he often come to the fountain, himself, since he was supplying others. You that are water carriers for thirsty souls must necessarily come often to the Living Water, yourselves, and be thankful that your Master is always willing to meet you and give you rich supplies! He graciously waits to take you apart in the way and speak to you things which you need to hear and tell. Take care that you hear well that which you are commissioned to publish to all the world. Take good note of this, you who instruct others—neglect not the yielding of your ears to your Lord quite as completely as your tongue. Hear Him that you may speak of Him. Be sure that you are alone much with your Lord, that you may have Him much with you in public.

When our Lord, on this occasion, spoke to the 12, the time was significant—it *was on the way to a great trial*. To Him, His coming suffering was the sum of all trial. He was about to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities! The chastisement of our peace was about to fall upon Him that with His stripes we might be healed. But it was also to be a time of great trial to the disciples. Inasmuch as they loved their Lord, they would sympathize with His sufferings and death. Inasmuch as they trusted in Him, it would be a sharp trial to their faith to see Him dying on the Cross, vanquished by His remorseless enemies. Inasmuch as they loved His company, they would weep and lament, and feel like orphaned children when He was taken from them. Therefore they must be favored with a special private interview to prepare them for the coming ordeal.

Have you ever noticed how our Lord, before the coming to us of a great tribulation, strengthens our hearts by some heavenly visitation? Either before or after the affliction, it has happened to me to enjoy very special manifestations of the Well-Beloved. At such junctures He brings us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is love, that we may go down to the battle like men refreshed by a feast. He gives us a joyful bracing up, that we may be ready for tomorrow's stern service. I feel that it is so and I pray that each of you may know, by personal experience, how wise is your Redeemer's foresight—and how, by the communion apart, He prepares us for that which we are to meet at the end of the way. A drink from the brook of fellowship by the way will make you ready for the heat of the conflict. A word from His myrrh-dropping lips will perfume the air, even of the valley of death-shade. Speak to us, Lord, and we will not heed the howls of the dog of Hell!

When our Master thus took the 12 apart, we may say of His conversation, that *it was upon choice themes*. Our Lord's conversation is always holy and suitable for the occasion. *He spoke to them of the Scriptures*. Luke says, "He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished." Blessed theme—the Word of the Lord by His Prophets and the fulfillment thereof! Have you ever noticed how our Divine Lord delights to speak upon the Scriptures? How of-

ten does He enforce His teaching by, “as the Scripture has said”! If He has only two of them and they are walking on the road, we read, “Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Communion with Christ Jesus must be based on the Word of the Lord!

If you speak half a word derogatory of Holy Scripture, your fellowship will evaporate. Men talk about building upon Christ and not upon the Scriptures, but they know not what they say, for our Lord continually established His own claims by appealing to Moses and the Prophets! They would be Christo-centric, they say—I only wish they would! But if they take Christ for a center, they will inevitably have the Scriptures for a center, too—and these men neither want the one nor the other. They care nothing for the center—they only want to do away with the circumference, that they may roam at their own proud wills! Our Lord made the written Word to be the reason for many of His acts—He did this and He did not do that—because of what the Scriptures had said. He comes not to take away the Law and the Prophets, yes, not a jot or a tittle does He destroy, so careful is He of the Scriptures of truth! We learn from Him to believe not only in Inspired Words, but in Inspired jots and tittles!

They that have been much with Christ always show a profound reverence for the Word of God. I have never yet met with a person worthy to be called a saint who did not love and revere the Inspired Book. I have heard, in the last few days, the newly-coined word, “bibliolatry,” which is meant to set forth the imaginary crime of worshipping the Bible. I know not who may be guilty of the offense—I have never met with such idolaters. When I do, I will try to show them their error, but at present I am too much occupied with the enemies of the Bible to think much of its too ardent friends, if there is such an one! While the word may be used in an accusation against us, it most surely is a confession on the part of those who use it that they see nothing special about the Scriptures and are angry with those who do! Let them speak as they will, O Lord, “my heart stands in awe of Your Word.” I would be numbered with the men who tremble at Your Word!

The words of the Holy Spirit are more than words to me. I tremble lest I should sin against *Him* by sinning against them! I would not take away a word from the Book of this prophecy, nor add thereunto—let it stand as it is—for here it is that Jesus meets us and communes with us! He opens the Scriptures to our understanding and then He opens our understanding to receive the Scriptures. He makes us hear His voice in these chapters—yes, we see Him in them—

***“Here I behold my Savior’s face
Almost in every page.”***

We cannot look up to Heaven and see Jesus amid the celestial splendors, but He lovingly looks down from the Throne of His Glory into the mirror of the Word—and when we look into it we see the sweet reflection of His face. As in a mirror, His countenance is displayed by Scripture. O Believers, love the Word of God! Prize every letter of it and be prepared to answer the cold, carping words of critics who know nothing of the benediction which

comes to us through every line of Inspiration. These are they who would cruelly divide the living child, for it does not belong to them, but we will have no sword come near it, for it is our love—it is life and bliss to us! Our Lord, in His most private conversation with our souls, speaks in, and by, and through the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit!

But the chief theme that our Lord dwelt upon was *His own suffering even unto death*. Beloved, our Lord Jesus has said many delightful things—and let Him say what He will, His voice is as angels' music to our ears! But from the Cross, His voice is richest in consolation. We never come so near to Jesus—at least, such is my experience—as when we gaze upon His bloody sweat, or see Him robed in shame, crowned with thorns and enthroned upon the Cross! Our Lord's incomparable beauties are most visible amid His griefs. When I see Him on the Cross, I feel that I must borrow Pilate's words and cry, "Behold the Man!" Covered with His own blood from the scourging and about to be led away to be crucified between two thieves, you look into His inmost heart and behold what manner of love He bore towards guilty men!

We know not Christ till He puts on His crimson garments. I know not my Beloved when He is only to me as the snow-white lily for purity. But when, in His wounding, He is red as the rose, then I perceive Him! "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand." A suffering Savior bears the palm for me—a wounded Savior is my Lord and my God! The lower He went for my redemption, the higher does He rise in my soul's loving esteem. He saw this when He said, "I, if I am lifted up," for, indeed, it was a lifting up of Him to die upon the cruel Cross. To the wondering universe, the Son of God is lifted to a height of wondering admiration by His becoming obedient unto death out of love to His chosen. He is lifted up in every grateful heart and shall be lifted up forever. Our fellowship with Jesus largely flows along the great deep of His suffering and to me, at least, it is then deepest, truest and sweetest.

Our Lord talked to the 12 of His sufferings in great detail, of which we will speak further on, but He did not shrink from dwelling upon His death, nor did He stop there, but *foretold His rising again*. In each of the three accounts He appears to end the story of His passion by saying that on the third day He would rise again from the dead. That was a glorious climax—"The third day He shall rise again." Oh, that blessed doctrine of the Resurrection! If our Lord's record ended at the Cross, it might drive us to despair. But He is declared to be the Son of God with power by His Resurrection from the dead! That He was raised from the dead makes us see the merit, the power, the great reward of His death. He that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, even He will make us perfect in every good work to do His will. Whenever the Master comes very near to us in His gracious condescension, He shows us not only that He shed His blood for us, but that He rose again and always lives to carry on our cause. When you worship most closely, you will worship Him that lived, died, rose again and now lives forever and ever. This is our Lord Jesus Christ! He is not only a teacher, or merely a bright example, but One

whose death is the source of our salvation and whose Resurrection and eternal Glory are the guarantee and foretaste of our everlasting bliss! A living, dying, risen Christ is One with whom we have joyful fellowship! And if we know Him not in this Character, we do not know Him at all!

Furthermore, He conversed with them upon *their share in all this*. They were one with Him in that which would befall Him. He says, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." True, they would have no share in the scourging, the spitting and the Crucifixion. He must tread that winepress alone. But yet they would, with Him, carry the cross in the near future, and with Him deny themselves during the rest of their lives. Henceforward it would not only be Jesus the Lord who would bear witness for God and righteousness, but the followers of the Crucified One would unite in testimony to the same Truth of God, for the same great purpose! It was well for Him to speak to them on such a practical theme—they would be cheered and comforted in later days when they remembered that He had told them of these things. He will draw us into very intimate communion if we are willing to take up His Cross and bear His reproach. We lose much when we quit the separated path because it is rough, for we lose our Lord's sweet company. Oh, for Grace to love the rough paths because we see His footprints on them!

They listened to this private talk, but we are told by Luke that *it was very much lost upon them* because they did not understand Him. "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." "But," you say, "it was very simple." Possibly that is why they did not understand it. Numbers of people imagine that they understand mysteries and yet the simplicities of the faith are hid from their eyes because they are gazing after abstruse doctrines. They search after difficult things and miss the plain Truth of God! We groan as we wantonly dive into a profound abyss and yet we stand confounded over a little transparent stream, which, to wade through, would bring us bliss!

When our Lord told the 12 that He would die, they imagined that it was a parable, concealing some deep mystery. They looked at one another and they tried to fathom where there was no depth, but where the Truth lay on the surface. The deep things of God, thousands will pry into, but yet these are not *saving* matters—nor are they of any great practical value. Fixed fate, free will, predestination, prophecy and the like—these have small bearings upon our salvation from sin—but in the death of our Lord lies the kernel of the matter! Beloved, when we try to commune with Jesus, let us wear the garments of simplicity! It is the serpent who trades in subtlety, but I would have you remember "the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus." There is in Him a depth which we cannot fathom, but His every Word is the pure Truth of God and those things which are necessary are made so plain that he who runs may read and he who reads may run!

Believe Him to mean what He says and take His promises as they stand and His precepts in their plain meaning! And, oh, if we do this, we shall be made greatly wise! Do not confuse your minds with doctrinal riddles nor amuse your souls with spiritual mysteries, but believe in Him who is

Jesus, the faithful and true, who makes known to us the heart of the Father! Believe that He died in our place! Believe that He took our sin upon Him and carried it all away! Believe that we are justified through His Resurrection and are made to live because He lives! Hypotheses and critical doubts we may leave to the dogs that first sniffed them out, but as for us, we will be as children who eat the bread their father gives them and ask no questions as to the field in which the wheat was reaped—and raise no debates as to the mill at which the seed was ground!

Thus, you see, the private conversations of our Lord with the 12 dealt with His sufferings and death—and His communications come home to our hearts in proportion as we are prepared to receive them in childlike simplicity.

II. Secondly, we will now turn our minds to THE PRIVATE THOUGHTS OF OUR LORD JESUS. We shall not be presumptuous if we humbly enquire—What were the thoughts of our Lord at the time? When He had called them quite apart and spoken to them, we may be quite sure that what He said to them was the outcome of His innermost meditations.

Our Lord was forecasting His death in all its mournful details. Do you not know that frequently it is more painful to anticipate death than it is actually to die? Yet our Lord dwelt upon His sufferings, even to their minutiae. A person was speaking to me, the other day, of a painful operation which he was bound to undergo. There was no probability that he could get into the hospital for another month or two and he remarked that he greatly wished that the operation could have been performed sooner, “For,” he said, “it is so painful to be looking forward to a matter so distressing. Let it be soon,” was his cry. Our Lord was like a grain of wheat which is cast into the ground and lies there, for a while, before it dies. He was buried, as it were, in prospective agony—immersed in suffering which He foresaw. In the thought of the Cross, He endured it before He felt the nails! The shadow of His death was upon Him before He reached the tree of doom! Yet He did not put away the thought, but dwelt upon it as one who tastes a cup before he drinks it to the dregs. After so deliberate a testing, is it not all the more marvelous that He did not refuse the draught?

Did He not remember *His engagement to go through with our redemption*? “Lo, I come,” He said, “in the volume of the Book it is written of Me.” He had pledged Himself by solemn Covenant and in the Book it was written that He would stand in our place and give His life an offering for sin. From this suretyship He never departed. He knew that the Father would bruise Him and put Him to grief in the approaching day of His anger. He knew that the wicked would pierce His hands and His feet. He knew all that would occur and He stayed not back from the pledge which He had given in the council chamber of eternity, that His life should be rendered up as a ransom for many! It were well if *we*, also, remembered our vows to God and the obligations under which we are placed by His great love.

Our Lord’s thoughts *took the form of a resolution to do the Father’s will to the end.* He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. Nothing could make Him look aside. He had undertaken and He would go through with

it. Unless it should prove possible for us to be saved otherwise, He would not set aside that cup which His Father had given Him to drink. The thought of our perishing, He could not bear—that was not to be tolerated. He would suffer all imaginable and unimaginable woe sooner than desert the cause He had espoused. He was straitened—so He described it—straitened till His labor was accomplished! He was like a Man pent up against His will—He longed to be discharging His tremendous task. He had an awful work to do, an agonizing suffering to bear, and He felt fettered until He could be at it—“How am I straitened till it is accomplished!” He was as a hostage bound for others, longing to be set free! He longed to be bearing the penalty to which He had voluntarily subjected Himself by His Covenant Suretyship. He therefore thought upon that “obedience unto death” which He was determined and resolved to render.

He had an eye, all the while, to you and to me. While He was thinking of death, He was chiefly regarding those for whom He would suffer. I doubt not that there flashed before that mighty mind the individuals who make up the vast host of His redeemed—and among them there were insignificant individuals such as we are. Out of His strong love to us, even to *us*, He determined to pay our ransom price in death—it was part of His solace that He would deliver you and me. “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” He made a voluntary offering of Himself for me, before He actually died—often and often surrendering Himself in purpose before the Cross was reared for the actual offering up of His body once and for all.

Then there came into His mind, also, the thought of *the grand sequel of it all*. He would rise again! On the third day it would all be over and the recompense would begin. A few hours of bitter grief. A night of bloody sweat. A night and a morning of mockery when He would be flouted by the abjects and made nothing of by the profane. A direful afternoon of deadly anguish on the Cross and of dark desertion by Jehovah! And then the bowing of the head and a little rest in the grave for His body. And on the third day the light would break upon mankind, for the Sun of Righteousness would arise with healing in His wings! The light that would come when He should rise would lighten the Gentiles and be the Glory of His people Israel. He would then have said, “It is finished,” and He would shortly afterward ascend to reap His reward in personal glorification and in receiving gifts for men—yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them!

Surely our Lord’s thoughts were all the while upon His Father! He always remembered the Beloved Father to whom He was to be “obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” That 22nd Psalm, which might well be our Lord’s on the Cross, is full of God—it is an appeal to God. As our Lord went on His way with the 12, conversing upon the road, they must have seen that He was in close communion with God. There was about Him a deep solemnity of spirit—a rapt communion with the Unseen—a heavenly walking with God even beyond His usual. This, mixed with His deeply-fixed resolve—and that stern joy which only they can feel who are resolved to accomplish a great purpose through bowing to the Divine will, let it cost

what it may. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus was everything to Him! And in all His acts, His heart was set upon Jehovah's Glory.

I wish that I had time for my subject, but it is overwhelming me. I can only open the door and bid you look into the private thoughts of Him whose thoughts are priceless gems, whereas yours and mine are as the pebbles of the brook. What meditations were His! How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O Christ! How great is the sum of them! Wonderful things did You ponder in Your soul on those days of Your nearing passion!

III. Now we will have a few moments as to OUR LORD'S DWELLING ON DETAILS. I do not want to preach. I wish to be a kind of guide for your thoughts, just setting the example by thinking first that you may follow. May the sacred Spirit now lead you quietly into the points upon which our Lord so calmly enlarged!

Note well what our Lord said about His sufferings. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed." Stop there! "*Betrayed*"! It is as though I heard the deep boom of a death knell. "*Betrayed*"! "*Betrayed*"! To die, yes, that is not a word with a sting in it to Him! But, "*Betrayed*"!—that means sold by cruel treachery! It means that one who ate bread with Him lifted up his heel against Him! It means that a man who was His familiar acquaintance, with whom He walked to the House of God in company, sold Him for a paltry bribe. "*Betrayed* for thirty pieces of silver! A goodly price, indeed, for the blood of such a Friend! "*Betrayed*"! Hear how He cries—"If it were an enemy, then I could have borne it." "*Betrayed*"! It was no stranger—it was no bloodhound of the Pharisees who scented Him out in the garden—but, "Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place." Betrayed with a kiss and with a friendly word! Handed over to them who sought His blood by one who ought to have defended Him to the death! "*Betrayed*"! It is a dreadful word to be set here before the passion, and it throws a lurid light over it all. We read—"The same night in which He was betrayed He took bread." This was the bitterest drop in His cup—that He was betrayed.

And still is He *betrayed*! If the Gospel dies in England, write on its tomb, "*Betrayed*." If our churches lose their holy influence among men, write on them, "*Betrayed*." What care we for infidels? What care we for those who curse and blaspheme? They cannot hurt the Christ! His wounds are those which He receives in the house of His friends. "*Betrayed*"! O Savior, some of us have been betrayed, but ours was a small sorrow compared with Yours, for You were betrayed into the hands of sinners by one who claimed to be Your friend, by one who was bound by every tie to have been Your faithful follower. "*Betrayed*"! Beloved, I cannot bear the word! It falls like a flake of fire into my bosom and burns its way into my inmost soul. "*Betrayed*"! And such a faithful Friend as He! So full of love and yet betrayed!

Read on. "The Son of man shall be betrayed *unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes*." The chief priests ought to have always been His best defenders! They were the leaders of the religion of the day—these chief priests were the guides of Israel! When Israel bowed before the Lord, the

chief priests presented the sacrifice. Yet these were our Lord's most bitter enemies—by their malice He was condemned and crucified! It is hard to have the professed servants of God against you. The scribes, too, those Bible writers and Bible interpreters—these, also, were fiercely against Him. From the hands of scribes He would have less mercy than from soldiers. I said, the other Lord's-Day, what I now repeat—I would rather be bitten by wolves than by sheep! It is wretched work to have those against you who are reckoned to be the best men of the time. It was little to Him to have Herod against Him, or Pilate and the Romans as His foes, for they knew no better. But it was heart-rending work to see the men of the Sanhedrim, the men of prayers and phylacteries, the men of the Temple and of the synagogue arrayed against Him! Yet into their hands He falls! Good Master, You are delivered into the hands of men who know no mercy, for they hate You for Your faithful words! They can compromise, but You cannot! They can trifle with language, but You cannot! They can play the hypocrite and that, You cannot do!

Read on—“*And they shall condemn Him to death.*” They did not leave the sentence of condemnation to the Romans, but they, themselves, passed sentence upon their Victim. The priests, whose office made them types of Himself—and the scribes, who were the official interpreters of His Father's Book—these condemned the Holy and Just One! They count Him worthy of death—nothing less will serve their turn. This the Christ could plainly see and it was no small trial to come under the censure of His country's governors. They could not put Him to death, themselves. If they dared, they would have stoned Him and that would have broken the prophecy which declared that in death His enemies must pierce His hands and His feet. They can condemn Him to death, but they cannot execute the sentence! Yet none the less, this iron entered into His soul that those who were professedly the servants of God condemned Him to die! If you have ever tasted of this cup you know that it has wormwood in it.

Notice, further—“*And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles.*” All men conspired in our Master's death—not half the world, but all of it must have a hand in the tragedy of Calvary. The Gentile must come in. He takes his share in this iniquity, for Pilate condemns Him to the Cross. The chief priests hand Him over to Pilate and he commits Him to the Roman soldiers that they may do the cruel deed. They “delivered Him to the Gentiles.” The Master dwells on this. It opens another gate through which His sorrows poured. At the hands of the Gentiles He dies—and for Gentiles He suffered. Beloved, I like to see how the Master notes this point. He makes distinctions. He does not say that He should be condemned by Pilate, but He is condemned to die by the chief priests and then He is delivered to the Gentiles. He sees it all and dwells upon the points of special interest. O Believer, behold your Lord bound and taken away to the Hall of Pilate! See Him delivered to the Gentiles, while His fellow countrymen cry, “We have no king but Caesar!” They shout, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” And the Gentiles carry out their cruel demand. Unanimity among our persecutors must add greatly to the sting of their unkindness.

These three words follow—“*To mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him.*” Mark puts in, “To spit upon Him.” That was a sad part of the *mockery*. What dreadful scorning He endured! From the Jews, when they blindfolded Him and buffeted Him—and from the Gentiles when they put on Him a purple robe and thrust a reed into His hand, bowed the knee and cried before Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They plucked His hair. They smote His cheeks. They spat in His face. Mockery could go no farther. It was cruel, cutting, cursed scorn! Ridicule sometimes breaks hearts that are hardened against pain—and the Christ had to bear all the ridicule that human minds could invent. They were maliciously witty. They jested at His Person. They jested at His prayers. They mocked Him when He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Herein is immeasurable grief and the Savior foresaw it and spoke about it.

That was not all—*they scourged Him*. I will not harrow your hearts by trying to describe scourging as it existed among the Romans. The scourge was an infamous instrument of torture. It is said to have been made of the sinews of oxen, intertwined with the hucklebones of sheep and slivers of bone—so that every time the lashes fell, they plowed the back and laid bare the white bones of the shoulders. It was an anguish more cruel than the grave! But our Lord endured it to the fullest. They mocked Him and they scourged Him—He dwells upon each separate item. Some of our most touching hymns upon our Lord’s passion are spoken of by the cold-blooded critics of today as sensuous. “I cannot bear,” says one, “to hear so much about the physical agonies of Christ.” Beloved, we must preach the physical agonies of Christ more than ever because this is an age of affectation in which His mental and spiritual griefs are no more apprehended than those of His body!

The device is to be rid of His sufferings altogether! This age is as fond of physical pleasure as any that has gone before it and it must be made to know that physical pain was a great ingredient in the cup which our Lord drank for man’s redemption! Very many are so unspiritual that they will never be reached by high-soaring language, appealing to a delicacy which they do not possess. We must exhibit the bleeding Savior if we would make men’s hearts bleed for sin! The cries of His great grief must ring in their ears or they will remain deaf! Let us not be ashamed to dwell upon points upon which the Lord, Himself, dwelt.

Then He adds, “*to crucify Him.*” Here I will come to a pause. Behold Him! Behold Him! His hands are extended and cruelly nailed to the wood. His feet are fastened to the tree and He is left to bear the weight of His body upon His hands and feet. See how the nails tear through the flesh as the weight drags the body down and enlarges the wounds! Look, He is in a fever! His mouth is dried up and has become like an oven! And His tongue cleaves to the roof thereof! Crucifixion was an inhuman death and the Savior was “obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” The wonder is that He could foresee this and speak of it so calmly. He meditates upon it and speaks to choice familiar friends about it! Oh, the mastery of love, strong as death! He contemplates the Cross and despises its shame!

Thus He dwells on it all and then closes by saying, “*and the third day He shall rise again.*” We must never forget *that*, for *He* never forgets it! Ah, you may think as much as you will of Calvary and let your tears flow like rivers. You may sit at Gethsemane and say, “Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for my Lord!” But, after all, you must wipe those tears away, for He is not in the grave—He rose again on the third day! O blessed morning! Not to be celebrated by an Easter, once in the year, but to be commemorated on every first day of the week, more than 50 times in each year! Every seven days that the sun shines upon us brings us a new record of His Resurrection! We may sing every Lord’s-Day morning—

**“Today He rose and left the dead,
And Satan’s empire fell!
Today the saints His triumph spread,
And all His wonders tell.”**

The first day of the week stands forever as the remembrance of our risen Lord and on that day He renews His special communings with His people! We believe in Him! We rise in Him! We triumph in Him! And, “He ever lives to make intercession for us.” Thus, you see, I have not preached my own thoughts, but I have set you thinking. Treasure these thoughts in your minds! All this week, sweeten your souls with the sacred spices of our Lord’s thoughts and Words when near His death. God bless this meditation to you by His Holy Spirit!

If you have never believed in Him, may you believe in Him at once! Why delay? He is able to save unto the uttermost! Believe in Him right now! And if you have believed, keep on believing and let your believing grow more intense. Think more of Jesus, love Him more, serve Him more and grow more like He. Peace be unto you for His dear sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Matthew 16:13-28.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—287, 273, 281.**

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

During last week Mr. SPURGEON appeared to be making good progress towards recovery, but on Saturday he suffered a serious relapse. His condition causes grave anxiety to the Church at the Tabernacle and all his friends. Their hope is that the Lord will yet raise him up in answer to the prayers of the thousands of Believers who are continually pleading for him.

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

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION (LIMITED ATONEMENT) NO. 181

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1858,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

*“Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,
and to give His life a ransom for many.”
Matthew 20:28.*

WHEN first it was my duty to occupy this pulpit and preach in this hall, my congregation assumed the appearance of an irregular mass of persons collected from all the streets of this city to listen to the Word. I was then simply an evangelist, preaching to many who had not heard the Gospel before. By the grace of God, the most blessed change has taken place and now, instead of having an irregular multitude gathered together, my congregation is as fixed as that of any minister in the whole city of London. I can from this pulpit observe the countenances of my friends who have occupied the same places, as nearly as possible, for these many months. And I have the privilege and the pleasure of knowing that a very large proportion, certainly three-fourths of the persons who meet together here are not persons who stray here from curiosity, but are my regular and constant hearers.

And observe that my character also has been changed. From being an evangelist, it is now my business to become your pastor. You were once a motley group assembled to listen to me but now we are bound together by the ties of love. Through association we have grown to love and respect each other and now you have become the sheep of my pasture and members of my flock. And I have now the privilege of assuming the position of a pastor in this place, as well as in the Chapel where I labor in the evening. I think, then, it will strike the judgment of every person that as both the congregation and the office have now changed, the teaching itself should in some measure suffer a difference.

It has been my desire to address you from the simple Truths of the Gospel. I have very seldom, in this place, attempted to dive into the deep things of God. A text which I have thought suitable for my congregation in the evening, I should not have made the subject of discussion in this place in the morning. There are many high and mysterious doctrines which I have often taken the opportunity of handling in my own place that I have not taken the liberty of introducing here, regarding you as a company of people casually gathered together to hear the Word.

But now, since the circumstances are changed, the teaching will be changed also. I shall not now simply confine myself to the doctrine of the faith, or the teaching of Believer's Baptism. I shall not stay upon the

surface of matters, but shall venture, as God shall guide me, to enter into those things that lie at the basis of the religion that we hold so dear. I shall not blush to preach before you the doctrine of God's Divine Sovereignty. I shall not stagger to preach in the most unreserved and unguarded manner the doctrine of Election. I shall not be afraid to propound the great Truth of the Final perseverance of the Saints. I shall not withhold that undoubted Truth of Scripture the Effectual Calling of God's elect. I shall endeavor, as God shall help me to keep back nothing from you who have become my flock. Seeing that many of you have now "tasted that the Lord is gracious," we will endeavor to go through the whole system of the doctrines of grace—that saints may be edified and built up in their most holy faith.

I begin this morning with the doctrine of Redemption. "He gave His life a ransom for many." The doctrine of Redemption is one of the most important doctrines of the system of faith. A mistake on this point will inevitably lead to a mistake through the entire system of our belief.

Now, you are aware that there are different theories of Redemption. All Christians hold that Christ died to redeem, but all Christians do not teach the same redemption. We differ as to the nature of atonement and as to the design of redemption. For instance, the Arminian holds that Christ, when He died, did not die with an intent to save any particular person. And they teach that Christ's death does not in itself secure, beyond doubt, the salvation of any man living. They believe that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible, or that by the doing of something else, any man who pleases may attain unto eternal life. Consequently, they are obliged to hold that if man's will would not give way and voluntarily surrender to grace, then Christ's atonement would be worthless.

They hold that there was no particularity and specialty in the death of Christ. Christ died, according to them, as much for Judas in Hell as for Peter who mounted to Heaven. They believe that for those who are consigned to eternal fire, there was as true and real a redemption made as for those who now stand before the Throne of the Most High. Now we believe no such thing. We hold that Christ, when He died, had an object in view and that object will most assuredly and beyond a doubt, be accomplished. We measure the design of Christ's death by the *effect* of it. If anyone asks us, "What did Christ design to do by His death?" We answer that question by asking him another—"What *has* Christ done, or what *will* Christ do by His death?"

For we declare that the measure of the effect of Christ's love is the measure of the design of it. We cannot so belie our reason as to think that the intention of Almighty God could be frustrated, or that the design of so great a thing as the atonement can by any way whatever, be missed of. We hold—we are not afraid to say what we believe—that Christ came into this world with the intention of saving "a multitude which no man can number." And we believe that as the result of this every person for whom He died must, beyond the shadow of a doubt, be cleansed from sin and stand, washed in His blood, before the Father's Throne. We do not believe

that Christ made any effectual atonement for those who are forever damned. We dare not think that the blood of Christ was ever shed with the intention of saving those whom God foreknew never would be saved—and some of whom were even in Hell when Christ, according to some men's account, died to save them.

I have thus just stated our theory of redemption and hinted at the differences which exist between two great parties in the professing Church. It shall be now my endeavor to show the greatness of the redemption of Christ Jesus. And by so doing I hope to be enabled by God's Spirit to bring out the whole of the great system of redemption so that it may be understood by us all, even if all of us cannot receive it. For you must bear this in mind that some of you, perhaps, may be ready to dispute things which I assert. But you will remember that this is nothing to me. I shall at all times teach those things which I hold to be true, without let or hindrance from any man breathing. You have the like liberty to do the same in your own places and to preach your own views in your own assemblies, as I claim the right to preach mine, fully, and without hesitation.

Christ Jesus "gave His life a ransom for many." And by that ransom He wrought out for us a great redemption. I shall endeavor to show the greatness of this redemption, measuring it in five ways. We shall note its greatness, first of all, *from the heinousness of our own guilt*, from which He has delivered us. Secondly, we shall measure His redemption by the sternness of Divine justice. Thirdly, we shall measure it *by the price which He paid*—the pangs which He endured. Then we shall endeavor to magnify it, by noting *the deliverance which He actually worked out*. And we shall close by noticing *the vast number for whom this redemption is made*, who in our text are described as "many."

I. First, then, we shall see that the redemption of Christ was no little thing, if we do but measure it, first, by our OWN SINS. My Brethren, for a moment look at the hole of the pit from where you were dug, and the quarry where you were hewn. You who have been washed, cleansed and sanctified, pause for a moment and look back at the former state of your ignorance. The sins in which you indulged, the crimes into which you were hurried, the continual rebellion against God in which it was your habit to live. One sin can ruin a soul forever. It is not in the power of the human mind to grasp the infinity of evil that slumbers in the heart of one solitary sin. There is a very infinity of guilt couched in one transgression against the majesty of Heaven. If, then, you and I had sinned but once, nothing but an atonement infinite in value could ever have washed away the sin and made satisfaction for it.

But has it been once that you and I have transgressed? No, my Brethren—our iniquities are more in number than the hairs of our head. They have mightily prevailed against us. We might as well attempt to number the sands upon the seashore—or count the drops which in their aggregate do make the ocean—as attempt to count the transgressions

which have marked our lives. Let us go back to our childhood. How early we began to sin! How we disobeyed our parents and even then learned to make our mouth the house of lies! In our childhood how full of wantonness and waywardness we were! Headstrong and giddy, we preferred our own way and burst through all restraints which godly parents put upon us.

Nor did our youth sober us. Wildly we dashed, many of us, into the very midst of the dance of sin. We became leaders in iniquity. We not only sinned ourselves but we taught others to sin. And as for your manhood, you that have entered upon the prime of life—you may be more outwardly sober, you may be somewhat free from the dissipation of your youth—but how little has the man become bettered! Unless the sovereign grace of God has renewed us, we are now no better than we were when we began. And even if it has operated, we have still sins to repent of, for we all lay our mouths in the dust, and cast ashes on our head, and cry, “Unclean! Unclean!”

And oh! you that lean wearily on your staff, the support of your old age, have you not sins still clinging to your garments? Are your lives as white as the snowy hairs that crown your head? Do you not still feel that transgression besmears the skirts of your robe and mars its spotlessness? How often are you now plunged into the ditch, till your own clothes do abhor you! Cast your eyes over the sixty, the seventy, the eighty years during which God has spared your lives. And can you for a moment think it possible that you can number up your innumerable transgressions, or compute the weight of the crimes which you have committed? O you stars of Heaven! The astronomer may measure your distance and tell your height, but O you sins of mankind! You surpass all thought! O you lofty mountains! The home of the tempest, the birthplace of the storm! Man may climb your summits and stand wonderingly upon your snows. But you hills of sin! You tower higher than our thoughts. You chasms of transgressions! You are deeper than our imagination dares to dive.

Do you accuse me of slandering human nature? It is because you know it not! If God had once manifested your heart to yourself, you would bear me witness that so far from exaggerating, my poor words fail to describe the desperateness of our evil. Oh, if we could each of us look into our hearts today—if our eyes could be turned within, so as to see the iniquity that is graven as with the point of the diamond upon our stony hearts—we should then say to the minister that however he may depict the desperateness of guilt, yet can he not by any means surpass it. How great then, Beloved, must be the ransom of Christ, when He saved us from all these sins!

The men for whom Jesus died, however great their sin, when they believe, are sanctified from all their transgressions. Though they may have indulged in every vice and every lust which Satan could suggest, and which human nature could perform—yet once believing, by God’s grace, all their guilt is washed away. Year after year may have coated them with blackness, till their sin has become of double dye, but in one moment of

faith, one triumphant moment of confidence in Christ, the great redemption takes away the guilt of numerous years. No, more. If it were possible for *all* the sins that *men* have done, in thought, or word, or deed since worlds were made, or time began—to meet on *one* poor head—the great redemption is all-sufficient to take all these sins away and wash the sinner whiter than the driven snow!

Oh, who shall measure the heights of the Savior's all-sufficiency? First, tell how high is sin and then, remember that as Noah's flood prevailed over the tops of earth's mountains, so the flood of Christ's redemption prevails over the tops of the mountains of our sins. In Heaven's courts there are today men that once were murderers and thieves and drunkards and whoremongers, and blasphemers and persecutors. But they have been washed—they have been sanctified. Ask them from where the brightness of their robes has come and where their purity has been achieved, and they, with united breath, will tell you that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. O you troubled consciences! O you weary and heavy-laden ones! O you that are groaning on account of sin! The great redemption now proclaimed to you is all-sufficient for your wants. And though your numerous sins exceed the stars that deck the sky, here is an atonement made for them all—a river which can overflow the whole of them, and carry them away from you forever.

This, then, is the first measure of the atonement—the greatness of our guilt.

II. Now, secondly, we must measure the great redemption BY THE STERNNESS OF DIVINE JUSTICE. “God is love,” always loving, but my next proposition does not at all interfere with this assertion. *God is sternly just*, inflexibly severe in His dealings with mankind. The God of the Bible is not the God of some men's imagination, who thinks so little of sin that He passes it by without demanding any punishment for it. He is not the God of the men who imagine that our transgressions are such little things, such mere peccadilloes that the God of Heaven winks at them and suffers them to die forgotten.

No. Jehovah, Israel's God has declared concerning Himself, “The Lord your God is a jealous God.” It is His own declaration, “I will by no means clear the guilty.” “The soul that sins, it shall die.” Learn, my Friends, to look upon God as being as severe in His justice as if He were not loving—and yet as loving as if He were not severe. His love does not diminish His justice nor does His justice, in the least degree, make warfare upon His love. The two things are sweetly linked together in the atonement of Christ. But, mark, we can never understand the fullness of the atonement till we have first grasped the Scriptural Truth of God's immense justice.

There was never an ill word spoken, nor an ill thought conceived, nor an evil deed done for which God will not have punishment from someone or another. He will either have satisfaction from you, or else from Christ. If you have no atonement to bring through Christ you must forever lie

paying the debt which you never can pay, in eternal misery. For as surely as God is God, He will sooner lose His Godhead than suffer *one* sin to go unpunished, or one particle of rebellion not revenged. You may say that this character of God is cold, stern, and severe. I cannot help what you say of it. It is nevertheless true. Such is the God of the Bible. And though we repeat it is true that He is love, it is no more true that He is love than that He is full of justice—for every good thing meets in God and is carried to perfection—while love reaches to consummate loveliness, justice reaches to the sternness of inflexibility in Him.

He has no bend, no warp in His Character. No attribute so predominates as to cast a shadow upon the other. Love has its full sway and justice has no narrower limit than His love. Oh, then, Beloved, think how great must have been the substitution of Christ when it satisfied God for all the sins of His people. For man's sin God demands eternal punishment. And God has prepared a Hell into which He casts those who die impenitent. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, can you think what must have been the greatness of the atonement which was the substitution for all this agony which God would have cast upon us, if He had not poured it upon Christ? Look! Look! Look with solemn eye through the shades that part us from the world of spirits and see that house of misery which men call Hell! You cannot endure the spectacle!

Remember that in that place there are spirits forever paying their debt to Divine Justice, but though some of them have been there these six thousand years sweltering in the flame, they are no nearer a discharge than when they began. And when ten thousand times ten thousand years shall have rolled away, they will no more have made satisfaction to God for their guilt than they have done up till now. And now can you grasp the thought of the greatness of your Savior's mediation when He paid your debt and paid it all at once so that there now remains not one farthing of debt owing from Christ's people to their God, except a debt of love? To Justice the Believer owes nothing. Though he owed originally so much that eternity would not have been long enough to suffice for the paying of it, yet in one moment Christ did pay it all. That the man who believes is entirely sanctified from all guilt and set free from all punishment through what Jesus has done. Think, then, how great His atonement if He has done all this.

I must just pause here and utter another sentence. There are times when God the Holy Spirit shows to men the sternness of Justice in their own consciences. There is a man here today who has just been cut to the heart with a sense of sin. He was once a free man, a libertine, in bondage to none. But now the arrow of the Lord sticks fast in his heart and he has come under a bondage worse than that of Egypt. I see him today—he tells me that his guilt haunts him everywhere. The Negro slave, guided by the pole star, may escape the cruelties of his master and reach another land where he may be free. But this man feels that if he were to wander the whole world over he could not escape from guilt. He that has been bound by many irons can not find a file that can unbind him and set him at

liberty. This man tells you that he has tried prayers and tears and good works, but cannot get the shackles from his wrists. He feels as a lost sinner still—and emancipation—do what he may, seems to him impossible.

The captive in the dungeon is sometimes free in thought, though not in body. Through his dungeon walls his spirit leaps and flies to the stars, free as the eagle that is no man's slave. But this man is a slave in his thoughts—he cannot think one bright, one happy thought. His soul is cast down within him. The iron has entered into his spirit and he is sorely afflicted. The captive sometimes forgets his slavery in sleep but this man cannot sleep. By night he dreams of Hell, by day he seems to feel it. He bears a burning furnace of flame within his heart and do what he may, he cannot quench it. He has been confirmed, he has been baptized, he takes the sacrament, he attends a Church or he frequents a Chapel. He regards every rubric and obeys every canon—but the fire burns still.

He gives his money to the poor, he is ready to give his body to be burned. He feeds the hungry, he visits the sick, he clothes the naked—but the fire burns still—do what he may he cannot quench it. O, you sons of weariness and woe! This that you feel is God's Justice in full pursuit of you—and happy are you that you feel this—for now to you I preach this glorious Gospel of the blessed God! You are the man for whom Jesus Christ has died. For you He has satisfied stern Justice. And now all you have to do to obtain peace and conscience, is just to say to your adversary who pursues you, "Look you there! Christ died for me. My good works would not stop you, my tears would not appease you. Look you there! There stands the Cross, there hangs the bleeding God! Hark to His death-shriek! See Him die! Are you not satisfied now?" And when you have done that, you shall have the peace of God which passes all understanding, which shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ your Lord—and then shall you know the greatness of His atonement.

III. In the third place, we may measure the greatness of Christ's Redemption by THE PRICE HE PAID. It is impossible for us to know how great were the pangs of our Savior but yet some glimpse of them will afford us a little idea of the greatness of the price which He paid for us. O Jesus, who shall describe Your agony?—

***"Come, all you springs,
Dwell in my head and eyes. Come, clouds and rain!
My grief has need of all the watery things,
That nature has produced. Let every vein
Suck up a river to supply my eyes,
My weary weeping eyes—too dry for me,
Unless they get new conduits, new supplies
To bear them out and with my state agree."***

O Jesus! You were a sufferer from Your birth, a man of sorrows and grief's acquaintance. Your sufferings tell on You in one perpetual shower, until the last dread hour of darkness. Then not in a shower, but in a cloud, a torrent, a cataract of grief Your agonies did dash upon You. See

Him yonder! It is a night of frost and cold, but He is all abroad. It is night. He sleeps not—He is in prayer. Hark to His groans! Did ever man wrestle as He wrestles? Go and look in His face! Was ever such suffering depicted upon mortal countenance as you can there behold? Hear His own words? “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” He rises. He is seized by traitors and is dragged away.

Let us step to the place where just now He was engaged in agony. O God! And what is this we see? What is this that stains the ground? It is blood! From where did it come? Had He some wound which oozed afresh through His dire struggle? Ah, no. “He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground.” O agonies that surpass the word by which we name you! O sufferings that cannot be compassed in language! What could you be that thus could work upon the Savior’s blessed frame and force a bloody sweat to fall from His entire body?

This is the beginning—this is the opening of the tragedy. Follow Him mournfully, you sorrowing Church, to witness the consummation of it. He is hurried through the streets. He is first to one bar and then to another. He is cast and condemned before the Sanhedrin. He is mocked by Herod, He is tried by Pilate. His sentence is pronounced—“Let Him be crucified!” And now the tragedy comes to its height. His back is bared. He is tied to the low Roman column. The bloody scourge plows furrows on His back. And with one stream of blood His back is red—a crimson robe that proclaims Him emperor of misery. He is taken into the guard room. His eyes are bound and then they buffet Him and say, “Prophecy, who it was that smote You?”

They spit into His face. They plait a crown of thorns and press His temples with it. They array Him in a purple robe. They bow their knees and mock Him. All silently He stands. He answers not a word. “When He was reviled, He reviled not again,” but committed Himself unto Him whom He came to serve. And now they take Him and with many a jeer and jibe they drive Him from the place and hurry Him through the streets. Emaciated by continual fasting and depressed with agony of spirit He stumbles beneath His Cross.”

Daughters of Jerusalem! He faints in your streets. They raise Him up. They put His Cross upon another’s shoulders and they urge Him on, perhaps with many a spear-prick, till at last He reaches the mount of doom. Rough soldiers seize Him, and hurl Him on His back. The transverse wood is laid beneath Him, His arms are stretched to reach the necessary distance. The nails are grasped. Four hammers at one moment drive four nails through the most tender parts of His body. And there He lies upon His own place of execution dying on His Cross. It is not done yet. The Cross is lifted by the rough soldiers. There is the socket prepared for it. It is dashed into its place. They fill up the place with earth. And there it stands.

But see the Savior’s limbs, how they quiver! Every bone has been put out of joint by the dashing of the Cross into that socket! How He weeps! How He sighs! How He sobs! No, more—hark how at last He shrieks in

agony, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” O sun, no wonder you did shut your eye and look no longer upon a deed so cruel! O rocks! No wonder that you did melt and rend your hearts with sympathy, when your Creator died! Never man suffered as this Man suffered. Even death itself relented and many of those who had been in their graves arose and came into the city.

This however, is but the outward. Believe me, Brethren, the inward was far worse. What our Savior suffered in His body was nothing compared to what He endured in His soul. You cannot guess, and I cannot help you to guess, what He endured within. Suppose for one moment—to repeat a sentence I have often used—suppose a man who has passed into Hell—suppose his eternal torment could all be brought into one hour, and then suppose it could be multiplied by the number of the saved, which is a number past all human enumeration. Can you now think what a vast aggregate of misery there would have been in the sufferings of all God’s people, if they had been punished through all eternity?

And recollect that Christ had to suffer an equivalent for all the Hells of all His redeemed. I can never express that thought better than by using those oft-repeated words—it seemed as if Hell was put into His cup, He seized it, and, “At one tremendous draught of love, He drank damnation dry.” So that there was nothing left of all the pangs and miseries of Hell for His people ever to endure. I say not that He suffered the same, but He did endure an equivalent for all this and gave God the satisfaction for all the sins of all His people—and consequently gave Him an equivalent for all their punishment. Now can you dream, can you *guess* the great redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ?

IV. I shall be very brief upon the next head. The fourth way of measuring the Savior’s agonies is this—we must compute them by THE GLORIOUS DELIVERANCE WHICH HE HAS EFFECTED.

Rise up, Believer, stand up in your place and this day testify to the greatness of what the Lord has done for you! Let me tell it for you! I will tell your experience and mine in one breath. Once my soul was laden with sin. I had revolted against God and grievously transgressed. The terrors of the Law got hold upon me. The pangs of conviction seized me. I saw myself guilty. I looked to Heaven and I saw an angry God sworn to punish me. I looked beneath me and I saw a yawning Hell ready to devour me. I sought by good works to satisfy my conscience. But all in vain. I endeavored, by attending to the ceremonies of religion to, appease the pangs that I felt within—but all without effect.

My soul was exceeding sorrowful almost unto death. I could have said with the ancient mourner, “My soul chooses strangling and death rather than life.” This was the great question that always perplexed me—“I have sinned. God must punish me. How can He be just if He does not? Then, since He is just, what is to become of me?” At last my eyes turned to that sweet Word which says, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleans from all sin.” I took that text to my chamber. I sat there and meditated. I saw

one hanging on a Cross. It was my Lord Jesus. There was the crown of thorns and there the emblems of unequalled and peerless misery.

I looked upon Him and my thoughts recalled that Word which says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Then said I within myself, "Did this Man die for sinners? *I* am a sinner. Then He died for *me*. Those He died for He will save. He died for sinners. I am a sinner. He died for me. He will save me." My soul relied upon that Truth. I looked to Him—and as I "viewed the flowing of His soul-redeeming blood," my spirit rejoiced, for I could say—

***"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to His Cross I cling.
Naked I look to Him for dress,
Helpless, I come to Him for grace!
Black, I to this fountain fly—
Wash me, Savior, or I die!"***

And now, Believer, you shall tell the rest. The moment that you believed, your burden rolled from your shoulder and you became light as air. Instead of darkness you had light. For the garments of heaviness you had the robes of praise. Who shall tell of your joy since then? You have sung on earth hymns of Heaven and in your peaceful soul you have anticipated the eternal Sabbath of the redeemed. Because you have believed you have entered into rest. Yes, tell it to the whole world over—they that believe, by Jesus' death are justified from all things from which they could not be freed by the works of the Law. Tell it in Heaven—none can lay anything to the charge of God's elect. Tell it upon earth—God's redeemed are free from sin in Jehovah's sight. Tell it even in Hell—God's elect can never go there—Christ has died for His elect and who is he that shall condemn them?

V. I have hurried over that, to come to the last point, which is the sweetest of all. Jesus Christ, we are told in our text, came into the world, "to give His life a ransom for *many*." The greatness of Christ's redemption may be measured by the EXTENT OF THE DESIGN OF IT. He gave His life "a ransom for many." I must now return to that controverted point again. We are often told (I mean those of us who are commonly nicknamed by the title of Calvinists—and we are not very much ashamed of that. We think that Calvin, after all, knew more about the Gospel than almost any uninspired man who has ever lived. We are often told that we limit the atonement of Christ because we say that Christ has not made a satisfaction for all men, or all men would be saved.

Now, our reply to this is, that, on the other hand, our opponents limit it—we do not. The Arminians say Christ died for all men. Ask them what they mean by it. Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of all men? They say, "No, certainly not." We ask them the next question—Did Christ die so as to secure the salvation of any man in particular? They answer, "No." They are obliged to admit this if they are consistent. They say "No, Christ has died that any man may be saved *if*"—and then follow certain

conditions of salvation. We say, then, we will just go back to the old statement—Christ did not die so as beyond a doubt to secure the salvation of anybody, did he? You must say, “No.” You are obliged to say so, for you believe that even after a man has been pardoned, he may yet fall from grace and perish.

Now, who is it that limits the death of Christ? Why, you. You say that Christ did not die so as to infallibly secure the salvation of anybody. We beg your pardon, when you say *we* limit Christ’s death. We say, “No, my dear Sir, it is *you* that do it. We say Christ so died that He infallibly secured the salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who through Christ’s death not only may be saved but *are* saved, *must* be saved and cannot by any possibility run the hazard of being anything *but* saved. You are welcome to your atonement. You may keep it. We will never renounce ours for the sake of it.”

Now, Beloved, when you hear anyone laughing or jeering at a limited atonement, you may tell him this—general atonement is like a great wide bridge with only half an arch. It does not go across the stream. It only professes to go half way—it does not secure the salvation of anybody. Now, I had rather put my foot upon a bridge as narrow as Hungerford, which went all the way across, than on a bridge that was as wide as the world, if it did not go all the way across the stream. I am told it is my duty to say that *all* men have been redeemed, and I am told that there is a Scriptural warrant for it—“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Now, that looks like a very great argument, indeed, on the other side of the question. For instance, look here—“The whole *world* is gone after Him.” Did all the *world* go after Christ? “Then went *all Judea* and were baptized of him in Jordan.” Was *all Judea*, or all *Jerusalem* baptized in Jordan? “You are of God, little children,” and “the whole world lies in the wicked one.” Does “the whole world” there mean everybody? If so, how was it, then, that there were some who were “of God”? The words “world” and “all” are used in some seven or eight senses in Scripture. And it is very rarely that “all” means all persons taken individually. The words are generally used to signify that Christ has redeemed *some of all sorts*—some Jews, some Gentiles, some rich, some poor—and has not restricted His redemption to either Jew or Gentile.

Leaving controversy, however, I will now answer a question. Tell me then, Sir, who did Christ die for? Will you answer me a question or two and I will tell you whether He died for *you*. Do you want a Savior? Do you feel that you need a Savior? Are you this morning conscious of sin? Has the Holy Spirit taught you that you are lost? Then Christ died for you and you will be saved. Are you this morning conscious that you have no hope in the world but Christ? Do you feel that you of yourself cannot offer an atonement that can satisfy God’s justice? Have you given up all confidence in yourselves? And can you say upon your bended knees “Lord, save, or I perish”? Christ died for you.

If you are saying this morning, “I am as good as I ought to be. I can get to Heaven by my own good works,” then, remember, the Scripture says of Jesus, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” So long as you are in that state I have no atonement to preach to you. But if this morning you feel guilty, wretched, conscious of your guilt and are ready to take Christ to be your only Savior, I can not only say to you that you may be saved, but what is better still, that you *will* be saved.

When you are stripped of everything but hope in Christ. When you are prepared to come empty handed and take Christ to be your All and to be yourself nothing at all—then you may look up to Christ and you may say, “You dear, You bleeding Lamb of God! Your griefs were endured for me. By Your stripes I am healed and by Your sufferings I am pardoned.” And then see what peace of mind you will have—for if Christ has died for you, you cannot be lost. God will not punish twice for one thing.

If God punished *Christ* for your sin, He will never punish *you*. “Payment, God’s justice cannot twice demand, first, at the bleeding Surety’s hand, and then again at mine.” We can today, if we believe in Christ, march to the very Throne of God, stand there, and if it is said, “Are you guilty?” We can say, “Yes, guilty.” But if the question is put, “What have you to say why you should not be punished for your guilt?” We can answer, “Great God, Your justice and Your love are both our guarantees that You will not punish us for sin. For did You not punish Christ for sin for us? How can You, then, be just—how can You be God at all, if You punish Christ the Substitute, and then punish man himself afterwards?”

Your only question is, “Did Christ die for me?” And the only answer we can give is—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ came into the world to save sinners.” Can you write your name down among the sinners? Not among the complimentary sinners, but among those that feel it, bemoan it, lament it, seek mercy on account of it? Are you a sinner? That felt, that known, that professed—you are now invited to believe that Jesus Christ died for you, because you are a sinner—and you are bidden to cast yourself upon this great immovable Rock and find eternal security in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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CHRIST'S GREAT MISSION

NO. 3532

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

***“Even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve,
and to give His Life a ransom for many.”
Matthew 20:28.***

THE mission of Christ to our world was distinct and definite. The ministry of the Gospel should be alike clear and transparent. It was but the other day I read a letter from the deacon of a church in which, speaking of his minister, he said, “We ought to understand geology thoroughly, for we usually hear something of it, at least once every Sunday. There is one thing, however, we shall never be likely to understand under our present friend’s ministry—he seems utterly to ignore the Doctrine of the Atonement. I have not heard him allude to it for the past three months, nor do I know, for certain, whether he believes it or not. Though he sometimes alludes to Jesus Christ as an example, I have neither heard of Christ dying, nor Christ buried, of Christ risen, or Christ pleading in Heaven at all! In fact, it seems to me I might as well attend a Socinian chapel.” Well, God forbid that such a reflection should ever be cast on me! Is it not my constant endeavor to bring you back, Sabbath after Sabbath, to the same old, old story of the Cross and of the Redemption by blood which was then and there worked? This bell has but one note! It may be repeated, I sometimes fear, with too much monotony. Still, the tone is clear. I know that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There is salvation in none other name under Heaven. The Propitiation which God has set forth for human sin is alone efficacious. There is no remission without blood. Full salvation is to be procured only through the wounds of Jesus slain. There is no salvation in Heaven or earth beside. We are coming to that same story again. It never wearies the Believer’s ears, nor does it ever fail to be the Power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes! I want my text to speak this evening! Let me, then, begin by expounding it, word by word—and after that let me explain the Doctrine to which it gives most distinct prominence.

I. THE PLAIN DECLARATION.

“The Son of Man!” So does our Lord Jesus Christ speak of Himself. In relation to our fallen humanity, it sounds humble, but in the light of Prophecy, it is full of dignity. “*The Son of Man.*” This is none other than the true Messiah—the Son of God, Infinite, Eternal, Co-Equal with the Father—and yet He chooses to call Himself, full often, “the Son of Man.” Perhaps because as it was man who committed sin, it is man who must

make an Atonement for sin to the injured Law of God! Man was the offender, man must suffer the penalty. As in one man the whole family died, in another man they must be made alive, if made alive at all. Jesus tells us that He is a Man—thoroughly a Man—one like ourselves. The Son of Man, a Man among men, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—not wearing a fictitious manhood, but a real Humanity like our own! This we must always bear in mind, for without it there could be no Atonement at all. Jesus is not merely a Son of Man, but He is preeminently the Son of Man foretold in the prophecy of Daniel and predicted on the threshold of Paradise in the language of the first promise, “The Seed of the women shall bruise the serpent’s head.” He is the Man, the Second Adam in whom men are made alive. Being thus found in fashion as a Man and having taken upon Himself the Federal Headship of man, He was qualified to become man’s Substitute and to make an Atonement for human guilt. Dwell on this blessed Truth of God, my dear Hearers! Dwell upon it, those of you who are not saved—look wistfully at it for the encouragement it offers you! The Person in whom you are admonished to trust is not only God—or His unclouded Glory might strike you with awe and His terrors might justly make you afraid—but He is also Man—and this ought to attract you to Him, for He is akin to yourselves in nature and sympathy. Sin excepted, He is in no wise different from you! Oh, may you not well draw near to Him without appalling dread, and with inspiring confidence, since He calls Himself the Son of Man and bids the sons of men come and put their trust under the shadow of His wings?

He “*came*”—that is the next word in our text. “The Son of Man *came*.” Strange the errand and unique as the blessed Person who undertook it. Thus to come He stooped from the highest Throne in Glory down to the manger of Bethlehem—and on His part it was voluntary. We are, as it were, thrust upon the stage of action—it is not of our will that we have come to live on this earth. Jesus had no need to have been born of the virgin! It was His own consent, His choice, His strong desire that made Him take upon Himself our nature, of the seed of Abraham. He came voluntarily on an errand of mercy to the sons of men! Dwell upon this thought for a moment. Let it sink into your mind. He who was King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, voluntarily, cheerfully descended that He might dwell among the sons of men, share their sorrows, bear their sins and yield Himself up a Sacrifice for them, the innocent Victim of their intolerable guilt! If the angels burst out in song on that first Christmas night. If they made Heaven and earth ring with their sweet harmonies, much more may we who have a share in the redemptive work of the Incarnate God burst out into song as the news greets us that Heaven descends to earth, that God comes down to man, that the Infinite becomes an Infant, that the Eternal, who has life in Himself, deigns to dwell among the dying sons of men! Surely a way from earth to Heaven will now be opened up, since there is a way from Heaven to earth, so sacred, yet so simple! The same golden ladder that brings the blessed Visitant down to our humani-

ty will also take us up to the Divinity of God, to see Him as our reconciled Father. "The Son of Man came."

The next words are startling, for they reveal a singular intention, far different from the usual aim and end of messages and errands. "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to minister." Let me give you the exact translation, "Not to be served, but to serve." That is the nearest approach to a literal rendering I can supply. He came not to be served, but to serve! He had not a selfish thought in His Soul! Though He had set His heart upon being the Incarnate God, He had nothing whatever to gain by it. Gain? What could the Infinite God gain? Splendor? Behold the stars—far away they glitter beyond all mortal count! Servants? Does He need servants? Behold angels in their squadrons—twenty thousand, even thousands of angels are the chariots of the Almighty! Honor? No, the trumpet of fame forever proclaims Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Who can add to the splendor of that diadem that makes sun and moon grow pale by comparison? Who can add to the riches or the wealth of Him who has all things at His disposal? He comes, then, not to be served, but to serve! And you see Him in the workshop serving His reputed parent. You see Him in His home honoring His blessed mother with all filial obedience. You see Him at the noontide of His wonderful career in the midst of His disciples, much more their servant than their Master, though He always maintained precedence by His own Sovereign counsel, and by their weak apprehensions. As He takes the basin, and the pitcher, and the towel—and washes His disciples' feet—you can see the meekness of His disposition. And soon after this, you see Him giving Himself up—His body, His Soul, and His Spirit—in order that He might serve us! And what if I say that even at this very moment, as the Son of Man in Heaven, He continues a kind of service for His people? For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace and for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest, but still continues to intercede for those whose names He bears upon His heart! Hear it, then, all you people, and let everyone that hears hail the gracious fact—be you saints or sinners, be you saved already, or thirsty for the knowledge of salvation—the thought that Christ's errand was not to aggrandize Himself, *but to benefit us*, must be welcome! He does not come to be served, but to serve. Does not this suit you, poor Sinner—you who never did serve Him, you who could not, as you are, minister to Him? Well, He did not come to get your service! He came to give you His services, not that you might first do Him honor, but that He might show you mercy! Oh, you need Him so very much! And since He has come not to look for treasures, but to bestow unsearchable riches—not to find specimens of health, but instances of sickness upon which the healing art of His Grace may operate—surely there is hope for you! I think were I just now seeking Christ, and sorely cast down in spirit, it would make my heart beat for joy to think that Jesus came to serve, and not to be served. Perhaps I would say, He knows my case and He has come to serve me, poor me! Do I not need washing? Why should He not wash me? The dying thief rejoiced to see in his day the fountain which Jesus had opened! Why

should not I see it, too, and have a washing from that precious One who came to serve the vilest and the meanest of the sons of men? Behold! Behold and wonder! Behold and love! Behold and trust! Jesus came from the right hand of God to the manger, to the Cross, to the sepulcher, not to be served, but that He might serve the sons of men!

Pass on to the next words, "*And to give His Life,*" or, more correctly, "and to give His Soul." We have no lives to give. Our lives are forfeited—they are due to Divine Justice. Christ had a Life of His own which was, by no means, due to God on account of any obligations. He had not sinned, but He gave His Life. The death of Christ was perfectly voluntary. As He was free to come, or not, so He was not under any constraint to give His Life, but He did so, and that of His own free will! The grand objective of His coming to this earth was to give His Life. Read the text again. "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His Life." Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into this world merely to be an Example, or merely to reveal the Godhead to the sons of men. He came to make a Substitutionary Sacrifice. He came to give His Soul as a ransom! If you do not believe this Doctrine, you do not believe Christianity. The very pith and marrow, the very sum and substance of the mission of Jesus Christ is His coming to give His Life that He might stand in the place of those for whom He died. He came on purpose to give His Life. Now to give the soul is something more than to give the life. He died, 'tis true, yet He did more than die—He died by an outpouring of all His Life-floods, by the endurance of an anguish such as no ordinary mortal could ever have borne. Of old 'twas the blood that made Atonement. The animal was presented in sacrifice, but the animal was no sacrifice till it was slain—and then when the purple stream smoked down the altar's side, and the bowels of it were cast upon the altar, then it was that the sacrifice was truly presented. Jesus Christ gave up the very essence of His Humanity to be a Substitutionary Sacrifice for us! His spirit was tortured with pangs that are past conception, much more past description! He said, "My Soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." He was like a splendid cluster put into the winepress, and the feet of eternal vengeance trod upon Him till the sacred wine of His atoning blood streamed forth to save the sons of men! He gave His very Self, His entire Self, His soul, His Life, His essential Being, to be a ransom for the sons of Adam! Oh, that I could turn your eyes to that great sight! Behold how He gave His Life! Would to God that for a moment your thoughts were fixed on those five streaming wounds, those sacred fountains of life, and health, of pardon and peace to dying souls! Oh, that your eyes could but gaze within the wounds, into that heart boiling like a cauldron with the wrath of God, tossed to and fro, heaving within itself, oppressed, burdened, tormented and filled with terrible anguish! Oh, that you could see it! Oh, that you could understand that He came from Heaven to suffer all this, to give Himself up thus, that He might be, instead of us, the Victim of a vengeance *we* deserved—that His griefs might avert our ruin, that His pangs might rescue us from destruction! He drank the cup of condemnation

dry! Not a drop was left and, in so doing, He poured out His Soul unto death!

Moreover, His death is our ransom. So it is written, He came to give His Life "*a ransom.*" No one here, I suppose, needs to have explained to him what a ransom means. It may be fairly illustrated by the old Jewish ceremony of the redemption money. Every male person among the Jews belonged to God and he must be redeemed. There was a settled price. The rich were not to give more—the poor should not give less. The same amount was fixed for all. The tithe drachma was paid by every Jew. Then he was enrolled as one of the Lord's redeemed, of whom you so often read. Failing that, he would have been cut off from the congregation of Israel. That piece of money stood instead of the man—it was his ransom. He was not to die—he was to live as a redeemed person! That is just what Jesus has done for His people! He has put Himself, His Soul, His devoted Life, His accomplished death before God in the place of our soul, of our death, of us! And every man who has Christ to be his Substitute is a redeemed man! He is one of the Lord's ransomed people and shall go to Zion with songs of everlasting joy upon his head. But every man who has not accepted Christ remains an unredeemed man, under the curse and subject to the Divine Wrath—under the slavery of Satan and awaiting the sentence of an utter destruction! Jesus Christ came to give His Life as a ransom. As a slave is redeemed by the payment of a price, so Jesus redeems us from the curse of the Law under which we were by nature, having Himself come under the Law. He redeems us from the death which was due to us by Himself enduring a death which was a full equivalent in the estimation of God. He gave His Life as a ransom.

Our text says "*for many.*" We might with greater force and stricter accuracy translate it, "He gave His Life as a ransom in the place of many." The word, "for," there, has a substitutionary meaning, "He gave His Life instead of many." Indeed, this is the point of the sentence—One stood for many! Jesus suffered for many! He put Himself into the place of many! Mark the word, "many." With this we finish the exposition. It does not say "all." There are passages which speak of all. They have their meaning. None of them, however, refer to the substitutionary work of Christ. Jesus Christ did not give His Life as a ransom in the place of all mankind, but a ransom in the place of many men. Who are those many men? Bless God, they are many, for they are not a few! But who are they? God knows. "The Lord knows them who are His." You may ascertain as much as you need to know by answering a plain question. Do you trust Jesus Christ with your eternal destinies? Do you come, all guilty as you are, and rely upon His blood to take that guilt away? Do you confide in Jesus, and in Him, alone? If so, He died for you, and in your place—and you shall never die! This is your comfort, that you cannot die! How can you perish if Jesus was put into your place? If your debt was paid of old by Christ, can it ever be demanded of you again? Once paid, it is fully discharged—the receipt we have gladly accepted—and now we can cry, with the Apostle, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is

God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died; yes, rather that has risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

See here the mainstay of every Believer's confidence! He knows that Christ died for him because he has put his trust in His blessed mediation. If Jesus died for me, then I cannot be condemned for the sins which He expiated. God cannot punish twice for the one offense. He cannot demand two payments for one debt. The Believer, therefore, finds sweet solace in the song which Toplady composed—

***"Turn, then, my Soul unto your rest,
The merits of your great High Priest
Speak peace and liberty—
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear your banishment from God since
Jesus died for thee."***

Thus did the Son of Man give His Life a ransom in the place of many. And such do I believe to be a fair and honest exposition of the words.

II. SOME POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS.

The main drift of the text is the Doctrine of a vicarious or substitutory Atonement whereby Christ's ransom suffices in the place of many. On this let me give to each thought but a sentence or two. It would *seem that man is not delivered from the bondage of his sins without a price*. No one goes free by the naked mercy of God. Every captive exposed to God's vengeance must be redeemed before he is delivered, otherwise he must continue a captive. Broad as the statement may appear, I venture to assert by Divine Warrant that there never was beneath the cape of Heaven a sin forgiven without satisfaction being rendered. No sin against God is pardoned without a propitiation! It is only forgiven through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ! It never can be remitted without the penalty having been exacted. The Divine Law knows of no exception or exemption. The statute is absolute, "The soul that sins, it shall die." Every soul that ever sinned, or ever shall sin, must die, die eternally, too, either in itself or in its Substitute. The justice of the Law of God must be vindicated. God waives none of the rights of justice in order to give liberty to mercy. Oh, my Hearers, if you are trusting in the unconditional mercy of God, you are trusting in a myth! Has someone buoyed you up with the thought of the infinite goodness of God? I would remind you of His infinite holiness! Has He not declared that He will by no means spare the guilty? No debt due to God is remitted unless it is paid. It must either be paid by the transgressor in the infinite miseries of Hell, or else it must be paid for him by a Substitute! There must be a price for the ransom and evidently, according to the text, *that price* must be a soul, a life! Christ did not merely give His body, nor His stainless Character, nor merely His labors and sufferings, but He gave His Soul, His Life, as a ransom! Oh, Sinner, Almighty God will never be satisfied with anything less than your soul! Can you bear the piercing thought that your soul shall be cast from His Presence forever? Would you escape the dire penalty, you must find another soul to stand in your soul's place! Your life is forfeited. The sen-

tence is passed. You shall die. Death is your doom! Die you must, forever die, unless you can find another life for a sacrifice in lieu of your life! And know that this is just what Christ has found. He has put a Soul, a Life, into the place of our souls, our lives. How memorable that text, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Why? Because "the blood is the life thereof." Until the blood flows, the soul is not divided from the body. The shedding of the blood indicated that the soul—the essence of the being—had been offered! Oh, blessed, forever blessed be the crowned head of Him who once did bear the Cross! He has offered for His people a Soul, a Life, a matchless Soul, a Life unparalleled! No more can Justice require! Vengeance is satisfied! The price is paid, the redeemed of the Lord are completely free!

The question has been asked, "If we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, who receives the ransom?" Some have talked as if Christ paid a price to the devil! A more absurd imagination could never have crossed human mind! We never belonged to the devil. Satan has no rights in us. Christ never acknowledged that he had any and would never pay him anything! What then? Surely the ransom price was paid to the Great Judge of All. This is, of course, but a mystical way of speaking. A metaphor is employed to bring out the meaning. The fact is that God had sworn and would not repent, that sin must be punished! In the very essence of things, it was right that transgression should meet with its just recompense. There could be no moral government kept up, there could be no unimpeachable governor unless conviction followed crime and retribution was exacted from the guilty. It was not right, nor could it have been righteous, on any ground, for sin to have been passed over without its having been punished, or for iniquity to have escaped without any infliction! But when Jesus Christ comes and puts His own sufferings into the place of our sufferings, the Law is fully vindicated, while mercy is fitly displayed! A man dies—a Soul is given, a Life is offered—the Just for the unjust! What if I say that instead of Justice being less satisfied with the death of Christ than with the deaths of the ten thousand thousands of sinners for whom He died, it is more satisfied and it is most highly honored? Had all the sinners that ever lived in the world been consigned to Hell, they could not have discharged the claims of Justice! They must still continue to endure the scourge of crime they could never expiate. But the Son of God, blending the Infinite Majesty of His Deity with the perfect capacity to suffer as a Man, offered an Atonement of such inestimable value that He has absolutely paid the entire debt for His people! Well may Justice be content since it has received more from the Surety than it could have ever exacted from the sinner. Thus the debt was paid to the Eternal Father.

Once more. *What is the result of this?* The result is that the man is redeemed. He is no longer a slave. Some preachers and professors affect to believe in a redemption which I must candidly confess I do not understand—it is so indistinct and indefinite—a redemption which does not redeem anybody in particular, though it is alleged to redeem everybody

in general! A redemption insufficient to exempt thousands of unhappy souls from Hell after they have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus! A redemption, indeed, which does not actually save anybody, because it is dependent for its efficacy upon the will of the creature! A redemption that lacks intrinsic virtue and inherent power to redeem anybody, but is entirely dependent upon an extraneous contingency to render it effectual! With such fickle theories I have no fellowship! That every soul for whom Christ shed His blood as a Substitute, He will claim as His own and have as His right, I firmly hold! I love to hold and I delight to proclaim this precious Truth of God! Not all the powers of earth or Hell, not the obstinacy of the human will, nor the deep depravity of the human mind can ever prevent Christ seeing of the travail of His Soul and being satisfied! The last jot and tittle of His reward shall He receive at the Father's hand. A Redemption that does redeem! A Redemption that redeems many, seems to me infinitely better than a redemption that does not actually redeem anybody, but is supposed to have some imaginary influence upon all the sons of men!

Our last question I must leave with you to answer. *Did Jesus Christ redeem you?* Ah, dear Hearer, this is a serious matter. Are you a redeemed soul or not? It is not possible for you to turn over the books of destiny and read between the folded leaves. Neither need you wish to do so. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is to be preached to every creature under Heaven—"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." Therefore, everyone that believes and is baptized, being saved, must have been redeemed, for He could not have been saved otherwise! If you believe and are baptized, you are redeemed, you are saved! Now for your answer to the question—Do you believe? "I believe," says one, and he begins to repeat what they call the "Apostle's Creed." Hold your tongue, Sir! That matters not—the devil believes that, perhaps more intelligently than you do—he believes and trembles! That kind of believing saves no man! You may believe the most orthodox creed in Christendom and perish! Do you trust—for that is the cream of the word, "*believe*"—do you trust in Jesus? Do you lean your whole weight on Him? Have you that faith which the Puritans used to call "recumbency," or, "leaning"? That is the faith that saves—faith that falls back into the arms of Jesus, a faith that drops from its own hanging place into those mighty arms and rests upon the tender breast of the Lord Jesus the Crucified! Oh, my Soul, make sure that you trust Him, for you have made sure of everything else when you have made sure of that! Has God the Holy Spirit taught you, my dear Hearer, that you cannot safely rely on your own good works? Has He weaned you from resting upon mere ceremonies? Has He brought you to look to the Cross—to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, alone? If so, Christ redeemed you—you can never be a slave again! Has He redeemed you? The liberty of the Believer is yours, now, and after death the Glory of Christ shall be your portion, too! Remember the words of the dying monk when putting aside the "extreme unction" and all the paraphernalia of his apostate church—he lifted up his eyes

and said, "*Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera Jesu!*" "Your wounds, oh, Jesus! Your wounds, oh, Jesus!" This must be your refuge, poor broken-winged dove! Fly there into the clefts of the rock, into the spear-thrust in the Savior's heart! Fly there. Rest on Him! Rest on Him! Rest with all your weight of sin, with all your blackness and your foulness, with all your doubts and your despairs—rest on Him! Jesus wants to receive you! Fly to Him—fly away to Him now—

***"Come, guilty souls, and fly away,
And look to Jesus' wounds—
This is the accepted Gospel day,
Wherein free Grace abounds.
God loved His Church and gave His Son
To drink the cup of wrath—
And Jesus says He'll cast out none
Who come to Him in faith."***

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 20:1-28.**

Verses 1, 2. *For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man that is an landowner, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.* It was a fair wage. It was for fair and healthful work which they were to do in the vineyard. They were happy men to be hired so early in the morning. Never do those who serve Christ reject Him and though in this parable some are represented as finding fault with their wages, yet Christ's true servants do not so. Their only request is, "Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord." They feel it to be reward enough to be permitted to go on working. Indeed, this is one way in which we get our wages during the day. If we keep one precept, God gives us Grace to keep another! If we perform one duty, God gives us the privilege to perform another! So we are paid well. We work *in the work*. We say not "for the work," for we are unprofitable servants. Yet is there the penny a day.

3. *And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace.* It was bad for them to be standing there. No good is learned by idlers in idle company. Idle men together kindle a fire that burns like the flames of Hell.

4, 5. *And said unto them; Go you also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.* Much more out of charity than out of any good that he could get from them. Especially was this manifest when it got towards the latter end of the day. So late, so very late, it was but little they could do. Yet for their good he bade them come in.

6. *And about the eleventh hour.* Why, then, surely the day was over! They were ready to put away their tools and go home. But—

6. *He went out and found others standing idle, and said unto them, Why have you been standing here all day idle?* "Why? Can you give a rea-

son for it? Why stand here in the marketplace, where men come together on purpose to be hired? Why do you stand here, you able-bodied ones that still might work? Why do you stand here all day? That you should be idle a little while is bad enough. Why do you stand here all day, and why do you stand here all the day idle, when there is so much work to be done, and such a wage to receive for it?"

7. *They said unto him, Because no man has hired us. He said unto them, Go you also into the Vineyard and whatever is right, that shall you receive.* And so the great landowner was glad when he had emptied the marketplace of the idlers, and brought in from early morning, even till sunset, so many that should be at work—happily at work there. I wonder whether there are any here early in the morning of life who have not yet come into the vineyard? If so, the Master calls you! Are you in middle life? Have you reached the sixth hour, and are you not enlisted in His service? Again the Master calls you! And if you have reached the eleventh hour, where are you? Decrepit—leaning on your staff—leaning downward to your grave? Yet if you are not called now, now He calls you and bids you, even at this late hour, come into the vineyard!

8, 9. *So when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard said unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.* And when souls come to Christ, however late it is, they have the same joy, the same matchless, perfect peace, the same salvation, even, as those who have come while yet they are young! True, they have lost many days, many hours of happy service. They have permitted the sun to decline and have wasted much time, but yet the Master gives them the same life within them, the same adoption into the family of God, the same blessing!

10. *But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.* Why, there are some of us who have now been in Christ's vineyard ever since we were boys, but we must not think that we shall receive, or can have, more than those who have just come in! I have heard people say, "Why, here are these people just lately converted, and they are singing and rejoicing! And there are some of the old people that have been following the Lord for years—and they do not seem to have half the joy! No, no. That is true. It is the old story of the elder brother and the prodigal over again. But do not—do not let us repeat that forever and ever! Do not let us get off of the lines of free, rich, Sovereign Grace, and begin to think that there is some desert in us, some merit in us. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, I will be glad enough to sit at the feet of the meanest child of God, if I am but to be numbered in the family—glad enough to have the same salvation which the dying thief obtained, though only at the last moment he looked to Christ! Yet there is this spirit that will grow up—that some who have been longer in the work ought certainly to have more joy, more of everything, than those that have just come in. See the answer to it.

11-16. *And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have worked but one hour and you have made them equal to us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them and said, Friend, I do you no wrong. Did not you agree with me for a penny? Take that which is yours and go your way: I will give unto this last, even as unto you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is your eye evil because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many are called, but few chosen.* The great principle of Election in Divine Sovereignty will crop up, not in one place, but in many! God will have us know that He is Master, and that in the Kingdom of Grace He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and in the distribution of that Grace He will give according to His own good pleasure! And the moment we begin to murmur or set up claims, He answers us at once with, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" Yet that unevangelical spirit, that ungodly spirit of fancying that we have some sort of claim or right will come in—and it must be sternly repressed. It is of Grace —of Grace alone—of Grace to begin with, of Grace to go on with, of Grace to close with! And human merit must not be allowed to put a single finger anywhere! "Where is boasting, then?" says the Apostle. "It is excluded." It is shut out—the door shut in its face. It must not come in. If you and I serve God throughout a long life, we shall certainly have much greater happiness in life than those can have who come to Christ only at the last. But, as far as the Gospel blessing is concerned, which Christ gives, it is the same salvation which the newly-born Christian enjoys as that which the most advanced Believer is now enjoying! It is to every man the penny bearing the King's own impression!

17-20. *And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death. And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again. Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him.* Then, in the most inopportune time in all the world, when Jesus was talking of being mocked and crucified, and put to death, here comes Mistress Zebedee with an ambitious request about her sons!

21. *And He said unto her, What do you wish? She said unto Him, Grant that these, my two sons, may sit, the one on Your right hand, and the other on the left, in Your Kingdom.* He is thinking of a Cross, and they are dreaming of a crown! He is speaking of being mocked and put to death, and they have ideas of royalty, that they want to have the chief place in the coming Kingdom! Oh, how like ourselves! Our Master thinks of how He can condescend, and we are thinking of how people ought to respect us, and treat us better than they do! Oh, the selfishness that there is in us! May our Master's example help to stay it.

22-24. *But Jesus answered and said, You know not what you ask. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They said unto Him, We are able. And He said unto them, You shall, indeed, drink of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit at My right hand, and at My left is not Mine to give. But it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared by My Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brothers. Thus showing that they were exactly like they, "For," they said, "look at these two—this James and John—they want to have the preference over us! We will not have it." It was exactly the same spirit in each one—ambition in them all for priority of honor. Ah, dear Friends, it often happens that when we are so intent in our condemnation of others, it is only because we fall into the same sin! Some, I have no doubt, whatever, hate the Pope because they *have the essence of popery in themselves*. Two of a trade will never agree—and one man is very angry with another because he is so angry—and one is quite indignant that another should be so proud. *He is not proud. He is proud to say he is humble—he is, therein, proving how proud he is!* Oh, that those beams in our eyes could be taken out. Then the specks in our brothers' eyes would probably no more be seen.*

25-28. *But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whoever will be great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever will be first among you, let him be your slave. Even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His Life a ransom for many.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

ANOTHER ROYAL PROCESSION

NO. 1038

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 3, 1872,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King comes unto you, meek,
and sitting upon a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”
Matthew 21:5.***

IT is not our intention to preach from this verse, alone, but from the combined narrative of our Savior's triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem as contained in the four Evangelists. When our Lord was here on earth He was a humble Man before His foes. He was a weary Man and full of woes, and only now and then did some glimpses of His native royalty burst forth from Him. He had, now and then, a day in which His regal rights were assumed and His royal position was claimed. He is gone from us now as to His actual Presence, but He is with us spiritually and His spiritual Presence here is not unlike what His bodily Presence was in the days of His flesh.

For the most part, the glory of His Gospel Presence is unobserved except among His own disciples. And when perceived by others He is still despised and rejected of men. He moves up and down among our assemblies—hearing our prayers and accepting our praises—but still His honor as a Prince lies concealed from the eyes of the many who know Him not as King by Divine right. Yet, as in those days He had His times of clearer display and His hours of partial manifestation, even so He has now. He gives to His Church her Glory periods, her days of thanksgiving, her court days, and her times of exultation. And I pray God that He may grant such times as these to His Church now, that in the midst of these dull years He may gird His sword upon His thigh and ride forth gloriously in His majesty!

Oh, that the streets of His Jerusalem could be gladdened by the holy pomp and sacred splendor of His gracious and triumphal Presence! Beloved, the world does well to salute righteous kings with all homage. Our nation does well to honor their well-beloved queen, whom may God long preserve! But shall Christ, the King of kings, be without His homage? I must confess I am jealous for Him—jealous with a burning jealousy that the streets should blaze with splendor for the Queen of Britain—and that so little should be done in honor of the King Immortal, Eternal! Lo, the shouts of the multitude rend the skies for earthly princes and I grudge them not. But should there be no lifting up of joyful voices for the Prince of Peace?

Why this lethargy in His Church? Why such slender zeal for the Chief among ten thousand? Why should not earth and Heaven ring with His praises? If I might say so much as a sentence today that should lead the tribes to speak a word to bring the King back again to His own. If I might excite in any soul a fervent desire that Christ's kingdom should more speedily come and His throne should be exalted more on high in the midst

of His people, I should be thrice happy! To that end shall I endeavor to speak this day. Oh, for the anointing of the Holy Spirit to aid me!

Our points of consideration, this morning, will be, first, that Christ has even now His glorious days among men. And secondly that when those glorious days come honors are paid to Him similar to those described by the Evangelists on the occasion of His entrance into Jerusalem. In the third place I shall remind you that He is likely, on such occasions, to perform the same mighty deeds. and in the close of our discourse we shall have to observe that even on those brilliant occasions, "all is not gold that glitters."

I. First, then, here is a very pleasant consideration, that THE LORD JESUS HAS, EVEN NOW, BRIGHT AND GLORIOUS DAYS OF SPECIAL MANIFESTATION IN HIS CHURCH. He has ridden into His Jerusalem again and again in the history of the Gospel. We call these times revivals, and in yet more scriptural language they are known as "times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord." They usually occur, (and I shall try to follow the narrative in all the remarks I make), they usually occur after the Lord has visited His beloved and quickened them.

He came into Jerusalem after He had raised Lazarus from the dead. His Omnipotent voice had said, "Lazarus, come forth!" and Lazarus came forth and the grave clothes were loosed from him. Then, and for that cause, did the people come to meet our Lord with palm branches. First does the Lord speak to His Church and He says to her, "Come forth out of the grave of your sloth and your indifference." He says, "Loose her, take away the bands of her sloth and her conventionalism and set her free." And then when He has restored among His Church a people whom He loves, and granted to them renewed vigor of spiritual life in the power of His Resurrection, then it is that the sign of the Glory of the Son of Man is revealed!

I despair, Beloved, of any revival being of the slightest value which does not begin with the Church of God. It never can originate outside and work into the interior—this is not the rule of spiritual life—it must commence with the *spiritual* in the midst of the Church. It must next quicken the mass of the discipleship, and then it shall spread to those who are outside and in ever widening circles its power shall be felt. But, revival must begin at *home*. Hear this, you professors, and take heed lest you hinder Christ of His Glory! Hear this, you who profess to be members of His Church, and beware lest you be like the damp wood which will not kindle, and therefore no fire burns among the sons of men! Oh, let not the Well-Beloved find His worst hindrances in His own household! Let not the Glory of Christ be obscured most by those who stand nearest to Him and ought, therefore, to be most jealous for His holy name!

Yet so I fear full often it is—the children Ephraim being armed and carrying bows turn back in the day of battle—and so Israel's God is dishonored. Lazarus must arise! Our death must be shaken off and *then* shall the Lord Jesus greatly triumph. The Lord was pleased to ride in state when His disciples were obedient to Him. Note well their implicit obedience, for it is a sure prophecy of glorious displays in the Church. He said to two of His disciples, "Go," and they went. And others of them having His commission performed their errands without hesitation.

Alas, I fear the disobedience of the Church often hinders the advance of the Gospel. The disciples do not, at this day, as they did then, the things which Jesus commanded them. One of them says, "I will follow Paul," another, "I will follow Cephas"—would God we laid aside all party leadership and were only led by the Master Himself! One says, "This institution is venerable if it is not Scriptural." Another says, "I believe this ritual to be impressive and instructive, even if it is not ordained of God." And so men excuse their will-worship. Oh that we could lay all these things aside and recognize that the Law of the house is the Law which the Master makes, and not the Law which the servants invent!

It is time that we laid our perverse likes and our dislikes, our whims and our fancies, our opinions and even our more sober judgments at the feet of Him who is the only King of Zion—for be assured of this—His sacred majesty will not manifest its Glory to disobedient disciples, unless it is in a way of terror! Take heed, then, O you who stand in His courts by your profession and are His servants in name, that you labor to do His will on earth as it is done in Heaven! Do it cheerfully, speedily, exactly, and with reverence to His every Word, for otherwise He will veil His Glory, and do but few mighty works among you!

Another indication of our Lord giving us Glory days will be found in the prompt and cheerful sacrifice which His disciples will make. On the day of His entrance into Jerusalem, the owner of the donkey and its colt cheerfully surrendered them when he heard that the Lord had need of them. The disciples who brought the donkey did not spare their own contributions, for they took their garments and piled them on the donkey. And others would not be debarred from their share of homage, for they spread their garments in the way, counting it their greatest honor to be bare-backed for Christ. All hands contributed for all hearts were warm. The willing offerings of the people carpeted the road for the Son of David when He went through the metropolis to His cathedral.

None appeared before Him empty—there was no withholding on that day. A generous spirit had seized upon all His followers, and mark this word—for there is more of the solemn Truth of God in it than some will think—Christ Jesus has often taken away the power of His Spirit from the Church because of the covetousness of many professors who have grudged the cause of God what they ought spontaneously and cheerfully to have offered! They have said of sacrifice to the Lord, "what a weariness it is!" They have robbed God in tithes and in offerings. They have counted the free-will offering to be a tax, when they ought to have considered it to be an honor and a privilege to be allowed to give to the Lord's cause. God has been insulted by miserly gifts and penurious contributions!

What they would have been ashamed to offer to the meanest among princes they have presented to the Lord. How often have I blushed as I have heard in prayer that text, "Prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Why have you blushed? you ask. Because seldom or never do I hear that text quoted correctly, its point is dexterously turned aside. What is the proof which the Lord puts before His people in that text? For what does He say, "Prove Me

now?" By your prayers? No! By your good works? No! But the text is, "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts," and so on.

That is the peculiar test to which God brings His people, and in that test, alas, how many fail! They buy Him no sweet cane with money, neither is He filled with their sacrifices. They will give their words in plenty—their lip homage in floods—but if it comes to their *substance* they will have none of it! How few Christians have ever read this text and understood it, "Sell what you have and give alms." Their almsgiving has never come to that—they have given but the cheese parings and the candle ends to Christ—but they never *knew* they had given them! They made no *sacrifice* to do so. Many do not give to Jesus so much in a year as it costs to clean their shoes. Christ's cause costs them not half the hire of the most menial servant in their kitchens.

Is not this a crying evil to be answered for by those who are guilty of it? How can we expect the kingdom to come and the cause of Christ to grow while in these days of unreal profession Christ's followers deny Him His due and straiten the treasury of His Church! If no garments strew the road and no man gives up his colt, how shall the Prince celebrate a triumph? But we must pass on from that—those three things are, however, very significant signs of Christ's Glory days—a quickened people, an obedient discipleship, and a general self-sacrifice. Let us see these and we shall be sure that one of Christ's Glory days has come!

Furthermore, the Glory of Christ is seen when Jesus Christ is publicly proclaimed as King. Forevermore, beyond a doubt, we acknowledge Christ to be King in the Church. I hope all Believers are sound upon that point. But in what holes and corners does the Church whisper out the Truth which He has told us in the closet? Years ago, many of the Churches were quite content to hide their light under any bushel, meeting in the strangest courts, and lanes, and alleys, where nobody but an angel and themselves could ever find them out! This contentment with obscurity is contrary to the genius of the Gospel! Let moles and bats seek out the hidden places and dwell there—the children of light are not ashamed—but make it their glory that these things are not done in a corner.

It is a grand day for the kingdom of Christ when the King is proclaimed in the streets! When the great trumpet is sounded! When the disciples stand in the highways and the voice of wisdom is lifted up in the chief places of concourse, at the going in of the gates! Then are things well ordered when Zion lifts up her voice, yes, lifts it up with strength, and says unto the cities of Judah, "Behold your God." Our commission as preachers is to every creature, and, therefore, the more public the teaching of the Gospel the better! Truly, there was Grace in the earth when in popish times God was loved by men in quiet, and when Christ was worshipped by little knots in secret. But that was a grander day when Luther stood out in the open air and said that Christ was King and salvation was by His blood!

Then, when all over Europe the crowds began to gather in the fields, or beneath the Gospel oak, or in the public squares to listen to the men who—not in a corner nor with bated breath—but aloud and boldly before

them all declared that Antichrist must come to an end and that the Lord Jesus Christ must be exalted, and faith in Him must be declared to be the salvation of the sons of men! Oh, it was *then* that Christ and His Church decreed a glorious day! Blessed be God for the Reformation—but we must not rest in faded laurels—we need new victories! We desire the blessings of the Gospel to be extended! And we must pray that the Gospel may have free course and be glorified—that every street may ring with its charming music, that every alley and court may brighten with salvation—yes, and that not a house in London may be left without knowing that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.”

It is a notable day when in the great gatherings of the people the Lord Jesus is declared to be the Lord of all! On such days one part of the Glory consists in many going forth to meet Christ. I wish I might live to see the facts of the Gospel narrative fulfilled spiritually before our eyes. The people in Jerusalem took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Jesus, glad that He was coming into the city, willing to swell the pomp of His entrance. And even thus God moves often on bright days upon the mass of the people making them willing to receive the Gospel. There are times when the preacher feels that he is sowing on stony ground, but on other days when God’s Spirit is abroad, the soil seems broken up, pliable, ready to receive the grain—and the seed suddenly springs up and a speedy harvest is produced!

Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, that God would move our fellow countrymen to go forth to meet King Jesus! Pray that there may come a great desire of religious thought over the minds of the people. God can cause it—He has the keys of human hearts and can secretly guide them according to His will. Pray that there may be a great religious movement among the people, for then we may look for one of the days of the Son of Man, as the days of Heaven upon earth! Then, too, as another sign, we shall see enthusiasm prevailing on all sides. When Christ rode through Jerusalem it was not possible for men to be cold at the sight of His majesty!

Those who hated Him burned with malignity, but those who loved Him were full of flaming affection towards Him. It is one specialty of Christ’s Character that men can scarcely be indifferent in His Presence. He that is not with Him is against Him. What enthusiasm there was in the crowd that day when the city rang again! The children climbed the trees and threw down the branches. Their parents waved them in triumph and then cast them in the roadway that the Savior might ride over them. The shouts were loud and long! The day was full of gladness to the many. Ah, and it is a mark of Christ’s Presence when the Church becomes enthusiastic.

We sometimes hear complaints about revivals being too exciting. Perhaps the censure is deserved, but I would like to see a little of the fault. This age does not generally sin in the direction of being too excited concerning Divine things. We have erred so long on the other side that, perhaps, a little excess in the direction of fervor might not be the worst of all calamities! At any rate, I would not fear to try it. Doubtless our Lord’s Presence, like the rising of the sun, scatters heat as well as light on all sides. Oh to be scorched by that Sun, to be parched with that heat!

Blessed would they be who should be guilty of too great a love for Him—convicted of too consuming a zeal for the Glory! I would gladly die of that heavenly malady!

On that triumphal day, beloved Brethren, where there was no enthusiasm, there was inquiry, for all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?” When our Lord grants revivals to His Church, the congregations and the multitude outside begin to ask, “Why all this stir? What does all this mean? Who is this Christ, and what is His salvation?” This spirit of inquiry is eminently desirable. It is just now a matter to be sought for by importunate prayer. Would God that all this vast metropolis were stirred by the inquiry, “Who is this?” and that everywhere men said, “What is this Gospel about which so much noise is made?” May the Lord in His mercy move men’s hearts as the trees of the forests are shaken with the wind! This is that shaking which the Prophet saw in the Valley of Vision when bone came together to its bone before the breath of the Spirit made the slain to live. Be instant day and night, O you chosen men of God, and pray that like Nineveh in the days of Jonah this whole city may be moved by the preaching of the Word of God!

The strange thing about the matter was that when Jesus entered Jerusalem, all His enemies were quiet. He rode publicly through the streets where Herod and Pilate held their courts, yet they did not attempt to molest Him. The Romans were very jealous of their authority. They were always prompt to seize upon any person who pretended to be a king, and yet not a solitary praetorian guard laid his rough hand upon the King of the Jews and neither did Herod’s men of war appear upon the scene! It does not appear that any information was carried to headquarters concerning this singular procession—neither was it laid to the Lord’s charge by His enemies at His trial.

As for the scribes and Pharisees, they did no more than bark a little, but bite they could not, for they feared the people. That day every foeman cowered down before the Lord like dogs when a lion roars. When He entered the temple He was unattended by armed followers. He took with Him no sword, but simply a scourge made of small cords, and yet with that slight weapon He chased out the buyers and sellers, overturning their tables and overthrowing the seats of them that sold doves. It does not appear that any resistance was made to Him—He was Lord of the hour. Against Him not a dog dared move his tongue! In the Presence of the King of Zion the enemy was as still as a stone till He and His people had passed through the city and the day of the royal pomp was over.

In like manner it is remarkable that, in times when the Lord is blessing His Church, He restrains the wrath of His enemies or causes it to praise Him. He has power to make the proudest humble themselves, and the most stout-hearted bow their necks—and He uses that power to the Glory of His name. While I am thus describing what the glorious days of Christ are when they dawn upon us, surely you, my dear fellow members, are all pleading with God and earnestly praying, “O King of Grace, Grant us one of these royal days in this Church!” And you, the members of other Churches, are crying, “would God that Jesus would come to our town in that fashion, and that He would rule in our Church after that manner.”

Let us pray for it unanimously and continually, and let us be of good cheer, for Jesus loves His Church and He will give her what her heart is set upon. Let us plead with Him for it, and we shall yet see the day in which the many shall cry, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."

II. But, time would fail us if we lingered here, and therefore we pass to the second head, which is this, that ON THESE GLORY DAYS OF JESUS CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH, LIKE HONORS ARE PAID TO HIM NOW AS THEN. And first, He is at this time as loudly praised and as greatly rejoiced in among His people as He was then. They clapped their hands and called Him, "Blessed." And the whole multitude of His disciples rejoiced with an exceeding loud voice, and cried, "Hosanna, Hosanna."

Oh, Beloved, we are dull enough when Christ is away. How can the children of the bride chamber rejoice when the Bridegroom is gone from them? But when His Spirit comes with power into our midst how can we fast? Oh, then our hearts rejoice and leap along in glee like the long frozen brooks when the soft breath of spring has set them free! Send us but a revival, O God, and Ready-to-Halt shall leap upon his crutches, and Much-Afraid and Fearing, and Despondency shall sing with holy mirth! No joy is like the joy of Christ's Presence with His people! Oh, that we might have it! Bickering soon ceases! Murmurings come to an end! Complaints of one another and of God's Providence are all hushed! The sense that Jesus Christ is with His people drowns every note of sorrow and every heart is tuned to loudest notes of thankfulness!

O, my Soul, bless the Lord God! And may all that is in me be stirred up to bless His holy name—to magnify and bless, on that auspicious day—when the power of Jesus Christ is revealed in the city of His choice. It is a gladsome time, a time of singing, a time of shouting, a time of exultation and of intense delight when we go forth to meet our King Solomon to crown Him anew! I need not say to you, should He favor us with such a delightful period, let us rejoice and be glad in Him for you would be sure to do it! When the Lord turns again the captivity of Sion, then is our mouth filled with singing and our tongue with laughter! The point that I shall dwell upon here would be that Christ's peculiar honor lay not only in the joy and rejoicing which flowed around Him, but in the multitude who felt the contagion of that joy.

It was said by those who saw the pageantry of last week, that the great sight of all was the multitude! The thing to look at and to wonder at was the *crowd*—the dense, far-reaching, eager, surging crowd. And, surely, in Christ's Glory days the thing which brings Him much honor is the crowd—the multitude. When He makes bare His arm, and His Gospel is preached with power, the multitude are sure to listen, and men say, "Behold the whole world is gone after Him." It may seem strange and unaccountable, but so it is, that the very Gospel which is opposed by men has a strange attraction for their ears—they cannot help hearing it—and though to this day there is an opposition in the human heart to the Truth as it is in Jesus, yet it is a remarkable fact that men love to listen to it. The numerical strength of Christ's Church still lies in the multitude—the common people hear Him gladly.

Though it was known that Christ was coming, the princes did not go to meet Him. The priests did not go to meet Him. There were no long files of Jewish nobility to greet their King. But the *people* went by the thousands! The masses cheered Him! I dare say the Pharisees called them the mob, the rabble, the unwashed. Yes, and let it stand for fact, “this Man receives sinners.” He is the *people’s* King, the Helper of the poor and needy. The poor of this world have been rich in faith in Him. In the old days of persecution and of burning—who were the men that played the man most nobly at the stake? Here and there a bishop and a noble did so, but the rank and file of the heroes were from the poor or the middle class!

There was one great man with an unworthy right hand that recanted, and yet did well at the last—but the poor weavers of Colchester, and the cobblers of Bow never recanted at all! They gloried in being made a burnt-offering for the Truth of God! Wherever the Gospel has been mainly upheld by the great ones of the earth it has had little success. Take, for instance, Spain and Italy. The converts of the Reformation there nearly all belonged to the higher ranks, and before long its doctrines became extinct. But it lived among German peasants and British artisans. The valiant of Israel still come from the loom, the smithy, the plow and the bench. Wherever the Gospel entrenches itself among the common people, the devil himself cannot destroy it! It is then like a lion in its own forest, and none can drive it away!

The priests and the mighty ones may uphold what cause they will, but if the people are for King Jesus, His advocates have no need to blush. It is this day the Glory of Christ that He does save the poor and the needy, and that He is the Prince of the multitude. “I have exalted,” says the Lord, “One chosen out of the people”—Jesus is the people’s Christ—the people’s Man. He still has honor out of the mouth of those whom others despise, for He has chosen the base things of the world and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are! Here was a part of Christ’s glory.

And then, observe, that on that day it was Christ’s Glory that He received all sorts of homage from all kinds of people. As I have already said, he who had a beast that Christ might ride upon cheerfully surrendered it. He who had no beast had at least a garment, and he gave it. And he who was so poorly clad that his best garment, when spread in the way, might seem rather to insult than to honor the King, gave a branch from the tree. He who could, brought a palm, which probably he had to purchase with money. But those who could not buy palm branches, climbed the trees that were common and grew by the highway, and threw the branches down.

I suppose these were branches of olives, for they were hard by the Mount of Olives—let the fatness of the earth honor Him! There were also branches of the fig tree, for Bethpage was the house of figs—let the sweetness of the earth honor Him! Doubtless there were branches of the cedars—let the honor and strength of the earth adore Him! There were branches of the myrtle—let all earth’s honor and victory glorify Him! I do not read that Christ rejected so much as one attempt to do Him honor. He rebuked no disciple and silenced no child! Oh, in the day when Christ is

glorious all His people try to serve Him! Each one brings his portion—the prince brings much, but the peasant brings his share—and the Lord accepts them all! No Christian, when the Lord is abroad, shirks his duty or forgets to bring his sacrifice—nor does the Lord reject so much as one honest gift of a sincere heart.

And on that day, oh, it was a sweet thing to notice and delightful to remember, it will always be so when Christ is glorious—the little ones were conspicuous! Did not the boys in the Temple cry, “Hosanna! Hosanna!” and their throats were not hoarse half so soon as their fathers’ were! They kept up the mirth of that gladsome day—a joyful holiday was it for them! Even thus where there is true Grace working powerfully in a Church I always expect to see young converts—boys and girls will be brought to Christ in any true revival—and where they are not, I think we have good reason to suspect that the movement is not genuine—for had it been the work of the Spirit of God, the little ones would have been suffered to come unto Him as well as those of older growth.

Oh, may such honors be heaped on Christ in this Tabernacle! Would God I could hear the little ones say, “Hosanna!” while their fathers and their mothers join the song! The Lord grant that the Sunday school may send up a noble regiment for the King’s army! Oh, that on all sides, you men with wealth and you men with none. You with great gifts and you with few. You with much time and leisure, and you with scarcely an hour to call your own—you aged men and you youngsters—O that you would unite in magnifying the Redeemer! Oh, that I could see you all strewing something in the way of Christ to glorify Him in the midst of His Church!

III. But, I must not dwell here, though the theme is very tempting. Notice that when Christ comes into the Church HE EXECUTES THE SAME DEEDS AS HE DID THEN. What was the first thing He did that we observe? He was seated on the colt and as He rode along and heard the shouts of the people, I have no doubt that a smile was over His face. And when He saw the little ones, in all their ardor, He looked at them with love. But, on a sudden, just as He came where He could see Jerusalem, though it was the day of His triumph, He stopped! And all around could see that some mighty emotion was swelling His heart to bursting, and at last the tears coursed adown those cheeks and He burst into this lament, “O that you had known, even you, in this your day.”

I know that everywhere Christ is in the Church, in the power of His Spirit, compassion for souls becomes very prominent. Christ weeps through His people’s eyes and yearns through His children’s hearts. He makes them pitiful and full of compassion. They cannot bear it that men should be damned! It grieves them that the day of a gracious visitation should come and yet so many should reject Christ. Oh, my Brothers and Sisters, you who live near to Christ and feel a sympathy with Him, ask the Lord to give you heartache over dying souls! Ask Him to make you feel an anguish because men will not come unto Him that they might have life, but will persist in committing spiritual suicide by putting far from them life eternal! Oh, that we might see a holy passion for souls in the Church! That would be a blessed sign of rich Grace!

At the same time, on that same occasion, the judgments of Christ were conspicuous for His compassion did not permit Him to keep back the tidings of future punishment. He said, "If you had known, even you, at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you that your enemies shall cast a trench about you and compass you round, and keep you in on every side. And shall lay you even with the ground and your children within you. And they shall not leave in you one stone upon another because you knew not the time of your visitation."

I have noted that in genuine revivals the preachers of God's Truth are not backward in preaching the threats, as well as the promises. We are told that men are drawn to Christ by love and the statement is true. But, at the same time, "knowing the terrors of the Lord," we are to persuade men and not to keep back from them the evil tidings. Even Christ, with weeping eyes and tender heart, does not hesitate to tell Jerusalem of its coming destruction—and I believe it is a token that Christ is in the Church when those terrible things of His are not kept back to please the popular taste—when there is no trying to cut them down and moderate them in order to make the wrath to come look less terrible than it is.

It must be thundered out again and again, "unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish!" It must be told the sinner that if he goes on in his iniquity he shall be driven away from hope and salvation, "where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched." Christ is not present in an unfaithful Church! And this is a point upon which some Churches are very apt to grow unfaithful. We must deliver the whole Truth of God—even the dark side of it as well as that which smiles with mercy—and Christ is not present unless it is so. The sympathy of Jesus led Him, as it should lead us, to be lovingly honest with the sons of men.

But, you notice in the reading, that our Lord, when He rode through the streets of His metropolis, went straight away to the cathedral gate. And when He entered there He began to purge the Temple. With the scourge in His hand He smote right and left—and He overthrew the tables of those that were changing the shekels! And He cast out the cages of doves that were stored there for merchandise. Even now does Christ do. No Church can remain long impure with Jesus in her midst. His Presence brings reformation—things tolerated before become intolerable where He is. While a Church is without the Spirit of God it will keep in its old ways—it will plead precedent, it will endure grievous abuses—it will make excuses for this and excuses for that.

But let the Lord once come, and out the hawkers and hucksters must go—tables, money-bags, doves, and all! He will not have them in His House of Prayer—bag and baggage must go when He comes in! He only in His Truth and power must reign in the midst of His own Church! I do not believe we shall thoroughly purify any Church by Acts of Parliament, nor by reformation associations, nor by agitation, nor by any merely *human* agency. No hand can grasp the scourge that can drive out the buyers and sellers but that hand which once was fastened to the Cross. Let the Lord do it and the work will be done, for it is not of man, nor shall man accomplish it!

Then, when Christ had purged the Church, the next thing was to heal the sick who came to Him in the Temple. The place which might not be a mart was allowed to be an hospital. So the Glory days of Christ are always notable for the great cures that He works—the sons of men receive lasting benefits and are relieved of grievous maladies. Eyes are opened! Understandings are enlightened! Infirmities are removed, the lame walk! Wills are subdued! Hearts are cleansed and natures are changed! Where Jesus comes, salvation follows with all the train of blessings which it includes.

And, then, we find that that day His foes were all confounded. They came to meet Him with their questions, but He soon answered them, and what did they say, the one to the other? “Perceive you how we prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him.” O Master, give us to see such times as these! Our souls now long for them! Cause our enemies to lament, and say, “We thought we had put down these old doctrines, but we have prevailed nothing! Behold the multitude is moved by them.”

The devil thought in England, years ago, that the Gospel light was put out! He had lulled the Church of England and Dissenters, too, into a deep sleep and Arianism and all sorts of errors had spread all over the land. But the Lord touched the heart of Whitefield and Wesley, and the godly ones. The Spirit of God came down—the multitude heard the Gospel gladly! And many an enemy of Christ, as he stood at his window and saw the streets thronged to hear those men as they never had been thronged before—as they heard the song borne on the distant breezes of the wide open spaces outside the towns and villages, said, “Why, after all, we have not put this thing down, though we fancied we had destroyed it!”

There is hope of this celestial tree—if it is cut down it will sprout again! At the scent of water it will bud. This child is not dead, but sleeps! A certain vainglorious party of Pretenders to intellect and culture tell us now that the old Puritan faith is nearly extinct. They say there are only a few of us ignorant people who now hold the same truths as John Owen, John Bunyan, Goodwin and Charnock. They say only the elite of the world, those who have all the “sweetness and light” to themselves—the thinkers, the mental gentility—have all been sensible enough to give their votes for something more suitable to the times. In the name of God we shall yet show them the difference! And by His Spirit He will din their ears with the Gospel ram’s horn till they and their Jericho come down in a common ruin!

The evangelical doctrine which shook Europe will shake it yet again! And England shall yet know that the same Truths of God for which her martyrs died and for which her Puritans fought on many a well-contested field, shall yet break in pieces the rationalism and ritualism—and all else that stands in the way of the true Gospel of the living God of this land! We are not afraid nor discouraged, but we cry mightily unto the King that we may once more lift up a shout because of His Presence—for then human philosophy shall be ashamed, and old Rome shall know, and all the cubs of the beast of Rome shall know—that the Lord lives and His invincible Truth shall win the day!

IV. Now lastly, I said that even on the occasion when Christ came into Jerusalem, ALL WAS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERED, and so we must not

expect it to be in any revival of religion. They said, “Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!” till the heavens rang again, but there was an undercurrent—there were Pharisees and men of other classes with them, raging and snarling—trying then and there to devise a plan by which to destroy the Lord. And there was Judas at that very time plotting, planning—ready to sell his Master.

However, what did that signify? The worst thing of all was this—that those same tongues which were that day crying, “Hosanna!”—oh shame on our humanity that we should have to mention it!—those same tongues which cried “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord,” within that same week said, “crucify Him! Crucify Him!” I say not all, but some. It was the mob of Jerusalem that brought Him in as their King, but when they found that He would not assume the throne and that He spoke of a *spiritual* kingdom, and not an earthly one—then they were instant with loud voices, saying, “Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified!”

Expect not, therefore, when many hearts are impressed with the Gospel, that all will be steadfast towards Christ. Do not reckon that every pious feeling will end in genuine conversion. The florist does not expect all his slips to become shrubs. Look at the trees, which, in a few short days will be smothered with blossoms and glorious with beauty—do you expect those blossoms all to become fruit? No gardener thinks that such a thing can be! He understands that full many of those flowers will wither, will be blown off in the March gales, or smitten by the evening’s frost. He looks for fruit proportionate to the blossoming, but not to a fruit that shall be equal to the full promise of the bloom.

And so, think not ill of Christ’s great days because they seem, to inexperienced eyes, greater on the surface than they are. Thank God there is a residue of reality—be thankful for that. But do not be disappointed, much less scoff, because it is not all that you had hoped it was. If some are saved we are glad. If I had a thousand professed converts, and only a hundred of them turned out to be genuine, I would be more grateful than if all my converts were genuine, and there was only half a dozen of them. Large dealers look for some losses and bad debts, and yet hope to gain much in the long run. So long as I do but get the number of *real* converts, I will forget, and my heart shall outlive the disappointment of having expected more. Go on, Brothers and Sisters, go on praying, hoping, working—for the Lord will bless His people! The Lord will bless His people with peace. Amen and amen!

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THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM NO. 405

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 18, 1861,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Tell you the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King is coming to you
lowly and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.”
Matthew. 21:5.*

WE have read the chapter from which our text is taken. Let me now rehearse the incident in your hearing. There was an expectation upon the popular mind of the Jewish people that Messiah was about to come. They expected Him to be a temporal prince, one who would make war upon the Romans and restore to the Jews their lost nationality. There were many who, though they did not believe in Christ with a *spiritual* faith, nevertheless hoped that perhaps He might be to them a great *temporal* deliverer. And we read that on one or two occasions they would have taken Him and made Him a king, but that He hid Himself.

There was an anxious desire that somebody or other should lift the standard of rebellion and lead the people against their oppressors. Seeing the mighty things which Christ did, the wish was father to the thought and they imagined that He might probably restore to Israel the kingdom and set them free. The Savior at length saw that it was coming to a crisis. For Him it must either be death for having disappointed popular expectation, or else He must yield to the wishes of the people and be made a king. You know which He chose. He came to save others and not to be made a king Himself in the sense in which they understood Him.

The Lord had worked a most remarkable miracle. He had raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been buried four days. This was a miracle so novel and so astounding that it became town talk. Multitudes went out of Jerusalem to Bethany—it was only about two miles distant—to see Lazarus. The miracle was well authenticated. There were multitudes of witnesses. It was generally accepted as being one of the greatest marvels of the age and they drew the inference from it that Christ must be the Messiah.

The people determined that now they would make Him a king and that now He should lead them against the hosts of Rome. He, intending no such thing, nevertheless overruled their enthusiasm that by it He might have an opportunity of performing that which had been written of Him in the Prophets. You must not imagine that all those who strewed the branches in the way and cried “Hosanna” cared about Christ as a *spiritual* prince. No, they thought that He was to be a *temporal* deliverer and when they found out afterwards that they were mistaken they hated Him just as much as they had loved Him and “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” was as loud and vehement a cry as “Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.”

Our Savior thus availed Himself of their mistaken enthusiasm for many wise ends and purposes. It was needful that the prophecy should be fulfilled—“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout O daughter of Jerusa-

lem! Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly and sitting on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.” It was needful, that He should make a public claim to be the Son of David and that He should claim to be the rightful inheritor of David’s Throne—this He did on this occasion.

It was needful, too, that He should leave His enemies without excuse—in order that they might not say, “If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly”—He did tell them plainly. This riding through the streets of Jerusalem was as plain a manifesto and proclamation of His royal rights as could possibly have been issued. I think, moreover—and upon this I build the discourse of this morning—I think that Christ used the popular fanaticism as an opportunity of preaching to us a living sermon, embodying great Truths which are too apt to be forgotten because of their spiritual character. Embodying them in the outward form and symbol of Himself riding as a king, attended by hosts of followers. We come to this as the subject of our sermon. Let us see what we can learn from it.

I. One of the first things we learn is this. *By thus riding through the streets in state, Jesus Christ claimed to be a king.* That claim had been to a great extent kept in the background until now. But before He goes to His Father, when His enemies’ rage has reached its utmost fury and when His own hour of deepest humiliation has just arrived, He makes an open claim before the eyes of all men to be called and acknowledged a king. He summons first His heralds. Two disciples come. He sends forth His mandate—“Go you into the village over against you and you shall find a donkey and a colt.”

He gathers together His courtiers. His twelve disciples, those who usually attended Him, come around Him. He mounts the donkey which of old had been ridden by the Jewish lawgivers, the rulers of the people. He begins to ride through the streets and the multitudes clap their hands. It is reckoned by some that no fewer than three thousand people must have been present on the occasion—some going before, some following after—and others standing on either side to see the show. He rides to His capital. The streets of Jerusalem, the royal city, are open to Him. Like a king He ascends to His palace. He was a *spiritual* king and therefore he went not to the palace temporal but to the *palace spiritual*.

He rides to the temple and then, taking possession of it, He begins to teach in it as He had not done before. He had been sometimes in Solomon’s porch, but He was more often on the mountain side than in the temple. But now, like a king, He takes possession of His palace and there, sitting down on His prophetic throne, He teaches the people in His royal courts. You princes of the earth, give ear—there is One who claims to be numbered with you. It is Jesus, the Son of David, the King of the Jews. Room for Him, you emperors, room for Him!

Room for the man who was born in a manger! Room for the man whose disciples were fishermen! Room for Him whose garment was that of a peasant, without seam, woven from the top throughout! He wears no crown except the crown of thorns, yet He is more royal than you. About His loins He wears no purple, yet He is far more imperial than you. Upon His feet there are no silver sandals decked with pearls, yet He is more glorious than you. Room for Him—room for Him! Hosanna! Hosanna! Let Him be proclaimed again a King! A King! A King! Let Him value His place

upon His Throne, high above the kings of the earth. This is what He then did—He proclaimed Himself a King.

II. Moreover, Christ by this act showed *what sort of a king He might have been if He had pleased and what sort of a king He might be now, if He willed it.* Had it been our Lord's will, those multitudes who followed Him in the streets would actually have crowned Him then and there. And bowing the knee, they would have accepted Him as the branch that sprung out of the dried root of Jesse. He that was to come—the ruler, the Shiloh among God's people. He had only to have said a word and they would have rushed with Him at their head to Pilate's palace and taking him by surprise. With but few soldiers in the land, Pilate might soon have been His prisoner and have been tried for his life.

Before the indomitable valor and the tremendous fury of a Jewish army, Palestine might soon have been cleared of all the Roman legions and have become again a royal land. No, with His power of working miracles, with His might by which He drove the soldiers back when He said, "I am He"—He might have cleared not only that land but every other! He might have marched from country to country and from kingdom to kingdom till every royal city and every regal state would have yielded to His supremacy. He could have made those that dwelt in the isles of the sea to bow before Him and they that inhabit the wilderness could have been bid to lick the dust.

There was no reason, O you kings of the earth, why Christ should not have been mightier than you. If His kingdom had been of *this* world, He might have founded a dynasty more lasting than yours. He might have gathered troops before whose might your legions would be melted like snow before the summer's sun. He might have dashed to pieces the Roman image, till, a broken mass, like a potter's vessel shivered by a rod of iron, it might have been dashed to shivers.

It is even so, my Brethren. If it were Christ's will, He might make His saints, everyone of them, a prince. He might make His Church rich and powerful. He might lift up His religion if He chose and make it the most magnificent and sumptuous. If it were His will there is no reason why all the glory we read of in the Old Testament under Solomon might not be given to the Church under David's greater Son. But He does not come to do it and hence the impertinence of those who think that Christ is to be worshipped with gorgeous architecture, with magnificent vestments, with proud processions, with the alliance of States with churches.

O the folly of making the bishops of God magnificent lords and rulers. With lifting up the Church herself and attempting to put upon her shoulders those garments that will never fit her—vestments that were never meant for her. If Christ cared for this world's *glory*, it might soon be at His feet. If He willed to take it, who should raise a tongue against His claim, or who should lift a finger against His might!? But He cares not for it. Take your gewgaws elsewhere, take your tinsel hence—He wants it not. Remove your glory and your pomp and your splendor—He needs it not at your hands.

His kingdom is *not of this world*, else would His servants fight, else were His ministers clothed in robes of scarlet and His servants would sit among princes. He cares not for it. People of God, seek not after it. What your Master would not have, do not court yourselves. Oh, Church of Christ

what your husband disdained, do you also disdain. He might have had it but He would not. And He read to us the lesson, that if all these things might be the Church's, it were well for Him to pass by and say, "These are not for Me—I was not meant to shine in these borrowed plumes."

III. But thirdly and here lies the essence of the matter. You have seen that Christ claimed to be a king. You have seen what kind of a king He might have been and would not be. Now see *what kind of a king He is and what kind of a king claimed to be*. What was His kingdom? What is its nature? What was His royal authority? Who were to be His subjects? What are His laws? What is His government? Now perceive at once from the passage taken as a whole, that Christ's kingdom is a very strange one—totally different from anything that ever has been seen or ever will be seen.

It is a kingdom, in the first place, *in which the disciples are the courtiers*. Our blessed Lord had no prince in waiting, no usher of the black rod, no gentlemen-at-arms who supplied the place of those grand officers! Why a few poor humble fishermen were His disciples. Learn, then, that if in Christ's kingdom you would be a peer you must be a *disciple*. To sit at His feet is the honor which He will give you. Hearing His words, obeying His commands, receiving His grace—this is true dignity, this is true magnificence. The poorest man that loves Christ, or the humblest woman who is willing to accept Him as her Teacher becomes at once one of the nobility that wait upon Christ Jesus.

What a kingdom is this which makes fishermen nobles and peasants princes while they remain but fishermen and peasants still! This is the kingdom of which we speak—in which *discipleship* is the highest degree—in which *divine service* is the patent of nobility. It is a kingdom, strange to say it, *in which the king's laws are none of them written upon paper*. The king's laws are not promulgated by mouth of herald but are written upon the *heart*. Do you not perceive that in the narrative Christ bids His servants go and take His royal steed, such as it were and this was the law, "Loose him and let him go"?

But where was the law written? It was written upon the heart of that man to whom the donkey and the foal belonged—for he immediately said, "Let them go," cheerfully and with great joy. He thought it a high honor to contribute to the royal state of this great King of Peace. So, Brethren, in the kingdom of Christ you shall see no huge law books, no attorneys, no solicitors, no barristers who have need to expound the law. The law book is here in the *heart*, the barrister is here in the *conscience*, the law is written no more on parchment, no more promulgated and written, as the Roman decrees were, upon steel and brass—but upon the fleshy tablets of the heart.

The human will is subdued to obedience, the human heart is molded to Christ's image, His desire becomes the desire of His subjects. His glory is their chief aim and His law the very delight of their souls. Strange kingdom this—which needs no law save those which are written upon the hearts of the subjects!

Stranger still, as some will think it, this was a kingdom *in which riches were no part whatever of its glory*. There rides the King, the poorest of the whole State, for yonder King had not where to lay His head. There rides the King, the poorest of them all, upon another man's donkey that He has

borrowed. There rides the King, one who is soon to die—stripped of His robes to die naked and exposed. And yet He is the King of this kingdom—the First, the Prince, the Leader, the crowned One of the whole generation—simply because He had the least. He it was who had given most to others and retained least Himself—He who was least selfish and most disinterested, He who lived most for others—was King of this kingdom.

And look at the courtiers, look at the princes! They were all poor, too. They had no flags to hang out from the windows, so they cast their poor clothes upon the hedges or hung them from the windows as He rode along. They had no splendid purple to make a carpet for the feet of His donkey, so they cast their own toil-worn clothes in the way. They strewed along the path palm branches which they could easily reach from the trees which lined the road—because they had no money with which to bear the expense of a greater triumph. Every way it was a poor thing.

No spangles of gold, no flaunting banners, no blowing of silver trumpets, no pomp, no state! It was poverty's own triumph. Poverty enthroned on Poverty's own beast rides through the streets. Strange kingdom this, Brethren! I trust we recognize it—a kingdom in which he that is chief among us, is not he that is richest in *gold*—but he that is richest in *faith*. A kingdom which depends on no revenue except the revenue of divine grace. A kingdom which bids every man sit down under its shadow with delight—be he rich or be he poor. Strange kingdom this!

But, Brethren, here is something perhaps yet more exceedingly wonderful—*it was a kingdom without an armed force*. Oh, Prince, where are Your soldiers? Is this Your army? These thousands that attend You? Where are their swords? They carry palm branches. Where are their accoutrements? They have almost stripped themselves to pave Your way with their garments. Is this Your host? Are these Your battalions? Oh strange kingdom, without an army! Most strange King, who wears no sword but rides along in this midst of His people conquering and to conquer a strange kingdom, in which there is the palm without the sword, the victory without the battle.

No blood, no tears, no devastation, no burned cities, no mangled bodies! King of Peace! King of Peace, this is Your dominion! 'Tis even so in the kingdom over which Christ is King today. There is no force to be used. If the kings of the earth should say to the ministers of Christ, "We will lend you our soldiers," our reply would be, "What can we do with them?—as soldiers they are worthless to us." It was an ill day for the Church when she borrowed the army of that unhallowed heathen, the emperor Constantine and thought that would make her great. She gained nothing by it save pollution, degradation and shame.

And that Church which asks the civil arm to help it—that Church which would make her Sabbaths binding on the people by force of law, that Church which would have her dogmas proclaimed with beat of drum and make the fist or the sword to become her weapons—knows not what spirit she is of. These are *carnal* weapons. They are out of place in a *spiritual* kingdom. His armies are loving thoughts. His troops are kind words. The power by which He rules His people is not the strong hand and the stretched-out arm of police or soldiery. But by deeds of love and words of overflowing benediction He asserts His sovereign sway.

This was a strange kingdom, too, my Brethren, *because it was without any pomp*. If you call it pomp, what singular pomp it was! When our kings are proclaimed, three strange fellows, the like of whom one would never see at any other time, called heralds, come riding forth to proclaim the king. Strange are their dresses, romantic their costume and with sound of trumpet the king is magnificently proclaimed. Then comes the coronation and how the nation is moved from end to end with transport when the new king is about to be crowned!

What multitudes crowd the street! Sometimes of old the fountains were made to flow with wine and there was scarce a street which was not hung with tapestry throughout. But here comes the King of kings, the Prince of the kings of the earth—no spotted steed, no prancing horse which would keep at a distance the sons of poverty. He rides upon His donkey and as He rides along He speaks kindly to the little children, who are crying, “Hosanna,” and wishes well to the mothers and fathers of the lowest grade, who crowd around Him. He is *approachable!* He is not divided from them. He claims not to be their superior, but *their servant!*

No trumpet sounds—He is content with the voice of men. No trappings upon His donkey, but His own disciple’s garments. No pomp but the pomp which loving hearts right willingly yielded to Him. Thus on He rides. His the kingdom of *meekness*, the kingdom of *humiliation*. Brethren, may we belong to that kingdom, too? May we feel in our hearts that Christ is come in us to cast down every high and every proud thought? That every valley may be lifted up and every hill may be abased and the whole land exalted in that day?

Listen again and this perhaps is the most striking part of Christ’s kingdom—*He came to establish a kingdom without taxations*. Where were the collectors of the King’s revenue? You say He had not any. You say He had none, but what a revenue it was! Every man took off his garments willingly. He never asked it. His revenue flowed freely from the willing gifts of His people. The first had lent his donkey and his colt. The rest had given their clothes. Those who had scarce clothes to part with, plucked the branches from the trees and here was state for once which cost no man anything—or rather for which nothing was demanded of any man—but everything spontaneously given.

This is the kingdom of Christ—a kingdom which subsists not upon tithe, Church-rate or Easter dues—but a kingdom which lives upon the free will offering of the willing people. A kingdom which demands nothing of any man but which comes to him with a stronger force than demand, saying to him, “You are not under the Law, but under Grace. Will you not, being bought with a price, consecrate yourself and all that you have to the service of the King of kings?”

Brethren, do you think me wild and fanatical in talking of a kingdom of this sort? Indeed, ‘twere fanatical if we said that any mere man could establish such a dominion. But Christ has done it and this day there are tens of thousands of men in this world who call Him King—and who feel that He is more their King than the ruler of their native land. They give to Him a more sincere homage than they ever give to their beloved sovereign. They feel that His power over them is such as they would not wish to resist—the power of love. They feel that their gifts to Him are all too little, for

they wish to give *themselves* away! Marvelous and matchless kingdom! It's like shall never be found on earth.

Before I leave this point, I should like to remark that apparently *this was a kingdom in which all creatures were considered*. Why did Christ have *two* beasts? There was a donkey and a colt, the foal of a donkey. He rode on the foal because it had never been ridden before. Now I have looked at several of the commentators to see what they say about it and one old commentator has made me laugh—I trust he will not make you laugh, too—by saying that Christ telling His disciples to bring the foal as well as the donkey should teach us your infants ought to be baptized as well as their parents. This seemed to me to be an argument eminently worthy of childish baptism.

Thinking the matter over, however, I consider there is a better reason to be given—Christ would not have any pain in His kingdom—He would not have even a donkey suffer by Him—and if the foal had been taken away from its mother there would have been the poor mother in the stable at home, thinking of its foal. And there would have been the foal longing to get back, like those oxen that the Philistines used when they took back the ark and which went lowing as they went, because their calves were at home.

Wondrous kingdom of Christ—in which the very beast shall have its share! “For the creature was made subject to vanity by our sin.” It was the beast that suffered because we sinned and Christ intends that His kingdom should bring back the beast to its own pristine happiness. He would make us merciful men, considerate even to the beasts. I believe that when His kingdom fully comes the animal nature will be put back to its former happiness. “Then shall the lion eat straw like the ox, the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den.”

Old Eden's peacefulness and the familiarity between man and the lower creatures shall come back once more. And even now, wherever the Gospel is fully known in man's heart, man begins to recognize that he has no right wantonly to kill a sparrow or a worm, because it is in Christ's dominion. And He who would not ride a foal without having its mother by its side, that it might be at peace and happy, would not have any of His disciples think lightly of the mean creature that His hands have made.

Blessed kingdom this which considers even the beast! Does God care for oxen? Yes, that He does. And for the very donkey itself, that heir of toil, He cares. Christ's kingdom, then, shall care for beasts as well as men.

Once more—Christ, in riding through the streets of Jerusalem, taught in a *public* manner that His kingdom *was to be one of joy*. Brethren, when great conquerors ride through the streets, you often hear of the joy of the people. How the women throw roses on the pathway, how they crowd around the hero of the day and wave their handkerchiefs to show their appreciation of the deliverance he has worked. The city has been long besieged. The champion has driven away the besiegers and the people will now have rest. Fling open wide the gates, clear the road and let the hero come—let the lowly page that is in his retinue be honored this day for the deliverer's sake.

Ah, Brethren, but in those triumphs how many tears there are that are hidden! There is a woman who hears the sound of the bells for victory and she says, "Ah, victory indeed, but I am a widow and my little ones are orphans." And from the balconies where beauty looks down and smiles, there may be a forgetfulness for the moment of friends and kindred over whom they will soon have to weep—for every battle is with blood and every conquest is with woe. Every shout of victory has in it weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Every sound of the trumpet, because the battle is obtained, does but cover over the cries, the sorrows and the deep agonies of those that have been bereaved of their kinsfolk!

But in Your triumph, Jesus, there were no tears! When the little children cried, "Hosanna," they had not lost their fathers in battle. When the men and women shouted, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord," they had no cause to shout with bated breath, or to mar their joys with the remembrance of misery. No, in His kingdom there is unalloyed, unmingled joy. Shout, shout, you that are subjects of King Jesus! Sorrows you may have, but not from Him. Troubles may come to you because you are in the world, but they come not from Him. His service is perfect liberty. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all His paths are peace—

***"Joy to the world, the Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let every heart prepare a tune,
And every voice a song."***

He comes to wipe away your tears and not to make them flow. He comes to lift you from your dunghills and set you upon His Throne, to fetch you from your dungeons and make you leap in liberty—

***"Blessings abound wherein He reigns,
The prisoner leaps to lose His chains;
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the eons of want are blessed."***

Singular kingdom this!

IV. And now I come to my fourth and last head. The Savior, in His triumphal entrance into the capital of His fathers, declared to us very plainly *the practical effects of His kingdom*. Now what are these? One of the first effects was *that the whole city was moved*. What does that mean? It means that everybody had something to say about it and that everybody felt something because Christ rode through the street. There were some who leaned from the tops of their houses and looked down the street and said to one another—"Aha, did ever you see such fool's play as this? Humph! Here is Jesus of Nazareth down here riding on a donkey!

"Surely if He meant to be king He might have chosen a horse. Look at Him! They call that pomp? There is some old fisherman has just thrown down his bad-smelling garment. I dare say it had fish in it an hour or two ago!" "Look," says one, "see that old beggar throwing his cap into the air for joy!" "Aha," they say, "was there ever such a ridiculous thing as that?" I cannot put it in such terms as they would describe it. If I could, I think I would. I should like to make you see how ridiculous this must have seemed to the people. Why, if Pilate himself had heard about it he would have said—"Ah, there is nothing much to fear from that. There is no fear that that man will ever upset Caesar. There is no fear that He will ever overturn an army.

“Where are their swords? There is not a sword among them! They have no cries that sound like rebellion. Their songs are only some religious verses taken out of the Psalms. Oh,” he says, “the whole thing is contemptible and ridiculous.” And this was the opinion of a great many in Jerusalem. Perhaps that is your opinion, my Friend. The kingdom of Christ, you say, is ridiculous. You do not believe, perhaps, that there are any people who are ruled by Him though we say that we own Him as our King and that we feel the Law of Love to be a Law which constrains us to sweet obedience.

“Oh,” you say, “it is cant and hypocrisy.” And there are some who attend where they have golden censers and altars and priests and they say, “Oh, a religion that is so simple—singing a few hymns and offering extempore prayer!—Ah, give me a bishop with a miter—a fine fellow in long sleeves—that is the thing for me.” “Oh,” says another, “let me hear the peals of the organ. Let me see the thing done scientifically, let me see a little drapery, too. Let the man come up clad in his proper garb to show that he is something different from other people. Do not let him stand dressed as if he were an ordinary man.

“Let me see something in the worship different from anything I have seen before.” They want it clothed with a little pomp and because it is not so they say—“Ah, humph!” They sneer at it and this is all that Christ gets from multitudes of men who think themselves exceedingly wise. He is to them foolishness and they pass by with a sneer. Your sneers will be exchanged for tears before long, Sirs! When He comes with real pomp and splendor you will weep and wail—because you disowned the King of Peace—

**“The Lord shall come! A dreadful form,
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm,
With cherub voice and wings of wind,
The appointed Judge of all mankind.”**

Then you will find it inconvenient to have treated Him with contempt. Others, no doubt, there were in Jerusalem who were filled with *curiosity*. They said—“Dear me, whatever can it be? What is the meaning of it? Who is this? I wish you would come,” they said to their neighbors, “and tell us the history of this singular man. We should like to know about it.” Some of them said, “He is gone to the temple, I dare say He will work a Miracle.” So off they ran and squeezed and pressed and thronged to see a marvel. They were like Herod—they longed to see some wonder worked by Him. It was the first day of Christ’s coming, too and of course the enthusiasm might last some nine days if He would keep it up, so they were very curious about it.

And this is all Christ gets from thousands of people. They hear about a revival of religion. Well, they would like to know what it is and hear about it. There is something doing at such-and-such a place of worship. Well, they would like to go if it were only to see the place. “There is a strange minister who says strange things. Let us go and hear him. We had intended to go out”—you know who I mean among yourselves—“we had intended to go out on an excursion today,” you said, “but let us go there instead.” Just so, curiosity, curiosity.

This is all Christ gets today and He that died upon the Cross becomes a theme for an idle tale. And He that is Lord of angels and adored of men is

to be talked of as though He were a Wizard of the North or some eccentric impostor! Ah, you will find it inconvenient to have treated Him thus by-and-bye. For when He comes and when every eye shall see Him, you who merely curiously enquired for Him shall find that He shall inquire for you—not with animosity but with wrath and it shall be—“Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire.”

But among the crowd there were some who were worse still, for they looked on the whole thing with *envy*. “Ah,” said Rabbi Simeon to Rabbi Hillel, “the people were never so pleased *with us*. We know a great deal more than that imposter. We have read through all our religious books.” “Don’t you remember *Him*,” says one, “that when He was a boy He was rather precocious? You remember He came into the temple and talked with us and since then He deceives the people,” meaning by that He outshone them. That He had more esteem in the hearts of the multitude than they had, though they were far prouder.

“Oh,” said the Pharisee, “He does not wear any phylactery and I have made mine very large. I have made my garments almost all borders, so that they may be exceeding broad.” “Ah,” says another, “I tithe my mint, my anise and my cummin and I stand at the corner of the street and blow a trumpet when I give away a penny—but yet people will not put *me* on a donkey. They will not clap their hands and say, ‘Hosanna’ to me, but the whole earth is gone after this man like a parcel of children. Besides, think of going into the temple disturbing their betters, disturbing us who are making a show of our pretended prayers and standing in the courts!”

And this is what Christ gets from a great many. They do not like to see Christ’s cause get on. No, they would have Christ be lean that they might fatten themselves upon the plunder. They would have His Church be despicable. They like to hear of the falls of Christian ministers. If they can find a fault in a Christian man—“Report it, report it, report it”—they say. But if a man walk uprightly, if he glorifies Christ, if the Church increases, if souls are saved—straightway there is an uproar and the whole city is stirred. The whole uproar begins and is carried on by falsehoods, lying accusations and slanders against the characters of Christ’s people.

In some way or other men are sure to be moved. If they are not moved to laugh, if they are not moved to enquire, they are moved to envy. But blessed is it that some in Jerusalem were moved to *rejoice*. Oh, there were many who, like Simeon and Anna rejoiced to see that day. Many of them went home and said, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen Your salvation.” There was many a bedridden woman in the back streets of Jerusalem that sat up in the bed and said, “Hosanna,” and wished that she could get down into the street, that she might throw her old mantle in the way and might bow before Him who was the King of the Jews.

There were many weeping eyes that wiped away their tears that day and many mourning believers who began from that hour to rejoice with joy unspeakable. And so there are some of you that hear of Christ the King with joy. You join in the hymn. Not as we have all joined with the voice, but with the heart—

**“Rejoice, the Savior reigns,
The God of peace and love
When He had purged our stains**

He took His seat above!
Rejoice, rejoice!
Rejoice aloud, you saints, rejoice!"

Such, then, the first effect of Christ's kingdom! Wherever it comes, the city is stirred. Do not believe the Gospel is preached at all if it does not make a stir. Do not believe, my Brethren, that the Gospel is preached in Christ's way if it does not make some angry and some happy—if it does not make many enemies and some friends.

There is yet another practical effect of Christ's kingdom. He went up to the temple and there at one table sat a lot of men with baskets containing pairs of doves. "Any doves, Sir, any doves?" He looked at them and said, "Take these things away." He spoke with a holy *furor*. There were others changing money as the people came in to pay their half shekel. He overturned the tables and set them all a-flying and soon emptied the whole court of all these merchants who were making a gain of godliness and making religion a stalking-horse for their own emolument.

Now this is what Christ does wherever He comes. I wish He would come in the Church of England a little more and purge out the sale of religious offices—get rid of that accursed simony which is still tolerated by law and purge out the men who take that which belongs to the ministers of Christ and apply it to their own uses. I would that He would come into all our places of worship so that once and for all it might be seen that they who serve God serve Him because they *love* Him and not for what they can get by it. I would that every professor of religion could be quite clean in his own conscience that he never made a profession to get respectability or to get esteem—but only made it that he might honor Christ and glorify his Master.

The spiritual meaning of it all is this—we have no houses of God now—bricks and mortar are not holy. The places where we worship God are places of worship but they are not the houses of God any longer than we are in them. We believe no superstition which makes any place holy, but *we* are the temple of God. Men themselves are God's temples and where Christ comes He drives out the buyers and sellers. He expunges all selfishness. I will never believe that Christ, the King, has made your heart His palace till you are unselfish.

Oh, how many professors there are who want to get so much honor, so much respect! As to giving to the poor—thinking it more blessed to give than to receive. As for feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. As for living for other people and not for themselves—they do not think of those things. O Master, come into Your temple and drive out our selfishness. Now! Come! Help us to live unto You and to live for others by living to You and not live unto ourselves.

The last practical effect of our Lord Jesus Christ's kingdom was He held a grand reception. He had, if I may so speak, a drawing-room day. And who are we who came to attend Him? Now, you courtiers, the disciples, show us your nobility and gentry that are come to wait upon Him. Here comes one man—he has a bandage over here and the other eye has almost failed—show him in. Here comes another, his feet are all twisted and contorted—show him in. Here comes another limping on two crutches, both his limbs are disabled and another has lost his limbs. Here they come and here is the reception.

The King himself comes here and holds a grand meeting—and the blind and the lame are His guests—and now He comes. He touches that blind eye and light shines in. He speaks to this man with a withered leg—he walks. He touches two eyes at once and they both see! To another He says, “I will take away your crutches stand upright and rejoice and leap with joy.” This is what the King does wherever He comes. Come here this morning, I beseech You, You great King! There are blind eyes here that cannot see Your beauty. Walk, Jesus, walk among this crowd and touch the eyes.

Ah, then, Brethren, if He should do that, you will say, “There is a beauty in Him that I never saw before.” Jesus, touch their eyes—they cannot take away their own blindness, You do it! Help them to look to You hanging upon the Cross! They cannot do it unless You enable them. May they do it now and find life in You! O Jesus, there are some here that are lame—knees that cannot bend—they have never prayed. There are some here whose feet will not run in the way of Your Commandments—feet that will not carry them up where Your name is praised and where You are had in honor.

Walk, great King, walk in solemn pomp throughout this house and make it like the temple of old! Display here Your power and hold Your grand meeting in the healing of the lame and the curing of the blind “Oh,” says one, “I would that He would open my blind eyes.” Soul, He will do it, He will do it. Breathe your prayer out now and it shall be done, for He is near you now. He is standing by your side. He speaks to you and He says—“Look unto Me and be you saved, you vilest of the vile.” There is another and he says—“Lord, I would be made whole.” He says—“Be you whole then.” Believe on Him and He will save you. He is near you, Brothers and Sisters, He is near you.

He is not in the pulpit more than He is in the pew, nor in one pew more than in another. Say not—“Who shall go to Heaven to find Him, or into the depths to bring Him up?” He is near you. He will hear your prayer even though you speak not. He will hear your *heart* speak. Oh, say unto Him—“Jesus, heal me,” and He will do it. He will do it now. Let us breathe the prayer and then we will part.

Jesus, heal us! Save us, Son of David, save us! You see how blind we are—oh, give us the sight of faith! You see how lame we are—oh, give us the strength of grace! And now, even now, Son of David, purge out our selfishness and come and live and reign in us as in Your temple palaces! We ask it, O great King, for Your own sake. Amen.

And before we leave this place, we cry again, “Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna. Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.”

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HOSANNA!

NO. 2196

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 22, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And the multitudes that went before, and that followed,
cried saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is
He that comes in the name of the Lord;
Hosanna in the highest”
Matthew 21:9.***

AFTER the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, a great fame went abroad concerning our Lord. He still rested at Bethany and the people came up to the feast in great number—an easy walk from Jerusalem to Bethany—to see Jesus and to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. These people, on a certain day, formed a company and marched with Jesus towards Jerusalem. On the way our Lord sent two of His disciples to fetch a donkey and its colt—and upon this last He rode into the city. Another crowd, coming out of Jerusalem, met the company attending upon Jesus and, forming one great procession, the whole multitude marched into the city escorting the Lord Jesus in humble state and paying Him honor as King in Zion. Upon no stately warhorse, but riding upon a colt, the foal of a donkey, the meek and lowly King entered the city of David attended by vast and enthusiastic crowds who strewed the fronds of palms, the branches of trees and their own garments in the way along which He rode. Our Lord thus received a right royal and popular reception to the metropolis of His nation. This was a strange event, so very different from anything else that happened to our Savior, that one wonders at it with great wonderment. That it is to be viewed as an important event is clear, since every one of the four Evangelists takes pains to record it (see Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19 and John 12). Even of certain of the greater events of our Lord's life the Holy Spirit has not preserved us four accounts, but since He has done so in this case, He thereby calls us to give the more earnest heed to it. Herein is a mine of teaching—let us dig into it.

Assuredly, this honor paid to our Lord was passing strange—a gleam of sunlight in a day of clouds, a glimpse of summer in a long and dreary winter! He that was, as a rule, “despised and rejected of men,” was, for the moment, surrounded with the acclaim of the crowd. All men saluted Him that day with their Hosannas—and the whole city was moved. It was a gala day for the disciples and a sort of coronation day for their Lord.

Why was the scene permitted? What was its meaning? The marvel is that nothing like it had occurred before, for our Lord had healed many

sick folk and these and their friends must have felt favorably towards Him. He had fed thousands at a time with the bread of this life and hosts had been cheered and comforted by His teaching. The common people heard Him gladly and were ready to gather around Him. Among an excitable people it was a wonder that they had not long ago taken Him by force and made Him king. No one had yet appeared so like the Messiah of their Prophets—no one had so well deserved the people's gratitude. If they had, from the first, accepted Him as their monarch, and if they had watched every opportunity of doing Him homage, nobody would have been surprised. The marvel is that the popular enthusiasm had been repressed so long.

It was the Lord Himself who had suppressed the popular enthusiasm. With great skill He had succeeded in bridling a dangerous fanaticism. He "did not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets"—and with such a cry, and such a voice as He had—the marvel was that He preserved quiet and kept the nation from revolt. Had He withdrawn His hand, the people would have been eager to assail their foreign rulers. Had this been the errand on which He came, He might at any moment have been saluted as, "the King of the Jews." He, with a masterly art, repressed everything that would have made Him a popular hero. He uttered unpalatable Truth, or He stole away from the scene of His miracles, or He kept Himself in obscure villages—and thus He eluded their honors.

When He had fed the multitudes, He took ship and went to the other side of the lake that they might not follow Him. Many men live for ambitious ends, but our Lord lived to escape the honors of men. The proud hunt after praise, but our Lord fled from preferment, hid Himself from fame and shunned the throne which by descent belonged to Him. He often bade those whom He healed go home and tell no man what He had done, for the dense throngs that gathered about Him rendered it difficult for Him to move on His mission of mercy. "He went about doing good," and did not wait in any place to reap the laurels which His miracles had earned Him. No wonder that, at last, the people felt forced to surround Him with their praises! The pent-up fires of gratitude at last had vent! The covered flames of admiration leaped up, at last, and cast a brilliant light over the old city! Men's hearts had been somewhat worse than diabolical if they had not felt a grateful enthusiasm for so grand a benefactor. No one before had ever so greatly blessed Judea—thousands of voices felt it joy to cry, "Hosanna," before such a One!

It came at last, you see—I have read you the story in John and in Matthew. They saluted Him with their shouts of loyal welcome. But there was little in the acclamation when it did come. There was great shouting for the while, abundant strewing of branches and lining of the road with garments—but there was little else. Remember what happened less than a week afterwards? If not the same individuals, yet people of the same city cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." The Hosannas may be very loud, but they will not be long. "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord" sounds very sweet, but how much more vehement will be the cry, "Let Him be crucified"? Everything which comes to Jesus and His cause by

popular acclamation requires to be duly weighed—and when weighed it will be found wanting. “*Vox populi, vox Dei*,” they used to say, but the saying is false—the voice of the people may seem to be the voice of God when they shout, “Hosanna in the highest”—but whose voice is it when they yell out, “Crucify Him, crucify Him”?

“Surely men of low degree are vanity and men of high degree are a lie.” So little value did our Lord place on popular applause that He repressed it! And when it did burst forth, so little did it elevate His spirit that we find Him in the midst of it, gazing upon the city with tears in His eyes. While others were glad, He was weeping for the woes which His prophetic eye foresaw! The throng was carried away by the present moment and the enthusiasm of the hour, but His heart was anticipating that dreadful day when they would find His blood upon them and upon their children—and the Romans would utterly destroy their city and quench the light of Zion in rivers of blood! It may be well that an enthusiastic admiration of religion should be professed by the multitude, but it is no more stable than smoke! It may seem good that the Christian minister should be popular, but popularity is lighter than vanity! Once the Savior rides in state as a King, but soon He walks down those very streets bearing His Cross like a criminal! How soon is the public voice purchased for evil! What dependence can be placed on the clamor of the streets?

We, however, have the story placed before us four times by the Evangelists and, therefore, let us now give it our attentive consideration. May the good Spirit impart instruction to us by this strange stir and singular scene! May some Divine impulse come to us out of this riding of our lowly King into Jerusalem!

First, I shall ask you to think of *Christ triumphant in Jerusalem*. Secondly, I shall bid you see herein *Christ glorified in His Church*. And then, thirdly, we will think of *Christ entering into the heart*. Under these three divisions we may arrange our thoughts and, God helping us, we may meditate to profit.

I. First, I ask you to view CHRIST TRIUMPHANT IN JERUSALEM. Why this procession? Why these shouts of homage? Our Lord always had a reason, and an excellent one, for all that He arranged or permitted. What did He mean by this? How shall we interpret the scene?

I think it was, first, *that He might most openly declare Himself*. He had frequently avowed His mission in plain speech. He had told them who He was and why He came, but they would not hear, so that they dared to say to Him, “If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” He had plainly told them times without number. Now He will assure them still more positively of His Kingdom by openly riding into the city of Jerusalem in state. Now shall they see that He claims to be the Messiah, sent of God, of whom the Prophet said, “Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes.” Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings shall His fame be proclaimed—multitudes of people shall acknowledge with loud voices that, “He comes in the name of the Lord”—until the envious Pharisees shall be driven to ask, “Do you hear what these say?”

You will remember that our Lord rode into Jerusalem as a King, but He was also brought there as the Lamb of God's Passover, whose blood must save the people. It was not meet that the Lamb of God should go to the altar without observation. It was not fit that He who takes away the sin of the world should be led to the Temple unobserved. The day was near when He was to be offered up and all eyes were called to look on Him and know who and what He was. Therefore He permitted this great gathering and this honorable attention to Himself that He might say to Israel, by deeds as well as by words, "I am He that should come. I am He who of old had said, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God." Thus He, beyond all question, manifested Himself to the people. When they crucified Him, the rulers knew what He professed to be. Albeit many of them were in ignorance as to the truthfulness of His claims, yet they knew right well that they were crucifying One who professed to be the Lord of Glory—One who was acknowledged to be the Son of David—One who had publicly avowed Himself to be King in Zion. I think this was one reason for the joyous entry into the city of God.

Next, *it was our Lord's public claiming of authority over Israel.* He was the Son of David and, therefore, He was, by natural right, the King of the Jews. If He had taken possession of His own, He would have been sitting on the throne of the chosen dynasty of David by right of birth. He was, moreover, as the Messiah and Christ, the King of His people, Israel. Concerning Him it had been said by the Prophet, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon a donkey, and upon a colt the foal of a donkey." Our Lord Jesus literally came to Zion in this manner. As King, He rode to His capital and entered His palace. In His priestly royalty, the Son of God went to His Father's House, to the Temple of sacrifice and sovereignty.

Among the tribes of Israel He is seen to be "One chosen out of the people," whom the Lord had given to be a Leader and Commander for the people. Although they might afterwards choose Barabbas and cry that they had no king but Caesar, yet Jesus was their King, as Pilate reminded them, when he said, "Shall I crucify your king?"—and as His Cross declared, when it bore the legal inscription, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Before His trial and His condemnation, He had put in a public claim to the rights and prerogatives of Zion's King, whom God has set upon His holy hill. Would to God all my Hearers fully recognized our Lord's Kingdom and yielded to His sway! Oh, that you would bow before Him and put your trust in Him! Part of His intent in riding through Jerusalem was that we, also, who dwell in the isles of the sea might know Him and reverence Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let each one cry in His inmost soul—

***"Great King of Grace, my heart subdue,
I would be led in triumph, too.
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the victories of His Word."***

Possibly our Savior intended, also, by this singular procession, *to let His enemies know His real strength among the people.* If He could gather

so great a crowd of adherents without any summons or prearrangement, surely the whole population must have been, to a large degree, in His favor. If such an enthusiastic reception was spontaneously given Him, how many would have gathered if a plan had been arranged? Had He agreed to lead them against the Romans, thousands of fanatics would have followed His banner! If He had designed to make Himself a king and had permitted His servants to fight, the old fierce courage of the Jewish race would have burned like a flame of fire and His enemies would have fled before Him. He came not with war in His heart, but He would let the foeman see the hilt of the sword which He *might* have drawn from its sheath—He would let scribe and Pharisee bite their lips while they said, “Perceive you how you prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him.”

If the Savior had willed to use the baser methods that men, nowadays, would freely employ, by asking the world’s alliance, He might have made Himself a King at once. Had He blended politics with religion and yielded something to general prejudice, He might at once have set up a worldly kingdom! But no, He knew no selfish ambition—His kingdom was not of this world! He came not that He might be honored, *here*, but that He might be put to shame for our redemption! The diadem to which He aspired was a crown of thorns—yet He lets His adversaries see that He was not lowly because He was weak, nor gentle because He was feeble! They might, if they would, have seen by that day in Jerusalem, the greatness of the self-denial which abstained from earthly honors.

Nor have I exhausted the Savior’s reasons. We are told by the Evangelist that He did this *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet*. I have just now quoted the text from Zechariah 9:9—our Lord was always careful and earnest to fulfill each Prophecy of Holy Scripture. He held the Inspired Word in high esteem and was careful of each letter of it. You never hear a word from Him derogatory of the Inspiration, authority, accuracy, or Infallibility of the Law and the Prophets! He fulfils the Word of the Lord even to its jots and tittles. He directed His life by that old chart in which the way of the Messiah was laid down long before He came to earth! Oh, for the same reverence of Scripture among preachers nowadays! God forbid that we should be lowering men’s ideas of Inspiration, as some are fond of doing. May we value every Word which came from the Lord in old time! May we willingly change the course of our thought and teaching rather than neglect a single Word of Inspiration! When we see what the will of the Lord is, let us follow it implicitly. Obedience to the rule of Scripture was the way of the Head—it should also be the way of the members. If the King, Himself, is careful in His walk towards the Word of God, surely *we* ought to be!

I also think that as our Lord thus looked back and fulfilled Scripture, *He was looking forward to give us a prophetic type of the future*. Beloved, our Lord will not always be rejected. There are days of triumph for Him. “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” This is the age of iron, but there comes a golden age of love and light. We look for His appearing and His reign—His reign of peace and joy! There will come a day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the

kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. He shall sit upon the Throne of His father, David, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. The Lord shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah! Has not Jehovah said to Him, "Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession"? Yes, there will come a day when He that was the reproach of men shall be the Glory of His people! Kings shall bow down before Him. All generations shall call Him blessed.

When I see that joyful procession going up the hill to Zion and mark how they that went before, joined with those who followed after, while the King Himself rode in the center, I seem to see a rehearsal of the long succession of the faithful in all ages. The Prophets have gone before Him—listen to their loud Hosannas! We come behind Him, even we upon whom the ends of the earth have come, and we have our glad Hosannas, too! Here Patriarchs join with Apostles, Prophets are one with martyrs, and priests keep rank with pastors and deacons—all with one voice lifting up the same note, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." We see, then, in the simple state of our Lord in the streets of Jerusalem, a vision of the long glories which await Him in the New Jerusalem where He shall sit upon His Throne—and His enemies shall be made His footstool!

One thing more I cannot help mentioning. Surely our Lord allowed the populace a vent for their enthusiasm *with the desire to delight His friends*. Do you not think that the sympathetic Jesus thought it worth while to give His little band of followers what our forefathers would have called, "a gaudy day"—a high day—a holiday? These had been with Him in His humiliation and He would give them a taste of His Glory. They had seen Him despised and rejected of men—and He relieved the monotony of His humiliation with a glimpse of His Glory. For once they should be allowed to cast their garments under His feet and strew fragrant branches on His path. For once their zeal should have license to climb the trees and break down the boughs to strew His pathway. Nothing on that day filled their ears but the praises of their beloved Lord and honored Master! They would soon enough have sorrow when they would see Him seized in the garden and taken away bound to Caiaphas and Pilate to be condemned to die. He would give them a breathing space, an interval of pleasure wherein their spirits should no longer drag on earth, but rise on wings, into a lofty joy!

Our Lord loves His people to be glad. He kept His tears to Himself as He wept over Jerusalem, but the gladness He scattered all around, so that even the boys and girls in the streets of Jerusalem made the Temple courts to ring with their merry feet and gladsome songs. Hear how they clap their hands with delight! "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" You hear it everywhere and the Lord smiles as He sees the joy which pours in floods around Him. The Lord loves to cast into our cup, some drops of Heaven's own honey until the bitterness of grief is sweetened and His followers are made happy by their joy in Himself. "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." I wish I could express myself in tones more clear and musical,

but though bodily weakness compels me to be measured in my utterance, my soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior. May the Lord Himself cast into your hearts the burning coals of joyful love to Him—and so may your souls take fire and blaze aloft with vehement flames of delight! May this day be to your spirits a day of palms and Psalms, of prayers and praises, of Hallelujahs and Hosannas! Let us sing all day, as we sung in our opening hymn—

***“Hosanna to the anointed King,
To David’s holy Son!
Help us, O Lord! Descend and bring
Salvation from Your Throne.
Blest be the Lord who comes to men
With messages of Grace!
Who comes in God, His Father’s name,
To save our sinful race.
Hosanna in the highest strains
The Church on earth can raise;
The highest heavens, in which He reigns,
Shall give Him nobler praise!”***

II. Secondly, my text is, to my mind, a parable of CHRIST GLORIFIED IN HIS CHURCH. There are choice days when the shout of a King is heard in our assemblies. We have not yet fallen to a dull monotony of barrenness—we have hills like those of Carmel. The low water mark of lukewarmness is covered deep beneath flood tides of holy exultation. I am going to speak about these hallowed seasons.

I think that *such days come to the Church of God after special miracles of Grace have been worked.* Lazarus is raised from the dead and when the people see the greatness of the Prophet of Nazareth, they begin to commend and extol Him—and this leads on to holy excitement! If the Lord will be pleased to work remarkable conversions among us, we shall have grand times! If special instances of His gracious power are seen by us, we will bear our palms of victory before Him and many hearts will enquire, “Who is this?” Our hearts shall rejoice as with the joy of harvest when we see the Lord saving great sinners! Yes, we will shout as victors who divide the spoil! Do you not think that when Saul of Tarsus was converted and the Churches had rest, that they also had great exultation in their King? Everywhere it must have been spoken of that fierce Pharisee who had become a bold preacher of the faith which once he sought to destroy! What joy there is in saintly hearts when ringleaders in sin become champions for the Truth of God! Oh that our God would work such transformations in this city! Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord would do the same for us—and for all His Churches just now. Oh, for displays of His power to quicken the dead! Oh, for Lazarus to be raised and to live among us as a wonder of Divine Grace whom neighbors would come to see! O Lord, give us this signal of delight! Let us see Your arm made bare in the eyes of all the people!

Next, *it was a time of testimony,* for those who had been present and had seen Lazarus raised from the dead, bore witness. One stepped forward and said, “With these eyes I saw Lazarus come forth from the tomb of rock.” “As for me,” said another, “I saw him buried and I helped to carry

him to the grave. But I saw him come back to the house alive.” “Yes,” said a third, “I rolled away the stone and as I stood watching for the result, I saw the dead man come forth alive—and I helped to loosen his grave clothes.” All these bore witness to what they had seen. You cannot tell what a joyful effect it produces and what enthusiasm is stirred when one after another bears personal witness. Lord, open men’s mouths! Lord, make the quiet ones to tell forth Your praise! Your silent tongues deprive us of our joy. Your cowardly reticence robs Christ of His Glory and the Church of its increase. If God has done anything for you, or you have seen Him do anything for others, bear testimony to it! It is the Lord’s due and your duty, that you should speak to the glory of Christ Jesus. When great wonders have been done and those who saw them are willing to bear their testimony, then we may look for red-letter days wherein gladness and praise shall be in the ascendant.

It was a good sign, too, of joy to come, that *the enemies were now raging worse than ever*. They sought to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. If the devil never roars, the Church will never sing! God is not doing much if the devil is not awake and busy. Depend upon it, that a working Christ makes a raging devil! When you hear ill reports, cruel speeches, threats, taunts and the like, believe that the Lord is among His people and is working gloriously. We look upon the “many adversaries” as one of the tokens that a great door and effectual is set before us. When we hear thunder, we look for rain. Wrath in the lowest Hell is a prognostic of Hosanna in the highest Heaven!

It is also a cheering sign when there is *a general eagerness among the people concerning our Lord*. When the disciples gather around their Master and are prompt to do His bidding, then good times are come. When all agree, it is also well. When they that go before, and they that follow after are all of the same mind, then is it a day of joy. When gray heads grow young and young heads grow wise, it is a token for good. When the aged lift up their eyes to Heaven and say, “God, even our own God, shall bless us,” things look well. When our matrons and our sires grow hopefully confident and say, “The Lord has blessed us in days gone by and He is going to bless us yet again,” then the weather glass points to “Set fair.” When the younger sort, that follow after, who have been converted but lately, burn with a holy zeal and cry, “We will give the Lord no rest until He blesses us,” then the sun of the Church is shining high up in the sky. When we are all ready, each man, each woman, ready to take our share in the harvesting, then will the sheaves be garnered! It is cheering when the congregation shares the excitement with the Church and its ministers—and the prospect of a Divine blessing is before the mind of all who seek better things. Surely, the time to favor Zion, yes, the set time has come, when her King is longed for and every heart beats high with love for Him!

The case is clear when all this is attended *with an abounding generosity*. It is well when disciples are not only willing to fetch another man’s colt, but are willing to lay their own garments on it—when they will not only gather palm fronds to strew the path, but will take off their own coats to carpet the way of the King! When everybody does something, or gives

something, or, at any rate, joins in the hearty Hosannas, then is the King come into our midst! Our King is not where hearts are miserly and souls are selfish, but one token of His Presence is that His people offer willingly unto the Lord. At such times Believers feel that they are not their own, but are bought with a price—and things which once looked like sacrifices too great to be expected of them are cheerfully presented as sacrifices of joy.

Beloved, we must not forget that it is a token of God's having come to His Church and of His having given her a joyful day when *the children share in it*. Luther was greatly encouraged when he found that the children met together for prayer. He said, "God will hear *them*. The devil himself cannot defeat us now that the children begin to pray." It is very beautiful to read Mr. Whitefield's remarks about his sermons at Moorfields and elsewhere in London, when mud and stones were cast at him and yet a group of children always surrounded his pulpit. And though some of them were hurt, yet he noticed how bravely they stood by him through the service. He thought it a token for good that children drank in his words. When God moves the children to earnestness, He will soon move their fathers and mothers! When boys and girls meet to praise God, do not despise their little meetings, nor say, "It is only a parcel of children." The children are, in God's esteem, the most precious portion of the race! He sets high store by His little ones and He has set a special curse upon those who offend one of the little ones that believe in Him. Jesus, Master, come, we pray You! Come in Your lowly pomp, in all Your gentleness and Grace, and then will the children of these modern days sing loud Hosannas to Your name, like those in Your Temple of old.

I want you to notice in our text that *our Savior was received with the shout of Hosanna!* The best interpretation I can give is—"Save, oh, save! Save, oh, save!" Different nations have different ways of expressing their good will to their monarchs. A Roman would have shouted, "Io triumphe!" We sing, "God save our gracious Queen." The Persians said, "O King, live forever." The Jews cried, "Hosanna!" "Save," or, "God save the King!" The French have their "Vivas," by which they mean, "Long live the man." Hosanna is tantamount to all these. It is a shout of homage, welcome and loyalty. It wishes wealth, health and honor to the king. In the Saxon we say, "Hurrah." In Hebrew, "Hosanna." That mighty shout startled all the streets of the old city—"Hosanna, Hosanna, the King is come! Save Him, O Lord! Save us through Him! Long live the King!" While it was a shout of homage, it was also a prayer *to* the King. "Save, Lord; save us, O King! O King, born to conquer and to save, deliver us!" It was, moreover, a prayer *for* Him—"God save the King, God bless and prosper His Majesty. "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised." We never cease to pray, "Your Kingdom come; Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven." Let us then cry, Hosanna, making it at once a loyal shout! A prayer *to* our King and a prayer *for* Him. All these things appear in the benediction which follows, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

Would it be amiss if we were to indulge in a hearty shout for our King? May we never grow enthusiastic? May we never overleap the bounds of prim propriety? Shall we never cry Hallelujah! Shall no Hosannas burst from our lips? Surely, if our King will come into the midst of His Church, again, and end these black days of doubt, we must and will shout, or else the very stones will cry out! Yes, O Lord Jesus, You shall have our Vivas: we will shout, “Long live the King!”—

**“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall.”**

Nor will we cease to pray to You! Some of you that have not yet been saved by Him will, I trust, say, “Save me, Lord! O Jesus, save me!” You will not disturb but delight the present meeting if you will in your hearts cry, “Lord, save me!” Remember the cry of two blind beggars on this very journey of our Lord—and how He opened their eyes when they cried, “Son of David, have mercy on us!”

Will we not also put up prayer for our Lord this morning? Will not each one in his pew now breathe a petition to God, saying, “Father, glorify Your Son”? You have said that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands—make it so. O Jehovah, You are well pleased with Jesus; show Your good pleasure towards Him by giving Him to conquer ten thousand times ten thousand hearts! Let a nation be born in a day. May He reign forever and ever! Hosanna! Hosanna!

III. I have only a little time for my third point, and yet it is of great importance—CHRIST RECEIVED IN THE HEART. His triumphant ride into Jerusalem was a type of His entering the renewed heart. I pray that you who have never received Him may listen and may, by the listening, be led to pray for His coming into your heart.

On that day, when Christ came up from Bethany, *the city gates were wide open*. We read nothing about them because they were not in the way—there were no shut gates to Him. He rode into Jerusalem without let or hindrance. Are your gates wide open this morning? If not, I would say, “Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors: and the King of Glory shall come in.” He is willing to abide in your hearts and go no more out forever—be sure that your gates are set wide before Him! May the Holy Spirit open your hearts! Do not tolerate the thought of shutting out your Lord. Never! Open wide the portals of your soul. Yes, go forth by willing obedience and say, “Come in, my Lord! Come in!”

He was cheerfully received as King. Our Lord did not come to subdue the citizens at the point of the sword. He did not come with force of arms to coerce the city. You must receive Jesus willingly, or not at all. He comes to reign, but He comes in the gentleness of love. He rides on no high-mettled charger. He lays His hand on no sharp sword which clatters at His side. About Him are no men-at-arms. Behind Him come no heavy guns, dragged along the trembling streets. Jesus was willingly received—everyone exultingly welcomed Him. Will you so receive Jesus? Has He made you willing in the day of His power? You may well salute Him and welcome Him to your heart and your home, for you have never before received so blessed a guest! Open wide the gates and entreat Him to come

in, for He will bring Heaven with Him. He never uses force. He conquers only by love. The Holy Spirit works upon the will of man, but He still leaves it a will, so that we freely choose our Lord and delight in Him as our King!

Remember, Beloved, *the coming of Christ is with gentleness and love.* Riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey, is a very different thing from riding the fiery warhorse. I like not men who seem as if they were converted, to hate everybody else. It is not Christ who has come unto you if you have grown prouder, harder, more passionate than ever. No, the Christ who enters to save is, Himself, so meek and lowly of heart that those who take His yoke upon them learn of Him—and they become meek and lowly, too. Admit the lowly Christ and be of one mind with Him. He will kill your bad temper, conquer your malice and cast out your pride! Come and be the willing subject of a King who rides forth in lowliest guise.

His entrance caused great joy. No man's heart was made heavy that day. The face of the King frowned on none. Other kings have found it necessary to force their way through crowds of rebels to their capital and wade through slaughter to a throne—but none was found to hurt or devour in all the holy mountain when Jesus came to Zion! Women have been ravished, men have been murdered—even babes have been massacred when monarchs have entered cities—but when our King comes, boughs and palm fronds, shouts and songs are the setting of a very different scene! Instead of shrieks and groans, we hear the ringing music of children with their glad Hosannas! Oh, will you not admit the Lord Jesus? Who will refuse an entrance to One who brings with Him joy and peace?—

***“He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth!
Love, joy, and hope, like flowers,
Spring in His path to birth!”***

When He comes, men feel a burning enthusiasm for Him. It should not be necessary that I should plead for His admission. Surely you should run down the hill to meet Him and then come back, following after Him with glad Hosannas! Lord Jesus, we cannot be cold in Your Presence! Our souls burn as with coals of juniper when we remember You!

But I must tell you one thing which I am sure will not dampen your ardor if you are in a right state. If Jesus comes into your souls *He will come as a Reformer.* He will make your heart a Temple and out of it He will drive the buyers and the sellers—and all else that would pollute the soul. With His scourge of small cords, He will whip out many a naughty thing from the heart which He makes His Temple. Yes, let the thieves go! If your heart has been made a den of thieves by evil desires, should not these be chased out without mercy? So let it be. Welcome, You great Refiner! Gladly would we lose our dross.

I feel so glad to have to add that when He comes into your heart *He will heal you.* Did I not note it to you when we were reading the 14th verse—“The blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple; and He healed them.” Dear Heart, if Jesus comes to you, all that is blind and lame about you shall be healed! That was a singular *healing*, was it not? Many of that select company came on crutches and some with legs doubled up, or mal-

formed. Blind men were there, with useless eyeballs or empty sockets where eyes should have been. Into this limping, groping circle came the King of Glory and He did not repel them, but He healed them! Admit the Lord into your heart and the limping of your unbelief will be exchanged for the leaps of faith! Then shall you see those things to which your heart has long been blind. Let Him in! Let Him in! Believe on Him! Trust Him and let Him into your heart—and you shall find Him the Physician of your soul.

Last of all, you that have not yet received Him, we want you to *join with the rest of us in honoring Him and glorifying Him as He comes into your heart.* “Oh!” says one, “if He will only come into *my* heart, I will, indeed, praise Him.” Have your hosannas ready! Receive the Lord Jesus Christ with all honors. Mention His name with rejoicing! Have your hurrah ready to welcome the King, the Conqueror, as He enters your soul. Be jubilant! Be enthusiastic! Rejoice that such a One as He should come to dwell with such a one as you—and bring such blessing with Him. Praise Him! Praise Him! Extol Him in the highest heavens! Then pray to Him. “Save, Lord! Save, oh, save!” Then pray for others to Him in the same words, “Hosanna; save, Lord, save!”

And when you have done with Hosannas and prayers, conclude, as the Psalmist did, in that famous 118th Psalm, when he cried, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” Ask God of His love, today, to bind you to Christ, *THE Altar*, with one of those wreaths of love and ribbons of triumphant Grace which you now throw at His feet. Oh, for a twisted garland of mercies, the roses of gladness and the lilies of delight to bind our heart to Christ forever! These cords of love may seem weak, but in very deed they hold us faster than chains of steel. Nothing holds a man like the silken cord of gratitude! When you know how Jesus loves you—when you see how He died for you—then you are drawn to love Him in return and are held to serve Him in life, in death and to eternity!

Thus do we celebrate our Lord’s triumphant entrance into the City of Mansoul, and we feel that we could prolong the celebration throughout the whole of our lives—

***“Yes, we will praise You, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame,
Hosanna round the spacious earth
To Your adored name.”***

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THE BLESSED CHRIST

NO. 3427

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 1914.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1870.**

***“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He
that comes in the name of the Lord.”
Matthew 21:9.***

ONE feels very thankful that we have a few Hebrew words in common use in our Christian assemblies—a kind of link between Israel after the flesh and Israel after the spirit. “Hallelujah,” they sang of old, and we sing, “Hallelujah,” too. “Abba Father,” they said. We also say, “Abba Father.” And this word, “Hosanna,” is another of the few that remain to us of which we understand the meaning, though we use them still in a translated form—Hosanna—“save Lord,” “bless Lord.” “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” I did not mention in the reading of the Psalm—the 118th Psalm—that both the 25th and 26th verses of that Psalm begin with the word, Hosanna. One is translated, “Save Lord,” and the other is, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” I shall take this common exclamation, then, constantly used among the Jews, and we shall see as to its use among ourselves. And our first point will be to—

I. CONSIDER OCCASIONS WHEN THIS EXCLAMATION, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord,” HAS BEEN, OR WILL BE, SUITABLE.

And, first, in the olden times, the Israelites were accustomed to use this cry, “Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord,” *when their heroes returned victorious from the battlefield*. When they went up to the Temple to give thanks publicly to God for victories over their enemies, they were met by the people, with this exclamation of joy, “Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah’s name.” Very unlike the cries of other nations! Some nations only extolled the heroes, but the people of God see the hand of God, and they mark that the hero only comes in the name of the Lord. And while they give him blessings and wish him every good thing for what he has done, yet the praise is ascribed to the Master in whose name he comes—even Jehovah. While the Philistines would be extolling their god and Moab and Ammon would be lifting up the song to the idols they worshipped, Israel took care, in the song of triumph with which they

saluted the returning victors, to extol and magnify the glory of the Lord—the Lord God of Israel—“Blessed is he that comes in the name of Jehovah.” So, my dear Friends, whenever we thank men for kindnesses which they render to us—(and it is our duty to be grateful to them)—yet let us thank yet more the Lord our God! Thank God and thank the secondary means, but do not ascribe the honor to the instrument, alone, lest you set up an idol in the Presence of God! Always take care to see that God, whom you worship, makes all things work through your friends for your help and your deliverance. So to each one who shall bring you good—whether spiritual or temporal good—“Blessed is he that comes to me with this mercy. I recognize him as coming in Jehovah’s name.”

This exclamation might again have been *most commonly used of the coming of our Lord*. The Word became Incarnate and stooped from the Throne of Heaven to the manger of Bethlehem’s stable. I know not that these words precisely were used, but surely in this spirit the angels sang their midnight carol when the Savior descended—“Glory to God in the highest. On earth peace, goodwill towards men.” What is the spirit of all that song but this word, “Hosanna”? What is the essence of it all, but this sentence, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord”? The shepherds could not have used a more significant and suitable expression—and the Easterners, as they gathered round that little cradle and offered their gold, their myrrh, and their incense, together with their grateful homage might have looked at Mary and Joseph, and the Child, and said of Him, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” And had but the nations known it, had but Israel known it, had but the kings of the earth recognized it, one universal shout might have gone up to Heaven—“At last the promised One is come! The Seed of the woman is born! The Messiah has appeared! The Prince of Peace has come with innumerable blessings! Blessed is He that comes in Jehovah’s name!” And I think the very sea and land, even the heavens and the Heaven of heavens, might have caught up the spirit of that hour, and the sea, with its waves, might have roared out, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.” And you forests—every tree within you—might have burst forth in the same note till all the nations would have become one mouth for song, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.”

And this expression was used, according to my text, *further on in our Savior’s life*. When He rode in triumph upon a colt, the foal of an ass, up to the Temple, when He went to take possession of His Father’s House, and drive out the buyers and sellers, who had made it into a den of thieves—then in that day, when He was proclaimed King of the Jews, and the crowd of men mounted the trees and broke down the palm branches, juvenile voices all along the road shouted, “Hosanna.” This was the hour of our Savior’s gladness, and Jerusalem for once seemed as if she would shake off her solid coolness and would acknowledge Him whom God had

sent! It were well for her if it had been so, but the Truth of God was hidden from her eyes and she became desolate, because more heartily and truthfully she had not said, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord."

And shall I be thought to be fanciful if I suppose that this exclamation would have been most appropriate among the bands of angels and choirs of the blood-washed, *when our Savior, having finished His lifework, ascended to His Throne?* When they brought His chariot from on high to bear Him to His last place of rest, when He ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and the pearly gates were set open that He might enter, did not all those bright celestial spirits throng the streets of gold and cry "Hosanna: Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"? I can scarcely think they could refrain from the expressions of their delight when they saw Him come with His garments dyed red, fresh from the slaughter of all His foes, triumphant over all that came against Him, the great Conqueror, the Hero who had routed, once and for all, all Israel's enemies and put them all beneath His feet! Surely they must have said, "Hosanna," yet again and again, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"!

And surely, to close the list of occasions, I may mention *when He who went up from Olivet shall come a second time*, in like manner as He went up into Heaven, that is to say, in very Person as He mounted to the skies, He will be saluted, will He not—by all His waiting people, with this grand exclamation, "Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord"? The coming of the Son of God is no joy to the ungodly world—the day of the Lord to them will be darkness, and not light—the earth will burn as an oven! "The day comes that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, and yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble." To the righteous the coming of Christ is their grandest expectation—it is the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, the day for which the whole creation groans and travails, for it will be the day of our resurrection, when our souls that may have been a long while divorced from our bodies shall be re-married, and the body shall be raised again like unto His glorious body! "For we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come," and that same Spirit and Bride shall say, "Welcome, welcome, King of Kings!" when He shall come. Those who have watched most, and longed most, and hungered and thirsted most after that glorious Advent shall be they who most joyfully shall go forth to meet King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousal, and this shall be the note of their triumphant greeting, "Hosanna: Blessed is He that comes in Jehovah's name." Thus I have very briefly run through the occasions when this exclamation would seem to be exceedingly suitable. Now let us for a while consider—

II. THE SUITABILITY OF THIS CRY FOR CONSTANT USE—not now and then, but always! And it may be viewed in two lights. First, *as an exultation*. “Blessed is He that comes.” He is blessed. It is a blessed thing that He has come. It may be viewed, in the next place, *as a prayer*, let Him be blessed, let Him prosper and so on. First, then, *as an exultation, a note of triumph*, He is blessed that He has come in the name of the Lord, and ought we not to be always saying this, “Blessed is He that He should condescend to tabernacle among men! Blessed is He that it should be true that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, that we might behold His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth”? He is blessed, for He came to earth fully qualified for all His work, endowed with all the wisdom, the knowledge, the unction, the anointing from on high that He could wish. He was blessed in His coming, blessed while He carried on the work. Though His the pain and sorrow, yet it was all blessing to us, from the first act He did as a Man until He said, “It is finished.” When I think of Him coming down as a Man, coming down as a Servant, coming to take upon Himself to die for our sins, I can indeed say, “Blessed is He that comes to all this in the name of the Lord”—comes as our Brother, comes as our Priest, comes as our Substitute, comes as our Scapegoat, comes as our great Deliverer and propitiatory Sacrifice that we might be cleansed from sin! He is blessed—all blessings are in Him, all blessings come through Him, all blessings belong to Him! God has given all blessings to Him because of this. He is blessed. And, Brothers and Sisters, if He is blessed in the work and the carrying of it on, is He not, and shall He not be blessed in our esteem, now that He has mounted to the skies and taken the precious blood within the veil and sprinkled it there—and stands there now pleading as a prevalent High Priest for us? Blessed is He that came in Jehovah’s name—the great Ambassador of Peace between offended Deity and revolted man. He is our Peace and let His name forever be blessed! He is our Prince—let us adore Him! He is all our salvation, all our desire! We ask nothing more than to be like He and be with Him. Blessings in Him! He is blessed! God has blessed Him! Forever and forever shall all generations call Him blessed! It is an exultation, then. We shout to His triumph, “Blessed is He that comes!”

But *it is a prayer*. My dear Friends, we desire to do all we can for the Lord Jesus Christ, but how very limited are our capacities! If we were to give Him all we have, and give our bodies to be burned, it would be very little for us to give to such a Savior. But what a mercy it is that there is no limit to what we may wish. We can bless Him with our wishes, if we cannot with our acts. I was about to say we may bless Him infinitely with our desires. At any rate, there is no limit to our capacity to desire. And those desires may take the very acceptable and prevalent form of prayer. What I cannot *do* for Christ, I can *pray God to be done*. What if I cannot

preach His Gospel in every land, yet where I can, I will preach it and pray God to raise up many to proclaim it. And if I cannot crown His head with many crowns, yet would I lay at His feet such as I have, and then my *desires* would crown Him over, and over, and over again, and my prayers would clamber up to His lofty Throne and put fresh coronets upon His dear head, blessing Him that He does not deny me a share of wishing what I cannot do, and of praying for what I cannot give! In this sense, Brothers and Sisters, we can, to a very great extent, bless Him who comes in the name of the Lord—bless Him with our wishes, our desires, our earnestness and especially with our prayers.

Now, what is the blessing, then, which we would seek for our Lord, Jesus Christ? What are the prayers that we would offer for Him? It is written, “Prayer also shall be made for Him continually.” What shall we ask for Him?

We will ask, first, that He that comes in the name of the Lord *may be blessed in His Church*. Oh, that He would bless the Church just now. I am afraid we have fallen upon lean times just now. It may be that God is about to chastise His Church, because when we had a revival we had not Grace enough to keep it. Almost universally there is a cloud hanging over Israel—lethargy coming in place of earnestness. God knows we were never very earnest—I mean the Church of God at large was not very earnest—but yet that earnestness which did arise seems now to be vanishing. I pray God it may not vanish, but, on the contrary, may all the zeal which has been in our days be far exceeded—all the agony for souls, all the labor to proclaim the Grace of God to them, all the earnest desires and prayers of God’s people—may all these be renewed with tenfold vigor, and in this way may we have to cry, “The Lord has visited His Church, and let His name be blessed.” We do tonight, I trust, put up the prayer, each one of us who belongs to this Church and people, “Lord prosper Your Word, be pleased to give power to your minister and increased Grace to your servants, holiness of life, separation from the world, power in prayer—give them communion with Yourself! Grant that there may be peace within the borders of your Church, and that the citizens of Zion may be filled with the finest of the wheat.” In this respect we will bless Christ by desiring a blessing on His Church and seeking to promote its prosperity.

Next to this, I say, “Lord save”—“Lord bless”—Him that comes, (putting it as a prayer *for the scattering of the Church’s enemies and His own enemies*). Christ still has many enemies in the world. The Pope, the Antichrist of Rome, with all his doctors and counselors, assemble at this very hour—the incarnate Antichrist—at this present moment! And here, in this England of ours, there are priests busy up and down, in every court and lane, in every corner of the land, and our clergy of the Established Church, many of them double-dyed Papists, doing the work of

Rome and eating the bread of a Protestant Church at the same time! And then there is infidelity, seeking all it can to make its converts, with a zeal which were commendable if it were used for a right purpose. They compass sea and land to make proselytes, and shame the coldness of many professed followers of Christ. The enemies of Christ are very many. The Church is very feeble, yes, she is like a reed shaken by the wind. Without her Lord, she is less than nothing—like chaff in the whirlwind! But, oh, let us pray that He may be blessed who comes in the name of the Lord by the scattering of all His enemies, by the putting down of spiritual wickedness in high places, and giving the victory to the Truth and to the Gospel—that which saves—putting to flight that which destroys before that which purifies—scattering that which defiles before that which glorifies God, annihilating that which blasphemes His holy name! May Christ be blessed as a Conqueror over His foes!

We may, further, very earnestly pray that the Lord may be blessed *in the conversion of souls*. Oh, would to God He were blessed in that respect in this congregation more and more! Preaching becomes very dead work when there are no converts. Sowing is very well and one likes it at the sowing season, but if a man had to sow all the year round and never saw the golden sheaves, he might well grow weary. Though, indeed, in sowing for God we ought not to be weary, yet the tendency is to be so. How few conversions there are anywhere just now! The Church does not increase at all in the same rate as the population does. Every year I believe that the sin of London is gaining upon the Gospel, and all the efforts that are made do not tell upon the masses. We scarcely hold our ground! Certainly we make very little if any, advance. Of course, we congratulate ourselves that there are so many churches built. Does anybody go to them? We sometimes think there are so many Chapels. Yes, but how many are there that are half empty, or even less occupied than that? And what if they are full, yet in how many places is the Gospel preached very uncertainly and no certain sound is given from the trumpet? It is Christ that is preached in a measure, but preached in a fog—certainly not in the way that is so plain that wayfaring men need not err therein, but in a way that is so perplexing and involved in hard words and gaudy obscurities of rhetoric, that oftentimes many know not their right hand from their left, and look on, marveling at the orator who speaks so grandly, but what he says, or whereof he affirmed, they utterly know not! How many there are that have the key of knowledge, but open not the door! They seem rather to show how delightfully they can lock it and how skillfully they can shut out the multitude! We need to see conversions! May God send them everywhere throughout this land by the tens of thousands! And in other lands, would God there were conversions by the millions! The world teems with population, but Jesus Christ has as yet few who find Him. Straight is the gate and narrow is the way, and few there are that go in at

the gate or tread that road. O Lord, how long, how long, how long? Arise and convert sinners to Yourself!

The same thought comes to us only a little enlarged. Our desire in prayer for Christ is that *He may be blessed in the sense of being glorious to the ends of the earth*. We have no doubts about the issue of the struggle in which we are engaged—against the powers of darkness. It may be a thousand years before Christianity is prevalent. It may be ten thousand years! It may be fifty thousand years, it may be a hundred thousand years! We, none of us, know. To God it will be quick, very quickly—and in but a short time—behold Christ comes quickly! But that, “quickly,” may not mean what we think it does, and they who sit down and say it will be the next twenty, or fifty, or 100 years know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm! We who are working now are very like, as I believe, those coral insects that are about to build a reef. They begin at the bottom of the sea. They lay, first of all, the foundations, broad and strong. It will be a long, long, long, long while before that reef will come to the top of the sea, before it will be seen, before earth and weeds will be attracted to it. It will be still longer before there begins to grow upon it certain tiny plants and mosses—still longer before the cocoon begins to spring, and before men and animals shall be found there. Now, those first insects that lay the foundation die. They have gone, and the next, and the next, and the next and the reef is still unseen. That is very like what we are. All we can do is to keep on working, working with all our might. Our prayer ought not to be that we should see the whole of our success. I like Moses’ prayer—“Let Your work appear unto Your servants! And Your Glory unto their children.” Hence no matter how things are—it may have been that we have hardly stood our ground, and we can hardly say the Lord’s cause has prospered—still, we have only seen the beginning! And we may rest assured that when the latter verses of this grand poem shall come, though the book may have opened somewhat dolorously and gloomily, the end will be, “Sing unto the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He cast into the sea.” In any great cause that is undertaken in any country, it is not one generation that succeeds. Many generations have to take part in it. There is a period of contempt for even common political principles—a period of neglect—afterwards a period of contempt—then, perhaps, a period of absolute persecution, and then, perhaps, when we least expect it, there comes the moment of victory. And so it will be with the great cause of Christ! Only let this be our prayer, that the Lord would cut short His work in righteousness. That He would be pleased to soon come forth with His sword girt upon His thigh and take to Himself His great power and reign! Before another year comes, if the Lord wills, the nations may all give up their idols and turn to Christ! God can do as He pleases. Time is nothing to Him. With men, steel and iron must be worked gradually, but in the

world of spirits, God has but to strike a spark and the fire will run along the ground and illumine the earth with its sacred conflagration! He can affect all minds at once, and turn the heart of the child to the Father, and the hearts of all men to the great Prince of Peace, if so He wills it! And, perhaps, He means to do that—to save the whole battle for one grand last charge when the King, Himself, shall lead the van, and then the conquering banner shall be seen, and the Lord God Omnipotent shall reign! Be it as He wills, we will always say under every discouragement, at all times when we see not our sign, “Blessed be You, Jesus! You shall get the crown and be Conqueror yet! May Your Kingdom come, and Your will be done as in Heaven, so on earth!”

Now, lastly, there are times, dear Friends, when this exclamation may be used *about ourselves personally*. I will only hint at these times. The first is *at our conversion*. When we had been in sorrow and trouble, under sin—when the Law had made sin revive and we died, when every hope was hurled in despair—you remember how you and I welcomed Christ. I remember the very Sabbath morning and the spot of ground. Some of you may not so distinctly remember—that does not matter—but some of you can. Oh, how blessed was he who came to us in the name of the Lord! Sin was forgiven. Doubts fled, despair vanished, joy and peace flowed in our souls, leapt within us, and we were so happy—we scarcely knew how to express our joy and our love! Oh, dear Savior, on that first day of our spiritual birth, and afterwards while we were yet in the love of our espousals, we could do no other than say, “Blessed is He, the dear precious and exalted Savior, who has come to me in the Lord’s name and saved my soul!” Since that day we have, every now and then, had repetitions of our conversion—*renewals of the Presence of God*. You had got very dull and worldly, and your soul was cleaving to the dust, but, perhaps, it was under a sermon or in private prayer. Or it may have been in the middle of your business the Lord returned to you—He became the health of your countenance and restored your soul! Oh, I know how you sang, when your communion with Christ began to be as sweet as it was before, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!” The Lord send such seasons to any of you who are backsliding! May He come to you, now, and knock at the door of your heart! Oh, open to Him and bid Him come in, for there is no power on earth that can revive a decaying heart like the coming of Christ afresh by renewed communion! So too, dear Friends, you and I have said this when we have had some very *happy seasons in the house of the Lord*. Have you not sometimes, in this very place, when our voice has gone up in song (the thousands praising God)—when we have been all moved by gracious Words of Scripture, as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind—have you not been inclined to burst out with the note, “Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord”? Why, the very preacher has been beloved to you

for his Master's sake! But the preacher's Master—oh, what love you felt in your heart for Him—what joy at the sound of His name! What delight when it has been like ointment poured forth, and the love of God has been shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you! Do you not remember when you went up with the multitude that kept holy day, when you went up to the altar of God with exceeding joy, with the voice of thanksgiving? Ah, then it was—

***“Blessings forever on the Lamb,
Who bore the Cross for wretched men.”***

And once again, to conclude, *whenever God visits His Church with a revival*, then the cry goes up, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord”—a revival of religion, I mean, of this kind—when a deep religious concern is upon all, when Christians become more earnest and more prayerful, when they become more attentive to the unconverted and more anxious to see them saved. And when the unconverted, themselves, take a deeper interest in the Word—when they begin to feel their sin, when they cry out for mercy, when they ask the way to Zion! We have had the Lord with us now these 17 years with no bursts of excitement, but with one continual stream of blessing—and I am so anxious that we should not lose it. I could wish that we might see some token of even a larger measure of His Presence than we have had yet. I would ask some of you that have power in prayer to join with me every morning and every night in a prayer that He would come to us afresh. We are not discouraged—very far from it. We have never been without many enquirers and many being added to the Church, but still, there are unconverted ones in the congregation. We have found at the Tabernacle what we had at Park Street, that we have many more members than seats. I remember one man coming one night to have a seat who was very honest and wanted to see me, first, before he took a sitting. “Sir,” he said, “somebody told me that I should be expected to be converted if I took a seat, and I cannot guarantee that.” I said, “My dear Friend, somebody has told you the right thing, but he has not put it exactly right. If you take a seat, we expect that you *will* be converted. It is not that you are expected to convert yourself, but we expect that if you hear the Word, God will bless you, because,” I said, “I hardly know any who have sat there but have been converted.” I was very glad to find there was all current among the seat-holders that God would bless them! I believe He will. But still, I wish we had more members. We have 4,200, I think, but we can hold more than that. I would like to see six thousand! What a joy it would be! So many that I would be half inclined to say I must go and fish in another pool—they are all caught here! Would not it be a mercy if there were no more fish in the sea to be caught, but all were converted—everyone that comes into this Tabernacle? His power is infinite! There is no limit to that, except that our unbelief in the economy of Grace is sometimes allowed to

limit it. What is said converted to God! If you could go out and do good to others, and bring others in, and other churches could be formed, what a blessing might come of it! And why not? “He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.” Oh, that this might be taken away from us! May we believe, and we shall see! May we trust and pray, and we shall joyfully behold it! Oh, that some poor sinner would come to Jesus Christ tonight! He would, indeed, have to say, “Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.” One prayer will bring you to Him, if it is sincere. Simply to trust Him—that is the thing! To rely upon Him—that is all! He died for the guilty. His blood was shed for the foul. Come and trust Him and yield to Him! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 118.**

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the LORD: for He is good: because His mercy endures forever.* Here is a standing reason for thanksgiving. Although we may not always be healthy, nor always prosperous, yet God is always good and, therefore, there is always a sufficient argument for giving thanks unto Jehovah, That He is a good God essentially—that He cannot be otherwise than good—should be a fountain out of which the richest praises should perpetually flow.

2, 3. *Let Israel now say that His mercy endures forever. Let the house of Aaron now say that His mercy endures forever.* These were especially set apart for God’s service and, therefore, where much is given, much is expected. The house of Aaron, therefore, must have a special note of thanksgiving, and though we who preach the Gospel claim no sort of priesthood, yet if any ought to lead the strain of thankfulness, it should be those who minister continually for God.

4. *Let them now that fear the LORD say that His mercy endures forever.* Let them all say it—let them all say it now—let every one of us say it for himself, “His mercy endures forever.”

5. *I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me and set me in a large place.* I think many of us could make just such a record as that and not once, but many times in our lives we could say, “I called upon the Lord in distress.” We have had many trials, but we have a Mercy Seat always to fly to and a God always ready to hear the cries of His distressed ones.

6. *The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do to me?* The past always gives us assurance for the future, for we are dealing with the same unchangeable God and, therefore, we may expect to have the same dealings from Him.

7, 8. *The LORD takes my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon those who hate me. It is better to trust in the LORD*

than to put confidence in man. There is one text which I have never seen put up anywhere. You have illuminated texts in your houses and school-rooms, and so on, but I think I have never seen this, “Cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm.” Or this other one, “Cease you, from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?” And I am sure there is no teaching of Scripture more necessary than that, whether it refers to great men or to little men, whether it refers to men of eminence, or to those of your own family circle. “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.”

9. *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.* It is nobler, it is more agreeable to sound reason, it will lead to better results. God better deserves our confidence than the princes of the earth do—even the best of them.

10. *All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.* This may apply to David, but it applied better to Christ, around whom Jews and Gentiles came, but He won the victory over them.

11, 12. *They compassed me about: yes, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as fire of thorns; for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.* The thorn makes a good blaze and crackles and splutters, but it is soon out. “For in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.” In this way we may meet our spiritual foes, temptations, trials, the world, sin, death, Hell—the name of Jehovah shall be our strength. “*In hoc signo vincit,*” said one of old—“By this sign you conquer,” and so by this sign we also overcome through the blood of the Lamb!

13. *You have thrust sore at me that I might fall; but the Lord helped me.* This will rebut all the attacks of our fiercest foes—“But the Lord helped me.”

14, 15. *The LORD is my strength and song, and has become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.* Where God’s people dwell, there is the voice of joy. “Their family prayer sanctifies the house with its joyous notes.” Even then there is trouble and sorrow in the house, yet resignation still makes joy and rejoicing there. And if rejoicing for a moment should go, yet salvation never does. “This day is salvation come to your house. If you are now a converted man, it will never go away. It is an abiding thing—it is in the tabernacles of the righteous.

16, 17. *The right hand of the LORD is exalted, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly. I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the LORD.* Some have thought this Psalm was composed by Hezekiah after his sickness, and after the destruction of Senacherib’s host. It may be so. It has been used by many besides Hezekiah, who have not forgotten that these are the words of Wickliffe, used when monks came round his dying

bed with prayers, Paternosters and crucifixes and urged him to repent, and he said, "I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord." And so, indeed, he did!

18. *The LORD has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death.* Many of His best children can say this, for, "whom the Lord loves He chastens." "The Lord has chastened me sorely, but He has not given me over unto death." You that have recovered from sickness, here is a song for you who above all were not given over to your sins and to the just punishment of them! Here is music for you, "He has not given me over to the second death which He might have done."

19, 20. *Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them and I will praise the LORD. This gate of the LORD into which the righteous shall enter.* I suppose he who uttered these words has passed through the beautiful gates of the Temple.

21. *I will praise You: for You have heard me, and have become my salvation.* Future, past, present—all full of blessing!

22-24. *The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD has made: we will rejoice and be glad in it.* Though this is applicable to the Sabbath, yet it is also applicable to any day and to every day which God especially makes glorious by delivering many.

25-27. *Save now, I beseech You, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech You, send now prosperity. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, who has showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.* It is the king returning from victory and recovered from sickness. He brings his sacrifice with thanksgiving, as every child of God should, and there it is, ready bound to the altar horns.

28, 29. *You are my God, and I will praise You: You are my God, I will exalt You. O give thanks unto the LORD: for He is good; for His mercy endures forever.*

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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

A STIR—AND WHAT CAME OF IT

NO. 2939

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 1905.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 11, 1875.**

***“And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city
was moved, saying, Who is this?”
Matthew 21:10.***

MANY things make a stir in a city and, sometimes, these stirs are full of evil. I always think, each time I read Carlyle's history of the French Revolution, how thankful we ought to be that the city of London has not been excited, from end to end, by political storms as the unhappy city of Paris was at that time and has been many times since. We are not grateful enough, I fear, for the social order and quiet which reign in our midst. There are other countries where the people, when they go to bed at night, cannot tell what will be the form of government when they wake in the morning—whether they will still be free nations or beneath a tyrant's heel. I heard an excellent man—one highly esteemed among us—prophecy that before long the streets of London will run with blood. He was afraid of the power of the democracy of whom he stood in great terror. I confess that I have never participated in his fears for a single moment, for I fully believe that, by God's Grace, our country will continue for many years to enjoy the blessing which results from having a form of government which with all its faults and imperfections, is so satisfactory on the whole. May God grant that we may not, on some future day, have to remember with regret our ingratitude for the peace we now possess—when we have lost it—and may we all do our best to cement the various classes of society together and promote that Christian love, that spirit of justice and that spirit of philanthropy which will tend to hold together the whole nation in bonds that cannot easily be broken. Let us not be envious. Let us not be proud. Let us not oppress one another and let us not demand too much from one another. Let the golden rule be the rule of life to all with whom we are brought into contact. Let us do to others as we would they should do to us and so may our country and its capital never be stirred by those terrific senses of strife which would make the pavements run with blood, but may our land enjoy, for many a century, unless Christ should come, the same peace which we have seen in our day!

But there are such things as good stirs—stirs for the better—stirs which help to remove the evil consequences of stagnation. There are, at certain times and seasons, blessed blowing of the sacred wind from Heaven through the garden of mankind and I think, at this period,

London is, to a large extent, enjoying just such a stir as that. At this moment I might almost say concerning this city what was said concerning Jerusalem at the time mentioned in our text, “All the city was moved, saying, Who is this?” There is a great religious excitement at the present time—and a spirit of enquiry and an unusual desire to hear the Word of God. There is more than this, for there is a Divine Power going forth to convert the people—thousands have of late have been converted to the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. For one, I am devoutly thankful for this stir and pray God to continue it for a long time and to bring the richest possible results out of it.

Concerning the stir mentioned in our text, I want to, ask, first, *what caused this stir?* Secondly, *what was the enquiry,* “Who is this?” And *how do we answer it?* And then, lastly, *what came of this stir?*

I. First, WHAT CAUSED THIS STIR? “All the city was moved.”

The first cause of this moving of the city was that *Jesus was proclaimed King.* True, the proclamation was uttered by children and by the common people and not by the officers of the State, yet He was proclaimed—and wherever Jesus Christ is proclaimed as King and Lord, there is sure to be a stir! Even if it is nothing but opposition to Him, there must be some movement, for Christ is never without influence either one way or another. He is never savorless—He is always either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death. It matters very little who it is that proclaims Jesus as King, for the power is not in the voice that utters the proclamation, but in the Truth of God which is uttered! If God is pleased to call men of humble birth and small education to preach Jesus Christ, He will get all the more glory because of the feebleness of the instruments He uses! If He should call little children to yell out the Gospel—out of the mouths of babes and sucklings would He perfect His praise. It is *what* is said, not who says it, that is the important matter. If it is the Gospel, that Gospel will shake the world! Let Luther’s preaching bear witness to that fact. The Gospel preached by a tinker will have an everlasting effect upon those who hear it—let Bunyan’s preaching be the witness to that fact. The Gospel preached by one who had been a servant at an inn may influence the entire nation, as witness the case of George Whitefield! It is the Gospel, not the man—the Truth, not the mere utterer of it—which is the more important!

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, at this time we have Jesus Christ very widely proclaimed in London. I believe that most ministers are preaching more about Jesus Christ than they ever did before. Some of our Brothers and Sisters have become very philosophical—they have given way a great deal to modern thought and have lost power thereby—but I believe there is a pretty general return to the lifting up of the bronze serpent on the pole—the preaching of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. And whenever this is the case, if He is proclaimed, the village, the town, the city must be moved thereby!

But there was more than that when all the city of Jerusalem was moved, *for Jesus Christ Himself was present.* He was not proclaimed in His absence. He was riding through the streets in that humble pomp

which well suited His Character, as well as fulfilled the ancient prophecy concerning Him. But He was there and I guarantee you that if the proclamation of the Gospel is a power, much more a power is the Presence of Jesus Christ who is the sum and substance of the Gospel! There must be a stir wherever He is. When He goes where demons make their haunts, they flee before Him. When He stands amid the raging elements and says, "Peace: be still," immediately there is a great calm. All Nature and all created beings feel the majesty of the Presence of the Crucified. The wicked tremble when they perceive Him, but the saints of God, when Jesus comes to them, are stirred in a very different fashion, for they grow strong in His Presence!

Some of our troops, in one of the battles in the Peninsula War, seemed likely to give way, the assault of the French upon them being so terrible. But, just then, the Duke of Wellington rode up into the center of them and one man said to his fellow, "Here comes the Duke! How glad I am to see his face! He is worth more to us than ten thousand men—we will soon drive those Frenchmen to the winds now." And so they did, for the presence of their leader seemed to make each man grow into a giant! And at this time there is a shout of a King is in our midst, for our Lord Jesus Christ has come in the power of His Spirit! He has come with His ministers who preach the Gospel simply and faithfully and He is scattering His foes and putting them to rout! And He is saving souls and so magnifying His holy name. Where Jesus is proclaimed, and where Jesus Himself is, there must be a stir, as there was in Jerusalem when "all the city was moved, saying, Who is this is?"

I do not wonder that there was a stir in Jerusalem when we reflect that *all Christ's disciples were that day in a very lively state*. They were often inclined to be sleepy or sluggish, as we are. Oh, how idle some Christians are and how readily do we slumber! And if the Church of Christ is not itself thoroughly awake, it cannot be expected to awaken the world. Some preaching is a kind of articulate snoring in which the preacher does not appear to be certain whether he is, himself awake and, therefore, it is not very likely that he will be able to awaken others. But that day in Jerusalem Christ's disciples were all full of joy and full of praise to God for all the mighty works that they had seen! Every man's eyes shone with delight. They were, as we say, "all there," all alive and all in earnest! That day, too, they were all generous, for they took off their outer garments and laid them on the colt, or strewed them in the way where Jesus was to ride. There was not one of Christ's disciples who was cowardly that day—they were all ready to give what they could to grace His triumph! We shall never see the world converted while the Church is so stingy as it often is. There are Christian people who will sing that—

***"They love their God with zeal so great
That they would give Him all,"***

but they never go even to the verge of giving Him all. They seem to have a "saving" faith, in a very bad meaning of that term. But when Christ's Church once brings all her tithes into the storehouse, then will God fulfill His ancient declaration, "Prove Me now herewith, says the Lord of Hosts,

if I will not open you the windows of Heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

That day, too, *Christ's disciples were all obedient to His orders*. They did as their Master commanded them concerning the fetching of the ass and the colt. You sometimes wonder that the Gospel does not spread more rapidly in the earth. But are disobedient servants likely to do their Master's work well? If there are commands of Jesus which we persistently ignore—if there are precepts of the Savior which, year after year, we forget—if there are Doctrines and other parts of His teaching to which we turn a deaf ear, can we expect Him to bless us? O servants of the Lord, obedience within the Church will be sure to bring power outside the Church! And the Church, moving according to the orders of the great Captain of our salvation, step by step and rank by rank, in Gospel order, will be certain to march on to victory! God will be sure to send a stir when His people are in a right state of heart and life.

A further reason for the stir in Jerusalem was that *multitudes were thronging around Christ*. There is something that stirs one in the sight of a crowd and, oftentimes, we gather power in our preaching by the very sight of the multitude of those who have come to listen to our message. And certainly there is a great charm in that mighty volume of praise which we heard just now, which seemed to roll like the waves of the sea in glory and grandeur! A preacher is delighted to see crowds coming to hear the Gospel, for he knows that it is good fishing where there is an abundance of fish! So there was a stir in Jerusalem because there were such crowds of people thronging around Christ. I am glad to hear that crowds are going to listen to the Gospel preached and sung by our two American Brothers, Moody and Sankey. God grant that in their services, there may not be merely the excitement of multitudes gathering together, but the power of the Spirit of God working upon the hearts and consciences of the hearers, for where that is felt, there is sure to be a stir in the city!

In Jerusalem there were not only multitudes thronging around Christ, but *miracles were being worked by Christ*. The lame were leaping, the blind were seeing, the deaf were hearing, the dumb were speaking and, not long before that, a man who had been dead four days had been raised from the grave by the voice of Jesus calling to him, “Lazarus, come forth!” No wonder, then, that the whole city was moved! And nothing moves a family like the salvation of a soul in it. Nothing moves a parish like the conversion of some gross vagabond, some outrageous rebel against his God. If the Lord will but go on saving people in London, we need have no fear about London being moved. Soul-saving work—life to the dead in sin, sight to the spiritually blind, leaping to the spiritually lame—this is what will stir London more than anything else! Therefore, pray for it, O you people of God, and you shall see more and more of it!

Hence it was that crowds in Jerusalem were crying, “Hosanna.” How could they help it when Christ was distributing His royal favors on the right hand and on the left? My own heart is ready to cry, “Hosanna,” even over the hope that many have been converted to Jesus! And if it is

really so, the angels are rejoicing over those who have repented and returned to the Lord. They must have been having a grand time of it for the last two or three months at least! Heaven's music has them constantly increasing in volume as Christ has called together His friends and neighbors and has said to them, "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost." Have the angels been rejoicing with Christ over the finding of any of you, dear Friends? If they have not, God grant that they soon may do so!

II. Secondly, WHAT WAS THE ENQUIRY IN JERUSALEM, AND HOW DO WE ANSWER IT? "Who is this?"

They could all see that this movement was around a Person, so they did not ask, "What is this?" but, "*Who* is this?" And any preaching that is worth anything tells of the Person of Jesus Christ. You cannot enkindle enthusiasm about a mere doctrine. You may lay down certain theses as logically as you will, but they will not stir the soul—you must rally men around a person! It is the presence of his sovereign that makes the soldier brave in the day of battle and it is the preaching of Christ—telling about the Person of Christ—lifting Him up in our preaching even as once He was lifted up upon the Cross that is sure to stir the hearts of men! So the crowd asked, "Who is this?" because the Personality of Christ had come to the front.

Some probably asked the question in a scoffing, contemptuous fashion—"Who is this?" Oh, the Son of a carpenter of Nazareth! A pretty thing this, for Him to be riding thus through the city! We may expect next to see fishermen and sailors, and tinkers and tailors riding in triumph through our streets." I have heard that kind of remark many a time, haven't you? Christ will give His own answer to that, one of these days, so I bid every scoffer here to prepare for what my Master will say to him at the last. You will talk in quite another tone then, Sir—would God that you might change your tune now!

There were others, no doubt, who asked this question in some such style as this, "Who is *this*?" The crowd, which is mostly composed of fools is always running after some novelty or other. "Who is this?" And there are plenty of persons nowadays who ask questions about great religious movements in that supercilious, offhand kind of way. "I wonder what is up now? What can all this stir be about?" And there the enquiry ends, as far as they are concerned, but a dying Savior, a risen Redeemer is not to be treated in that style! He may be saying to some of you at this very moment, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto My sorrow which is done unto Me wherewith the Lord has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger?"

I feel sure, however, that there were others who asked this question in quite another spirit. They said, "Who is this?" There was a blind man in Jerusalem and his friends told him of a great Miracle-Worker who had opened the eyes of the blind. So he cried out eagerly, "Who is this? Tell me where I can find Him, that I may go to Him and have my eyes opened!" And there was a poor lame man lying at home who could not

rise from his bed and he said, “What did you say?—that So-an-So, who has been paralyzed for so many years has been restored to health and strength? Oh, ‘who is this?’ Who is performing such miracles of mercy as this? Could you not carry me to Him, that I might ask Him to heal me also?” Doubtless there were many other sufferers in Jerusalem whose hearts leaped within them as they heard of what Christ had done, and said, “Who is this?” And I do hope that among you who are not yet saved, there are some who long to be, and that each one of you is saying, “Who is this?’ If other people are being saved, why should not I be? Tell me how I can be saved! Tell me the old, old story. Let me know the good news about Jesus, the Savior of sinners! Let me understand how Christ is able to save the guilty, that I also may be saved and that, in my case, salvation to the uttermost may be displayed!” Blessed are all of you who ask the question in that way. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Look to Jesus by simple faith and He will work wonders of Grace and mercy for you.

Now I want, briefly, to speak about how we answer this enquiry—“Who is this?” How shall we answer it? Who is this Jesus, about whom we are always preaching? We have really only one answer to that question, but it takes two or three forms. Our one answer to the sons of men is—Jesus, whom we preach, very God of very God, who deigned, more than 1800 years ago, to descend to this earth and to take upon Himself our nature, and so to be both God and Man in one Person and, in that dual Nature, suffered and died upon the Cross in the place of all who believe in Him. We preach this Jesus to the sons and daughters of men as able to cleanse them from sin, to give them pardon, to change their natures and to lift them up from the degradation into which their transgressions have sunk them. No, we do not only preach Him as One who can save, but as *the* One who has been sent into this world on purpose to save the lost! The One whom God has set forth to be the Propitiation for sin!

And, more than that, God has sent Christ with this authority, that whoever will accept Him and trust in Him shall be eternally saved, but that whoever rejects Him shall, beyond all hope of mercy, perish forever! The message we have to deliver to you is not this—“Here is Christ and you may have Him or leave Him, as you please—and it is left to your own choice which you will do.” No! But it is this—“In the name of God we *command* you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and it will be at your peril that you will reject Him, for He is soon to come to be your Judge. And if you reject Him as your Savior, He will certainly destroy you in that day. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” O Sirs, we who preach to you are men of like passions with yourselves, with no priestly authority or power to pardon sin! But we are sent to you, in the name of God, lovingly and earnestly to tell you the Truth of God revealed in His Word and, in the name of Jehovah—the Creator of the Heavens and the earth, at whose absolute disposal your breath is—we, I say, are sent by Him to urge you to be at peace with Him! And you cannot be at peace with Him unless

you accept Christ whom He, Himself, in Infinite Grace, has given to bleed that you might not suffer—and to die that you might not perish!

There is Christ on the Cross—refuse Him and you irrevocably seal your destruction. There is Christ on the Cross—look to Him. Lovingly trust Him and you are at once and forever saved! This is God's plan of salvation and this is the answer to the question, "Who is this?" It is no common Person whom we preach, no stranger to whom you have no relation, but we preach Jesus Christ by whom alone you can be saved—and without whom you must perish forever! Oh, I implore you, give good heed to our solemn message and, since it so intimately concerns you, give it your most earnest attention! Lay hold on eternal life, I do beseech you. May the Spirit of God lead you to do so!

But while our answer to the question, "Who is this?" is always the same in substance, it takes different forms according to the person who puts the enquiry to us, "Who is this?" I think I see here a member of a Christian Church who is no credit to that Church and I hear him saying, "Who is this?" What is the meaning of all this stir? I have always gone to a place of worship where I could hear quiet preaching and where everything was conducted in an orderly, decorous fashion. But what is the reason for all this excitement, all this enthusiasm? Who is this?" Brother, it is your Lord and Master who has caused this stir! Unless your profession has been a false one, it is your Savior's Presence which has stirred up this excitement! It is He who bought you with His blood who has come here and He finds you asleep! His power to save is being displayed all over this city, yet you, who ought to be helping Him—who ought to be pleading with sinners and praying for them, are fast asleep! Look at that lamp of yours, my Sister! Do you not see that there is smoke, instead of light, coming from it? It is almost out! Does that mean that you are one of the foolish virgins? Have you no oil in your vessel with your lamp? If you have, trim your lamp and be ready to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, for the call is even now sounding through London, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes! Go you out to meet Him." Up, you sluggards! Awake yourselves! Behold, Jesus is coming—will you not be found enlisted beneath His banner and fighting His battles? Remember that ancient message to David, "When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself, for then shall the Lord go out before you to smite the host of the Philistines." When the angels' feet trod lightly over the green leaves at the tops of the trees, then were David and his warriors to march onward to victory! It seems to me that the angels' wings are rustling all round us just now and, better still, that Jehovah, Himself, has come riding upon the wings of the wind to save the multitudes that are perishing! Awake, you slumbering professors! Oh, that I had a voice of thunder that could pierce through ear and heart at once—and make the whole Church wake up! This should be sufficient to awaken you, that He who has come is your Lord and Master! Therefore go you forth to meet Him!

I know also that there are in this congregation, as there are in all congregations, backsliders. You used to be in fellowship with the Church of Christ but you disgraced your profession, you dishonored your Lord and Master, you oppressed the spirit of your minister, you made the whole Church sorrowful and you filled the mouths of the wicked with scoffing because of your backsliding. And this Christ who has come into our midst is He whom you have crucified afresh and put to an open shame! He has not yet come to execute judgment—He has come to display yet more of His mercy. Where are you, Backslider? Do you feel as if you must run away from Him? Oh, do not, but stay, my Brother, and look up into the face of Jesus! He is looking down upon you and may that glance of His be like the look which He gave to Peter, who went out and wept bitterly at the remembrance of his backsliding. Your Lord still loves you! Come back to Him. He has redeemed you—yield your whole soul to Him. Come, Backslider, and kiss the feet which were pierced for you and give yourself again to Jesus. You have wandered away from the good pasture and from the rest of the sheep, but Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is seeking you, so wander no longer, but return unto Him who waits to welcome you. God bless this message to you and make you know that this is a special time of Grace for backsliders!

There is a young man who has lately come up from the country and who has heard of this stir and excitement and he has been asking, “What is this? “I must have a word or two with him. Young man, I will tell you who is the cause of all this stir—it is your mother’s Savior! That kiss which she gave you when you left home is still warm upon your cheek. She begged you to read the Scriptures every day, but you have done nothing of the kind. There are some of you who have a father and mother in Heaven, but you are not following in their footsteps. Now that Christ is saving sinners on the right hand and on the left, will He not save the children who have been the subjects of so many anxieties and so many intercessions? Young man, young man, may the Lord save you before you leave this building! Prayer has come up to Heaven on your behalf and it is not lost—may it bring salvation down to you even now!

There is one who asks, “Who is this?” who is really seeking the Savior, but cannot find Him. You say that you have been praying a long time, but have not yet found peace? Do you not know that praying is not the way to find peace? The way to obtain peace with God is not by praying, but by *believing*. “Who is this who is being preached as the one hope of lost mankind? It is Jesus Christ who says, “Believe on Me, and you shall be saved.” O you guiltiest of the guilty, you hardest of the hard, you most careless of the careless and you most despairing of the despairing—there is salvation in Jesus Christ even for you if you will only trust Him! Look unto Him and be you saved—and look unto Him right now! This is the Glorious One who has come into our midst, the Almighty Savior who is able to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him!

If there are any here who despise Christ, I beseech them to remember that He who has come and whom we preach unto you as the Savior of all who believe in Him, will, if you refuse Him, assuredly come with a rod of

iron to break His adversaries in pieces! I cannot too often remind you that the Lord shall surely come to judge both the quick and the dead—and every one of us must appear before Him! Let me ask you, you who scoff at Him now—will you scoff at Him *then*, when the Lamb of God shall come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah—and the meek and lowly Jesus, who was once crucified on Calvary, shall come in all the Glory of His Father and of the holy angels? Will you utter your infidelities and your mockeries then? No! I can tell you what you will do—you will want to fly from His Presence and you will cry to the rocks and to the hills to hide you from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb—the wrath of Him who wept over Jerusalem and who laid down His life for sinners! Ah, yes! it will be from His wrath that you will want to hide and you will cry, “What fools we were to ever be at enmity against Infinite Love, to rebel against such marvelous mercy, to fight against such amazing tenderness and to show spite against Him who is and always was surpassingly lovely.” May the God of mercy and Grace forbid that any one of you should ever have to utter such a lament as that! Yet you will, some of you, as surely as you now live, unless you turn to God! And it may be that some of you will not have many days, or even hours, in which you will be able to turn to Him.

III. I must speak only very briefly upon the last question I mentioned, WHAT CAME OF THIS STIR? I have talked about the stir, the enquiry and the answer to it. Now, what came of this stir?

Well, *there were some who entered very heartily into this movement* and nobody has ever heard that any of them regretted doing so. As for this present stir in the city of London, I urge every Christian to have a share in it. Even if you do not agree with all that is said, or the way it is said, or the way the work is being done, never mind, Brothers and Sisters—go and do God’s work in your own way. If your way of doing the Lord’s work is really so much better than the plans that others have adopted, that is all the more reason why you should press forward and help all you can. We never had a better opportunity of seeking to extend the Redeemer’s Kingdom than we have just now! And if the Church of God does not bestir herself now, it may be that she will have a long and dreary winter and remain for years without the spiritual harvest which now seems ripe for reaping. I do not say, “Join this revivalist, or that,” but I do urge you all to do something and to do all that you can to bring honor to the Lord Jesus out of the present stir. As some of Christ’s disciples cut down branches of trees and others took their garments and placed them at His disposal, so let each of you, in your own way, do something to honor the Savior now that so many are moved to ask, “Who is this?”

There were *other people who were opposed to that movement*. Some of them even went to Christ to complain about the children crying in the Temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David.” They said, “Hear you what *these* say?” A pack of boys and girls—“hear you what *these* say?” Yes, the chief priests and scribes did not approve of that stir, and there are some who

say, nowadays, “We do not want all this excitement. We can go on very well in our own quiet way.” My reply to that remark is that there have been far too many already damned on the quiet and I think it is high time that more souls were saved, even if the work is done in an unusual fashion! But, after all, this talk about excitement in religion has not much in it. About three weeks ago I stood in the Bourse at Paris and looked down from the gallery upon a mass of men all shouting together and endeavoring to sell their various stocks and shares. I thought to myself, “We are sometimes charged with being excited at our services, but we never made such a noise as this!” The din could be heard outside even above the roar of Paris and I felt that I was never in a place before so much like Bedlam. There was a terrible row all about making money, yet, if some poor souls get excited under conviction of sin, or finding salvation through the Savior, somebody is sure to talk about “hair-brained fanaticism!”

I have told you before what good old Rowland Hill said upon this matter, “People say, when I preach the Gospel very earnestly, ‘How excited Mr. Hill gets!’ Why,” he said, “I was walking through Wotton-Under-Edge the other day and saw some men digging gravel. All of a sudden, the earth gave way and buried two or three of their men. I ran off, as fast as my old legs would carry me, and I shouted, ‘Help! Help! Help!’ but people did not say, ‘Poor old Mr. Hill is getting dreadfully excited.’” Oh, no! He might be as excited as he pleased when men’s lives were in danger, but when a man’s *soul* is in danger, the proper thing would be to say to him, very quietly and calmly, “My dear Friend, unless something shall interpose and you shall, one of these days, become somewhat different from what you now are, it will not be quite so well for you in another world as, perhaps, you might desire.” No, we have had far too much of that sort of preaching already! We must talk to men in a very different fashion from that if we would impress them with the solemn Truths of God that we are commanded to preach in the name of Jesus!

There is one sad fact of which I want to remind you before I finish my discourse. Within a few days from the time when all that stir was made about Christ, there was quite another kind of stir concerning Him. Instead of, “Hosanna! Hosanna!” there was heard the cruel cry, “Crucify Him, crucify Him, crucify Him.” They were as eager on that occasion as they had been on the previous one—but what a revulsion of sentiment was thus manifested! Yes, and if this present stir does not lead to decision, to vital godliness, to real faith in Jesus, it will make you worse than you are now and it will make London worse than it is—and the last end of our city will be worse than the first. And, under God, it depends upon Christians whether it shall be so or not! If you get metal up to a certain heat many times, it is harder to heat afterwards. You cannot readily melt cast iron and so is it with people who have been stirred up by religious excitement. If it does not lead to real conversion, they will be worse than they were before! Skepticism and every form of irreligiousness will be more rampant than ever in this city unless we take this opportunity of calling in the arm of the Lord to make real work of it and

not to let it be sham. Anyway, God's purpose was fulfilled in Jerusalem, even though some did reject the Savior, and so will it be fulfilled in this city, whether men are lost or saved, for God is not dependent upon men for the accomplishment of His purposes or the Glory of His Throne. He will be magnified in His Justice, if He is not in His Mercy! That it may be the latter rather than the former, come to Jesus, lay hold upon Him by faith and live forevermore! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 21:1-5.**

Verses 1-3. *And when they drew near unto Jerusalem, and were come the Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway you shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto Me. And if any man says anything unto you, you shall say, The Lord has need of them; and straightway he will send them.* The time was for our Lord to finish His great work on earth. And His going up to Jerusalem was with this intent. He now determines to enter the capital city openly and there to reveal Himself as King. To this end, when He came near to the city, *Jesus sent two disciples* to bring Him the foal of an ass whereon He would ride. His orders to the two disciples whom He commissioned, *when they were come to Bethphage*, are worthy of our serious attention. He directed them as to the place where they would find the animal—*“Go into the village over against you.”* The Lord knows where that which He requires is to be found. Perhaps it is nearer to us than we dream—*“over against you.”* He told them that they would not have to search—*“straightway you shall find.”* When the Lord sends us on an errand, He will speed us on our way. He described the condition of the creatures—*“an ass tied, and a colt with her.”* Our Lord knows the position of every animal in the world and He counts no circumstances to be beneath His notice. Nor did He leave the disciples without orders how they were to proceed—*“loose them, and bring them.”* Demur and debate there would be none—they should act at once! To stand questioning is not for the messengers of our King—it is their duty to obey their Lord's orders and to fear nothing. The two animals would be willingly yielded up by their owner when the disciples said, *“The lord has need of them.”* No, he would not only give them up, but *“straightway he will send them.”* Either the owner was a secret disciple, or some awe of the Lord Jesus was on his mind, but he would right joyfully consent to lend the ass and its foal for the purpose for which they were required.

What a singular conjunction of words is here, “the Lord” and, “has need”! Jesus, without laying aside His Sovereignty, had taken a Nature full of needs, yet, being in need, He was still the Lord and could command His subjects and requisition their property. Whenever we have anything of which the Lord's cause has need, how cheerfully should we hand it over to Him! The owner of the ass and her colt regarded it as an

honor to furnish Jesus with a creature to ride upon. How great is the power of Jesus over human minds, as that by a word He quietly moves them to do His bidding!

We have here the record of two disciples being sent to fetch an ass—those who do little things for Jesus are honored thereby. Their errand appeared strange, for what they did might seem like robbery, but He who sent them took care to protect them from the least shade of suspicion. The messengers raised no question, offered no objection and met with no difficulty. It is ours to do *what* Jesus bids us, *just* as He bids us and *because* He bids us, for His command is our authority!

4, 5. *All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, saying, tell you the daughter of Sion, Behold, your King comes unto you, meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.* Matthew is always reminding us of the Old Testament, as well, indeed, he may, for our Lord is always fulfilling it! Every point of detail is according to the prophetic model—*All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet.* The Old and New Testaments dovetail into each other. Men have written “Harmonies of the Gospels,” but God has given us a Harmony of the Old and New Testament! The passage referred to is in Zechariah 9:9. It represents Zion’s King as meek and lowly even in the hour of His triumphant entrance to His metropolis, riding, not upon a warhorse, but upon a young ass, whereon no man had sat. He had before said of Himself, “I am meek and lowly in heart,” and now He gives one more proof of the truth of His own words and, at the same time of the fulfillment of prophecy—“*Tell you the daughter of Sion, Behold, your King comes unto you, meek and sitting upon an ass.*” He did not, like Solomon, fetch horses out of Egypt to minister to His pride, but He who was greater than Solomon was content with *a colt the foal of an ass*, and even that humble creature was borrowed, for He had none of His own. The tenderness of Jesus comes out in the fact of His having the ass brought with her foal that they might not be parted. He was, as a King, all gentleness and mercy! His grandeur involved no pain, even for the meanest living thing. How blessed is it for us to be ruled by such a King!

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

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AN EXCITING ENQUIRY NO. 3085

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 1908.

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

***“And when He was come into Jerusalem,
all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?”
Matthew 21:10.***

OH, that something would move this great city of ours! I am afraid that at least one-third of our population is settling down in stolid indifference to all religion. It is not that there are thousands of professed infidels, but without making the profession of being so, infidels they really are. It is not that they hate the Gospel—they do not care to hear it, or to know what it teaches. They have not enough interest in it to enter the sanctuary even for once in their lives, unless influenced by fashion or by fear they may attend some ceremonial observance. I think we can hardly form a conception of the fearful heathenism of this great metropolis. You might go down street after street and find that the larger proportion of the people, so far from making any profession of religion, did not even enter a place of worship and knew nothing more than what the city missionary or the Bible woman may have been helped to teach them. We are getting into a very, very, very sad state of things—we need something or other that will get *at* the masses and compel the city to be moved.

The theater services which have been lately attempted have no doubt proved a great blessing—the opening of cathedrals was a step in the right direction—but everybody can see that the effect of such departures from the ordinary routine is naturally transient. There will be no greater attraction in a theater than there will be in a chapel or church if the same Gospel is preached, after the novelty of its having been preached there shall have worn off. We can no more expect to see cathedrals crowded long together, now, than we might have expected it 20 years ago. The thing is good as an expedient, but it must be temporary in its results. We shall need something greater than this before we shall get at the masses of London! This is only, as it were, a little hammer—we need a hammer more massive than that of Thor to strike this island to make it shake from end to end! When you have three millions of people herded together, you cannot move them by simply opening half-a-dozen theatres, or by crowding a cathedral, or by filling some large place of worship.

What a hopeful sign it would be even if people were excited *against* religion! Really, I would sooner that they intelligently hated it than that they were stolidly indifferent to it. A man who has enough thought about

him to oppose the Truth of God is a more hopeful subject than the man who does not think at all. We cannot do anything with logs—we feel that we could brace up our nerves to the charge amidst men possessed with devils while we have the Gospel to cast the devils out. It is when men have no spirit at all, but are simply dull, lumpish, thoughtless logs that we cannot get on with them. For my part, I do not regret the activity of Puseyism and Popery just now. Though I dread it as an awful evil in itself, I am thankful for everything that will relieve the awful stillness of religious stagnation. If it will only stir us up to oppose it, if it will only make the true Protestant spirit of England come out, I shall be grateful for the sanitary results, however much I deplore the devastating pestilence. We need something that shall again arouse this city and move it from end to end!

I. The text seems to me to tell us what will do it. WHAT IS THAT WHICH WILL STIR THE WHOLE OF LONDON AS IT STIRRED UP JERUSALEM? A reigning Savior riding in triumph! Jesus Christ never moved Jerusalem till He mounted on that donkey, till they cast their garments in the pathway and strewed the branches and cried, “Hosanna!” Then it was, as He rode in triumph as King of the Jews, that the whole city was stirred. Oh, that we had a reigning Savior more distinctly recognized in all our churches! There is no use in mincing matters or hiding our shame—the shout of a King is not in the midst of the Church at large. The ancient Glory which rested upon the Lord’s chosen has in a great measure departed. Write Ichabod, for the Glory is departed! We have not now the lighting down of the mighty arm, nor the strength of a present God—as once we had. The world *knows* very little about the Church and *cares* very little about her as long as Christ does not reign in her palaces! Unfurl the King’s flag, proclaim His entry, make known His residence and forthwith, “the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”

What was that Church which disturbed the dark ages? Why, a Church made up of men who hazarded their lives unto the death—men who stood up and preached in the dead of night to the few who were bold enough to gather to hear them—men who at other times could beard the tyrant and stand face to face with cardinal or pope and speak the Truth of God, come what might. These were men who had a reigning Savior in their midst! Yet few and feeble, that gallant host subdued the world! The Vatican trembled! The words they spoke, sustained by the character they bore, fell like thunderbolts about it. Would you enquire, my Brothers and Sisters, for the simple but saintly servants of God who brought a Reformation into England? They were men who recognized a reigning Savior! The Church was represented by those in whose hearts Jesus Christ really did dwell—such men as Wycliffe and his successors. From marketplace to marketplace they went with but half-pages or whole pages of the Word of God, as fast as they could be printed! They read them at the market. They went on from place to place, preaching the

pure, unadulterated Gospel in homely language, with fiery tongues—and soon they set all England in a blaze!

And who were they in later days, in the last century, who awoke the slumbering Church? They were men who had Christ reigning in them—such men as Whitefield and the Wesleys—men who bowed before the royal dignity of Jesus, and said—

***“Shall we, for fear of feeble men,
The Spirit’s course in us restrain?”***

Awed by no mortal’s frown, would they smooth their tongues and fashion their words to win human esteem? On the hill-tops, in the churchyards, by the roadsides—anywhere, everywhere—they unfurled the banner of a reigning Savior! And straightway the darkness of England gave place to glorious light! And now, could we only get the Church of God to awake, we should soon have the whole city moved. Let our ministers preach the Gospel, or let them preach it with something like force instead of treating us to moral essays and elaborately-prepared discourses! Let them speak their hearts out in such words as God would give them on the occasion! Let the members of the Church back them up by vehement zeal, earnest prayer and incessant labors! We would need nothing else to stir this city from end to end. Oh, to see the Savior riding in the midst and to hear the acclamations, while joyous converts shout, like the young children of old, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!” The old attractions of the Cross have not departed. You cannot preach Christ and not get a congregation! Be it “the Christ” whom you preach honestly and preach fully, the people must come to hear! Though they hate and loathe the Truth of God, they will come again to hear it. They will turn on their heels and say, “We cannot bear it,” but the next time the doors are opened they will be there! The Gospel gets them by the ear and holds them. It has a secret, mysterious influence even over the hearts that do not receive it, to compel them at least to lend their ear to the hearing of it. Let the Church, then, awake, and that influence shall be had whereby the whole city shall be moved!

But when we speak of the Church, I am afraid we often hide our own sins under a declaration against the Church. Why, *we* are the Church! Christian men and women, *you* are the Church! You must not tie the Church up like a quivering victim and lash her—tie yourself up and let the lash fall on your own shoulders! If you and I had a reigning Christ in our hearts, we would help to move the city. Do you ask what I mean by that? I do not mean the way in which some of you show the quality of your faith by the quantity of its fruits. Your convictions and your conversion assume a very mild form. You keep them well in check—you have got a tight rein on the motions of the heart. Your religion never runs wild—never! You are such a prudent Brother, *you* will never be guilty of anything like enthusiasm—no one will ever chalk the word, “Fanatic,” on your back! You will never move the city, my Friend—no fear of it. While appeals which ought to make your heart burn, freeze on your ears, you will never move the city. While themes which ought to bow you to the earth in humility of spirit and then lift you up as on eagles’ wings in

rapture of delight, affect you not at all! Unimpressible as stone, you will never move the city!

But if you and I felt that the things we believed were of the first and last importance, that they were worth living for and worth dying for, that there was nothing else, in fact, in all the world that was worth any care or thought except these things, then, Beloved, we would soon see the city moved! One earnest Christian fully given up to his Master, one soul perfectly devoted to Christ is of more worth in soul-winning and in world-conquering than fifty thousand of mere professors! You know how it used to be in the olden wars. The rank and file all did service in their way, but it was the one man who made the corner of the triangle to break the enemy's ranks and gathered all the spears into his own bosom—it was *he* who won the victory! The man who dashed foremost with his battle-axe and slew the foe—and gave courage to all the trembling ones behind—the man who told them that victory was sure to wait on courage and who dashed on against fearful odds—he was the man who made his country famous! And we need such Christians nowadays—those who know no fear, do not believe in defeat and are animated with the assurance that the Most High God is with us—and who will go on, and on, and on, conquering and to conquer!

You see, it is a *reigning* Christ who moves the city! Christ riding in the heart in a glorious procession of gladsome acclamation—it is this that will be the great thing to stir even London's stolid masses!

II. THE GREAT MULTITUDE, WHEN STIRRED, WILL ASK THE QUESTION, "WHO IS THIS?" and it will be an unfortunate thing if you who are with Christ should not be able to give an answer. Some of you, whose hearts are, I hope, right towards Him, are scarcely attentive enough to that precept, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." I do deprecate above all things your getting your creed from me—your building your creed upon the fact that the preacher has said such-and-such. We need Bible students as Christians—men who not only believe the Truth of God, but have good reasons for believing it! Men who can meet error with the argument, "It is written," and can maintain the Truth at all hazards, using weapons taken from the armory of God's Inspired Book! Oh, that we had among us more who were fit to be teachers! But, alas, I am afraid we shall have to say of many of you, as Paul said of the weak ones in his day, that when they ought to have been teachers, they were still only learners—and when they should have been breaking the Bread of Life to others, they were themselves still needing to be fed upon milk. I hope that will not be the case with us. May we grow in Grace so that when the question is asked, "Who is this?" we may be able to answer it!

Beloved, is it your desire to do good to your fellow man? Have you a longing in your soul to be the means of bringing others to Christ? In order to accomplish this, it is imperatively necessary that you should have a knowledge of Jesus! Let it be a *heart knowledge*. You sometimes tell your children to learn their lessons by heart. You cannot learn Christ

in any other way! Christ cannot be learned in the head. Only love can learn love—and Christ is Love Incarnate! It is by loving Him and communing with Him that you will get to understand Him. You must learn Him by heart. Then you must learn Him experimentally. I would not give anything for an answer to my anxious enquiries from a mere theoretical person. Could I not read the Book and get at the theory myself? I want to be taught by one who has tasted and handled the things of which he speaks. Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, seek to know Jesus by living upon Him. Drink of His blood. Eat of His flesh. Be in constant communion with Him till your vital union with Him shall transcend your faith by a constant joyful experience! Know Christ experimentally.

Also Endeavor to know Christ, Beloved, by being taught of His Spirit. That learning of Christ that we get from human wit is of little worth—it is the Revelation of Christ in us by the Holy Spirit which alone is true knowledge! John Bunyan used to say that he preached only such Truths of God as the Lord had burnt into him. Oh, may He burn these Truths into you! May He be pleased to write upon the tablets of your heart the story of your Master, so that when any shall say, “Who is this?” you may not need to pause for a single moment, or to ask any Divine to assist you in the answer—

***“But gladly tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found!!***

III. THIS ENQUIRY ABOUT CHRIST SHOULD ALWAYS BE MET WITH A CLEAR AND DISTINCT ANSWER.

If I had only one more sermon to preach before I died, I know what it would be about—it would be about my Lord Jesus Christ—and I think that when we get to the end of our ministry, one of our regrets will be that we did not preach more of Him. I am sure no minister will ever repent of having preached Him too much. You who are with Jesus, talk much about Him and let that talk be very plain. Tell sinners that “God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and His disciples beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.” Tell them that He came to this earth as a Substitute for His people, that His holy life is accounted their righteousness, that His sufferings and death constitute a complete Atonement and appease the wrath of God for all their sins. Never let an opportunity be lost of telling out the Doctrine of Substitution. That is the core of the Gospel—the sinner in Christ’s place, and Christ in the sinner’s place! Our debts to God paid by Christ! The chastisement of our peace laid upon Him that we may have the peace through His chastisement.

I wish to put this matter very earnestly to my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus and especially to you who are in Church fellowship here. Do on every occasion and especially when you get but half an invitation to do so—do speak out concerning the Person of Christ as God and Man, concerning the work of Christ as taking human guilt and suffering for it, concerning the worth of that work as being able to take away all manner of sin and blasphemy! Tell it to the very chief of

sinner, that the blood of Christ can make them clean! Tell it to the drunk, the harlot, the thief, the murderer! Tell them all that whoever believes in Him is not condemned! And never, from fear or through shame, refuse to give an answer to so hopeful an enquiry as this—"Who is this?"

And what shall I say to *you who are moved by curiosity to ask this question*, "Who is this?" I daresay there were some in Jerusalem who were so busy with their shops that they did not enquire, "Who is this?" "Oh," they would say, "We need not go across the threshold to see what a mob may be doing in the street—a lot of children calling out, 'Hosanna,' and a number of idle gossips following a silly Fellow as He rides upon a donkey through the street—that is all it is." Other people doubtless had a little of the bump of curiosity. They could not help enquiring. So they come into the street. They stood among the crowd and they said to one, "Who is this?" "I don't know," he said, "I came to see for myself." "But who is this?" they repeat again and again! And they very likely got six wrong answers before they got the right one! They push on and at last they get a good place—perhaps climb up into a tree, as Zacchaeus did—and there they are, all wide awake, trying to get an answer to the question, "Who is this?"

Well, I hope some such curiosity as this may be in your mind. At any rate, I had it in my mind once and I believe there are many who now have it. I will tell you the occasions upon which this curiosity is often excited. A laboring man has been in the habit of working with another who was often intoxicated, an habitual swearer and, perhaps, even prone at times to blaspheme. On a sudden, he sees him a changed character, steady in all his conduct, affectionate, thoughtful of his wife and children, industrious and, lo and behold, he is religious! What a difference! Can it fail to cause enquiry? Or he calls in at the house of a neighbor and finds the neighbor very sick and ill. He is a working man with a large family and it would be a very serious thing for him to die and leave those little ones. But he sits up in the bed and he tells his friend that he has not any care at all about these matters—he has left them all with God. He says, "I used to fret and worry myself, but now, whether I live or die, I leave all with God. I am perfectly resigned to His will. Christ is with me here and I find it—

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

"Oh," says the man, "who is this that has made such a difference in my neighbor?" What can be the cause of this change? What can be the reason of this? He watches another. He persecutes him, jeers and laughs at him, casts all manner of threats and insinuations at him. He sees him bear it all very quietly. He knows that he cannot tempt him to do what is wrong, though he tries hard to do it. The path of integrity is trodden year after year and the worldly man, looking on, cannot make it out. He says, "Who is this?" He sees another, a very happy, lively, earnest, joyful Christian. "Well," thinks this man, "I have to go to the theater to get any fun. I must be in company and I must drink a certain quantity before I

can get my spirits up. But here is a man cheerful and bright without any of these things! He is poor, but he is happy. He has got a corduroy jacket, but he has not got a corduroy heart—he's as happy as a king! His soul is merry within him—I can't make it out—"Who is this?" These things stir men's curiosity and I hope, dear Friends, you will try to make people more and more curious by this plan. And how often a holy deathbed stirs that curiosity! As the expiring Believer shouts victory, or sinks to his rest with perfect joy, the worldling looks on and says, "Who is this? I can't comprehend it, I can't make it out."

Now it is little wonder, my dear Friends, that there should be some curiosity to know about Christ. There ought to be a great deal more. Consider that God Himself speaks to you by Christ. Shall God speak and shall mortal man not care to hear what God says? Shall God speak to me by His dear Son and shall I have no ear to hear the Divine Word? I ought to be anxious to know it. Christ was spoken of by Prophets—Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah—all of them spoke of Christ. Were there all those testimonies about Him and shall not I care to know of Him? When He came upon earth, it was with songs of angels—and a new star was launched forth to welcome His birth! Have I no curiosity to know of Him? I understand that His Person is complex, that He is at once God and Man—a strange, wonderful Person this! Do I not wish to know more of Him? I find that He died and that He rose again, and that there is a close connection between His dying and rising again and the forgiveness of our sins and the justification of our souls. Do I not want to know about that? Christ has come to solve the most tremendous problem, come to tell us of life beyond the grave, of immortality when corruption shall have done its work—have I no curiosity about this? The bleeding Savior, hanging on the Cross, says to every man, woman and child here who has any curiosity in His Nature, "Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me." I commend the curiosity that would make you know more of Jesus Christ. Study this blessed Book much. Pry into those mysteries which speak much of Him, and do, oh do press forward till you have got an answer to that question, "Who is this?"

There may be, in this house of prayer, *some who are in positive ignorance asking the question*, "Who is this?" I think we ought not to take it for granted that all our congregation understands the Gospel, for they do not. The simple command, "Believe and live," which God has written so plainly in the Bible, is not understood by a great many of our hearers. I sometimes get letters from those who have heard the Gospel preached here which astound me. The way in which my correspondents look at things seems conclusive that they have never read the Bible—they imagine that my preaching and everybody else's should be altered in order to suit some whim and fancy of theirs. The ignorance pointed at in the text was strange, for Christ had lived in Jerusalem and had been working miracles there, yet the people said, "Who is this?" And Jesus Christ is preached in the very street where you live! You can hear of Him

out of doors if you like, in the ministry of some open-air preacher. The city missionary will tell you about Him. There is a Testament to be had for twopence! Everybody may know about Jesus Christ and yet there are a great many who do not know about Him at all!

But is not ignorance of Jesus Christ in this age willful? Those who do not know of Jesus Christ now have nobody but themselves to blame. Let me remind you that this ignorance is very damaging—you lose by it much joy and comfort here below, beside the risks of the hereafter. Ignorance of Jesus Christ will be fatal to your soul's welfare. You may not know how to read, but if you know Christ, you shall "read your title clear to mansions in the skies." It is a bad thing for a man not to know a little of all sciences, but a man may go to Heaven well enough if he knows only the science of Christ Crucified. Not to know Jesus will shut you out of Heaven though you had all the degrees of all the universities in the world appended to your name! Ignorance of Him who is the Savior of sinners is ignorance of the remedy for your soul's disease, ignorance of the key which unlocks Heaven's gate, ignorance of Him who can kindle the lamp of life in the sepulchers of death! Oh, I pray you, if you have been hitherto ignorant of the Savior, be not satisfied till you know Him!

And when I speak of ignorance of Christ, I do not mean ignorance of His name and of the fact that there is such a Person—I refer more especially to that *spiritual* ignorance which is so common even among the best informed. Nine persons out of ten who go to place of worship do not know the meaning of the Savior shedding His blood for the remission of sin. If you press them to tell you how it is that Christ saves, they will tell you that He did something or other by which God is able to forgive sin. Though the grand fact that Christ was actually punished in the place of His chosen people is a fact as clear in the Scripture as noonday, they do not see it! The false doctrine of general redemption—that Christ died for the damned in Hell and suffered the torment of those who afterwards are tormented forever—seems to me to be detestable, subversive of the whole Gospel and destructive of the only pillar upon which our hopes can be built! Christ stood in the place of His *elect*—for *them* He made a full Atonement—for *them* He so suffered that not a sin of theirs shall ever be laid at their door. As the Father's love embraced them, so the death of His Son reconciled them.

And who are these that are thus redeemed from among men? They are those who believe in Jesus Christ! This definition is not more simple than conclusive to those to whom the work of the Spirit of God is intelligible. If you put your trust in Him, it is evident that Christ died for you in a way and manner in which He never died for Judas. He died for you so vicariously that the offenses you have committed were imputed to Him and not to you and, therefore, your sins are forgiven. If you trust Him, you cannot be punished for your sins, for Christ was punished for them! How can debts be demanded of you that were paid originally by your Savior? You are clear. The Master said, "If you seek Me, let these go their way." [See Sermons #2368, Volume 40—THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST and #2616, Volume 45—CHRIST'S CARE OF HIS DISCIPLES—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And

when they seized Jesus, they let His chosen people go. You are clear—before God’s bar you are clear. Nobody can lay anything to your charge if you trust in Jesus Christ, for He suffered in your place. Ignorance of that great fundamental Truth of the whole Gospel keeps thousands in darkness! It is the great ball and chain upon the leg of many spiritual prisoners! And if they did but know that and could spell, “substitution,” without a mistake, they would very soon come into perfect joy and liberty!

Once more. *It is thought that the expression, “Who is this?” was a contemptuous one on the part of many.* They said, “What next, eh? We have heard of all sorts of excitements and noises—what next? Here is a Man who has not where to lay His head, yet He is riding like a king. Here is a Man who wears the common smock-frock of a Galilean peasant—and there are people spreading their garments in the way and strewing branches of trees before Him! What next, and what next?” Perhaps with scornful tone some said, “Well, what *shall* we live to see? The King of the Jews! Ah! King of the Jews! Yes, very likely! His father and mother are with us—is this the poor carpenter’s son? King of the Jews, forsooth!” And so they just sneered and turned away. Yes, but Friends, stop a bit. Some persons who sneer deserve to be sneered at—but we will not treat you so.

It cannot be, after all, such a very fine and wise thing to sneer at the Savior, when you recollect that the angels do not sneer and never did sneer at Him! They came with Him when first He descended into Bethlehem’s manger. They came with joyous songs on that memorable night when He was born of the Virgin. Did they not sing “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men”? Do not sneer where angels sing! When He afterwards retired in an hour of terrible sorrow, to the Garden of Gethsemane where great drops of blood fell on the ground, the angels came and strengthened Him. Round the bloody Cross they watched and wondered how the Lord of Glory thus could die. And when He went into the grave, I think they hung their harps awhile in silence. This we know, that when, on the third day, He burst the bands of death, one of them came to roll away the stone and two others sat—the one at the foot, the other at the head—where Jesus had lain. And when the forty days had been accomplished and He went up to His abode—

***“They brought His chariot from above,
To bear Him to His Throne,
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
‘The glorious work is done.’”***

In Heaven they cry, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” The mightiest archangel in Glory counts it his honor to fly on Jesus Christ’s errands. Sneer not, then! What is there to sneer at? These spirits are at least as wise as you. Pause awhile, and “kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way.”

Do you not care for angels? Then listen—do not sneer, for there are as wise men as you who have not sneered at Christ. You mention some

great man who was a scoffer. Ah, well, so it may be, for great men are not always wise. But, on the other hand, what Newton believed in, what Locke trusted in, what Milton sang of, what a Bunyan could dream of in Bedford Jail cannot be quite such a contemptible thing after all. I might quote some names at which you could not and would not sneer. You would think yourself unknown and base, indeed, if you called them unknown and ignoble. The name which these men, great even in *your* esteem, thought worthy of their highest reverence, surely you need not be so fast to reproach! Come, my Friend, look also into this problem. Give your wit a little exercise upon this question, “Who is this?” Seek to know who and what Christ is and whether He is not a suitable Savior for you. Do not be contemptuous, for, after all, if you look after it, there is nothing to despise. What is the Gospel story? It is this—that though you are the enemy of Christ, Christ is no enemy of yours. Here is the story, that while we were yet His enemies, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. I could never despise a man who loved his enemy, and if I saw him come to die to save another, and that other his foe, I could not despise him. I might think him unwise, and think the price of his fair life too dear to buy the wretch for whom he died—but I could not despise his love!

Oh, there is something so majestic in Christ’s love that you cannot sneer at it! Uncurl that lip! He dies not for Himself in any sense! He bleeds for His friends—no, more, for His foes! His dying prayer is, [See Sermons #897, Volume 15—THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS; #2236, Volume 38—CHRIST’S PLEA FOR IGNORANT SINNERS and #3068, Volume 53—UNKNOWN DEPTHS AND HEIGHTS—Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And even when His friends forsook Him, His last thoughts were all for them. Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich! There is nothing to sneer at here! He casts aside His Glory, hangs His azure mantle on the sky, takes the rings from off His fingers to hang them up for stars and down He comes and is born a feeble Child! In His mother’s lap He lies. He lives so poverty-stricken that He has nowhere to lay His head. And when the fox went to its burrow and the bird to its nest, He went to the lone mountain and His locks were wet with the dews of night. “Give Me a drink,” He says, as He sits upon the well of Samaria. He is forsaken, despised and rejected of men. And when He dies, even God, Himself, leaves Him. Jesus cries, “Why have You forsaken Me?” And all this was because of His strong, all-conquering love for the sons of men! You cannot despise this Man! I would love the Savior even if He had not died for me. I could not help it! Such love as His must have my heart. Such disinterested giving up of all for the sake of those who hated Him must claim our heart’s affections!

Do not despise Him, let me again say to you, for you do not know but that one day you may be where He is. Oh, if you knew that He would wash you in His precious blood and make you clean! If you knew that He would cast His robe of righteousness about you! If you knew that He would take you up to be with Him and put the palm branch in your hand, and make you sing forever of victory through His precious blood,

you would not despise Him! And yet that *shall* be the portion of all of you if you believe in Him, if you cast yourselves on His finished work. Where He is, there you shall be and you shall see His face! Do not despise Him, the sinner's Friend. Can you dislike Him, the Lover of your soul? How can you refuse to be a lover of Him? Shedding His tears over you, shedding His blood for you—how can you do otherwise than cast yourselves at His feet?

Despise Him not, lastly, for He is coming again in pomp and Glory. Speak not lightly of Him who is at the door. He is coming, perhaps, while I talk of these great matchless things. Soon may He come into our midst, but He will come with rainbow wreath and clouds of storm. He will come sitting on the Great White Throne and every eye shall see Him! And they, also, who pierced Him. Do not despise Him now, for you will not be able to despise Him then. Will you do now what you cannot do then? Oh, what a different story will some men tell when Christ comes! How those who called Him foul names will hide their fouler faces! Come up now, do not play the coward, come up now and spit in His face again, you villains, who once did it in His lifetime! Come now, and nail Him to the tree again! Judas, come and give Him a kiss, as once you did! Do you see them? Why, they flee! They hide their heads. They do not any longer despise and reject Him, but their cry is, "Rocks, fall on us and hide us!" "You mountains, open your bowels and give us a place of concealment."

But it cannot be—the Lamb's eyes of love have become the Lion's eyes of fire! And He who was meek and gentle has now become fiery and terrible! The voice that once was sweet as music is now loud and terrible as the crash of thunder! And He that once dealt out mercy, now deals out bolts of vengeance! Oh, despise not Him who shall so soon come in His Glory! Bow, now, and "kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." Ask, "Who is He?" And when you put the question, answer it yourself, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem." Trust Jesus Christ, Sinner, and you shall know who He is! And He, knowing who you are, will save you with a great salvation! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LAMENTATIONS 3:52-58.**

52-55. *My enemies chased me sorely, like a bird, without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over my head; then I said, I am cut off. I called upon Your name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.* He said, "I am cut off," yet he called upon the name of the Lord out of the low dungeon into which his enemies had cast him. What a mercy it is that God's servants are often as graciously inconsistent as Jeremiah was just then! They are afraid that the Lord will not hear them, yet they continue to pray to Him! They are afraid that they are cast off forever, yet they will still use the privilege of a child of God and cry to Him, though they doubt whether they have a child's right

to do so! Go on, Beloved, with that blessed inconsistency, and the Lord will bless you in it!

56. *You have heard my voice: hide not your ear at my breathing, at my cry.* Is not that a beautiful description of prayer, when the soul cannot find words, nothing but a “breathing”? Did I say nothing but a breathing? Why, that is the very essence of prayer!—

**“Prayer is the breath of God in man,
Returning whence it came.”**

Vocal sounds in prayer can be given forth by hypocrites. Our children have their dolls or their little animals that they press to make them squeak, but there is no life in them—so there may be a sound, yet no life. But I never heard of anything that really breathed and yet had not life. And when your soul breathes itself out before God in prayer, although it cannot utter any articulate sound by reason of the sorrow of your heart, there is spiritual life in you!

57. *You drew near in the day that I called upon You.* [See Sermon #1812, Volume 30—A WONDER EXPLAINED BY GREATER WONDERS—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Oh, sweet experience! Cannot you, Beloved, say that these words suit you as much as they did Jeremiah? I am inclined to say to Him, “They are mine. Jeremiah, they certainly were yours, but I am sure that they are equally mine!”

57, 58. *You said, Fear not. O Lord, You have pleaded the causes of my soul; You have redeemed my life.* [See Sermon #579, Volume 10—GOD PLEADING FOR SAINTS AND SAINTS PLEADING FOR GOD—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] Blessed be His holy name forever and ever!

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

“WHO IS THIS?”

NO. 3394

**A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1914.**

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
**AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1869.**

***When He was come into Jerusalem, all the city
was moved, saying, “Who is this?”
Matthew 21:10.***

THIS was not the first time that question had been asked, or asked concerning the same Person. “Who is this?” is a common question in reference to our Lord. “Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?” “Who is this king of glory?” and so on. Doubtless, the angels who are represented as standing on the Mercy Seat gazing down upon its golden brightness, desired to look into this very question in the olden times, and often said to one another, “Who is this?” We hear the Prophet speak of One who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, and is therefore Man, but He is called by the same Prophet equal with God, Fellow of the Eternal! How can this be? “Who is this?” The subject of the Incarnation of a pure Spirit such as God is, in human flesh, must have been staggering even to the intellect of seraphs—and again and again they must have said, one to another, “Who is this?”

I can conceive that on that memorable night when the first Christmas carol made glad both Heaven and earth, the angels came to Bethlehem’s manger and looked upon the new-born Child, and said, “Who is this?” Knowing that He was the same Person to whom they had been obedient for many an age, the ever-glorious Son of God, they must have marvelled to find Him an Infant sleeping there where the horned oxen fed, or hanging on a woman’s breast! And they said to each other, “Who is this?” And I can conceive that they followed Him through those 12 years of His childhood, or during the years in which He remained in solitude and obscurity, unknown to the sons of men, and though they knew Him as the Son of Mary, and the reputed Son of Joseph, yet as watchful spirits they must have seen the pure beams of Deity in His Character! And so the marvelous and supernal excellence of His secret life must often have compelled them to ask, one of another, “Who is this?”

He is in the carpenter’s workshop, using the axe and the plane, and yet this is He who is to deliver Israel! How is this, and who is this? And I can imagine them following Him through the three years of His public ministry in the wilderness beholding Him tempted of the devil, though Lord of All and Prince and King! When they watched Him in His hunger, and cold, and nakedness, and saw Him in His sleepless nights upon the

bare mountainside—when they beheld Him and strengthened Him in His agony and bloody sweat—when they gathered around the Cross, with all its terrors, could their eyes have known a tear, they would have wept it there and would have said, “Who is this?” When He was buried and after three days, rose again from the grave, there must have been amazement through all the angelic host! They came, some of them, and sat, the one at the head and the other at the foot, where the body of Jesus had lain, still wondering much at the great mystery. We can well gather that they asked such questions onward through His life, since when that life had come to a close, and the issues of it had begun to be developed, when our Lord ascended up on high and led captivity captive, clothed with Glory—when they came to meet Him, joined in the triumphal procession and approached the golden gates—when the songs went up, “Lift up your heads, O you gates, and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors, that the King of Glory may come in!” there was a wonder lingering among the watchers at the portals of Heaven, for they said, “Who is the King of Glory?” And again, a second time they said, “Who is the Lord of Hosts? Who is the King of Glory?” and they had to receive the two answers—they had to be told who He was that was mighty in battle and the Lord of Hosts who was the King of Glory! Do they not even now marvel, as they cast their crowns upon the glassy sea and mingle with the white-robed band—do they not now marvel that such as He should be born of a woman, that such as He should be tempted by the devil, that such as He should have known poverty, and nakedness, and death itself? Those wounds, those scars still visible, must still be a theme for holy admiration and adoring questioning! And as they worship Him, recognizing in Him the Wisdom that was with God in the beginning, and without whom was not anything made that was made—as they adore Him as the Eternal Word, the Preserver as well as the Creator of all things—they must still, as they look to His Manhood taken into such union with His Godhead, think of Him with holy amazement, with joyous astonishment and ask, “Who is this?”

But we have not to do with the angels at this time! Rather our business is with the sons of men. And among them there ought to be more of the asking of this question, and there ought to be less. There ought to be more of it, the asking in holy wonder! There ought to be less of the asking of it in ignorance or in derision. The question, I take it, can be asked in both ways. Endeavoring to understand the mystery, he that knows it best may still say, “Who is this?” Caring not to know Him, but scornfully turning aside from this great mystery of godliness, there are tens of thousands who will continue to say, “Who is this? And why make this noise about Him, and all this stir and hubbub about the Man of Nazareth?” This question is still asked among the sons of men because in one sense it ought to be more common, but because in another sense it ought never to be raised, I speak upon it tonight. And first we shall take—

I. THE QUESTION AS IT STOOD IN REFERENCE TO THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM.

I suppose there was a pretty common knowledge of our Lord in Jerusalem. He spoke openly in the Temple. He was no teacher in secret conventicles, hidden away in the dark. He had been seen in their streets. His miracles had been the subjects of admiring wonder and observation by tens of thousands. They knew who He was. Many of them rather delighted to remember His lowly origin. "His brothers, are they not all with us?" They knew His mother. They said they knew His father. "Is not this the carpenter's Son?" A knowledge of Christ was pretty general. They did not ask the question out of ignorance, but it was asked for this reason, among others—by some it was asked because *now He came under quite a different aspect from that in which He had ever appeared before*. He never rode, that I know of, upon the land but that once. He never rode in anything like pomp or state. He had come into Jerusalem and He had gone out of it, a simple private individual, claiming no office except that of preacher. But on this occasion He comes as a King! Riding in pomp as one who claims to be honored among men, and even claims to be King, for He says, "Behold, your King comes, meek and lowly." They, therefore, said, "Who is this?" What a change has come over the scene!—

***"The lowly Man before His foes,
The weary Man and full of woes."***

Does He ride, and ride amidst shouts of popular acclaim, He that did not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets? He? Does He come in this guise? Therefore greatly struck and amazed by the change, they said, "Who is this?" Yes, and we may learn from this that when Christ, who is still among the sons of men as the meek and lowly Savior, bearing with their bad behavior, and saying, "Come you weary, take My yoke and bear it, and you shall find rest"—when He comes before long as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the whole earth will then cry out, "Who is this?"

Is this the Man that bled at Calvary? Is this the Man that died praying for His enemies? And does He come with a rod of iron in His hand to break the nations and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel? Oh, what astonishment will seize the sons of men when they see the King in His Glory, whom they would not understand nor serve when He came in the meekness and gentleness of love!

Part of the reason why the people of Jerusalem asked the question was, no doubt, this—*they were struck with the remarkable enthusiasm with which the people received Him*. People had been enthusiastic at other times, but then it had been immediately after they had been fed with the loaves and fishes and, therefore, their enthusiasm was very easily accounted for. But on this occasion there had been no feeding with loaves and fishes, and yet here He was received by a most enthusiastic crowd. They could not, if they had all been sure that He was the very Messiah, have received Him outwardly with greater delight. There were their garments for Him to sit upon. There were their garments in the road to car-

pet the ground which was thought too coarse for Him to tread upon. There were the trees, denuded of their branches, and the palm branches borne in front amidst general acclamations of, “Hosanna, blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord!” Yes, and the world may say whenever it sees an enthusiastic Church, whenever it beholds a company of people treating Christ as He ought to be treated, “Who is this?” The Church, as we generally see it, never excites any wonderment among men. They quite understand what it is—a compact of people who have got enough religion to make themselves comfortable and form an association for mutual admiration. But a genuine Church is a company formed for the admiration of Christ Jesus! A company of people who are melted into one because they are all red-hot and flow like streams of molten metal into one mold—all united, loving Christ after such a sort that they would not merely put their garments in the road, but would themselves make a road—who would wish, themselves, that their blood could be shed if Christ might be glorious! When the world sees such a Church as this, then they begin to cry, one to another, “Who is this? Who is this around whom such enthusiasm gathers?” Glory be to God, Your day shall yet come to this world when the Church shall wake from her slumbers! Then shall she be ashamed of herself, to have treated her Bridegroom in such a scurvy manner! When she once loves Him as she ought and puts the crown upon His head as she should—then will the whole earth say, “Who is this?”

I have no doubt, also, that part of the question of the people of Jerusalem arose *from the singular nature of the pomp with which the enthusiastic multitude surrounded our Lord*. There was a great deal of beauty about it, but how very simple it was, how altogether opposed to the usual array, to the usual order of pomp! Why, my Brothers and Sisters, if you could see the pomp in which great priests—say, at Rome—are carried through the streets, with men all clad in liveries, with attendants in blue and scarlet, and fine linen and peacocks’ feathers, and the high elevated throne on which the man is carried who claims to be, “His Holiness,” you would see how artificial it all is! And it is all the same if there is nobody there that cares about it! True, some may, but if they did not, it would be all the same. It would all be gone through and the admiration that is poured on any of these kings and princes—well, it all comes as a matter of course! It is natural that we poor worms of the dust should clap our hands when we see a king. Of course, it is the bounden duty of such ordinary mortals as we are to pay wonderful respect to all those who happen to have a peculiar kind of blood in their veins. That is the order of things and, as long as people are conventional fools, it always will be! And the men of the world will always remain so. We shall always reverence rank, whether it has any worthy character about it or not—and priests will always like such reverence as that!

But here was a different style of pomp altogether. Here was a plain, common Man, whose garment was merely the smock-frock of an ordinary peasant—a garment “without seam, woven from the top throughout”—a

Man who made no professions to rank, did not separate Himself at all from the people! And here they have extemporized for Him a pomp in which every jot and tittle is true and real! There was not a shout raised here because it was the custom to raise shouts to Jesus of Nazareth. There was not a garment strewed in the way because His office required Him to be esteemed. It was all genuine, true, real and, mark you, Brothers and Sisters, there is no pomp like it!

What a distinction there is between the honor given to a monarch who is beloved, such as we would give to ours—and the honor that is given to a monarch such as the one I spoke of just now—who is honored merely because he is a monarch, but whom men would honor just as heartily or even more heartily if he were gone! Now, the honor given to our Lord Jesus Christ was all given because of His Person and the work that He had really done in the raising of Lazarus, out of—I will not say true spiritual affection, for the multitude did not understand Him in His deeper Character, so as to receive Him spiritually—but out of a real feeling of reverence for this wonderful Being. There was a natural pomp about the whole thing that quite distinguished it from anything that the inhabitants of Jerusalem had ever seen before. Some of them might have seen a Caesar or a Pompey come home from the wars. Some of them might have seen the conquerors and their pageants, and their triumphal return into the capital and all the imposing preparations that were made that everyone might join in the welcome. They hailed him as Rome's greatest man, who trod Rome's enemies beneath his heels. But they had never seen anything like this—when the very children in the streets took up the cry and said, "Hosannah! Hosannah! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." And so they said, "Who is this?"

Now, mark you, this is always one of the points which should distinguish the triumphs of Christ. It is not the victory of officialism. It is not the splendor of outward dress, and form, and show. There is a real force over men's hearts so that they come to love Jesus for what He truthfully is to them. It is not a mock homage which they pay, which consists of genuflections and of pompous ceremonies, but it is that they exult at the very thought of Him! The heart invents, without being taught, its own method of praising Him, seeking out and straining after new songs with which to sing unto the Lord who has gloriously triumphed! I do believe that the very beauty of the Christian religion is its simplicity. And the beauty of the Church of God is its having simple worship—all its joys and all its pomp being that which comes out of the simple heart—which has no form, no ceremony and needs no directorium, no rule by which to guide it but just does what it feels to be the natural expression of that which is felt within. And wherever this is, the world cries, "Who is this?"

Still, there were some in that crowd who did not ask the question for that reason at all, but merely that they might say, "*Who is this? What is He? What's in it? It is all an imposture! He is not the Messiah! He comes not in the name of the Lord.*" They looked down upon the crowd who fol-

lowed Christ, and they said, "It is a vulgar herd—have any of the rulers believed in Him? Did the Rabbis follow at His heels? Do the Scribes and chief priests accept Him? Who is this?" Well, and this, too, is a part of the proof of the true Christ. Wherever He is fully preached and His power is known, there is sure to be stirred up a company of men who, knowing nothing of the real power of the Gospel, will be quite sure to sneer at it! They will say it is only the poor who come to it, as though that were not said of old, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." They will say it is only the illiterate, as though they had not known that the Apostle Paul, himself, blessed God that He "had chosen the foolish things of this world, and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are." There will always be those who, not caring to enjoy, themselves, the blessings of the Great Shepherd's reign, will sneer at all those who would. Let us accept their sneers as the only tribute they can render to Christ, and as true a proof of His excellence and His Glory as the admiration of His followers!

I will not detain you further about the people of Jerusalem, but now just observe that—

II. THIS QUESTION WILL ALWAYS BE ASKED WHENEVER JESUS CHRIST COMES INTO ANY PLACE THROUGH THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.

Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, I am not about to criticize that which is called the preaching of the Gospel, so as to condemn it in any wholesale way, but I will say this, that wherever the Gospel has been preached simply, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but with the plain words of the common tongue. Wherever Christ has been preached affectionately. Wherever the whole Gospel has been delivered with fervor and with impartiality, it has never failed in any place, or in any time, to draw attention to itself, to excite enquiry and to compel men to take sides about it, one way or the other! We need never be afraid that the Gospel is not suitable to any village, that the inhabitants are too degraded. Take it there and they must and shall receive it, or else, at their peril shall they reject it! But they will hear it! It shall attract them! They shall be found, if not willing acceptors of it, yet at least willing hearers of it, willing critics of it and that is something! We need not, on the other hand, be afraid to take the Gospel among the most enlightened classes. Whatever they may know, they know nothing superior to the Word of Jesus Christ—and it shall command even their attention. They shall be compelled to examine it and if it is not a savor of life unto life to them, still it shall be a savor of death—and to God in either case—a sweet savor of Jesus Christ! Let us never think that the Gospel needs to be rendered attractive by some additions of our own! It is like a sword that cuts just as well without the diamonds in the hilt, for the cut of it lies not in the handle, but in the sword itself. The Gospel will cut and clear its own way. I scarcely think we shall need to come down to the use of so-called popular lectures on Sundays. I think we shall never need to come down to catchwords for sermons. The Gospel will, after all, if it is but drawn out of its scabbard

and lifted up as the bare and naked sword of the Lord, be pretty sure to cut its own way. And, ah, how have we learned in the past, when the Gospel has come to a place and it has begun to be the means of the conversion of sinners, what a stir it has made! The little village was snug enough in the darkness that had gathered around the old tower and there it lay all asleep and in the death, but some Methodists came and preached upon the Green. A few were converted and gathered into a little room—and what a noise there was about it! The squires would put it down. How there were threats against those poor cottagers and others! They must lose their work—certainly their Christmas gifts—but all that only proved that the Gospel still had power, a power, at any rate, to irritate the ungodly, which is something, and to bless the simple men and women that were willing to receive it!

Before long we have sometimes seen those very persons who were the most determined opponents of the Gospel, sit at its feet! Some of them have become its preachers! More and more the Kingdom of Christ has spread and grown! From village to village, from town to town the sacred ardor has spread! In the days of Whitfield and Wesley the whole nation was awakened—as from a long sleep our land started up! Then there were found a multitude whom God had chosen, who began to sing glad hymns and to chant the praises of God in every town and street! And this land, which seemed fast going down in sin and wickedness to the very gates of Hell, took a start on the road to Heaven, which, thank God, has never been altogether lost, nor shall be, for still will God raise up others who will preach Jesus Christ and the leaven shall continue to permeate! The salt shall still work for Christ among the putrefying mass until He comes, who shall end the battle in a glorious victory!

But I hasten from that to notice that the same wonderful effect in another form is produced—

III. WHEN THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST COMES INTO A SINGLE HEART.

Do not some of you remember when Jesus Christ first came to your heart? Oh, I remember when Moses came into mine, with the Law and the great Commandments. When I saw myself a sinner in the light of the Law of God! When the fiery light of Sinai made me see my multitude of spots—yes, discover that I was covered all over with filthiness and blackness! Then the minister came to my gate and I heard the Word preached, preached affectionately, too. Then parents taught me the Word with tears and prayers, but I got no comfort and my soul continued in bondage under a sense of sin. But what a mercy it is when Jesus Christ, Himself, comes! When it is no longer the coming of the minister or of the preacher, but the coming of Jesus Christ, Himself, when Jesus passes by! I know some of you can remember right well the time when He passed by you and came into your heart. You believed Him—it was but a small action—you believed in Jesus! You gave up all trying to save yourselves by your works—you renounced once and for all your reliance upon ceremonies, past or future, and you cast yourselves down before that Cross

whereon the Master shed His atoning blood! You remember that. Now, do you not remember what peace there was that came into your spirit, a peace that passes all understanding?

The promises of God could not comfort you until Jesus came with them and applied them to your soul. They were full of power when He brought them in His hands, but they were nothing until He brought them!

Do you remember, too, how your doubts and fears all fled? They had been hooting in your soul, but when that Light of God shone in, full upon you, they soon took to their wings and there was not one of them left! You could then rejoice where so lately you had been mourning—and you now had songs instead of groans! And do you remember those sinful habits of yours which you could not break off? You had struggled against them, but you were like a man who is bound fast in iron—you could not snap the fetters by any means! You tried, and tried, and tried again, but always in vain. But when Jesus came, how free you were, how delivered you were! [Here someone shouted, "Hallelujah! Glory be to God! Jesus is passing by!"] I wish our friends would not be at all troubled with our Brother who simply spoke out of the affection of his heart. We are not Methodists and do not quite like it, but when a Brother does it, it does not disconcert me and it ought not to trouble you! I wish sometimes that there were interruptions like that which came at Pentecost, "What must I do to be saved?" I wish sometimes that we did feel that we must tell all that Jesus was passing by and was entering into our hearts, as our Brother told us just now. Well, you remember the moment when Christ came to those bad habits of yours—when you had strived against them but could not overcome them—but when He came, they dropped off as though they were cloth! Those great ropes of sin were snapped and were gone—and you recollect the joy you felt within when you could say, "I'm forgiven! I'm, forgiven!"

Later when you sat down in holy wonder, you could not help it, but the tears came fast and thick, one after the other, as you said, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul, that ever I was led to receive Christ and to find peace in Him!" Oh, Beloved, I know that you said to yourselves, "Who is this? What a matchless Christ is this? Who is this that could have worked such a wonderful change in me, that could have made my dead heart live, could have thawed the iceberg, could have made the mountain of snow that is in my soul dissolve, could have brought me up from the Valley of the Shadow of Death into the land of light and exceeding brightness and glory?" I know you said, "Who is this?"

And, let me add, your wonder at Christ has not ceased since then! It is not long ago since you had sore trouble in business and your heart was very heavy. But you got alone with God in prayer and you saw Christ as suffering with you, standing in the furnace with you—and how happy and quiet your mind was! You could not help saying to yourself, "What manner of Man is this that He made me to rejoice, even in tribulation, and to be calm in the midst of my afflictions?" You lost a child not long

ago and you thought your heart would break under that trial, but you took the case to Jesus and you were resigned to it, and you said, "What manner of Man is this, again, that could so have comforted me?" Or it may be you are like some of us watching day by day the slow but steady progress of disease in one dear to you as your life. And the only comfort you have is by feeling that Jesus Christ being with you, it is still easy to bear and to be resigned. And, perhaps, you have been slandered for Christ's sake and misrepresented in all you have tried to do. But when you have told it to Him, you have said, "I'll hail reproach and welcome shame for Jesus' sake." And the calm you have had has made you say, "Who is this?" I can only say tonight, though I hope I have known my Lord these 21 years, that I do marvel more and more at Him, that ever He could do such marvels for me, a poor worthless worm. And I think the more you know of yourselves, and the deeper you sink in self-abasement, the more will the question rise in your soul, "What a glorious Christ must this be! What power there must be in His blood! What prevalence in His plea! What tenderness in His heart! What might in His arm! What immutability in His Nature, that ever He should continue to look down on me and bless me as He does!" "Who is this?" your soul will say!

Now, I must not detain you on that and, therefore, again with great brevity, remark that—

IV. THE TIME IS COMING WHEN THIS QUESTION MAY BE ASKED BY SOME HERE WITH GREAT FEAR AND ALARM.

Unless we ask it now in loving wonder, we shall soon have to ask it in most fearful terror! We know not when the time shall be, for times and seasons are not committed to us. But it is certain that within a short time, Christ will come upon the clouds of Heaven. When the time appointed by the Father shall arrive, that very Man who was crucified on Calvary, and, who was taken up from among His disciples upon the Mount of Olives, shall so come in like manner as He went up to Heaven.

Now, He went up in Person, and He will come in Person, too, and when He comes, it will not be alone, as first He came, but in the Glory of His Father and all His holy angels with Him! What astonishment and confusion will seize the minds of those who doubted His very existence, who denied His Godhead, who stood out against His power! What will the Jew say when he looks on Him whom he pierced? What will the Gentile say when he looks on Him whom he despised? What will the great men of the earth say as they rise from their graves and find themselves so little and Him, whom they thought so little, to be so great? What will the rich men of the earth say as they find themselves naked and poor as beggars and the King, whom they thought nothing of, clothed with the Glory of God? Oh, what then will the pleasure-seeker say, who said, "As for Christianity, I care not the snap of my finger for it"? What will the blasphemer say who even poured contempt and curses upon Christ's name? There He sits in majesty that out blazes the sun! There He is surrounded by immortals, each one of them shining forth like the sun, for so the prom-

ise is to all the righteous! There rings the trumpet that every ear must hear, and all the dead start up from sea and land—a countless multitude! There are the books, they are opened amidst a blaze of light and there is the voice that reads out the doom of the sons of men! Jesus! Jesus it is, who says, "Depart, you cursed," as well as, "Come, you blessed." Oh, how the multitude will wring their hands in amazement when they discover that the Man of Nazareth and the Son of Mary is the Everlasting Son of the Father—and those, His enemies who would not that He should reign over them, shall be utterly destroyed by the Glory of His Presence when He comes in His power! Oh, how will the question be asked and how terrible will be the answer, "Who is this?" I would rather that you should ask tonight, humbly and enquiringly, "Who is this?" And if you do so ask, these few words shall tell you and may God tell you to your heart what I can only tell to your ears. Who is this? It is Jesus Christ, God over all, blessed forever! He so loved the sons of men that He would rather die than they should die! He came into the world, took our flesh and became Emmanuel, God With Us and, being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the Cross—

***"He bore that we might never bear,
The Father's righteous ire."***

And whoever trusts in this Man—this God, the appointed Substitute for man—shall be saved! But if you trust Him, you must take Him to be your Monarch. You must henceforth, by His Grace, yield Him service! And His service is pleasure. His service is holiness and holiness shall to you be a delight! Oh, that you would, finding that He is such a Savior, Divine and Human blended in one—a dying Savior risen from the dead and living at the right hand of God—oh, that you would say, "I know who He is," and then, "I will accept Him! He shall be mine forever." God grant to you the willing mind to do this, and yours shall be the blessing—and His shall be the Glory, forever and ever. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 TIMOTHY 2:15-26.**

15. *Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* This is a metaphor taken from the action of the priest at the sacrifice. The priest cut up the bullock and then laid it in its different pieces according to order. Or, as some think, it is taken from the part of the father at the table, when he carves the meat and gives to every child its portion. Old Master Trapp said that "there are some ministers who are only fit to be Gibeonites—and certainly not to be Levites, for they hardly understand the cutting of wood, much less the art of cutting up the sacrifice of God." Brothers, it is well so to handle the Word of God as to be able to give rebuke when rebuke is needed, exhortation when it is needed, and comfort when consolation is required, for otherwise we do mischief. As it is said in the old fa-

ble of the simpleton, that he gave to the ass a bone and to the dog hay, so there are some who give wrong exhortations, not because they are wrong in themselves, but because they are wrong in their application.

16, 17. *But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as does a canker.* Now, there are some people who can never be content except they make their religion a sort of wrangling match. They get hold of a Word in Scripture, and away they go with it! Here shall be another opportunity for finding fault with all the Church of God. Here shall be another occasion for railing against all the preachers of the Truth of God. How delighted they are when they can do this! Shun profane and vain babblings! Martin Luther said that there were some in his day so nice and precise about the letter of Scripture, that when one of them had delivered an exposition upon the Book of Job, Luther said that by the time the man had got to the 10th Chapter, Job had been a thousand times more plagued by the expositors than he had ever been by the losses which he suffered upon the dunghill! And doubtless there are many Truths of Scripture which are turned to mischief because men will be forever making them opportunities for strife—not bonds of love! Brothers, hold the five points of the Calvinistic Doctrine, but mind you do not hold them as babbling questions! What you have received of God, do not learn in order to fight with it, and to make contention and strife and to divide the Church of God, and rail against the people of the Most High as some do! But on the contrary, love one another as Brothers and Sisters, and hold the Truth of God in love, and seek after the unity of the Spirit and the perfect bond of charity. The word of those who raise these questions will eat as does a cancer, which eats till it gets to the bones, and turns the sound flesh into rottenness. Oh, there are many contentions which have done this mischief in the Church of Christ!

17-19. *Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort. Who concerning the truth, have erred, saying that the resurrection is already past; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, The Lord knows them that are His.* How careful the Apostle is lest we should think that any have turned aside, who were the Lord's people. He says the faith of some was overthrown, but nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure. Oh Brothers and Sisters, whenever we see apparent apostasy, let us not therefore think that any of God's people have perished! Oh, no, for the Lord knows them who are His!

19-21. *And let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man, therefore, purges himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.* When Mr. Philpot, the martyr, was addressing a young man about to die for Christ, he said to him, "Brother, you are a vessel in the great

house of your Master, and this day He will scour you, scour you hard, but remember, you shall soon stand upon the shelf, shining bright and glorious.” Well, sometimes pains and troubles, and tribulations do have this effect of scouring the vessels of God to make them bright for Heaven. We must all be purged and scoured from sinful lusts, from all the contamination of the flesh and of the creature—and then we shall be fit for the Master’s use!

22. *Flee also youthful lusts.* Run away from them! It is no use contending with them. Fight with the devil. Resist the devil and make him flee, but never fight with the flesh. Run away from that. The only way to avoid the lust of the flesh is to stay out of its way. If you subject yourself to carnal temptations and fleshly lusts, remember it is almost certain that you will be overcome by them! “Flee youthful lusts,” and as you must keep going and have something after which to follow—

22, 23. *But follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions, avoid, knowing that they do cause strifes.* It is generally a good thing to avoid all questions that breed strife, unless they are upon vital and important matters. For, oh, Brothers and Sisters, it is so important to keep the unity of the Spirit! It is such a blessed thing to preserve love among Christians and there are some who in order to create disunion, go about the land and tear and rend the body of Christ as much as they can! Beware of such! Seek not their company! Come not near them, lest their cancer pollute you also!

24-26. *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient. In meekness instructing those who are in opposition, if God, perhaps, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him to do his will.* We have here laid down, then, the duty of the Christian minister and the duty of each Christian, too! And let us seek, in the Holy Spirit’s Grace, to carry it out, being at once firm, and gentle, and loving of heart, and yet honest for the Truth of God as it is in Jesus.

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

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

THE CHILDREN AND THEIR HOSANNAS NO. 1785

A SERMON DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 7, 1884,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON.

(BY REQUEST OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION).

*“But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying in the Temple, and saying, ‘Hosanna to the son of David!’ they were sorely displeased, and said unto Him, ‘Do You hear what these are saying?’ And Jesus said unto them, ‘Yes. Have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have perfected praise?’
Matthew 21:15, 16.*

THESE scribes and Pharisees always come in very conveniently as a sort of shadow to bring out the bright lights of the picture. One feels glad that they are not alive to worry us *now*, but somewhat glad that they were alive just then to put some of their strange cross questions to the Savior and to awaken His spirit to utter precious Truths of God which are all the better understood because of the occasion which called for them. Here was their question, “Do You hear what these are saying?” I suppose that if interpreted at full length the question means, “Do You permit these mere children to salute You with hosannas? What do You think of Yourself when Your name is in the mouths of noisy boys and girls who make the Temple courts to ring, again?”

I have met with that spirit in these days, for the Pharisees are not *all* dead, nor the scribes either. They may be dead *literally*, but their spiritual successors—are they not still among us? Listen to their criticism—“It is true that the good man has many converts, but they are only a parcel of young people—mere boys and girls!” Oh yes, I know you, my old friend, I have met with you before! This is the very language of the ancestors of your house—they, also, enquired sarcastically—“Do you hear what these are saying?” A despising of true religion, when it is found among the very young, is a pernicious evil which springs up, again, in each generation—however diligently we may pull up the weed!

Explanations are sometimes given of the light esteem in which men hold juvenile godliness. They say, “It is not the children’s youth that we look down upon so much, but they are, of course, ignorant and, therefore, do not know what they are saying.” No doubt the Pharisees would have exclaimed, “They do not even know the meaning of the word, ‘hosanna!’ How can they know that it is proper to apply the term to the Man of Nazareth? They have never read the Talmud, or the Gemara—what could they know?” I have heard the same thing said of certain people in these mod-

ern times. The polite and intelligent, or rather, those who think themselves so, cry—"Oh, it is a congregation of quite the lower orders! They are ignorant, uninstructed people. Very earnest, very prayerful, very sincere—but still, so poor and illiterate that it takes a large quantity of them to make up anything very considerable."

That judgment tallies with the criticism of the Pharisees of old and I would recommend all friends to steer as far away as they can from the track of those ancient cavilers. The spirit which looks down upon *any* class of people who sincerely love the Lord, is not from Heaven! Neither would the Lord Jesus sanction it for a moment! One is our Master, even Christ, and we are all Brethren—and if some people do not know quite so much as we do, it is just possible that there may be a little conceit in our knowledge, and it were far more commendable to seek their edification than to sneer at them!

Then, again, I suppose that the Pharisees would have said, "We do not condemn their youth or their ignorance, but their excessive enthusiasm is quite annoying. If they walked steadily through the court and chanted, 'Hosanna,' in a subdued tone, one could bear it. But to shout at that rate is going too far! These children cry, 'Hosanna,' in the Temple in quite a tumultuous fashion. Everything should be decorous and proper there." Yes, yes, I have often heard the same thing, but there is not much in it. We can be overdone with propriety. Some of us are hampered and hindered by it and in proportion as we get into that state we, of course, resent anything that looks like enthusiasm! No doubt, fanaticism is a bad thing—but it is the exaggeration of something which is good. When zeal grows to madness, it is dangerous. But the stuff that it is made of, if it could be kept in order, might be just the one thing necessary in many a Church!

Fire is a bad master. We all admit that. It is, however, an exceedingly good *servant*, and it would be a pity to quench all the fires that burn upon our hearths because, perhaps, they might produce a conflagration. Enthusiasm is of God—let us not repress it because we are fearful that it may grow into fanaticism! Is not the very suggestion suspicious? It is so like what the Pharisees would have done. We are pretty sure to be on the wrong track when we say, "Do you hear what these are saying?" I remember what Zwingli said in time of battle and I have sometimes felt inclined to say the same, though I have not said it. He cried, "In the name of the Holy Trinity, let all loose." When we get contracted and official; when red tape and decorum tie us hand and foot, I feel inclined to cut the bonds and let men and women shout and sing as they have a mind to. Especially let the children, in the fervor of their spirits, have full liberty to cry, "Hosanna," in the Temple and anywhere else! I demand liberty for life and double freedom for young life, which will, otherwise, not be fresh, bright and beautiful. I have nothing more to do with that point just now.

I was asked to speak on behalf of the Sunday School Union and I must make my discourse suitable to the occasion. I remember hearing a sermon preached on a missionary Sunday which was about everything in the world except missions. I believe the Brother thought that, as the Missionary Society had the occasion, he needed not give it anything more, but

might use the opportunity for discussing something else. Although I may seem to be somewhat confined in my run of thought, I cannot help it—I must keep the service sacred to its purpose. I have never learned the art of hitting two targets with the same shot. I must, therefore, keep to one theme and preach about the children to those who are endeavoring to teach them the right way. It is upon the children that the brunt of this sarcastic question still falls, “Do you hear what these are saying?”

There are still among us those who hardly think that children can be truly converted. They put on their magnifying glasses when there is a child before the Church and they look hard for a flaw in its character! They put the child under a microscope and examine him much more particularly than they would a person of adult years. When the child is received into the Church, it is with a kind of feeling that only the generous spirit of Christianity would enable us to be so wonderfully condescending and so purely unselfish, for, of course, such young people cannot add much to the Church, and it is by no means an occasion for killing the fattened calf and beginning to eat and be merry! That spirit still lingers among us—I wish we could exterminate it!

The Savior’s answer to the Pharisees was splendid. Even in its opening words He smote them, “Have you never read?” Why, they were *always* reading! They *lived* on the letter and reckoned the reading of Scripture to be a very virtuous act! Reading and writing were the business of the scribes and Pharisees and it hit them hard when the Savior said to them, “Have you never read?” Might He not even hint that they did not read, after all? They were readers or *nothing*, yet the Savior hints that they were not readers in the true sense! “Have you never read?” You have never reached the inner sense. You have not read so as to *understand*. Have you never read that wondrous passage in the Psalms, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength”? It was well to carry the war into the enemy’s country and to charge them home in such a telling style! And they evidently felt it, for they gave Him no answer! Jesus, having silenced them, being satisfied that nothing could be done with them, left them and went to Bethany. They were barren ground given up to burning—it was useless to sow them with good seed. Jesus stopped their mouths, prevented their hindering the children and then went His way to His village retreat.

That text which He quoted seemed to say to them—God is most glorified in weak things. If praise shall come out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, then is God greatly honored. If the heavens are telling of His Glory, that is something—but if *babes* are doing it, that is somewhat more! There is more of power displayed in the Lord’s raising up the weak things to confound the mighty than in His using the great things to set forth His majesty! It is very remarkable under the Old Testament dispensation what care the Lord always took of the poor and despised. There was an appointed gift for rich men. The offering was also arranged to suit persons of moderate position. But this was not all—the sacrifice was also accommodated to those of the humblest rank—so that the poorest woman might bring her pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. I think four times in one chapter in Leviticus we read, “He shall bring an offering of

what he can get.” The Lord thus accepted the sacrifices of the poor and we may rest assured that He accepts the offerings of the children. It is according to the spirit of our great Lord to dwell with the lowly and the humble—and to be pleased with the praises of the little ones. Others may despise them, but He never does, for He even enrolls them in His Kingdom.

And now to our work of dealing with this matter of questioning the blessedness of children’s piety. May the Holy Spirit help me!

I. Our first head is this—CHILDREN ARE CAPABLE OF A VERY DEEP PIETY. Instead of saying, “Do you hear what these are saying?” with a kind of contumely, we should cry with holy delight, “Lord, we know that You hear what the children say. If You turn Your ears away from us by reason of our pollution, yet You hear *their* simple cries and eager notes of praise, for they are true and hearty.” I am sure that children are capable of that early Grace with which true religion usually begins, namely, that of deep *repentance*. Have you ever heard the sobs and cries of little ones when they have been convicted of sin? I have almost wondered, when I have seen their pure lives, and yet have marked their solemn sense of guilt. Outward sin in its grosser forms was scarcely known to them, even by name, and yet when they have felt the power of God’s Holy Spirit, boys that were usually gay and thoughtless, when they felt the evil of their hearts, have sobbed and wept as if they could not be comforted!

They have mentioned their little deeds of disobedience to their parents, or their acts of passion with their brothers, or some other fault, and they have cried aloud as if their hearts would burst! Foolish persons have said, “Do not fret, my dear, I am sure you have never been a bad child,” but the child has known better. The conscience awakened within him has revealed to him much more of sin than the unrenewed trifler could perceive—ininitely more than the child ever showed in his outward life! I cannot help remembering how the Lord dealt with me as a child. If ever any lad knew the guilt of sin, I did. I was tenderly cared for and kept from all sorts of evil company, yet the great deeps within my nature were broken up and rose in vast waves of sin and rebellion against God. I was amazed at my own sinfulness! I have met with scores of persons, converted in riper years, who, I am sure, never felt a hundredth part of what I felt as a child when I was under the hand of God’s Spirit.

I experienced a thorough loathing of myself because I had not lived to God and loved and served Him as He deserved. I speak upon this point what I know and testify what I have seen and felt in myself. Grief for sin and a holy dread of the consequences can be felt by children quite as well as by their seniors. In many children whom I have known, repentance has been true, thorough, deep, intelligent and lasting—they have found their way to the foot of the Cross and seen the great Sacrifice—and have wept all the more to think that they should have offended against the love which so freely forgives.

As to faith, I am sure that no one who has seen converted children will ever doubt their capacity for *faith*. In the hand of God’s Spirit, a child’s capacity for faith is, in some respects, greater than that of a grown-up. At any rate, the faith of children is usually far more simple than that of

adults. They take the Word of God as they find it and they believe it to be the very Truth of God. They read it fairly and they do not put glosses thereon, or degrade it with interpretations gathered from the schools or from the current philosophies. God's Book means to them just what it says. No undertone of doubt mars the music of the promises—they accept the Word as it ought to be accepted—as the sure testimony of God's mouth. They believe and have little unbelief to struggle with! They believe and are sure and, therefore, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven!

You must have noticed how vivid their faith is. The Gospel is all fact to them and they seem to see it before their eyes! They feel it and believe it and, in their childlike way, they act upon it. They expect great things and look for them in everyday life. They sometimes look for them in a shape in which they will never see them, but still, that is much better than never to expect at all and so to miss seeing the Glory of God. Jesus is to children no mere Character in history—He is with them, and their eyes behold Him! The Master's word is to them what He meant it to be—and they expect to realize it and to see it fulfilled in their own experience—hence some holy children are far in advance of us poor questioners who are cracking the nut while the little ones have eaten the kernel!

And how effective their faith is! Have you never known a child in whose holy life you have seen the *reality* of his faith? He was a child—God forbid that he should be otherwise—but he was a *holy* child. For a boy to put on the air and manners of a man is not sanctification—that is to spoil him, not to sanctify him! And for a girl to be other than a girl—and to assume the air and tone of her careful mother—would be very mischievous. God does not sanctify children into men, but He sanctifies children in their own childlike way! I have noticed, especially, the struggles of some children with whom it has been my great joy to converse. They have been to school, and they have met there with almost the same temptations which you encounter in business, or the market, or in the Stock Exchange—only the temptations have been adapted to their state, according to the subtlety of the Evil One who knows how to fit his snares to the birds he would entrap.

Converted children have a horror of wickedness. A bad word that they have heard has made them sob themselves to sleep. They have been disturbed by the *look* of sin—and some wicked thing that has been said about the Divine Lord has cut them to the quick! They have not acted quite rightly—they have felt it and they have not again been easy till they have mentioned it to mother or father, or perhaps to their teacher and obtained a sense of forgiveness. The dear ones need to be clear with everybody, that they might not seem to be better than they were. Oh, the sweet simplicity of childhood! The dear child has said, "Jesus has forgiven me, I know. I stole away into a corner and I told Him that I had done wrong, but that I loved Him, and I believe that He has even now blotted out my sin. I hope that I shall not do wrong again. Pray for me that I may be kept right and may be pure and good, like the holy Child Jesus."

Does anybody here despise such desires in a child? If so, my Friend, as far as it is right to do so and, perhaps a little farther, I despise you! I cannot help it, for there seems to me something so beautiful in youthful faith

that you might as well sneer at a lily for its purity as despise a child for his artlessness! Children may teach some of us how to believe in God. I am sure they may put us all to shame by their unfeigned confidence in the result of prayer. I have smiled at the story of the child who went to a Prayer Meeting which was summoned that they might pray for rain—and *took her umbrella with her*. Ah, but that is the *marrow* of true prayer! We pray, but we do not take our umbrellas, yet it is the essence of faith to expect to be heard and to be prepared to be answered! Children often remind us that faith is not to be a show thing, a theme for pious talk, a source of gracious emotion, but a matter-of-fact force operating upon the ordinary concerns of everyday life. I am sure that I am not wrong when I say that children are capable of repentance and of a very high degree of faith.

As to *love*, my dear Friends, is it not one of the matters in which children excel? When they learn to love our blessed Lord, they copy closely the love of Mary of Bethany—they sit at His feet and receive His Words. They are not yet Marthas, nor cumbered with much serving. I had almost said, “God grant that they may *never* grow to be such. But, having chosen the good part, may they keep to it, and still sit and look up into that dear face which they realize in all its beauty far better than we do.” They truly love Jesus and there is no room to question the fact! The Lord never said to a child, “Do you love Me?” He did say it to Peter and there was good reason for His doing so—but a child, once becoming a disciple of Christ, is sure to love fervently with a pure heart. Childhood is all heart.

I have noticed in children other virtues besides these, when they have been brought to Christ. For instance, *courage*. We do not always look for that in children, yet they have shown it. This was seen conspicuously when the martyr Laurence was burned at Colchester! The Popish tormentors had so tortured him in prison that he had to be carried to the stake in a chair—and all the grown-ups were afraid that they might be burned, too, if they were seen to associate with him. But the little children had no such fears and so they came round the man of God and cried, “Lord, strengthen Your servant! Lord, strengthen Your servant!” So they were his comforters while he confessed his Lord amid the flames!

When one was burned in Smithfield, a boy was seen going home after the burning and someone said, “Boy, why were you there?” He answered, “Sir, I went to learn the way.” Those were brave days, surely, when boys learned the way to witness for Jesus at the stake! Yet they were children, you know, and children like ours. The Brentwood martyr was a holy boy of whom one said to his mother, “Will you not urge him to forsake the faith?” She said, “I have had many children, but I never thought one so well bestowed as this dear boy though he is to be burned to the death, seeing it is for the Lord Jesus.” He cheered his older companion who stood back to back with him in the flames—and then he died unflinchingly. Children have taken their fair share all along in martyr days. Read the old stories of Church history. When the good ship of the Church plowed her way through seas of blood, the children on board bravely endured their share of the tempest and the tossing. Grace made them heroes before nature had fully made them men!

So, to come nearer to your own hearts. There is another Grace which is akin to courage, but more often required by children, now, and that is *patience*. Oh, the patience of pious children! I have known one lie for years upon his back—the most cheerful person in the house! He could never stir—by the order of the doctor he was forced to lie in one position—but never a murmur escaped his lips. You must have seen children behave splendidly when they have had to go to the hospital, or to undergo a painful operation. They have resigned themselves to the great Father and they have trusted in Jesus in a way that must have made you blush—certainly, if you have been guilty of impatience—you must have felt reprovèd.

Oh, dear Friends, I plead for the children's piety with all my heart, for I am sure that they are capable of being *quick of understanding* in the fear of the Lord. They are not necessarily ignorant, nor even shallow. It has been my great privilege of late to admit to the Church a large number of little children, and I have done so with unreserved confidence in their intelligent apprehension of the Gospel. I have talked with them, I hope with gentleness, but I have put questions to them concerning the deep things of God—and wherever the question has been vital, there has been no hesitancy as to the answer. I had, years ago, a good Brother in our number who, at Church Meetings, usually felt it necessary to ask a young child some testing question. I did not admire his habit and I thought he would grow out of it, as indeed he did.

He asked this question of a child—"Have you a good heart?" It was a little boy and he at once replied, "Yes, Sir." My friend looked at me as much as to say, "There, you see the child's ignorance!" I knew better and, therefore, said to the boy, "What do you mean when you say that you have a good heart?" "Sir," he said, "the Lord Jesus Christ gave me a new heart when I believed in Him and I am sure that it is a good one." My venerable friend who put the question was greatly delighted—and completely shut up—he asked no more questions of children for a very considerable time. If he had done so, I might have had more good illustrations to give you!

It is not true that godly children come into the Church believing something or other, not knowing what—for I have marked a maturity of understanding in some children that, I am sure, I have not always seen in persons of riper years. *God* instructs the babes—*He* teaches the young men wisdom—*He* gives the youths knowledge and discretion. Age is wise, undoubtedly, but not always. Youth is foolish, but yet the Lord grants a considerable share of wisdom to young Samuels and youthful Davids. Frequently, also, what they know is truer wisdom than that of their elders. I read some time ago that the Jews permit children to read the Scriptures when they are five years old—but they may not read a word of the Talmud till they are fifteen. God help me to keep on reading the Scriptures and never get to the Talmud at all!

Alas, many professors are so old that it is *all* Talmud with them—the Bible is buried under a heap of novel theories. With the children there is no Talmud and much Bible! They just keep to the simple Word of God and what they know is worth the knowing. Whereas much of what others of us know never was worth the knowing and it would be a great blessing if we

could forget it altogether! Children can be quick of understanding in the fear of God.

If you inquire for anything else, such as, “Can children know *joy in the Lord?*” Oh can they *not*? Would God we had their joy and their delight in Divine things! Have you ever seen them on the brink of death when they have been within hail of Heaven? When the golden gate has been in sight? What words they have uttered—priceless as rare gems! A half-a-dozen words from a dying child have been worth a dictionary for the weight of meaning that has been concentrated therein! If their heavenly Father can bless them in dying, He can bless them with joy unutterable in living! And so, indeed, He does!

One thing strikes me very strongly about children—when *men* grow old and ripen for Heaven, they usually enter upon a child-like career before they die. Their mature tastes and purified hearts bring them into a childhood which is not childish but child-like. Where childhood begins ripe, manhood ends. The last words that were said by old Dr. Nott were—

**“And now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”**

A child’s verse that his mother taught him, served him for a watchword at the gates of death! It is very pleasing to read of our late dear friend, Dr. Guthrie, that, just before his departure, he said, “Sing me one of the children’s hymns.” Oh, yes, when we become old, we grow like children again! We need the children’s hymn and the children’s faith! The child is, in some respects, our model and example. “Except you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.” What need of more argument as to the excellence of child religion?

II. But now, secondly, as children are capable of deep piety, so CHILDREN ARE CAPABLE, IN THE HANDS OF GOD, OF RENDERING GOOD SERVICE. Some children have been chosen for very special service—not many, but some. It would prove the capacity of a child if there were but one Samuel. He ministered before the Lord and thus was a child priest. He spoke the Word of the Lord to Eli, having received it in a vision of the night, and thus was a child Prophet. He was a messenger of God when Eli’s sons were men of Belial. Little children can, and often do, convey healing messages to those about them. The little maid that waited upon Naaman’s wife did good service to the Syrian hero when she said, “Would God my lord were with the Prophet that is in Samaria! For he would recover him of his leprosy.”

Little children, I have no doubt, often guide blind souls into the Light of God and even great Believers have been indebted to children. Can we ever forget Samson, that brawny, strong-sinewed man who became blind as the result of his own folly? He could not serve his God without the help of a boy and, therefore, he said to the lad that held him by the hand, “Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house stands, that I may lean upon them.” And the boy led the blind hero to the place where, bowing himself with all his might, Samson avenged his blindness upon the

Philistines. How often strong men have been guided to great actions by a child!

Most of you can remember times when to you, also, it was true, "A little child shall lead them." You had not thought of it, had not the boy suggested it to you. You could not have done it before, but somehow the words he said, as he looked up into your face, quickened you to energy. A Christian man had never set up family prayer had not his little boy went to visit an uncle—and when he came back, he said, "Father, why do you not do as uncle Isaac does?" "What is that, child?" "Why, he reads a chapter every morning and every evening and prays with His family." Father attended to family worship after that! The child's remark was a great help.

You may have beheld a scene like that which comes up to my memory—At a temperance meeting a drunk came in with a little boy whom he greatly loved, and both of them listened to the speeches. The little boy, turning round, said, "Father, do not drink any more. Come up to the platform and let us both sign the pledge." "That I will, child." Putting the boy on his shoulders, he forced his way through the crowd—and they both signed and put on the blue. He was true all his life to it—no, he became a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ after being saved from his drunkenness! Oh, little children, you have done much and you will do more! We cannot, therefore, thrust you away and say to our Master, "Do You hear what these are saying?" God forbid that we should!

Little children serve the Lord wondrously by their *prayers*. There are no Prayer Meetings to my mind more touching, or more likely to prevail, than the Prayer Meetings of little children when they get together and cry unto the Lord! Melancthon thought so, for he said to Luther, when he found him down in the dumps, "Courage, Brother, the children are praying for us, and God will hear them." Mr. Whitefield mentions in his diary the great encouragement that he received at Moorfields from the children. He says that he was pelted with mud and stones, but he was greatly comforted, for a company of little children always sat around the platform and passed him up the requests for prayer. When mud and stones fell fast about them, they never stirred, but still kept looking up to the man of God and offering their prayers that God might help him. The Lord God will hear children! He hears young ravens when they cry—will He not much more hear the young of the human race?

That perfect praise which He brings out of their mouths, He must accept, for He has Himself put it there. He will accept their childish pleading—blessings must descend when children pray! The children of London, I do verily believe, are the best city missionaries that we have—and the best evangelists that we shall ever find. They come to our schools and everything is happy and holy there—but they often go home to houses from which they have been sent to get rid of them—and for no better reason. And when they go home, what do they do? If you were to turn into a singing pilgrim and visit certain homes with the wish to sing gracious hymns, the door would be shut in your face! But little Tommy will sing at home and Father will say, "Come and sing me one of your little pieces"—for in his opinion, Tommy's voice is much sweeter than yours.

And little Ruth, when she goes home, tells her father what her teacher said. Father does not care for parsons and he does not believe in religion. But then, you see, he is very fond of Ruth—and Ruth prattles so prettily that he loves to listen to her—and even tells his mates what she says. Even her breaking down and her lispings are pretty to him and his heart must be impressed now that Ruth sings to him! In many hundreds of cases it has been so. When children are converted, they do more than sing and tell what they have heard—I heard of a little child whose father was prone to curse and swear. And when he had indulged in a fit of horrible language, she went behind the door in terror. Her father fiercely demanded, “What are you doing there? Come out!” When she came out her eyes were red with weeping. “What are you crying for, child? What are you crying for?”

“Because, dear Father, I could not bear to hear you swear!” “Well, child, you never shall hear me swear again. Mother, I think that child goes to a good school. What school is it? I must go and hear the minister.” How many cords of love God is binding about hearts by means of the children from our Sunday schools! If you ever become weary in teaching because you think you are not doing much, recollect that you do not know how much you are doing! You are teaching the children, but you are also teaching the fathers and the mothers—and through them the Word of God is entering where none of us can take it! God will bless the Word which the children carry home. They are capable of great service, even as children. Therefore do not pray that they may be converted when they grow up, but pray that they may be converted while they are children! Pray that while they are yet little ones, they may be spiritually girded with a linen ephod and may spend their earliest days in the house of the Lord.

III. Lastly, lest I weary you, the third head shall be this—CHILDREN’S PIETY AND SERVICE ARE PECULIARLY GLORIFYING TO GOD. It glorifies God’s *condescension* when He takes a little child and instructs it in His fear and manifests Himself to it as He does not to the world. I have heard some speak of condescending to children. Oh, Brothers and Sisters! We go *up* when we talk to children! It is almost condescension on the little children’s part to consort with such poor creatures as we are! But for *God* to stoop to children is, indeed, wonderful! His great condescension is seen in the nursery and the infant class.

So, too, I think is His *sovereignty*—that while He permits the wise of this world to be foolish in their wisdom and not many great men after the flesh, not many mighty are called—He has chosen the weak things of this world. I feel deep sympathy with our blessed Lord, tonight, while I say, “I thank You, O Feather, Lord of Heaven and earth, that You have hid these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” He passes the towers of haughty princes and He comes down to accept a babe kneeling at its mother’s knee—and there works a miracle of Grace! He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy—and He wills to give that mercy to children—condescending sovereignly, He takes a child from its little cot and leads it to the eternal Throne!

And, oh, what *power* is manifested in the conversion of a child! Perhaps that did not strike you. I will tell you how it may strike you. If you have any doubt about it, will you kindly try to convert a child, yourself? There are teachers here, perhaps, who have performed the experiment. You have found yourselves baffled at every point! You find the little sinner as hard to subdue as the greatest rebel on earth. You find the same unbelief in its little heart as in your own, though it takes its own peculiar form. There, too, you see the same waywardness, the same fickleness after their own form and fashion. You find the same hardness of heart, the same forgetfulness, the same carelessness, the same indifference in a child as in those who are grown up. For a child to become a saint is a mighty instance of Divine Power, as you will say after you have once tried to make your child into a saint by your own endeavors! The wisest and most tender efforts, apart from Divine Grace, must end in utter failure and, therefore, when God works the miracle, let His name be praised!

By the conversion of little children, the Lord gets to Himself much glory because they so admirably rebuke His enemies. Do I address any men who has not yet given his heart to God? You will be rebuked, I am sure, if you find that your children have done so! I know fathers, now, whose children, though they are but little, pray for them every day, saying, "God save dear Father." I know mothers who gather their little children about them—and they pray together for Father! Perhaps Father is very kind, but yet not a Christian. Or else Father is cruel when he is intoxicated and they are all afraid when he enters the house in such a state. Oh, how they pray for Father that he may come home sober! The prayers of the mothers and the children are bringing the fathers and the husbands to Christ—for who can see what some of us have seen in children and not feel ashamed of living so long in opposition to the Redeemer's love?

Yes, and I may add, I think, that children sometimes rebuke God's own people and so glorify God. Some of God's people here, tonight, have never made a confession of their faith. What would you think if I introduced six children to you whom I saw, one after another, last week, and who all came forward with eagerness to say, "We have been washed in the blood of Jesus and we want to join His Church"? I said, "Come along, my children; I am glad to see you." When I talked with them and heard what God had done for them, I had great confidence in proposing them to the Church! I have not found young converts turn back. I usually find that these young ones who are introduced early to the Church hold on and become our best members!

Do not refuse to receive them, lest it should ever happen to you as it did to one who was cruelly prudent. A child had loved the Savior for some two or three years and she desired to make a confession of her faith. She begged her mother that she might be baptized. The mother said that she thought she was too young. The child went to bed broken-hearted, and in the morning a great tear stood in her eye. She had joined the Church triumphant above! Do not let your child ever have to complain of you, that you will not believe in its truthful love to Jesus! Do you expect *perfection* in a child before it joins the Church? Then I hope you are perfect, yourself and, if you are, pray go to Heaven, because I am sure you will fall to quar-

relling with everybody here on earth! Few of the perfect people are agreeable neighbors—I suppose they are so good that they have no patience with us who are not up to their standard.

No, dear Friend, a converted child will give you evidences of *true* religion, not of *perfect* religion—for *that* you ought not to expect. Let the child avow its faith in Christ and, if you have not confessed Him in Baptism, yourself, stand rebuked that a child is ready to obey its Lord while you are not!

Dear Sunday school teachers, allow me to congratulate you upon the blessed work in which you are engaged. It is very hard work if you do it thoroughly, especially to you who are busy all week and really need the Sabbath for rest. You teach the children while suffering from a headache—and they do not always behave as you would wish. But pray work on for poor London’s sake, for the Church’s sake, for Christ’s sake and for the children’s sakes. I put that in last because it has most to do with my sermon. Labor on for the children’s sake! Do, for the love of them, never give up Sunday school teaching. “Oh, but I am getting into middle life!” Do you think that Sunday school teaching ought to be done by nobody but boys and girls?

“Oh, but I have done enough!” It is a mercy for you that the sun does not say that he has done enough, or else he would not shine tomorrow—or that God and His Christ do not say they have done enough! What would become of you if the Lord ceased blessing you? We are needing Sunday school teachers almost everywhere in London! Our people who get on in the world are too respectable to teach children. What a wretched pride this is! Those who talk so are disreputable creatures—I am sick of them! In America, a president has taught a Sunday school—it was to His honor. In England chancellors and prime ministers have thought such service no disgrace. Let queens and princes teach Sunday school—it shall be for their renown! If you are the most wealthy man in London, you are the person who should take a class—that is to say, if you are a true Christian. You of knowledge, you of understanding, you of intelligence, you should come to encourage the rest.

Do not leave this sacred service to our second-best people. I do not say that you have done so, but do not *begin* to move in that direction. Let those who know most, teach most—and let those who have grown most in Christ, themselves, be most earnest that others should grow up in His fear. If you love my Master, I leave this subject with you in fullest confidence. If not, I do not ask you to attempt to teach what you do not know. Jesus does not say to Judas or to Pilate, “Feed My lambs.” But He does say it to you, Peter, because *you* can say, “Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 78:1-35.

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NO. 2107

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S -DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 29, 1889,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON**

*“And He left them and went out of the city into Bethany. And He lodged there. Now in the morning as He returned into the city, He hungered. And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it and found nothing thereon but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on you henceforward forever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!”
Matthew 21:17-20.*

THIS is a miracle and a parable. We have books upon the miracles, we have an equal number of volumes upon the parables—into which of these volumes shall we place this story? I would answer, put it in both. It is a singular miracle and it is a striking parable. It is an acted parable, in which our Lord gives us an object lesson. He gets truth before men's eyes, in this instance, that the lesson may make a deeper impression upon the mind and heart.

I would lay great stress upon the remark that this is a parable. For, if you do not look upon it in that light, you may misunderstand it. We are not of those who come to the Word of God with the cool impertinence of the critic, thinking ourselves wiser than the Book, and therefore able to judge it. We believe that the Holy Spirit is greater than man's spirit, and that our Lord and Master was a better judge of what is right and good than any of us can be. Our place is at His feet—we are not cavilers but followers.

Whatever Jesus does and says, we regard with deepest reverence. Our chief desire is to learn as much as we can from it. We see great mysteries in His simplest actions and profound teaching about His most plain words. When He speaks or acts, we are like Moses at the bush and feel that we stand on holy ground.

Flippant persons have spoken of the story before us in a very foolish manner. They have represented it as though our Lord, being hungered, thought only of His necessity and, expecting to be refreshed by a few green figs went up to the tree in error. Finding no fruit upon the tree, it being a season when He had no right to expect that there would be any, He was vexed and uttered a malediction against a tree, as though it had been a responsible agent. This view of the case results from the folly of the observer—it is not the Truth of God.

Our Lord desired to teach His disciples concerning the doom of Jerusalem. The reception given Him in Jerusalem was full of promise but it would come to nothing. Their loud hosannas would change to, “Crucify Him!” When Jerusalem was to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in a former time, the Prophets had not only spoken, but they had used instructive signs. If you turn to the Book of Ezekiel, you will there see the record

of many signs and symbols which set forth the coming woe. These tokens excited curiosity, secured consideration, and brought home the prophetic warnings to the homes and hearts of the common people.

Again, the judgments of God were at the gates of the guilty city. Words—the words of Jesus—had been wasted. And even tears—tears of the Savior—had been spilt in vain. It was time that the sign should be given—the sign of condemnation. Ezekiel had said, “All the trees of the field shall know that I, the Lord, have brought down the high tree and has dried up the green tree.” And herein was suggested the very image which was employed by our Lord. He saw a fig tree, by a freak of nature, covered with leaves at a time when, in the ordinary course of things, it should not have been so.

Our Lord saw that this was a fine object lesson for Him, and therefore He took His disciples to see if there were figs as well as leaves. When He found none, He bade the fig tree remain forever fruitless and immediately it began to wither. Our Lord would have used the fig tree to excellent purpose had He ordered it to be used as fuel to warm cold hands—but He did better when He used it to warm cold *hearts*. No wrong was done to any man. It was a tree on the waste, and utterly worthless. No pain was inflicted. No anger was felt.

In the object lesson, the Lord simply said to the fig tree, “Let no fruit grow on you henceforward forever.” And it withered away. In this our Lord taught a great lesson to all ages at a small expense. The withering of a tree has been the quickening of many a soul. And if it had not been so, it was no loss to any that a tree should wither when it had proved itself barren. A great teacher may do far more than destroy a tree, if he can thereby give demonstrations of truth and scatter seeds of virtue. It is the most idle of criticism to find fault with our Lord Jesus for a piece of fine poetic instruction, for which, had it been spoken by any other teacher, the most lavish praise would have been awarded by these very critics.

The blighted fig tree was a singularly apt simile of the Jewish state. The nation had promised great things to God. When all the other nations were like trees without leaves, making no profession of allegiance to the true God, the Jewish nation was covered with the leafage of abundant religious profession. Scribes, Pharisees, priests, and elders of the people were all sticklers for the letter of the Law and boasted of being worshippers of the one God and strict observers of all His laws. Their constant cry was, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these.”

“We have Abraham as our Father” was frequently on their lips. They were a fig tree in full leaf. But there was no fruit upon them. For the people were neither holy, nor just, nor true, nor faithful towards God, nor loving to their neighbor. The Jewish Church was a mass of glittering profession, unsupported by spiritual life. Our Lord had looked into the temple and had found the House of Prayer to be a den of thieves. He condemned the Jewish Church to remain a lifeless, fruitless thing. And it was so. The synagogue remained open. But its teaching became a dead form.

Israel had no influence upon the age. The Jewish race became, for centuries, a withered tree—it had nothing but profession when Christ came,

and that profession proved powerless to save even the holy city. Christ did not destroy the religious organization of the Jews—He left them as they were. But they withered away from the root till the Romans came—and with the axes of their legions—cleared away the fruitless trunk.

What a lesson is this to nations! Nations may make a profession, a loud profession of religion, and yet may fail to exhibit that righteousness which exalts a nation. Nations may be adorned with all the leafage of civilization, art, progress, and religion—but if there is no inner life of godliness and no fruit unto righteousness, they will stand for awhile and then wither away.

What a lesson this is to Churches! There have been Churches which have stood prominent in numbers and in influence. But faith, love, and holiness have not been maintained and the Holy Spirit has left them to the vain show of a fruitless profession. And there stand those Churches, with the trunk of organization and widely-extended branches—but they are dead and every year they become more and more decayed.

Brethren, such Churches we have even among Nonconformists at this hour. May it never be so with this Church! We may have numbers of people coming to hear the Word and a considerable body of men and women professing to be converted. But unless vital godliness is in their midst—what are congregations and Churches? We might have a valued ministry but what would this be without the Spirit of God? We might have large subscriptions and many outward efforts. But what of these without the spirit of prayer, the spirit of faith, the spirit of Divine Grace and consecration?

I dread lest we should ever come to be like a tree, precocious with a superlative profession—but worthless in the sight of the Lord—because the secret life of piety and vital union to Christ are gone. Better that the axe clear away every vestige of the tree than that it stand out against the sky an open lie, a mockery, a delusion.

This is the lesson of the text. But I do not want you to consider it only in its relation to nations and Churches. My heart's desire is that we may learn the lesson in detail and take it home, each one, to his own heart. May the Lord Himself speak to each one of us this morning personally! In preparing the sermon, I have had great searching of heart, and I pray that the hearing of it may produce the same results. May we tremble, lest, having a profession of godliness, we should wear it conspicuously and yet should lack the fruit-bearing which alone can warrant such a profession.

The name of saintship, if it is not justified by sanctity, is an offense to honest men and much more to a holy God. A pronounced and forward avowal of Christianity without a Christian life at the back of it is a lie, abhorrent to God and man, an offense against truth, a dishonor to religion and the forerunner of a withering curse. May the Holy Spirit help me to preach very solemnly and powerfully at this time!

Our first observation is this—There are in the world cases of forward, but fruitless, profession. Our second observation will be this—These will be inspected by King Jesus. And our third remark will be—The result of that inspection will be very terrible. Help us, O Holy Spirit!

I. First, then, THERE ARE IN THE WORLD CASES OF FORWARD, BUT FRUITLESS, PROFESSION.

The cases to which we refer are not so very rare. They far excel their fellow men. Their promise is very loud and their exterior very impressive. They look like fruitful trees. You expect many baskets of the best figs from them. They impress us by their talk. They overpower us by their manners. We envy them and lash ourselves. This last might not harm us. But to envy hypocrites can never be otherwise than injurious in the long run. For, when their hypocrisy is discovered, we are apt to despise religion as well as the pretenders to it. Do you not know persons who are in appearance everything and in reality nothing?

O dark thought! May we not ourselves be such persons? See the man, he is strong in faith, even to presumption. He is joyous in hope, even to levity. He is loving in spirit, even to utter indifference about the Truth of God! How very glib he is in talk! How deep he is in theological speculation! Yet he has never entered the kingdom by the new birth. He has never been taught of God. The Gospel has come to him in word only. He is a stranger to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Are there not such persons? Are there not persons who are defenders of orthodoxy and yet are heterodox in their own conduct? Do we not know men and women whose lives deny what their lips profess? We are sure it is so. All vineyards have had in them fig trees covered with leaves, which have been conspicuous from the foliage of their profession, and yet have brought forth no fruit unto the Lord.

Such persons seem to defy the seasons. It was not the time of figs, yet was this fig tree covered with those leaves which usually betokened ripe figs. I suppose you all know what I have often seen for myself—the fig tree puts forth its fruit *before* its leaves. Early in the year you see green knobs put forth at the end, and points of the branches—and these, as they swell, turn out to be green figs. The leaves come forward afterwards, and by the time the tree is fully covered with leaves, the figs are ready for eating. When a fig tree is in full leaf, you expect to find figs upon it. And if you do not, it will bear no figs for that season.

This tree put forth leaves abundantly before its season and therein excelled all other fig trees. Yes, but it was a freak of nature and not a healthy result of true growth. Such freaks of nature occur in forests and in vineyards. And their like may be met with in the moral and spiritual world. Certain men and women seem far in advance of those round about them and astonish us by their special virtues. They are better than the best—more excellent than the most excellent—at least in appearance. They are so zealous that they are not chilled by the surrounding world—their great souls create a summer for themselves.

The backwardness of saints, and the wickedness of sinners, do not hinder them. They are too vigorous to be affected by their surroundings. They are very superior persons, covered with virtues, as this fig tree with leaves. Observe that they overleap the ordinary rule of growth. As I have told you, the rule is, first the fig, and afterwards the fig leaves. But we have seen persons who make a profession before they have produced the slightest fruit to justify it. I like to see our young friends, when they believe in Christ, proving their faith by holiness at home, by godliness

abroad and *then* coming forward and confessing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That looks to be the sober and normal way of proceeding—for a man first to *be*—and then to *profess* to be. First to be lighted and then to shine. First to repent and believe, and then to confess his repentance and his faith in the Scriptural way—by Baptism into Christ. But these people think it unnecessary to attend to the trifle of heart-work—they dare to omit the most vital part of the matter. They attend a revival meeting and they declare themselves saved, though they have not been renewed in heart and possess neither repentance nor faith.

They come forward to avow a mere *emotion*. They have nothing better than a resolve. But they flourish it as if it were the deed, itself. Quick as thought, the convert sets up to be a teacher. Without test or trial of his brand new virtues, he holds himself forth as an example to others. Now, I do not object to the rapidity of the conversion—on the contrary, I admire it, if it is true. But I cannot judge till I see the fruit and evidence in the life. If the change of conduct is distinct and true, I care not how quickly the work is done. But we must see the change.

There is a heat which leads to fermentation and a fermentation which breeds sourness and corruption. O dear Friends, never think you may skip the fruit and come at once to the leaf. Be not like a builder who should say, “It is all nonsense to spend labor and material on works underground. Foundations are never seen. I can run up a house in no time—four walls and a roof will not take long.” Yes, but how long will such a house last? Is it worthwhile building a house without foundations? If you omit the foundation, why not omit the house altogether?

Is there not a tendency, especially in these days, when men are either skeptical or fanatical, to cultivate a mushroom godliness, which comes up in a night and perishes in a night? Will it not be ruinous if conviction of sin is slighted, repentance slurred, faith imitated, the new birth counterfeited and godliness pretended? Beloved, this will never do. We must have figs *before* leaves, acts *before* declarations, faith *before* Baptism, union to Christ *before* union with the Church. You cannot leap over the processes of nature, neither may you omit the processes of Divine Grace, lest haply your foliage without fruit become a curse without cure.

These people usually catch the eye of others. According to Mark, our Lord saw this tree “afar off.” The other trees were not in leaf and consequently, when He began to go up the hill toward Jerusalem, He saw this one tree quite a long way before He reached it. A fig tree dressed in its vesture of lovely green would be a striking object and would be observable at a distance. It stood, also, near the track from Bethany to the city gate. It stood where every wayfarer would observe it and probably speak with wonder of its singular leafage for the season.

Persons whose religion is false are frequently prominent, because they have not grace enough to be modest and retiring. They seek the highest room, aspire to office, and push themselves into leadership. They do not walk in secret with God—they have little concern about private godliness and so they are all the more eager to be seen of men. This is both their weakness and their peril. Though least of all able to bear the wear and

tear of publicity, they are covetous for it and are, therefore, all the more watched.

This is the evil of the whole matter—for it makes their spiritual failure to be known by so many and their sin brings all the greater dishonor upon the name of the Lord, whom they profess to serve. Better far to be fruitless in a corner of a wood than on the public way which leads to the temple.

Such people not only catch the eye but they often attract the company of good men. Who blames us for drawing near to a tree which is in leaf long before its fellows? Is it not right to cultivate the acquaintance of the eminently good? Our Savior and His disciples went up to the leafy fig tree—not merely did it win their eye but it drew them to itself. Have we not been fascinated by the charming conduct of one who seemed to be a Brother in the Lord, more devout than usual, fearing God above many? Like Jehu, he has said, “Come, see my zeal for the Lord.”

And we have been glad enough to ride in the chariot with him—he seemed so godly, so generous, so humble, so useful—that we looked up to him and wished that we were more worthy to be associated with him. Young converts and seekers are naturally apt to do this. And therefore it is a sad calamity when their confidence turns out to have been misplaced.

Whenever we see any standing out prominently and making a bold profession, what should be our thoughts about them? I answer, do not judge them—do not fall into habitual mistrust. Your Lord did not stand at a distance and say, “That tree is worthless.” No, He went up to it, with His disciples and carefully inspected it. These prominent persons may be wonders of Divine Grace—let us hope and pray that they may be. Let the Lord and His love be magnified in them! God has His fig trees that bear figs in winter. God has His saints who are filled with good works when the love of others has waxed cold.

The Lord raises some up to be as standards for the Truth of God, rallying points in the battle. The Lord can make young men mature and new converts useful. It has been said, by way of proverbial expression, that “some men are born with beards.” The Lord can give great Grace, so as to make spiritual growth rapid and yet solid. He does this so often that we have no right to doubt but what the prominent Brother before us is one of these growths of Divine Grace.

Unless we are forced to see with bitter regret that there are no marks of Grace, no evidences of faith, let us hope for the best and be glad at the sight of God’s Grace. If we are inclined to be suspicious, let us turn the point of that sword towards our own bosoms. Self-suspicion will be healthy—suspicion of others may be cruel. We are not judges. And even if we are, we had better keep to our own court and sit on our own judgment seat, dispensing the law within the little kingdom of our own selves.

Where those who are prominent turn out to be all they profess to be, they are a great blessing. It would have been well if that morning there had been figs upon that fig tree. It would have been a great refreshment to the Savior if He had been fed by the green fruit. When the Lord makes the first in position to be first in holiness, it is a blessing to the Church, to the

family, and to the neighborhood. Indeed, it may prove to be a blessing to the whole world. We ought, therefore, to pray the Lord to water with His own hand those trees which He has planted. Or, in other words, to uphold, by His Grace, those men of His right hand whom He has made strong for Himself.

But when we take the text and lay it home to our own hearts, we need not be so gentle with it as in the cases of others. We have, many of us, for long years been like this fig tree, as to prominence and profession. And in this matter, so far, there is nothing of which to be ashamed. Yet it is evidently to ourselves that the parable speaks. For we have stood in open avowal and distinct service by the wayside and we have been seen “afar off.” Certain of us have made a very bold profession and we are not ashamed to repeat that profession before men and angels.

Therefore the enquiry—Are we truthful in it? What if we should turn out to be contending for a faith in which we have no share? What if in us there should be none of the life of love and consequently our profession should be “as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal”? What if there should be talk and no work—doctrine and no practice? What if we are without holiness? Then we shall never see the Lord. Whatever terrible aspect this parable-miracle may have, it bears upon many of us. I, the preacher, feel how much it bears upon me. In that spirit have I thought it over, anxiously trusting that every deacon and every elder of this Church and every member and every worker among you, may have great searching of heart.

May every minister of Christ who may have dropped in here this morning, say to himself, “Yes, I have been like that fig tree in prominence and in profession—God grant that I be not like it in being devoid of fruit!”

II. It is time that we remembered the solemn truth of our second head—THESE WILL BE INSPECTED BY KING JESUS.

He will draw near to them and when He comes up to them He will look for fruit. The first Adam came to the fig tree for leaves, but the Second Adam looks for figs. He searches our character through and through, to see whether there is any real faith, any true love, any living hope, any joy which is the fruit of the Spirit. He searches for any patience, any self-denial, any fervor in prayer, any walking with God, any indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And if He does not see these things, He is not satisfied with Chapel attendance, Church attendance, Prayer Meetings, communions, sermons, Bible readings.

For all these may be no more than leafage. If our Lord does not see the *fruit of the Spirit* upon us, He is not satisfied with us and His inspection will lead to severe measures. Notice that what Jesus looks for is not your words, not your resolves, not your avowals—but your sincerity, your inward faith, your being, indeed, worked upon by the Spirit of God to bring forth fruits meet for His kingdom.

Our Lord has a right to expect fruit when He looks for it. When He went up to that fig tree He had a right to expect fruit. Because the fruit, according to nature, comes before the leaf. If, then, the leaf has come, there should be fruit. True, it was not the time of figs. But then, if it were not the time of figs, it certainly was not the season for leaves, for the figs are first. This tree, by putting forth leaves, which are the signs and tokens of

ripe figs, virtually advertised itself as bearing fruit. So, however bad the times may be, some of us profess that we will not follow the times but will follow the one immutable Truth.

As Christians, we confess that we are redeemed from among men and have been delivered from this perverse generation. Christ may not expect fruit of men who acknowledge the world and its changing ages as their supreme guide. But He may well look for it from the Believer in His own Word. He looks for fruit from the preacher, from the Sunday school teacher, from the Church officer, from the Sister who conducts a Bible class, from that Brother who has a band of young men around him, to whom he is a guide in the Gospel.

Christ expects it of all who submit to His Gospel rule. As Christ had a right to expect fruit of a leaf-bearing fig tree, so He has a right to expect great things from those who avow themselves His trustful followers. Ah, me, how this fact should move the preacher with trembling! Should it not affect full many of you in the same manner?

Fruit is what the Lord earnestly desires. The Savior, when He came upon the fig tree, did not desire leaves. For we read that He hungered, and human hunger cannot be removed by leaves of a fig tree. He desired to eat a fig or two. And He longs to have fruit from us, also. He hungers for our holiness—He longs that His joy may be in us, that our joy may be full. He comes up to each of you who are members of His Church and especially to each of you who are leaders of His people and He looks to see in you the things in which His soul is well-pleased.

He would see in us love to Himself, love to our fellow men, strong faith in Revelation, earnest contention for the once delivered faith, importunate pleading in prayer, and careful living in every part of our course. He expects from us actions such as are according to the Law of God and the mind of the Spirit of God. And if He does not see these, He does not receive His due. What did He die for but to make His people holy? What did He give Himself for but that He might sanctify unto Himself a people zealous of good works?

What is the reward of the bloody sweat and the five wounds, and the death agony—but that by all these we should be bought with a price? We rob Him of His reward if we do not glorify Him, and therefore the Spirit of God is grieved at our conduct if we do not show forth His praises by our godly and zealous lives.

And mark here, that when Christ comes to a soul, He surveys it with keen discernment. He is not mocked. It is not possible to deceive Him. I have thought that to be a fig which turned out to be only a leaf was a mistake—but our Lord makes no such mistake. Neither will He overlook the little figs, just breaking forth. He knows the fruit of the Spirit in whatever stage it may be. He never mistakes fluent expression for hearty possession, nor real Grace for mere emotion. Beloved, you are in good hands as to the trial of your condition when the Lord Jesus comes to deal with you.

Your fellow men are quick in their judgments, and they may be either censorious, or partial. But the King gives forth a righteous sentence. He knows just where we are and what we are. And He judges not after the appearance but according to Truth. Oh, that our prayer might this morn-

ing rise to Heaven—"Jesus, Master, come and cast Your searching eyes upon me, and judge whether I am living unto You or not! Give me to see myself as You see me, that I may have my errors corrected and my graces nourished. Lord, make me to be, indeed, what I profess to be. And if I am not so already, convict me of my false state and begin a true work in my soul. If I am Yours and am right in Your sight, grant me a kind, assuring word to sink my fears again and I will gladly rejoice in You as the God of my salvation."

III. I come, thirdly, by the help of the Spirit of God, to consider the Truth of God, that **THE RESULT OF THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THE FORWARD, BUT FRUITLESS PROFESSOR, WILL BE VERY TERRIBLE.**

The Searcher finds nothing but leaves where fruit might have been expected. Nothing but leaves means nothing but lies. Is that a harsh expression? If I profess faith and have no faith, is not that a lie? If I profess repentance and have not repented, is not that a lie? If I unite with the people of the living God and yet have no fear of God in my heart, is not that a lie? If I come to the communion table and partake of the bread and wine, and yet never discern the Lord's body, is not that a lie?

If I profess to defend the Doctrines of Grace and yet am not assured of the truth of them, is not that a lie? If I have never felt my depravity. If I have never been effectually called, never known my election of God, never rested in the redeeming blood, and have never been renewed by the Spirit, is not my defense of the Doctrines of Grace a lie? If there is nothing but leaves, there is nothing but lies, and the Savior sees that it is so. All the verdure of green leaf to him without fruit is but so much deceit. Profession without Divine Grace is the funeral pageantry of a dead soul.

Religion without holiness is the light which comes from rotten wood—the phosphorescence of decay. I speak dread words but how can I speak less dreadfully than I do? If you and I have but a name to live and are dead, what a state we are in! Ours is something worse than corruption—it is the corruption of corruption. To profess religion and live in sin, is to sprinkle rosewater upon a dunghill and leave it a dunghill, still. To give a spirit an angel's name when it bears the devil's character, is almost to sin against the Holy Spirit. If we remain unconverted, of what use can it be to have our name written among the godly?

Our Lord discovered that there was no fruit and that was a dreadful thing. But, next, He condemned the tree. Was it not right that He should condemn it? Did He curse it? It was already a curse. It was calculated to tantalize the hungry and take them out of their way to deceive them. God will not have the poor and needy made a jest of. An empty profession is a practical curse. And should it not receive the censure of the Lord of Truth?

The tree was of no use where it was—it ministered to no man's refreshment. So, the barren professor occupies a position in which he ought to be a blessing, but, in truth, an evil influence streams forth from him. If he has not the Grace of God in him, he is utterly useless and in all probability he is a curse—he is an Achan in the camp, grieving the Lord and causing Him to refuse success to His people.

Our Lord did, however, use the fig tree for a good purpose when He caused it to wither away. For it became, from then on, a beacon and a warning to all others who put forth vain pretenses. So, when the ungodly man, who has exhibited a flourishing profession, is allowed to fade away in his ways, some moral effect is produced upon others—they are compelled to see the peril of an unsound profession. And if they are wise, they will no longer be guilty of it. Would God it might be so in every case whenever a notable religionist withers away!

After that, when the Savior had condemned it, He pronounced sentence upon it. And what was the sentence? It was simply, "As you were." It was nothing more than a confirmation of its state. This tree has borne no fruit—it shall never bear fruit. If a man chooses to be without the Grace of God, and yet to make a profession of having it, it is only just that the great Judge should say, "Continue without Divine Grace." When the great Judge at last shall speak to those who depart from God, He will simply say to them, "Depart!"

Throughout life they always were departing, and after death their character is stamped with perpetuity. If you choose to be graceless, to be graceless shall be your doom. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." May the Lord Jesus never have to sentence any of you in this way. But may He turn us, that we may be turned, and work in us eternal life to His praise and glory!

Then there came a change over the tree. It began at once to wither. I do not know whether the disciples saw a quiver run through it at once. But on the next morning when they passed that way, according to Mark, it had dried up from the roots. Not only did the leaves hang down, like streamers when there is no wind. Not only did the bark seem to have lost every token of vitality—but the whole fabric was blighted fatally. Have you ever seen a fig tree with its strange, weird branches? It is a very extraordinary sight when bare of leaves.

In this case I see its skeleton arms! It is twice dead, dead from the very roots. Thus have I seen the fair professor undergo a blight. He has looked like a thing that has felt the breath of a furnace and has had its moisture dried up. The man is no longer himself—his glory and his beauty are hopelessly gone. No axe was lifted, no fire was kindled—a word did it—and the tree withered from the root. So, without thunderbolt or pestilence, the once brave professor is stricken as with the judgment of Cain.

It is an awful fate. Better far to have the vinedresser come to you with the axe in his hand and strike you with the head of it and say to you, "Tree, you must bear fruit, or be hewn down." Such a warning would be terrible, but it would be infinitely better than to be left in one's place untouched, quietly to wither to destruction.

Now I have delivered my heavy burden, laying it far more upon myself than upon any of you. For I stand more prominent than you. I have made a louder profession than most of you. And if I have not His Divine Grace in me, then I shall stand before the multitude that have seen me in my greenness, and shall wither away to the very roots—a terrible example of what God does with those who bear no fruit to His glory.

And now I desire to conclude with more tender words. Let no man say, "This is very harsh." Brother, it is not harsh, is it, that if we profess a thing we should be expected to be true to it? Besides, I pray you not to think that anything my Lord can do is harsh. He is all gentleness and tenderness. The only thing He ever did destroy was this fig tree. He destroyed no men, as Elijah did when he brought fire from Heaven upon them. Nor as Elisha did when the bears came out of the woods. It is only a barren tree that He causes to wither away. He is all love and tenderness—He does not want to wither you, nor will He, if you are but true.

The very least He may expect is that you are true to what you profess. Are you rebellious because He asks you not to play the hypocrite? If you begin to kick against His admonition, it will look as if you were yourself untrue at heart. Instead of that, come and bow humbly at His feet and say, "Lord, if anything in this solemn truth bears upon me, I beseech You so to apply it to my conscience that I may feel its power and flee to You for salvation."

Many men are converted in this way—these harsh but honest things drive them from false refuges and bring them to be true to Christ and to their own souls. "But," says one, "I know what I will do. I will never make any profession—I will bear no leaves." My Friend, that also is a sullen, rebellious spirit. Instead of talking so, you should say, "Lord, I do not ask You to take away my leaves but let me have fruit."

The fruit is not likely to ripen well without leaves—leaves are essential to the health of the tree and the health of the tree is essential to the ripening of the fruit. Open confession of faith is good and must not be refused. Lord, I would not drop a leaf—

***"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause;
Maintain the honor of His Word,
The glory of His Cross."***

Lord, I do not want to be set away in a corner. I am satisfied to stand where men may see my good works and glorify my Father who is in Heaven. I do not ask to be observed. But I am not ashamed to be observed—only, Lord—make me fit for observation. If a commander said to a soldier, "Stand firm, but mind you, have your cartridges ready, so that you may not lift an empty gun," and suppose that soldier answered, "I cannot be so particular. I would rather run to the rear"—would that be a fit reply? Coward! Because your captain warns you that you must not be a sham, you would therefore, run off altogether? Surely, you are of an evil sort.

So you are not truly one of the Lord's, if you cannot bear His rebuke. Let not these solemn Truths of God drive us away but let them draw us on to say, "Lord, I pray You, help me to make my calling and election sure. I beseech You, help me to bring forth the expected fruit. Your Grace can do it."

I would suggest to everyone here to cry to the Lord to make us conscious of our natural barrenness. Gracious ones, may the Lord make us mourn our comparative barrenness, even if we do bear some fruit. To feel quite satisfied with yourself is perilous—to feel that you are holy, and indeed, that you are perfect, is to be on the brink of the pit of pride. If you

hold your head so high, I am afraid you will strike it against the top of the doorway. If you walk on stilts, I fear you will fall.

It is a safer thing to feel, “Lord, I do serve You and I am no deceiver. I do love You. You have worked the works of the Spirit in me. But alas, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I ought to be. I aspire to holiness—help me to attain it. Lord, I would lie in the very dust before You to think that after being dug about and fertilized, as I have been, I should bear such little fruit. I feel myself less than nothing. My cry is, ‘God be merciful to me.’ If I had done all, I should still have been an unprofitable servant. But having done so little, Lord, where shall I hide my guilty head?”

Lastly, when you have made this confession and the good Lord has heard you, there is one emblem in Scripture I should like you to copy. Suppose this morning you feel so dry, and dead, and barren that you cannot serve God as you would, nor even pray for more Divine Grace, as you wish to do? Then you are something like these twelve rods. They are very dead and dry, for they have been held in the hands of twelve chiefs, who have used them as their official staves.

These twelve rods are to be laid before the Lord. This one is Aaron’s rod. But it is quite as dead and dry as any of the rest. The whole twelve are laid in the place where the Lord dwells. We see them next morning. Eleven are dry rods still. But see this rod of Aaron! What has happened? It was dry as death. See, it has budded! This is wonderful! But look, it has blossomed! There are almond flowers upon it. You know they are rosy pink and white. This is marvelous! But look again, it has brought forth almonds! Here, you have them!

See these green fruits, which look like peaches? Take off the flesh and here is an almond whose shell you may break and find the kernel. The heavenly power has come upon the dry stick and it has budded and blossomed and even brought forth almonds! Fruit-bearing is the proof of life and favor. Lord, take these poor sticks this morning and make them bud. Lord, here we are, in a bundle—perform that ancient miracle in a thousand of us. Make us bud and blossom and bear fruit! Come with Divine power and turn this congregation from a stick into a grove.

Oh, that our blessed Lord may get a fig from some dry sticks this morning! At least, such a fig as this, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” There is sweetness in that fig, and as this, “Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief.” Here is another, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”—that is a whole basket full of the first ripe figs and the Lord rejoices in their sweetness. Come Holy Spirit, produce fruit in us this day, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen and Amen.

Portions Of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Matthew 21:12-32.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—100 (v. 1), 652, 645.

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WORK FOR JESUS

NO. 1338

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

***“Son, go work today in My vineyard.”
Matthew 21:28.***

I AM not going to confine myself to the connection of these words, nor to use them strictly after the manner in which they were first spoken. I may, perhaps, explain the parable very briefly at the close, but I take leave to withdraw these words from their immediate context and use them as a voice which, I believe, sounds often in the ears of God's people, and sometimes sounds in vain—“Son, go work today in My vineyard.” It is certain that God still speaks to us. He has spoken to us in His Word. There are His precepts and promises, His statutes and testimonies. He that has ears to hear let him hear these sacred oracles!

But beside this open Revelation there are counsels and rebukes more closely and personally addressed to the conscience. Voices—as soft, sometimes, as whispers—at other times loud as the thunders that pealed from Sinai. The Lord has a way of speaking to men when, “He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction,” as Elihu said. Thus He speaks when He calls them effectually by His Grace in conversion. So He once called, “Samuel, Samuel!” till the child answered. So He said, “Matthew, follow Me.” So He called out, “Zacchaeus, come down!” So He cried out, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” So He bid some of us till the Divine accents were clear and irresistible.

In like manner we have, many of us, heard Him say, “Son, give Me Your heart,” and we have given Him our hearts—we could not do otherwise. That voice exerted such a charming spell and swayed us with such a Divine power that we were subdued by it and we yielded our hearts to the God of Love. Since then, you who know the Lord, must often have heard a voice speaking to you and bidding you seek His face in prayer. Perhaps you have been busy with the world, but you found an impulse of a mysterious kind coming over you and you have been glad to withdraw yourself for a few minutes to the closet that you might speak with God.

You know how it has been when you have been meditating alone and yet not alone. One whose Presence you knew, whose face you could not see, was with you! You felt as if you *must* pray. It has not been any effort on your part. The exercise has been as easy as to breathe and as pleasant as to partake of your daily bread. You felt the Lord drawing you to the Mercy Seat and saying in your soul, “My Son, ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.” You must have been conscious of such a voice as that. And have you not, at times, in the silence of your mind, heard the Lord call you to a closer communion with Himself? Has not the sense, if not the words, of the spouse in the canticle been heard in your soul—“Come, My Beloved, let us see if the vines flourish. Come with Me from Lebanon, My Spouse, with Me from Lebanon”?

You have been up and away! You have gone into the secret places where Christ has shown you His love till you sat under His shadow with great delight—and His fruit has been sweet to your taste. Our experience makes us know that there are heavenly voices that invite prayer and call us to communion. And probably some of you have also been conscious of another voice which I earnestly desire we may all hear tonight, namely, the more martial and stirring call to service for the Lord Jesus Christ! Some of you have been obedient to the call these many years, but it calls louder and louder and louder still! You have been reaping and bearing the heat and burden of the day, but you cannot throw down your sickle, your hands cleave to it. Yes, rather do you take more gigantic strides and sweep down more of the precious corn at every stroke you take! You feel that you can never cease from it till you do—

***“Your body with your charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live.”***

A voice Divine seems to be calling you and saying, “Follow Me, and I will make you a fisher of men. Behold I have made you a chosen vessel to bear My name unto the Gentiles.” You have heard that voice and you are striving to obey it more and more. Others either have never heard it, or hearing it, have forgotten it. There are none so deaf as those who will not hear! And there are some who have a very deaf ear to any admonitions of this kind. They are like Issachar—a strong donkey crouching down between two burdens, but yet lifting neither. I fear lest upon them should come the curse of Meroz, because they come not, “to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord against the mighty.”

Now, perhaps this evening there are some Christian men or women here that shall feel as if the hand of the Crucified were laid upon them and they will hear Him say to them, “You are not your own. You are bought with a price. Why don’t you glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are His? Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” The text, I hope, may be blessed of God to be such a voice as that! Listening to it, we notice four things. First, the character under which it calls us, “Son.” Secondly, the service to which it calls us, “go work.” Thirdly, the time for which it calls us, “go work today.” And fourthly, the place to which it directs us, “go work today in My vineyard.”

I. First, then, THE CHARACTER UNDER WHICH IT CALLS US. It appears to me to be a very powerful selection of terms. “Son, go work today in My vineyard.” It puts work on a very gracious footing, when we are bid to work for the Lord, not as slaves, nor as mere servants, but as sons! Moses speaks to us, and he says, “Servant, go and work for your wages.” But the Father in Christ speaks to us, and He says, “Son, go work today in My vineyard.” No more as a servant, but as a *son*, shall you serve the Lord! The returning prodigal said, “Make me as one of your hired servants.” That was not an evangelical prayer and was not answered. The father said, “This, my son, was dead, and is alive again,” and so he received him, not as a hired servant at all, but as a son.

Oh, dear people of God, I trust you always draw the distinction very clearly between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. When

you work for God you do not work for life but *from* life. You do not try to serve Christ in order that you may be saved, but *because* you are saved! You do not obey His commands that you may become His children, but because you *are* His children and, therefore, are imitators of God as dear children! You say, "Abba, Father," because you feel the spirit of adoption within you and you endeavor to obey the commands of your Father for the same reason. I do not, therefore, say to anyone here, "Go and work for God that you may be saved." I would not venture to put it on that footing!

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." But turning to those who *are* saved, the Gospel exhortation is put after a Gospel sort—"Son, go work today in My vineyard." And it has all the more strength on this account, because, in addressing us as *sons*, it reminds us of the great love which has made us what we are. We were by nature heirs of wrath even as others, but, Beloved, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Think of the love which chose us when we were still aliens and enemies! Think of the love which adopted us and put us into the family—itsself wondering while it did it—for the Lord is represented as saying, "How shall I put *you* among the children?" as if it were a strange thing that such as *we* are should ever be numbered among the children of God!

The love which adopted us did not stay there, but having given us the rights of children, it gave us the *nature* of children! We were regenerated—"Begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which lives and abides forever." Now, just think of election, adoption, regeneration and when the Lord addresses you by that term of, "Son," think of all that and say, "I owe to God an immeasurable debt of gratitude for having enabled *me* to become His son! He, by His Grace, has given me power and privilege to become a child of God! Therefore do I feel the claims of obligation and I would endeavor to work in the vineyard because I am His child, His son, His daughter, made so by His Grace."

This you see, dear Friends, engages us to work in the vineyard all the more convincingly, because we may reflect not only on the Grace which has made us sons, but on the privileges which that same Grace bestowed upon us in making us sons, for, if children of God, the Lord will provide for us, will clothe us, will heal us, will protect us, will guide us, will educate us, will make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light! Remember, too, that precious passage, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if, indeed, we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

If heirs of God, how *large* is our inheritance! And if joint-heirs with Christ, how *sure* that inheritance is! And we have been brought now, Beloved, to such an estate as this that the angels, themselves, might envy us, for I venture to apply a passage of Scripture to this case—I hope without wresting it—"Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son?" But He speaks, thus, to us poor worms of the dust! And when He is bidding us serve Him, He comes to us under this character and addresses us in this relationship! He says, "Son, Daughter, go work today in My vineyard. I have given you boundless privileges in making you My

child. I have given you this world and world to come. Earth is your lodge and Heaven your home. And therefore, because I have done all this for you—and what could I have done more for you than have made you My child?—therefore I say, Go, work today in My vineyard.”

In appealing, thus, to us under the name of *Son*, it is supposed that we have some feelings within us correspondent to the condition to which our heavenly Father has called us. He says, “Son.” If any of you, being a son, has a father, and if that father wished you to do something for him, and he addressed you as, “my Son,” you would feel, at once, that whatever you could do you were bound to do because you were a son! It would awaken in you the filial feeling which is swift at once to yield obedience and love.

And when the Lord looks upon you, my Brothers and Sisters, and says to you “Son,” or, “Daughter,” it is supposed that there is, in your heart, a child’s nature given, by His Grace, and that this filial instinct prompts the quick response, “My Father, what do You say to me? Speak, Lord, speak, Father, for Your son or daughter hears You. I long to do Your will. I delight in it, for to me it is the greatest joy I know that you are my Father and my God. Therefore, Lord, my heart stands ready now to listen to whatever You have to say, and my hand is ready to do it, as Your Grace shall enable me, only strengthen me in Your ways.” “Son, Daughter, go work today in My vineyard.”

By the use of that term “son,” it is supposed, also, that you have something of the qualification that will fit you to do what He bids you. A man who has a vineyard naturally supposes that his son knows something about vineyards. The boy will have learned something through his sire and you that know the Lord are the only people who can serve Him in His vineyard—that is to say, in winning souls for Christ none can do this but those who are won, themselves. If there is a lost child to be reclaimed, he shall be brought in by one of the children who has, himself, been found. Unto the wicked God says, “What have *you* to do to declare My statutes?” but to you who are His sons and daughters He entrusts the Gospel, putting you in trust with it that you may bear it to others and bring others to know and love His name.

Oh, dear Friends, it must be a dreadful thing to be trying to save the souls of others while you, yourselves, are lost! And what an unhappy mortal must he be who has to preach the Gospel that he never knew—to tell of promises that he has never believed, and to preach a Christ in whom his soul has never trusted! But when the Lord speaks to you as His son and His daughter, the very fact that you stand in that relationship to Him proves that you have some qualification for the service and, therefore, dear Brother or Sister, you must not back out of it. You must not wrap your talent in a napkin, for you have got some talent in the very fact of being a child of God—a son or daughter of the Most High!

Thus have I tried to open up the character to whom the Lord speaks, but I cannot do it so as to interest those who are not His people. But I do say this to those of you who are a people near to Him, to whom He stands as a Father, that this fact has strong claims upon you. If I am a father, where is my honor? If you are my children, where is your fear? If, indeed, the Lord has put you into His family, do you not owe to Him the obedience

and the love of children? And what can be more natural that if there is household work to do—vineyard work to do—your Father should look to you to do it, and turn to you whom He has loved so long and loved so well, and say, “Son, Daughter, go work today in My vineyard”?

II. Well, now, secondly, let us turn to the next point, and that is, THE SERVICE TO WHICH THE LORD CALLS US—“Go work.” I know some Christians who do not like the word, “work,” and they look very black in the face if you say anything about duty. As for the matter of that, I do not mind how black they look, because there are some people who very much expose their own disposition by black looks and sullen moods. And when they turn sour they only manifest what is in their own nature. He that quarrels with the precept, quarrels with God! Let him remember that. And he that does not like the practical part of Christianity may do what he likes with the doctrinal part of it, for he has neither part nor lot in this matter.

The language of the true *child* of God is, “I delight myself in Your precepts.” And, as David put it, “Your precepts have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage.” He would even sing about the precepts of the Gospel! And now the text says, “Go work.” That is something practical, something real! Go work. He does not say, “My Son, go and think and speculate, and make curious experiments, and fetch out some new doctrines and astonish all your fellow creatures with whims and oddities of your own.” “My Son, go work.” And He does not, here, say, “My Son, go and attend conferences, one after another all the year round and live in a perpetual maze of hearing different opinions and going from one public meeting and one religious engagement to another—and so feed yourself on the fat things full of marrow.”

All this is to be attended to in its proper proportion, but here it is, “Go work! Go work!” How many Christians there are that seem to read, “Go plan.” And they always figure in a way with some wonderful plan for the conversion of all the world, but they are never found laboring to convert a baby—never having a good word to say to the tiniest child in the Sunday school! They are always scheming and yet never effecting anything. But the text says, “My Son, go work.” Oh, yes, but those who do not like to work, themselves, display the greatness of their talents in finding fault with those who *do* work, and a very clear perception they have of the mistakes and the crotchets of the very best of workers, whose zeal and industry are, alike, unflagging.

However, the text does not say, “My Son, go and criticize.” What it distinctly says, is, “Go and work.” I remember that when Andrew Fuller had a very severe lecture from some Scottish Baptist Brethren about the discipline of the Church, he made the reply, “You say that your discipline is so much better than ours. Very well, but discipline is meant to make good soldiers. Now, my soldiers fight better than yours and I think, therefore, you ought not to say much about my discipline.” So the real thing is not to be forever calculating about modes of Church government and methods of management and plans to be adopted and rules to be laid down which it shall be accounted a serious breach to violate.

All well in their place, for order is good in its way. But come, now, let us go to work! Let us get something done! I believe the very best working for God is often done in a very irregular manner. I get more and more to feel like the old soldier of Waterloo when he was examined about the best garment that could be worn by a soldier. The Duke of Wellington said to him, "If you had to fight Waterloo over again how would you like to be dressed?" The answer was, "Please, Sir, I should like to be in my shirt-sleeves." I think that is about the best! Get rid of everything superfluous and get at it and hack away!

I would to God that some Christians could do that, just strip to it, get rid of the superfluities of orderliness and propriety—and everything else which hampers them in trying to get back poor souls. There they are, going down to Hell! And we are stickling about this mode, and that, and considering the best way *not* to do it—and appointing committees to consider and debate to adjourn and to postpone—and to leave the work in abeyance! The best way is to arise and do it! Let the committee sit afterwards. God grant we may. My son, go work today. Let it be something practical, something real, something actually done! And by good work is meant something that will involve effort, toil, earnestness, self-denial—perhaps something that will need perseverance.

In right earnest you will need to stick to it. You will have heartily to yield yourself up to it and give up a good deal else that might hinder you in doing it. Oh, Christian men and women, you will not glorify God much unless you really put your strength into the ways of the Lord and throw your body, soul, and spirit—your entire manhood and womanhood—into the work of the Lord Jesus Christ! To do this you need not leave your families, or your shops, or your secular engagements. You can serve God in these things! They will often be vantage grounds of opportunity for you, but you must throw yourself into it!

No one wins souls to Christ while they are half asleep! The battle that is to be fought for the Lord Jesus must be fought by men and women who are wide awake and quickened by the Spirit of God. "My Son, My Daughter, go work today." Do not go and play at teaching in Sunday schools. Do not go and play the preacher! Do not go and play at exhorting people at the corners of streets, or even play at giving away tracts. "My Son, go work." Throw your soul into it! If it is worth doing, it is worth doing well! And if it is worth doing well, it is worth doing better than you have ever done before! And even then it will be worth doing better, still, for when you have done your best you have still to reach forward to a something far beyond—for the best of the best is all too little for such a God and for such a service! "My Son, go work."

Well, now, such a claim as this may, perhaps, you think, sound rather hard. But I could tell you of many who would be very glad, indeed, if the Lord would say that to them! I might tell you of some who seldom leave their couches! Some who can seldom sit upright through their weakness. Some to whom the nights are often full of pain and the days are spent in weariness. They have learned, by God's teaching, to be content to suffer—but sometimes they cannot stifle an ardent wish—they wish the Lord would let them serve Him! They do not envy, but yet there sometimes

crosses over their mind the shadow of something like envy when they remember what opportunities some of you have, who are full of health and strength.

I have seen my Brother minister laid aside, the voice, perhaps, gone, the lungs feeble, the heart prone to palpitate, and, oh, how he has wished that he could preach again! With what fervor has he said, "Oh, if I had but those opportunities over again, how I would try to use them better than when I was favored with them!" I tell you there are thousands of God's servants who would kiss the dust of His feet if He would only say to them, "Go work." I remember reading of a minister who had been laboring in America till he had fairly broken down. He had to take a tour for his health. He had not been away many days before he wrote in his diary, "There may be some ministers who count it a pleasure to be relieved from the duty of preaching, but I count it a misery. I would sooner preach as I have done in my own pulpit continually than I would see all the kingdoms of the world."

And, indeed, there is no pleasure in the world like that of serving God! You will soon get tired if you have a vacation, but you will never get tired of a Divine *vocation*, though you may sometimes grow tired *in* it. Now, think that the Lord might have said to you, "Now, go and lie on that bed for 10 years. Go and pine away in consumption. I have nothing much for you to do. You have got to bear My will." Are you not glad that you are full of strength, or that you have some share of it, and that now your heavenly Father says, "Son, go work. I have given you strength. Go work"? Lord, we thank You for so kind and gentle a command!

Besides, there is a great deal of honor in this work. You know how much your little boy wants to be a man. All boys do. When he first wears stick-up collars he congratulates himself upon the sign of anything like being a man. How proud he is of it! And if you, being a father, were to say to your boy, "My Son, you are now of such an age that I can trust you to do some work for me," see how the little man would begin to lift himself up! He is glad of it! And I am sure that if we look at it rightly, we who are the children of God ought to feel honored by our heavenly Father saying to us, "You may do something for Me."

We must be very humble, for, after all, we cannot do anything except as He works in us to will and to do! But it is really very gratifying and ennobling to a poor mortal spirit to be allowed to do anything for God, yes, and to do what perfect saints above and holy angels cannot do, for oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, there is no glorified spirit that can go down that back street and up that blind alley, and up those staircases that seem as if they would tumble down under your feet! Go and talk to that dying woman about Christ! You have a privilege which honored Gabriel has not! Be thankful that you have it! There is no angel that can take that little child in the Sunday school class and tell it of "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," and carry the little lamb for the Good Shepherd!

The Lord sends you to do it. And it should be a point of thankfulness with us all that He has counted us worthy and put us into the ministry—into any part or parcel of that ministry—to do something for His name's sake. Well, we are always receiving—always receiving and it is very

blessed—but still, in this, as in other things, it is more blessed to give than to receive! And when we can give back to God some little trifle of service, stained with our tears because it is no better than it is, oh, it is a happy and a blessed thing! How grateful you ought to be that the Lord says to you, “Son, go work today.”

And remember, once more, on this point, that the work to which the Lord calls us is very varied, therefore there is a great deal of change in it. And, besides that, it suits the different temperaments, constitutions, dispositions and abilities of His people. He says, “My Son, go work today in My vineyard.” But He does not give you to do *my* work, and He does not give me to do *your* work. Dear Sister, you would like to do the work of such-and-such an excellent Christian woman, would you not? Yes, but that is naughty of you. Be satisfied to do your own! Suppose your housemaid always wanted to do the cook’s work—the house would soon be in a mess! Better keep to your own place, dear Sister.

Ah, there is a Brother here who says, “I think I could preach if I only had such-and-such a congregation.” Very likely, Brother, but you had better preach to your own and do what good you can, there. Very likely I should do better with my own congregation and you will do better with yours than I could. Every man had better keep to his own work in his own place. And how thankful we ought to be that if one can preach a sermon, yet another can offer a prayer—that if one can go and speak to thousands—yet another can speak to ones and twos! There is work in the school. There is work in the family. There is work in the street. There is work in the workshop. There is work everywhere for Jesus if you will but stretch out your hands to find it and follow Solomon’s good advice, “Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might.”

III. Now, THE TIME is the next thing. “My Son, go work today.” That means directly—now. Brother, Sister, I will not say a word about what is your duty to do tomorrow. Let the morrow take care of itself. I will have nothing to say about what it will be right for you to do in 10 years. If you are alive, Grace will be given to you for that. But what I have to say to you, in God’s name is, “Go work today,” and as the sun has gone down, let it be, “Go work tonight in My vineyard,” if there is opportunity, even tonight, before another day’s sun has dawned upon the world. “And why today?” Because, Brothers and Sisters, Your Father wants you to be at it at once.

“Why do you stand here, all the day, idle?” If you have done nothing for Christ, you have wasted enough time. Do not rest today, but be at it *now*. He wants you to do it now because the vines are in a certain condition that require, just now, work. There is somebody in the world who is in a tender state of mind—to whom you may speak successfully. There is a mourner here who wants comfort tonight. There is one struggling against his conscience who needs urging on tonight in the right way. If the case is neglected, tonight, it will be like neglecting to trim the vines just at the proper time for taking away the superfluous wood.

Now you can do it. You cannot do it on any other day. Therefore, “go work today.” “Today,” because there are certain dangers to which those whom you are about to bless are just now exposed. The devil is tempting

them—it is necessary that you go and help them against that temptation. They are just now in despair. It is necessary that you step in with the Word of comfort from your Master's mouth. They are, perhaps, this very night, before they go to their rest, about to commit a great sin. Perhaps the Lord means you to interpose just now, before that sin is done. Son, Daughter, go work today—you are needed. There are very few laborers just now—many of them have gone. Son, Daughter, go today, while the others have gone out for their recreation—while the others are asleep and grown idle.

There is a gap just now. It is at this very moment. Many a brave deed of valor owed its success to being done at once. If Horatius had not kept the bridge just in that same moment when the enemy endeavored to pass over, we should never have heard of him, nor of the brave deeds of old. There is a time of dearth—of need—there is an urgency. Son, God says to you, "Hasten, even now, and go work today in My vineyard." "Today." Mark that. It means work *all day*—work as long as you live!

Son, if once you get into that vineyard, do not come home, again, until the day is done. I am always sorry when I hear of Christian people beginning to give up some of their work before the infirmities of old age come on. Although I think that many a minister, when he gets old, had better give up a charge for which he is not equal and take one smaller for which his strength would prevail. But I know that some give up this work and that, and they say, "Let the young people come and take their turn." Yes, yes, but suppose the sun were to stop shining and say, "There is a star over there. Let *him* have a turn and shine instead of me"?

Suppose the moon were forever to give up shining in the night watches, and say that she has had enough of being out at night? And suppose the earth were to say it has had enough of yielding harvests? "Why should I yield any more? Let the sea take its turn and grow corn." And so, dear Christian Friends, keep on as long as you can! Who can blame dear old John Newton? When he got too feeble to get up the pulpit stairs of St. Mary Woolnoth, he was helped up and then, leaning on his pulpit Bible he poured out his soul. A friend of his said to him, "Dear Mr. Newton, don't you think you ought to give up preaching?" "What?" he asked, "shall the old African blasphemer ever give up praising the Grace of God as long as there is breath in his body? Never!"

And so he went to his work again. Oh, for more of that spirit to persevere in the Master's service! Only there is this thought—it is only a day. "Son, go work today." It will only be a day. The longest life is no more and then the shadows of death will gather. But there will be no night, for instead, the day shall break and the shadows shall flee away—and then life's service, here below, will all be over. There will be no troublesome children to teach, no hard-hearted sinners to rebuke, no backsliding, lukewarm Christians to reprove, no deceivers to encounter, no skeptics to answer with the testimony that cannot be shaken, no scoffers to put up with, patiently bearing their contumely.

It will be all over, then! And then shall those who have served their Master behold Him gird Himself and sit down and serve *them*—and they shall feast at His table and enter into His joy! "My Son, Daughter, go work

today,” for you shall rest tomorrow. Work on, for there is rest enough in Heaven! Work on, for eternity shall well repay you for the toils of time!

IV. Then, as to THE PLACE WHERE THE LORD CALLS US TO THE WORK. “My Son, go work today in My vineyard.” I like to think of this special sphere of labor because it must be a pleasure to work in our Father’s vineyard. For everything that we do there will be done for Him! I trim this vine—it is my Father’s vine. I dig this trench—it is my Father’s ground I turn. I gather out these stones—it is my Father’s vineyard that I am engaged in clearing. I repair this fence—it is my Father’s soil that I am thus hedging about. It is all done for Him! Who would not do all that he could for the dear Redeemer, dying Lamb and for the blessed Father of our spirits? “Go work today in My vineyard.”

Then what interesting work it is, for it is our own vineyard because it is our Father’s vineyard! All that belongs to Him belongs to us. We are sons working in our Father’s vineyard, so we can say, “This vine? Why, I have an interest in it, for I am the heir of my Father’s property. This ground that I endeavor to dig about and fertilize? It is my ground, it is my Father’s. And this wall that I try to mend? It is mine, it is my Father’s.” It is always pleasant to work for ourselves, you know. And, in a blessed sense, when we are working for God we are working for ourselves. You are laborers, you are God’s farmers, you are God’s people—and when you are working for the Lord you are really taking shares with Him.

And what a work it is, too! “Go work today in My vineyard.” One likes working in a vineyard because it pays. Working in a desert may be thankless toil, but working in a vineyard where there will be clusters is very different. One can already think of those juicy grapes that will be ready for the winepress! And for the festival, when the ruddy juice comes freely forth—when they make merry and joy in the vintage. And you will have the new wine and the wine on the lees well-refined. All sorts of pleasures await the man who serves the Lord!

“Go work in My vineyard.” Does it not mean that the work is plentiful? There is always something to be done in a vineyard. If you ask those who keep vines, they will tell you that there is much labor required. From one part of the year, right on to the end, there is something to be done, many dangers to be averted, and many enemies to be kept off the vines. So there is plenty to do, Brothers and Sisters. Go work in the vineyard where there will be need of all your hands. It is close at hand, hard by you, for the heavenly Father did not say, “Son, take a ship and go to Tarshish, or to Ophir.” He said, “My Son, go work in My vineyard,” and the vineyard was just out the back door there.

Now, your heavenly Father’s vineyard is close to you. Those streets where you live—the very house in which you dwell, perhaps the very chamber in which you sleep—is God’s vineyard where you are to work for Him. It is your heavenly Father’s own work to be done by *you* in your heavenly Father’s own strength! Oh, if I might, tonight, by God’s Grace, set one young man on fire with love to Christ I would be glad! If I could but be, by His Grace, the humble means of inspiring some Christian woman with the high mission of being useful in her day and generation, how much would my soul rejoice!

There came into this Tabernacle one evening a young gentleman who was well known as being a great hand with his cricket bat. He was a Christian and full of earnestness in laying hold upon the great truths of Revelation! But he had never served his God. He thought it right to spend his leisure time in manly exercises and, in such pursuits, he sought recreation. But while I spoke, a fire kindled within him and he went home to begin to preach the Gospel in the streets of the city where he lived! And now he is the pastor of a large and influential Church which he has gathered together. Since then he has preached more than once, in this place, the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Oh, that some other Believer who may happen to be in that condition—some young man of ability who is spending all his strength on the world without going into anything grossly wrong, but simply wasting his talent—might hear a voice saying to him tonight, as he goes down that aisle, “My Son, go work today in My vineyard”!

After dwelling so long upon the practical admonition, I have but little time left for that brief explanation of the parable, or more properly the parables of the vineyard with which, on the outset, I promised to close. The occasion on which they were spoken is memorable. Assailed “while He was teaching”—rudely interrupted by the legal Sanhedrim of the Jews with the High Priest in the forefront—they confronted our Lord, as it were, with a warrant and propounded to Him two questions. One as to the authority or title by which He acted—the other as to the source from which His authority was derived.

You all know how skillfully He evaded His unscrupulous antagonists. “I, also, will ask you one thing,” He said. And He asked them a question that left them in a ridiculous parley, for, “they reasoned among themselves,” went aside to whisper, and then drew back in sheer timidity declining an answer, for, “they feared the people.” Or, as you may read it, “They were afraid of the mob!” The advantage our Lord thus gained, He quickly followed up with a parable—in fact, with the parable we have been talking about. He opened it thus—“What do you think”—putting a query about two sons. The one forward in profession, yet utterly disobedient. The other sullen in appearance though afterwards penitent in spirit and diligent in labor. The thing was so obvious that they answer without hesitation with a reply that nailed the censure to their own breasts!

“Which of these two did the will of his father?” They said unto Him, “the first.” Read it, read the parable for yourselves. Realize the force of it if you can! The penitent harlot and the obdurate High Priest are put in the scales. “In the way of righteousness”—according to the truthful caricature—the chief priests and elders, themselves, admit that “the first” of these two did the will of our heavenly Father! Digest this parable, I pray you! Almost without a break the vineyard supplied Him yet, again, with another parable which He insisted on their hearing—a parable that brought out the character of the dispensation and “the signs of the times” so distinctly that they could not fail to read it in the light of their own Prophets—and at the same time exposed the treachery of their counsel and conspiracy that they recognized their own portrait at once and perceived that He spoke of them!

“The vineyard,” you are all aware, was the constant symbol of the Jewish nation as a theocracy. The men that sat in Moses’ seat were the stewards in charge of that vineyard which was Jehovah’s special property. They, like the perverse rulers of every age, sought to shelter their evil designs under cover of syndicates and conferences. But the words and warnings of Jesus, His proverbs and parables, were keen enough to probe all their subtleties and leave them to stand abashed without an excuse for the guile of their hearts or the guilt of their conduct!

Now remember that the kingdom of God was taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. To what nation is it given? Is it not to the Church which is called “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”? The vine is the express symbol of our Christian life, as all Believers are incorporated with Christ. Well then, there is a vineyard of God’s own planting—you believe that. He has let it out to farmers—you believe that. He will come seeking fruit of this vineyard—you believe that. You are, dear Brothers and Sisters, the children of the farmers—you believe that, or else you would not presume to sit at His table and drink of His cup. He says, therefore, to you, “Son, go work in My vineyard.” What answer do you give with your lips? What answer do you give with your *life*?

Thus far I have not been speaking to unconverted people. I have not said a word to them. To them, however, I have this word to say, and I have done. I shall not ask you to work for Christ. I cannot exhort you to do *anything* for Him. You are not in a state of mind to do it! You must, first, *believe in Him*. Oh, let it be a sorrow to you, tonight, that you are incapable of serving Christ! Till you get a new heart and a right spirit you have no capacity to serve Him! You have first, to trust Christ and to prove in your own souls that this Gospel is the power of God to your salvation. Your eyes must be opened! Before you can do anything for Him, you must be turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God that you may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Jesus.

Then, not till then, will you be meet to be made witnesses both of those things which you shall have seen and of those things in which He will hereafter reveal to you. You must be born again, yourselves, before you can travail in birth for others, till Christ is formed in them. You cannot testify, those of you by whom the testimony of Christ has not been received and in whom it is not confirmed. Your unskilled labor would be mischievous. Hands off such holy work till those hands have been washed clean by Jesus Christ! Come to Him and trust Him! Come to Him and believe in Him, and when He has saved you, then He will say to you, “Son, go work today in My vineyard.”

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SAYING *VERSUS* DOING

NO. 2747

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 6, 1901.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 1, 1879.**

*“A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, Sir: and went not.”
Matthew 21:28-30.*

THE father had a right to the services of both his sons, for they were, according to the strict rendering of the word, children, or young men under age. They depended upon him for everything, so they were bound to obey his commands. He did not lay upon them any very heavy tax. He simply asked that they should set to work in his vineyard and go at once, seeing that, probably, there was need for the vines there and then to have their earnest attention. “Son,” he said to the first, “go work today in my vineyard’—do not toil for a stranger, nor for some master at a distance, but work in my vineyard. You are my son, you have a share in the fruit of the vineyard, so go at once, while your services will be the most valuable, and work in my vineyard.” The son replied, “I won’t,” for that expression, in its bluntness and brevity, gives more nearly the sense of the Greek than even our rendering, “I will not.” “I won’t.” That is a straight, positive, plain refusal. Notice that there is not even the word, “Sir,” to soften the reply. The second son said, “I go, Sir.” But this first one did not say, “I will not, Sir,” but just, “I won’t.” And that was the end of it. “But afterward,” though he had thus spoken so rudely, unkindly and willfully against his father, “he repented and went.” And I daresay, by his zeal and industry, he accomplished a good day’s work. Though the day began so badly, it ended all right.

Now, I feel persuaded that there are here some persons like this elder son, Here and there is one or another who has said, “I won’t,” as plainly and as rudely as they could. From their very childhood they cast off parental restraint and when they became more completely masters of themselves and the Gospel was preached to them, each of them very distinctly said, “I won’t.” Some said, “We won’t hear it.” They became Sabbath-breakers. Others, who heard it, said, “We won’t believe it.” They became hearers only—rejecters of what they heard. Conscience came and said to them, “You are very wrong in acting thus,” but they had, all the

while, one short, straight answer which they did not stammer in giving. They said distinctly, "We won't." There are some here who used to say this by willful transgression. There was scarcely any sin which they did not attempt to commit if it ministered any pleasure to them. They were greedy after it and even when there was no pleasure apart from the sin of it, they found a pleasure in the very sinfulness of the sin! They said, "We won't," most plainly—there was no hypocrisy about them. There was no mincing the matter with them—they were as bold as brass against the Most High.

But it has happened to some of us that there has come an "afterward" as it did in the case of this elder son. Thought followed upon indifference. We were led to consider our ways and then we began to say to ourselves, "Have we treated our God rightly?" Then the Holy Spirit came—that blessed Spirit without whom there is no right consideration—to teach us reason and to make our hearts to be what hearts should be—not stony things, but hearts of flesh. And we said to ourselves, "This disobedience will never do. It is not just or right. Neither does standing idle minister any comfort to us and, moreover, Satan has already found some mischief for our idle hands to do." We thought that we would probably slide from one sin to another and gradually grow worse and worse—and we were startled at such a thought, so we repented. By the gracious working of the Spirit of God, we were led to cry for mercy upon our stubborn hearts, and to ask for Him to renew us, crying, "Turn us, O God, and we shall be turned!" And it came to pass that we "repented and went," and happy was the day when that happened!

It is a good many years with some of us since we "repented and went," but we have never repented of that repentance, nor ever wished that we had not entered the vineyard. We have begun to taste the clusters and we have been more than repaid for all the service that we have rendered by the sweetness of the fruit. And our prayer is that we may continue laboring in that vineyard till our Heavenly Father shall call us Home. We would like to have a long day of toil if it shall please Him. As long as we have any degree of strength, we wish to labor in His service, for it has become perfect freedom for us, now, and His yoke is easy, and even His burden is light! We have a sacred pleasure in His service and you may guess, therefore, what pleasure we shall have in His rest—

***"If life is long, I will be glad
That I may long obey.
If short—yet why should I be sad
To soar to endless day?"***

Now we are moved to great anxiety concerning some of our fellow men who talk as we used to do. I must confess that I do not at all look with despair upon a man who says—"I won't." I am sorry that he should be so hard of heart, but I am somewhat glad that he does not try to hypocritically put on the appearance of sensitiveness and of obedience. I do not quite agree with the Quaker who, when he heard a man swearing, said to him, "Swear away, Friend! Swear it all out of you, for you can never go to Heaven while there is any of that in you." I am afraid that the swearing

process does not get the evil *out* of a man, but rather increases the quantity that is *in* him! That which comes out of a man defiles him and makes him even worse than he was before. Such open sin can never be a good thing—still, I could almost wish that some people, when they do reject the Savior, would do it openly. I could almost wish that I could bring them to a point where they must avow their decision, so that they would have to say, either, “I won’t,” or “I will,” for, perhaps the very echo of their rebellious voice might be blessed by the Spirit of God to their awakening. It might seem to them, though it really is not, but it might seem to them a more solemn thing to say, “I won’t,” than it is not to go, for, often, the actual doing of a wrong thing is easy for a man, but the saying that he means to do it, or even the confession that he has done it, is not quite so easy. The ear does not so soon get accustomed to the declaration concerning sinning as the heart does to the existence of the sin itself.

Now, my Friend, you have said, “I won’t.” Let me ask you to stop and consider a little. Do you not know that many an one, who at first said, “I won’t,” has afterwards come to Christ? If it were a proper thing to do, I could point out numbers of persons who are sitting here, who often vowed that they would never enter this place! But here they are and they often come. There are others who had a most contemptuous opinion of the preacher, for whom, at this moment, they have the greatest affection. They said they would never be found among those whom they called “canting Methodists.” Well, they are exactly where they said they never would be, though we do not cant and we are not Methodists! And others are now describing them by that very name which once they abhorred. I have heard it said, though I do not think it can be, that almost all true love begins with a little aversion. But this I know, that true love to Christ often springs up in the hearts of men who had a very great deal of aversion to Him.

If I can get a man to think enough about Christ to distinctly avow that he will not yield to Him, I have much more hope of him than of that man who will not think at all—I mean the one who passes Christ by with even greater disdain and who says there is nothing in Him that is worthy of his consideration. Ah, my dear Friend, I should like to hear you when you stand up to preach the Gospel—you who now deny the cardinal Truths of the Gospel. When the Lord brings you out of your present sinful state, oh, how boldly you will declare His Saving Grace and His wondrous power! I should like also to hear you preach, my Friend—you who now find all your delight in sensuality and who ridicule the very thought of righteousness. What a miracle of mercy you will be and how sweetly you will tell others how the Lord passes by iniquity, transgression and sin! I know you think it will never be the case with you, but I trust it will and, in order that it may be, I pray the Holy Spirit to lead you to reconsider that ignorant determination of yours—for I venture to call it so—that foolish resolution, which sprang from your old corrupt nature, that you may afterwards repent and do the Lord’s will.

I have not any more to say upon that part of my text, for I am going to spend the rest of the time allotted for discourse in dealing with the other character. The father afterwards went to his second son and said to him what he had said to his brother—"And he answered and said, I go, Sir: and went not."

You will notice, in your Bibles, that the word, "go," is printed in italics to show that it is not in the Greek. It was very properly supplied by the translators to give the sense of the original, but I can give you the meaning without that word. His father says to him, "Son, go work today in my vineyard." And his answer is, "I, Sir," as much as to say, "Even if nobody else goes, I will. I am your man." You know how we commonly put it, "I'll be there, Sir. Oh, yes, you bid me go. Just so. I'll go." You scarcely need to say the word, "go," but just, "I, I, Sir. I am your man. You may depend upon me."

And you will also notice that the second son used the word, "Sir," by way of respect. There was very little respect in his heart, but there was a good deal on his lips. He said, "I, Sir," as if he was so prompt that he had not time to put all the words together and so deferential that even when he was in a haste to speak, he did not leave out the term denoting respect, but said, "I, Sir." Now, as soon as you heard him speak so cheerfully, so promptly, so respectfully, you expected to see him shoulder his tools and get away among the vines. You are sorely disappointed to find that although he said, "I, Sir," he, "went not."

I am going to speak, first, about *a nominal consent to the Gospel*. Secondly, about *that actual disobedience which spoils the nominal consent*. And then, thirdly, about *the special danger to which people of this sort are exposed*, those who so readily say, "I go, Sir," yet who go not. I feel sure that there are some here who belong to that class of persons and, therefore, I would like to speak very plainly and very personally, because I want you to be converted by God's eternal Spirit. I pray that He may, this very hour, turn you from merely saying "I go," and make you to become one of those who really do go to work heartily in the vineyard of the Lord!

I. Why did this second son say, "I go, Sir," and give THIS NOMINAL CONSENT? What did it mean in his case and what does it mean when we get that kind of consent from so many of our hearers?

I suspect, in their case, it means, first, that *they admit that the Word of God which is spoken to them is quite right*. Sin is set before them in its real character—they are reminded of its heinousness and they say, "Yes, that is true." They do not wish to dispute that point. They are then reminded that repentance must be found in any heart that expects forgiveness and they say, "Yes, that is quite correct and very proper." Then they are told that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and they are glad to hear it. They are reminded that they must look to Jesus as the poor serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent and lived. They are told how simple the plan of salvation is, how very plain it is, that—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One"—

and they say, "Yes that is very delightful, very blessed news and we are glad to hear it." They do not dispute about it, but agree with all we say.

Then they are told, "You must be born-again," and it is explained to them that the whole life must be altered, that the principles which rule and govern that life must be entirely changed and that there must be imparted to them a new creation from the Holy Spirit. And they bow their head and say, "Yes, yes. That is quite orthodox, it is very sound, it is very proper. We quite agree to that." There is no quibbling as they go down the aisle, no disputing when they get home. They let it all in one ear and they let it all out the other, by way of letting the Gospel have free course, I suppose, but nothing comes of it. Having said, "I go Sir," there the matter ends, for with all their apparent agreement, they go not.

Sometimes, however, they go a stage further than that and *promise consideration in the future*. While the preacher has been setting before them life and death, eternal joy and everlasting misery and has been entreating the Holy Spirit to decide them for Christ and for salvation, they have said within themselves, "These things are very important and ought to be attended to. And with the blessing of God they shall be attended to by us." A hearer of this sort begins to say to himself, "I feel very uneasy in my present position. It is high time that I should get out of this condition and seek to become a new man, renewed in Christ Jesus. I must think of this matter. When shall it be? I do not think it is convenient just now, but, some time or other, when it is, I will think this matter out. I am concerned because I am over forty, so I am getting on in life. I have been a hearer of the Gospel these 20 or 30 years and still I am not saved—it is time that I should sit down and consider these things seriously—and be decided one way or the other and, please God, I hope that shall be the case with me. It is right that the preacher should be so earnest about me. I feel it to be a most important matter. I pray that I may continue to feel it and, when I get home, I will seek God's face. Well—perhaps I had better not say I will do so when I get home, for I have an engagement that I must fulfill first. So, not perhaps today, but one of these days I will seek the Lord."

Now, if that person could be informed that he would live 20 more years and at the end of those 20 years he would not be one solitary inch nearer salvation than he is now, but would still be resolving and promising—and that the whole of his resolves and promises would come to nothing—he would be astonished and would say, "Oh, no! I do not mean to act like that. When I speak of a convenient season, I mean in a very short time—I really do! Not, of course, just now. As I have said, there is that party I need to attend. Then I have a ticket for the theater and I must use that, but I do intend to be a Christian, though not just now. Still, I am not going to put it off for 20 years—oh, dear no! I could not run such a risk as that!" Well, now, this is another case of a person saying, "I go, Sir. Oh, believe me, I am resolved to go. I pray you do not doubt it. There are strong desires within my spirit towards that which is

right and good. It must be and it shall be so, though not just now.” Yes, “I go, Sir,” and he “went not.”

Perhaps I may have already described what has passed through some of your minds, but I have known some get further—I am grieved to say, much further, and yet really go further back—for *they have made a profession of having gone into the vineyard*. They have come forward and have said perhaps not quite what was a deliberate lie, but, still, what was not actually true—that they were Believers in Jesus Christ. I mean that it was not an intentional lie, for they had some sort of hope of salvation, yet they had no solid ground for that hope, so their profession was a false one. They said that they were renewed in heart, but those who saw them at home could not think that it was so, for their lives did not show that the spirit of Christ was in them. Some of them were baptized, for they said that they were dead to the world, but it was a very lively kind of death. They came to the Communion Table and they said that they had fellowship with Christ there, but their temper at home, and their general spirit did not betoken any real fellowship with Him—one would never have imagined that they had been with Jesus and had learned of Him.

It is very dreadful to reflect that there should be such persons, no doubt, in all churches, either self-deceived, or else having some sort of pretense and likeness to the right thing and misled by that glittering appearance without really meaning to deceive themselves. I am greatly afraid for any of you who manage to get into the church without being converted. You are much worse off than you were outside because the tendency with you is, when there is a searching Truth of God that ought to come home to you, to say, “It does not refer to me, for I am a church member.” Yes, and so was Judas! He was even an Apostle, yet you know how terrible was his end. When I am reading one of the stern passages of Scripture, I always like to pray to God to let it come right home to my heart, because the devil says to me, “Why? You are a minister of the Gospel, and you have brought hundreds and even thousands to Christ—you cannot be mistaken.”

Ah, but I may be. At least I am bound to continue self-examination and still to come to Jesus as a poor sinner resting alone in Him. That must be the case also with you who have been church members for years, or else it may turn out that you not only said, “I go, Sir,” but that you even said, “I have gone,” and yet, all the while, you never went at all! It will be an awful thing for a soul to stand at God’s judgment bar with its mask taken off, and to have Christ’s eyes of fire reading it through and through—and reading out this sentence, “You had a name to live, but you were dead. You had a form of godliness, but did deny the power thereof.” God help us all to be clear of this terrible evil!—

***“Searcher of hearts, before Your face,
I all my soul display.
And conscious of its innate arts,
Entreat Your strict survey.
To humble penitence and prayer
Be gentle pity given—***

***Speak ample pardon to my heart,
And seal its claim to Heaven.***

Another phase of this same very sad and dangerous character is the way in which *many people occupy themselves with spiritual daydreaming*. I think you know what I mean. They picture to themselves what they ought to be, or what they would like to be. They assent to the precepts of the Gospel that they are good. They read the biography of some eminent person and they wish that they bore his name or, at any rate, they rehearse his character and they say to themselves, "Now that is just what we would be if we were in similar circumstances." Of course they are not in such circumstances, so it is very easy to dream what they would be. Many young people spend a great deal of time in speculating on all the wonderful things they will do when they reach a certain age or position—and many poor people think of what they would do if they had a heap of money. Probably they would not do anything of the sort but, still, they dream about it and it is a very curious fact that you can dream over what you would do till you imagine you have done it—and you pat yourself on the back and say, "That is well done, my good fellow! That is a first-rate thing." Yet all the while it has been nothing but a dream.

But you may so delude yourself that as you go down the street, you may half wonder that the people do not say, "Look at that generous man! At least, he would be generous if he had ten thousand a year! Look at that noble confessor of Christ! He would stand and preach to crowds if he had only a voice. Look at that excellent woman! What a splendid mother she would be! How she would bring up her children in the fear of God, only she has no children! What an excellent mistress she would be if she had any servants! What a splendid employer of labor such-and-such a man would be, only he does not happen to be an employer, for he is only a servant!" Many of us wish that we were in somebody else's shoes. Ah, then we could run! If we had somebody else's armor on, then we could fight! But as we have only our own armor and our own shoes and our own feet, we cannot do what we would like to do. And, often, we do not do anything at all—but, still, we make up for that by dreaming beautiful daydreams.

I have known many young men who might have done something if they had given up dreaming of what they would do if—oh—that, "if"! He who does not serve God where he is, would not serve God anywhere else. "My soul is among lions," says one—"how can I serve God?" What did Daniel do when he was in that position? "Oh, but I am as poor as poverty can make me," says one—"what can I do?" What did Job do when he was in that condition? "Oh, but I seem to be cast out from my own family, and to be persecuted or neglected by everybody." What did Joseph do when that happened to him? "Oh, but I am despised and rejected!" What did our Lord Jesus do when He was in that condition? It is where you are that you are to fight the battle of life—not somewhere else! And it is as you are, the very man that you are, and just now, this very hour, that God calls you to work in His vineyard.

But, if you say, "I could work in the vineyard if it was cooler weather." Or if you say, "I could work in the vineyard if the sun was shining and it did not rain. I could work in the vineyard, but, you see, my knife is so blunt, my spade is not the right kind of tool for me to use." I know what the matter with you is. Lazy people always find fault with their tools, and those who do not intend to work always find some excuse, or other—and then they make up for their laziness by having a delicious spiritual dream! Half the nominally Christian people about us are dreaming and they consider that they are thus doing the work of the Lord! They are only doing it deceitfully by putting dreaming into the place of real service.

There are others who say, "I go, Sir," and yet they go not, because *they attend to all the externals of religion, but their heart is not right with God.* They say, "I attend twice on a Sunday at public worship. I take a class in the Sunday school. I go to the Prayer Meeting and the week-night lecture. I am always ready with my contribution for every good cause. In fact, there is nothing possible to me that I don't do." Yes, but all these things are mere shells—have you the kernel? These things are excellent cups and platters, washed on the outside—but is the inside of the cup and the platter washed, too? The children's hymn asks a solemn question—

***"I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray?"***

I often sing a hymn, but do I really praise? I mingle with the worshippers within the House of Prayer, but do I worship God in spirit and in truth? I talk of Christ and hear of Him, but do I truly trust Him? Do I love Him? Is my heart really His? If not, I am only offering to God the external service which He abhors and my prayer will be an abomination in His sight. My *heart* must go with all I do, or else I say, "I go, Sir," yet I go not.

I may put all these things together and say that very many who hear the Gospel *are in a most delightful state of mind*—they are worked up into such a condition that if anybody were to look them in the face and venture upon a description of them, it would certainly be, "Surely, those people are converted." Perhaps they are almost persuaded to be Christians. Possibly they are not far from the Kingdom of God, yet there they linger, shivering on the brink, on the wrong side of the line that divides saint and sinner—still dead in sins and yet looking as if they really were possessors of eternal life.

What is the reason why they go so far as to give this nominal consent to religion and yet do not actually trust Christ? I suppose with some it is because they are naturally plastic. There are many members of the Pliable family still living and some of the Obstinate family. Obstinate does not pretend to go on pilgrimage—he scorns the idea. But Pliable says that he will go with Christian and he actually begins with him, but he turns back as soon as they get to the first difficulty. He is ready for anything—you can twist and mold him anyway you please, but I bid you to beware of Mr. Pliable, lest you should become like he!

Then there are others who are anxious to please. Their dear friends are concerned about them. Their minister is in earnest about their salvation and they wish to please him, so they consent to the Gospel, that it is good, and they go a considerable way in the right direction. But their heart does not go—so they are still unsaved. Some do not like to give themselves any trouble. If to be saved were just a matter of giving what they have, they would part with their last garment for it, but to have to consider, to repent, to forsake favorite sins, to trust alone in Jesus—such things are too spiritual for them! If it were some outward performance—“taking the sacrament,” or being baptized, they would not mind that—but to give up sin, to consider their ways and think upon their heart’s condition in the sight of God, to repent of sin and believe in Jesus—this is too much trouble for them! The last thing that some people will do is to think they would rather have a day’s hard work on the treadmill than ten minutes’ solitary serious thought.

Then there are some who partly yield to the claims of the Gospel because it quiets their conscience. If they were to say, when the sermon is over, “I will not have this Man to reign over me. I will not be washed in the blood of Jesus”—if they were to say that outright, their conscience would say, “What are you doing? What are you doing?” And they would not be able to sleep at night. So they say, “Conscience, be quiet. I believe it all and I will attend to it, by-and-by. Mr. Conscience, do not roar like a lion! Be quiet, you are bringing me to my knees. You are making me shed tears. Come on, now, do not be so uproarious! Be still. I will listen to you, by-and-by. Go your way this time—when I have a convenient season, I will send for you.” So they say, “I go, Sir,” because it quiets conscience for a time—and they can go on sinning as before.

II. Now, secondly, just a few words upon THEIR ACTUAL REFUSAL.

The second son said, “I go, Sir,” but he went not. And these people do not go. They talk of repenting, but they do not repent. They speak of believing, but they never believe. They think of submitting to God, but they have not submitted themselves to Him yet. They say it is time they broke up the fallow ground and sought the Lord, but they do not seek Him. It all ends in a mere promise.

I suppose *they consider that the promise is enough*. But do not, I beseech you, think to mock God in this way! If you were hungry, would you consider that the promise of a meal was sufficient? Do you reckon with your debtors that when they promise to pay you, it is enough though they never meet your demands? And do you fancy that the eternal God is to be put off with these vain resolutions and to be mocked with these idle dreams of what you will do, when you do nothing whatever? Oh, may God save you from such a delusion!

I have known a man say, “I go, Sir,” but he has not gone, *because he would not give up some sin*. I have met with persons seriously concerned about their souls, who, nevertheless, would not give up drinking. They had fallen into that evil habit and it was a stumbling block in their way. I have known others deeply concerned about their souls, who would not

give up certain attractive companions, who ought not to have charmed them, for the charm was poisonous and deadly to their souls, yet they would not flee from it. Sweet Sin-Hold is one of the castles of the devil where he shuts up many a poor prisoner!

Then *the fear of man has kept many back*. They felt that they must confess Christ, but they dared not do it, for some fool or other would laugh at them, or give them the cold shoulder. So they have brought upon themselves the doom foretold in the Book of Revelation, “the fearful, and unbelieving...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” O Sirs, be afraid of being afraid whenever you find yourself afraid of following the Lord Jesus Christ!

Some people have said, “I go, Sir,” but *they put off the going from time to time* and that is why they did not go. Oh, that fatal procrastination—that delaying, that postponing! When a man once realizes that it must be now or never with him, then, Sirs, it will be now! If any soul is brought to say, “Now or never! I will find Christ now, or I shall never find Him,” he shall find Christ now! There is no promise given that if you seek the Lord tomorrow, you shall find Him. I know of no Gospel invitations available for a year or a month hence—they all have to do with this present moment. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Can you look the bleeding Christ in the face and tell Him that you will not have Him? Can you say to Him, “I won’t have You.” That will be a far more honest thing than to say, “You precious bleeding Lamb, I would gladly be washed in Your blood—but not today. I must wait a little longer.” Then you are not weaned from your sin. You still love it and you want to hold it. You are not an empty sinner yet. You are not a hungry sinner yet. You are not a longing sinner yet, for when a man is hungry and thirsty, he does not say, “I am so hungry, give me bread tomorrow! I am parched with thirst. My mouth is like an oven, give me a drink tomorrow.” No, he does not hunger, he does not thirst if he talks about delay. Come, then, poor hungering, thirsting ones! God help you to come and find Jesus Christ at once! Otherwise you will probably never come to Him at all and your apparent consent will be an actual refusal after all.

III. I might have said much more on this point, but I prefer to dilate, for the last few minutes, on the third most solemn head, namely, THE VERY SERIOUS DANGER IN WHICH THESE PEOPLE ARE FOUND. They say, “I go, Sir,” but they go not.

Observe, first, that *they are sinning against the Light of God*. That son could not say that he did not know he ought to go into the vineyard, for he had actually said, “I go, Sir.” Some of you cannot say that you do not know the Gospel, because you know it so well that you have promised to yield to its claims. You have already felt its power in a measure. Do you not recollect that day when you really had to struggle against conscience and to make up your mind that you would not yield? Well, then, all that Light which you resisted, witnesses against you, as well as adds to your responsibility! The poor heathen who does not know the Truth of God—

the poor outsider who does not understand the Gospel—has not sinned, and cannot sin as you have done in thus mocking the Holy Spirit, Himself, by saying, “I go, Sir,” yet not going. Your danger lies, therefore, in the heaping up of your responsibilities by sinning against the Light of God and knowledge.

It lies also in this, that *it is always a most dangerous thing to lie to God*. Ananias and Sapphira were not bound to give any money to the Apostles when they did—and they certainly were not bound to give all that they had—but they came and said they had given all they received for their land. And because they lied to God, they were struck dead then and there. Take heed, take heed, I pray you, when you say unto the Lord, “I will turn unto You,” lest He smite you on the spot when you lie to Him! Yet have not some of you already lied to Him when you were sick—when that typhus fever was upon you—when you were at the gates of the grave, what resolutions you made! What vows you uttered—all forgotten, all gone to the wind! Ah, Friends, all is registered in Heaven. It is marked down in God’s Book of Remembrance—“On such a day, So-and-So escaped shipwreck and afterwards broke his vow. On such a day, So-and-So was brought up from the grave, but afterwards broke his vow.” You forget it, but the recording angel has fixed it where the eternal memory will hold it against you forever unless you repent and turn to God. This is a dreadful thing. I wish that I could speak so that you would feel it, but if you do not for the moment, I hope you will turn it over in your mind and that the Spirit of God will make you think of it at home.

There is this fact, too, to be remembered, that *there is going on in your heart, all the while, a hardening of conscience*. When a man has said to God, once or twice, “I go, Sir,” and he does not go, he does not, by-and-by, feel inclined even to say, “I go,” and he feels easier in not going. You may very soon cover your conscience with a fatal film. Did you ever watch the process of a pond being coated with ice? I do not suppose you have ever stood long enough to see it completely done, but, at first, it is such a thin film, it does not seem like ice, but only like water asleep and still. By-and-by, there is just a glassy film and afterwards it continues to harden till you might drive a broad-wheeled wagon across the stream, so hard does the ice become! Just so is it with men’s minds. They film over gradually through the violations of conscience till they become harder than the nether millstone and like unto adamant!

Then, in addition to that, there is this danger—that *God may say, “I will never again bid that man go work in My vineyard.”* You know how you treat people who act as this son did. You say to a man, “Now go and do such-and-such a work.” He says, “Yes, Sir. Certainly, Sir.” If you find that he has neglected it, possibly you try him another time and when you go look and see that he has done nothing, you say to yourself, “I shall never ask him any more, for there is no reliance to be placed upon him.” Now suppose the Lord should say, “Let that young woman alone. She has so often broke her word to Me. Let that young man alone, he has lied to Me again and again. I will never ask him again.” Then, although you

should come and sit here, no sermon will ever come home to you! Whereas you used to feel and tremble, you will say, "The preacher has lost all his power—he does not seem to stir me as he once did." The change will not be in the preacher—it will be the preacher's Master who has said, concerning you, "Go and tell this people, Hear you, indeed, but understand not. And see you, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Oh, may God save you from such a judgment as that! Yet common sense and reason teach us that such a doom as that is but natural to those who despise God's warnings.

Well, now, what then? Have I said, "I go, Sir," and yet I have not gone? Then, break my heart! Oh, break, you rocky thing, to think that I should have lied to my God! O wretched man that I am, that I should have dared thus to fight against my best Friend, to postpone my bliss, to reject my Savior! May the Lord begin with you by causing you to suffer that blessed heart-break! Then, the next thing is for you to fall down at Jesus' feet and cry, "Lord, I have broken my promises, but You never break Yours! And You have said You will cast out none whomever come unto God by You. I come unto You now while I am in my pew! I may not even talk of going home, or taking a single step lest that step should be into the bottomless Pit! No, but, here and now, I yield my willing heart to You, if You will but have me. Lord, I believe! Help You my unbelief. My wanderings, Lord, are at an end. I yield myself to You."

Oh, may the Spirit of God work that blessed decision in your mind and heart right now! Not tomorrow—you may not see tomorrow! Right NOW is what I aim at and may God the Holy Spirit grant the request that now, before the hand of that clock shall have made another round upon its face complete, you may have sought and found the Savior by the guidance of the Divine Spirit who delights to draw men to Jesus! The Lord give you a blessing, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

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

A SERMON TO OPEN NEGLECTERS AND NOMINAL FOLLOWERS OF RELIGION NO. 742

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 24, 1867,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE AGRICULTURAL HALL, NEWINGTON.

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he repented and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, Sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him.”
Matthew 21:28-32.

THE sight of this vast arena, and of this crowded assembly reminds me of other spectacles which, in days happily long past, were seen in the amphitheatres of the old Roman Empire. Around, tier upon tier, were the assembled multitudes with their cruel eyes and iron hearts. And in the center stood a solitary, friendless man, waiting till the doors of the lion's den should be uplifted, that he might yield himself up a witness for Christ and a sacrifice to the popular fury. There would have been no difficulty, then, to have divided the precious from the vile in that audience.

The most thoughtless wayfarer who should enter into the amphitheatre would know at once who was the disciple of Christ and who were the enemies of the Crucified One. There stood the bravely-calm disciple, about to die, and all around, in those mighty tiers of the Coliseum, or of the amphitheatre of some provincial town as the case might be, there sat matrons and nobles, princes and peasants, plebeians and patricians, senators and soldiers—all gazing downward with the same fierce, unpitying look—all boisterous for their heathen gods, and all vociferous in the joy with which they gazed upon the agonies of the disciple of the hated Galilean, butchered to make a Roman holiday.

Another sight is before us today, with far more happy associations. But alas, it is a far more difficult task this day to separate the chaff from the wheat—the precious from the vile—than in the day when the Apostle fought with beasts at Ephesus. Here, in this arena, I hope there are hundreds, if not thousands, who would be prepared to die for our Lord Jesus. And in yonder crowded seats we may count by hundreds those who bear the name and accept the Gospel of the Man of Nazareth. And yet, I fear that both in these living hills on either side, and upon this vast floor, there are many enemies of the Son of God who are forgetful of His right-

eous claims—who have cast from them those cords of love which should bind them to His Throne and have never submitted to the mighty love which showed itself in His Cross and in His wounds.

I cannot attempt the separation! You must grow together until the harvest. To divide you were a task which at this hour angels could not perform, but which one day they will easily accomplish when, at their Master's bidding, the harvest being come, they shall gather together first the tares in bundles to burn them, and afterwards the wheat into Jehovah's barn. I shall not attempt the division but I shall ask each man to attempt it for himself in his own case. I say unto you, young men and maidens, old men and fathers, examine yourselves this day whether you are in the faith!

Let no man take it for granted that he is a Christian because he has helped to swell the numbers of a Christian assembly! Let no man judge his fellow, but let each man judge himself! To each one of you I say, with deepest earnestness, let a division be made by your conscience and let your understandings separate between him that fears God and him that fears Him not! Though no man clothed in linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side shall go through the midst of you to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations of this city, let conscience take the inkhorn and honestly make the mark, or leave the favored sign unmade.

Let each man question himself this morning, "Am I on the Lord's side? Am I for Christ, or for His enemies? Do I gather with Him, or do I scatter abroad?" "Divide! I divide!" they say in the House of Commons. Let us say the same in this great congregation this day. Political divisions are but trifles compared with the all-important distinction which I would have you consider. Divide as you will be divided to the right and to the left in the great day when Christ shall judge the world in righteousness. Divide as you will be divided when the bliss of Heaven, or the woes of Hell shall be your everlasting portion!

If the whole of us were thus divided into two camps—and we could say *these* have made a covenant with God by sacrifice, and *those* on the other hand are still enemies to God by wicked works—looking at the last class we might still feel it necessary by way of personal application to make a division among *them*. For although all unbelievers are alike unpardoned and unsaved, yet they are not alike in the circumstances of their case and the outward forms of their sins. Alike in being without Christ, they are still very varied in their mental and moral condition. I trust I was guided by the Spirit of God to my text this morning, for it is of such a character that while it enables me to address the whole mass of the unconverted, it gives me a hopeful opportunity of getting at the conscience of each by dividing the great company of the unconverted into two distinct classes.

O that for each tribe of unbelievers there may be a blessing in store this day! First, we shall speak to those who are avowedly disobedient to God. Secondly, to those who are deceptively submissive to Him.

I. First, we have a word for **THOSE WHO ARE AVOWEDLY DISOBEDIENT TO GOD**. There are many such here. God has said to you as He says to all who hear the Gospel, "Son, go work today in My vineyard." And you have replied, perhaps honestly, but certainly very boldly, very unkindly,

very unjustly, "I will not." You have made no bones about it, but given a refusal point-blank to the claims of your Creator. You have spoken your mind right out, not only in words, but in a more forcible and unmistakable manner—for actions speak far more loudly than words.

You have said over and over again, by your actions, "I will not serve God, or believe in His Son Jesus." My dear Friend, I am glad to see you here this morning, and trust that matters will change with you before you leave this hall! But at present you have not yielded even an *outward* obedience to God. In all ways have said, "I will not." Practically you have said, "I will not worship God. I will not attend a place of worship on Sunday—it is a weariness intolerable to me. I shall not sing the praise of my Maker—I will not pretend to bless the God for whom I have no love. In public prayer I shall not join—I have no heart for it. I shall not make a pretense of repeating morning and nightly prayer in private—what is the good of it? I will not pray at all! I do not believe in its efficacy and I will not be such a hypocrite as to follow a vain practice in which I have no belief whatever. As for what is called sin, I love it and will not give it up."

You are proud of being called an *honest* man, for you own the claims of your fellow men upon you, but you scorn to be thought *religious*, for you do not admit the rights of your Maker. To the righteous requests of others you yield a cheerful obedience, but to the just and tender requests of God you give a plain and evident denial! As clearly as actions can speak you say by your neglect of Sunday, by your disregard of prayer, by your never reading the Bible, by your perseverance in known sin, and by the whole course of your life, "I will not." Like Pharaoh, you have demanded, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" You are of the same mind as those of old who said, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is there if we keep His ordinances?"

Moreover, my Friend, you have not as yet given an assent to the doctrines of God's Word. On the contrary, intellectually as well as practically, you go not at God's bidding. You have set up in your mind the idea that you must *understand* everything before you will believe it—an idea, let me tell you, which you will never be able to carry out, for you cannot understand your own existence! And there are ten thousand other things around you which you never can comprehend, but which you must believe or remain forever a gigantic fool! Still you cavil at this doctrine and that doctrine, railing at the Gospel system in general, and if you were asked at a working man's conference, why you did not go to a place of worship, you would perhaps say that you kept away from worship because you did not like this doctrine or that.

Let me say on my own account, that as far as I am personally concerned, it is a very small consideration to *me* whether you like my doctrine or do not—for your own sake I am anxious above measure that you should believe the Truth as it is in Jesus—but while you live in sin, your dislike of a doctrine will very probably only make me feel the more sure of its truth and lead me to preach it with more confidence and vehemence! Do you think that we are to learn God's Truth from the likes or dislikes of those who refuse to worship Him and need an excuse for their sins? O unconverted men and women! It is very long before we shall come to you

to learn what *you* would have us preach! And when we fall so low as to do that, you, yourselves, will despise us!

What? Shall the physician ask his patient what kind of medicine he would wish to have prescribed? Then the man needs no physician—he can prescribe for himself! Show the doctor out at the back door directly. What is the use of such a physician? Of what service is a minister who will truckle to depraved tastes and sinful appetites, and say, “How would you like me to preach to you? What smooth things shall I offer you?” Ah Souls! We have some higher end to be served than merely pleasing *you*. We would save you by distasteful Truths of God, for honeyed lies will ruin you! That teaching which the carnal mind most delights in is the most deadly and delusive!

With many of you, your beliefs, and tastes, and likes must be changed or else you will never enter Heaven. I admit that in a measure I like your honesty in having said outright, “I will not serve God.” But it is an honesty which makes me shudder, for it betrays a heart hard as the nether millstone. Again, you have said, “I will not serve God,” and up to this time it is very possible that you have never been in the humor to repent of having said it, for the ways of sin are sweet to you, and your heart is fixed in its rebellion. You have never felt that conviction of sin which the Holy Spirit has worked in some of us. If you had felt it, you would soon have been shaken out of your “I will not.” If God’s power of Divine Grace, of which thousands of us bear witness that it is as real a power as that which guides the stars or wings the wind—if God’s almighty Grace should once get a hold of you, you would no longer say, “I do not believe this or that,” for as tremblingly as any of those whom you now despise, you would cry out, “What must I do to be saved?”

Up till now you have never felt that power, and therefore I cannot wonder that you do not acknowledge it, although the testimony of honest witnesses ought to have some weight with you. You are practically, intellectually, and avowedly not a Christian. You have never deceived yourself and others by making a profession which you do not honor. You have gone on in your own chosen path saying, with more or less resolution, in answer to every call of the Gospel, “I will not.” We said just now that the answer of the son to his father as recorded in our text was very plain. It was not, however, very genuine, or such as his father might have expected.

His father said, “Son, go, work today in my vineyard.” And the son rudely said, “I will not, that is it.” And without another word of apology or reason went his way. This is not quite as it should be, is it? Even so, my Friend, you may have been too hasty and so have been unjust. Is it not very possible you have denied to God and to His Gospel the respect which both really deserve? You have spoken very plainly, but at the same time very thoughtlessly, very harshly to the God who has deserved better things of you. Have you ever given the claims of the Lord Jesus a fair consideration? Have you not dismissed the Gospel with a sneer quite unworthy of you?

Have you not been afraid to look the matters between God and your soul fairly in the face? I believe it to be the case of hundreds here! I know it to be the case of *thousands* and *tens* of thousands in London! They have

put their foot down, and they have said, "None of your religion for me! I have made up my mind and I will never alter. I hate it and will not listen to it." Does no small voice within ever tell them that this is not fair to themselves or to God? Is the matter so easily to be decided? Suppose it should turn out that the religion of Jesus *is true*—what then? What will be the lot of those who despised Him? My Hearer, the religion of Jesus *is true*, and I have proved its truth in my own case! Do, I pray you, consider it and do not trifle away your immortal soul.

Thus says the Lord, "Consider your ways." It is now time for me to tell the openly ungodly what is his real state. You have been more than a little proud of your honesty. And looking down upon certain professors of religion you have said, "Ah, I make no such pretences as they do, I am honest, I am." Friend, you cannot have a greater abhorrence of hypocrites than I have! If you can find a fair chance of laughing at them, pray do so. If by any means you can stick pins into their wind bags, and let the gas of their profession out, pray do so! I try to do a little of it in my way—you do the same! You and I are agreed in this, I hope—in heartily hating anything like sham and falsehood.

But if you begin to hold your head up, and think yourself so very superior because you make no profession, I must take you down a little by reminding you that it is no credit to a thief that he makes no profession of being *honest*. And it is not thought to be exceedingly honorable to a man that he makes no profession of speaking the truth. For the fact is, that a man who does not profess to be honest is a professed thief! And he who does not claim to speak the truth is an acknowledged liar! Thus, in escaping one horn you are thrown upon another—you miss the rock but run upon the quicksand.

You are a confessed and avowed neglecter of God! A professed despiser of the great salvation! An acknowledged disbeliever in the Christ of God! When our government at any time arrests persons suspected of Fenianism, they have no difficulty about those gentlemen who glory in wearing the green uniform and flaunting the big feather. "Come along," says the constable, "you are the man, for you wear the regimentals of a rebel." Even so, when the angel of Justice arrests the enemies of the Lord, he will have no difficulty in accusing and arresting *you*, for, laying his hand upon your shoulder, he will say, "You wear the regimentals of an enemy of God. You plainly, and unblushingly, acknowledge that you do not fear God nor trust in His salvation."

No witnesses need be called concerning you at the Last Great Day! You will stand up, not quite so bravely as you do today, for, when the heavens are on a blaze and the earth is rocking to and fro, and the great white cloud fills the field of vision, and the eyes of the great Judge shall burn like lamps of fire, you will put on a different manner and a different carriage from that which you maintain before a poor preacher of the Gospel! Ah, my ungodly Hearer, with such a case as yours there shall be no need to *judge*—for out of your own mouth shall you be condemned!

Yet I came not here to tell you only of your sins, but to help you to *escape* from them! It is necessary that this much should be said, but we now turn to something far more pleasant. I am in hopes this day, that some of you will listen to that little word in the text, "afterward." He said,

“I will not, but afterward he repented and went.” It is a long lane which has no turning—let us trust that we have come to the turning now. There is space left you for *repentance*—though you may have been a drunkard, or a swearer, or unchaste—the die is not yet cast, a change is yet possible. May God grant that you may have reached the time when it shall be said of you, “Afterward he repented. He changed his mind. He believed upon Jesus and obeyed the Word of the Lord, and went.”

Perhaps the son in the parable thought a little more calmly about it. He said to himself, “I will consider the matter, second thoughts are often best. I growled at my good father and gave him a sharp answer, and I saw the tears standing in the good man’s eyes. I am sorry I grieved him. The thought of grieving him makes me change my mind. I said ‘No’ to him,” said he, “but I did not think about it. I forgot that if I go and work in my father’s vineyard I shall be working for myself, for I am his eldest son, and all that he has will belong to me, so that I am very foolish to refuse to work to my own advantage. Ah, now I see my father had my advantage at heart. I will even go as he bade me.”

See, he shoulders his tools and away he marches to labor with all his might. He said, “I will not,” but he repented and went, and it is admitted by all that he did the will of his father. Oh, I hope that many a man and woman now in this Agricultural Hall will this day cry, “I do retract what I have said! I will go to my Father, and will say to Him, ‘I will do Your bidding. I will not grieve Your love. I will not lose the opportunity of advancing my soul’s best interest. I obey the Gospel command.’” I will suppose that I see one such before me, and I will speak to him. Perhaps he said, “I will not,” because he really did not understand what religion was.

How few, after all, know what the way of salvation is? Though they go to Church, and to Chapel, they have not yet learned God’s plan of pardoning sinners. Do you know the plan of salvation? Hear it and live by it! You have offended God. God must punish sin. It is a fixed law that sin must be punished. How then, can God have mercy upon you? Why, only in this way: Jesus Christ came from Heaven and He suffered in the place and stead of all who trust Him! He suffered what they ought to have suffered, so that God is just, and yet at the same time He is able to forgive the very chief of sinners through the merits of His dear Son!

Your debts, if you are a Believer in Him, Christ has paid on your behalf! If you do but come and rest upon Jesus and upon Jesus only, God cannot punish you for your sins for He punished Jesus for them—and it would not be just of Him to punish Christ and then to punish you—to exact payment first from the Surety and afterwards from the debtor! My dear Hearer, whoever you may be, whatever your past life may have been—if you will trust Christ, you shall be saved from all your sins in a moment! The whole of your past life shall be blotted out! There shall not remain in God’s book so much as a single charge against your soul, for Christ, who died for you, shall take your guilt away and leave you without a blot before the face of God!

Read the last verse of my text, and you will see that it was by *believing* that men entered into the kingdom of God of old, and it is *still* by believing that men are saved. “Behold the Lamb of God,” said John the Baptist. And if you look to that bleeding Lamb, you shall live! Do you understand this?

Is it not simple? Is it not suitable to you? Will you still refuse to obey it? Does not the Holy Spirit prompt you to relent? Do you not even now say, "Is it so simple? I will even trust in Jesus—

***'Guilty, but with heart relenting,
To the Savior's wounds I'll fly.'***

I will come, by God's help, this morning lest death should come before the sun sets. I will trust Christ to save me. Precious way of salvation! Why should I not be saved?"

It is possible too, that you may have said, "I will not," because you really thought there was no hope for you. Ah, my Friend, let me assure you—and oh, how glad I am to be able to do it!—that there is hope for the vilest through the precious blood of Jesus. No man can have gone too far for the long arm of Christ to reach him. Christ delights to save the biggest sinners. He said to His Apostles, "Preach the Gospel to every creature, but begin"—where?—"begin at Jerusalem. There live the wretches who spat in My face. There live the cruel ones that drove the nails through My hands. Go and preach the Gospel to them first! Tell them that I am able to save, not little sinners merely, but the very chief of sinners. Tell them to trust in Me and they shall live."

Where are you, you despairing one? I know the devil will try to keep the sound of the Gospel from your ears if he can, and therefore, I would "cry aloud and spare not." O you despairing Sinners, there is no room for despair this side of the gates of Hell. If you have gone through the foulest kennels of iniquity, no stain can stand out against the power of the cleansing blood!—

***"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose ALL their guilty stains."***

Oh, I trust, now that you know there is hope for you, you will say, "I will even come at once, and put my trust in Jesus." While I would thus encourage you to repent of your neglect of God, let me invite you to come to Jesus, and press it upon you yet again.

Ah, my dear Friend, you will soon be dying, and though some wicked men, in their stupid insensibility, die very calmly, and as David said, "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men, but their strength is firm," yet, whether they perceive it or not, it is a dreadful thing to die with unpardoned sin hanging about you! What will your guilty soul do when it leaves the body? Think of it a minute. It is a matter worthy of your thought. Some of you, in all probability, will die this week. It is not probable that so many thousands of us will march through a whole week and be found alive at the other end of it. Well then, as we may some of us go soon, and all of us must go before long, let us look before us and think a bit.

Imagine your soul unclothed of the body. You have left the body behind you and your disembodied spirit finds itself in a new world. Oh, it will be a glorious thing if that separated spirit shall see Jesus whom it has loved, and fly at once into His bosom and drink forever of the crystal fountain of ever-flowing bliss! But it will be a horrible thing if, instead of it, your naked shivering spirit should wake up to find itself friendless, homeless, helpless, hopeless, tormented with remorse, afflicted with despair! What if

it should have to cry out forever, "I knew my duty but I did it not! I knew the way of salvation but I would not run in it. I heard the Gospel, but I shut my ears to it! I lived and at length left the world without Christ, and here I am, past hope! There is no repenting now, no believing now, no escaping now, for mercy and love no longer rule the hour?"

Have pity on yourself, my Hearer. I have pity on you. Oh, if my hand could pluck you from that flame, how cheerfully would I do it! Shall I pity you and will you not pity yourself? Oh, if my pleading should, by God's Grace, persuade you to trust in Christ this morning, I would plead with you while my voice, and lungs, and heart, and life held out! But oh, have pity on yourself! Pity that poor naked spirit which so soon will be quivering with utmost agony—a self-caused agony, an agony from which it will not escape—an agony of which it was warned, but which it chose to endure sooner than give up sin and yield to the scepter of Sovereign Grace. I would hope that you are saying, "I do now repent, and by God's Grace I will go."

If so, let me tell you there are a great many in Heaven who once, like you, said, "I will not," but they afterwards repented and are now saved. I will give you one picture. Yonder I see a company of men on horseback, and there is one, the proudest of them all, to whom they act as a guard. They are going to Damascus that he may take Christians to prison and compel them to blaspheme. Saul of Tarsus is the name of that cruel, murderous persecutor! When Stephen was put to death, God said to this man, Saul, "Go, work in My vineyard," but Saul said plainly, "I will not." And to prove his enmity, he helped put Stephen to death!

There he is, riding in hot haste upon his evil errand! There is none more set and determined against the Lord. Yet my Lord Jesus can tame the lion, and even make a lamb of him. As he rides along, a bright light is seen, brighter than the sun at noonday! Saul falls from his horse. He lies trembling on the ground and he hears a voice out of Heaven, saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Lifting up his eyes with astonishment, he sees that he had ignorantly been persecuting the Son of God! What a change that one discovery worked in him! That voice, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute," broke his hard heart and won him to the cause!

You know how three days after that, that once proud and bigoted man was baptized upon a profession of the faith of Christ whom he had just now persecuted! And if you want to see an earnest preacher, where can you find a better one than the Apostle Paul, who, with heart on fire, writes again and again, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"? I hope there is a Saul here who is to be struck down this morning! Lord, strike him down! Eternal Spirit, strike him down now! You did not know, perhaps, that you had been fighting God, but you thought the religion of Jesus to be a foolish dream. You did not know that you had insulted the dying Savior! *Now* you know it! May your conscience be affected and from this day forth may you serve the Lord!

I must leave this point when I have just said this. If there is one here who, after a long refusal, at last relents and is willing to become a servant of God by faith in Jesus Christ, let me tell him for his encouragement he shall not be one whit behind those who have been so long making a profession without being true to it, for the text says, "The tax collectors and

harlots go into the kingdom.” But what else? “Go into the kingdom” *before* those who made a profession of serving God, but who were not true to it!

You great sinners shall have no back seats in Heaven! There shall be no outer court for you! You great sinners shall have as much love as the best, as much joy as the brightest of saints. You shall be near to Christ. You shall sit with Him upon His Throne! You shall wear the crown! Your fingers shall touch the golden harps! You shall rejoice with the joy which is unspeakable and full of glory! Will you come? Christ forgets your past ill manners and bids you come *today*! “Come,” He says, “unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” Thirty *years* of sin shall be forgiven and it shall not take thirty *minutes* to do it! Fifty, sixty, seventy years of iniquity shall all disappear as the morning’s hoar-frost disappears before the sun! Come and trust my Master, hiding in His bleeding wounds—

**“Raise your downcast eyes, and see
What throngs His Throne surround!
These, though sinners once like you,
Have full salvation found.
Yield not, then, to unbelief!
He says, ‘There yet is room,’
Though of sinners you are chief,
Since Jesus calls you, come.”**

II. Bear with me a little time while I speak to the second character, THE DECEPTIVELY SUBMISSIVE, by far the most numerous everywhere in England—probably the most numerous in this assembly. Oh you, my own regular Hearers, you who have heard my voice these thirteen years—many of *you* are in this class! You have said to the Great Father, “I go, Sir!” but you have not gone! Let me sorrowfully sketch your portraits—you have regularly frequented a place of worship and you would shudder to waste a single Sunday in an excursion, or in any form of Sabbath-breaking.

Outwardly you have said, “I go, Sir.” When the hymn is given out, you stand up and sing, and yet you do not sing with the heart. When I say, “Let us pray!” you cover your faces, but you do not pray with real prayer. You utter a polite, respectful “I go, Sir,” but you do not go! You give a notional assent to the Gospel. If I were to mention any doctrine, you would say, “Yes, that is true. I believe that.” But your *heart* does not believe. You do not believe the Gospel in the core of your nature, for if you did, it would have an *effect* upon you.

A man may say, “I believe my house is on fire,” but if he goes to bed and falls asleep, it does not look as if he believed it, for when a man’s house is on fire he tries to escape! If some of you really believed that there is a Hell, and that there is a Heaven, as you believe other things, you would act very differently from what you do now. I must add that many of you say, “I go, Sir,” in a very solemn sense, for when we preach earnestly the tears run down your cheeks and you go home to your bedrooms and you pray a little, and everybody thinks that your concern of mind will end in conversion. But your goodness is “like the morning cloud and the early dew.” You are like dunghills with snow upon them—while the snow lasts, you look white and fair—but when the snow melts the dunghill remains a dunghill still!

Oh how many very impressible hearts are like that! You sin and yet you come to a place of worship and tremble under the Word! You transgress, and you weep and transgress again! You feel the power of the Gospel after a fashion, and yet you revolt against it more and more. Ah, my Friends, I can look some of you in the face and know that I am describing some of your cases to the letter. You have been telling lies to God all these years, by saying, "I go, Sir," while you have not gone! You know that to be saved you must believe in Jesus, but you have not believed! You know that you must be born again, but you are still strangers to the new birth! You are as religious as the seats you sit on, but no more—and you are as likely to get to Heaven as those seats are, and not one whit more—for you are dead in sin, and death cannot enter Heaven!

O my dear Hearers, I lament that ever I should be called to say such a thing as this and not be more affected by the fact! And, wonder of wonders, that you, some of you, know it to be true and yet do not feel alarmed! It is the easiest thing in the world to impress some of you by a sermon, but, I fear, you never will get beyond mere transient impressions. Like the water when splashed, the wound soon heals. You know, and you know, and you know—and you feel, and feel, and feel again and yet your sins, your self-righteousness, your carelessness, or your willful wickedness cause you, after having said, "I go, sir," to forget the promise and *lie to God!*

Now I spoke very honestly to the other class, and must be equally plain with you. You, too, criminate yourselves. There will be no need of witnesses against you. You have admitted that the Gospel is true. You did not quarrel with the doctrine of future punishment or future Glory. You attended a place of worship, and you said that God was good and worthy to be served. You confessed that you owed allegiance to Him, and ought to render it. You have even knelt down and in prayer you have said, "Lord, I deserve Your wrath." The great God has only to turn to some of your formal prayers to find quite enough evidence to secure your condemnation!

Those morning prayers of yours! Those evening prayers—hypocritical every one of them—will be more than sufficient to condemn you from your own mouth! Take heed! Take heed, I pray you, while you are yet in the land of hope. All this while, as the thirty-second verse reminds me, while you have remained unsaved, you have seen tax collectors and harlots saved by the very Gospel which has had no power upon you! Do not you know it, young man? You, I mean, the son of a godly mother? You know that you are not saved and yet you had a drunken workman in your father's employment and *he* has been, these last few years, a sober Christian man. He is saved and you, perhaps, have taken to the habits which he has forsaken!

You know that there have been picked off of the streets poor fallen women who have been brought to know Christ who are among the sweetest and fairest flowers in Christ's garden now, though they were once castaways. And yet some of you respectable people who never committed any outward vice in your lives are still unconverted, and still saying to Christ, "I go, Sir," but you have not gone. You are still without God! Without Christ! Lost, lost, lost! Yet fairer outward characters could scarcely be found. I could gladly weep for you! Oh, beware, beware of being like the

apples of Sodom which are green to look upon, but when crushed, crumble to ashes! Beware of being like John Bunyan's trees that were green outside, but inwardly rotten and only fit to be tinder for the devil's tinderbox. Oh, beware of saying, as some of you do, "I go, Sir," while you go not!

I sometimes see sick people who quite alarm and distress me. I say to them, "My dear Friend, you are dying. Have you a hope?" There is no answer. "Do you know your lost state?" "Yes, Sir." "Christ died for sinners." "Yes, Sir." "Faith gives us of His Divine Grace." "Yes, Sir." They say, "Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir." I sometimes wish before God they would contradict me, for if they would but have honesty enough to say, "I do not believe a word of it," I should know how to deal with them! Stubborn oaks are leveled by the gale, but those who bend like the willow before every wind, what wind shall break them?

O dear Brothers and Sisters, beware of being Gospel hardened! Or, what is the same thing, softened but for a season! Beware of being a promising *hearer* of the Word of God, and nothing more! I do not mean to close my discourse by speaking to you in this apparently harsh way, which, harsh as it seems, is full of love to your soul. I have a good word for you, too. I trust that you, in this Agricultural Hall, will have a change worked in you by the Holy Spirit, for although these many years you have made false professions before God, there is yet room in His Gospel feast for you. Did you notice the text? "The tax collectors and sinners enter into the kingdom of Heaven *before* you."

Then it is clear you may come *after* them, because it could not be said they entered *before* you, if you did not come after them! If the Lord shall break your heart, you will be willing to take the Lord Jesus for your All in All in just the same way as a drunkard must, though you have not been a drunkard. You will be willing to rest in the merit of Jesus just as a harlot must, though you have never been such. There is room for you, young people, though you have broken your vows, and quenched your convictions. Yes, and you gray-headed people may be brought yet, though you have lived so long in the outward means and have never given your hearts to Jesus!

Oh, come! This twenty-fourth day of March may the Lord bring you in this very place! May the Lord lead you to say silently, "By the Grace of God I will not be an open pretender any longer. I will give myself up to those dear hands that bled for me, and that dear heart that was pierced for me, and I will this day submit to Jesus' way." The fact is, to close the subject, there is, my dear Friends, the same Gospel to be preached to one class of men as to every other class. I pray God the day may never come when we shall be found in our preaching talking about working classes, and middle classes, and upper classes. I know no difference between you! You are the same to me, when I preach the Gospel, whether you are kings and queens, or crossing sweepers—satin and cotton, broadcloth and fustian are alike to the Gospel.

If you are peers of the realm, we trim not our Gospel to suit you. And if you are the basest of thieves, we do not exclude you from the voice of mercy. The Gospel comes to men as *sinners*, all equally fallen in Adam, equally lost and ruined by sin. I have not one Gospel for Her Majesty the

Queen, and another Gospel for the beggar woman. No, there is but *one* way of salvation, but *one* foundation, but *one* propitiation, but *one* Gospel! Look to the Cross of Christ and live! High was the bronze serpent lifted, and all that Moses said was, "Look." Was a prince of the house of Judah bitten, he was told to look! Without looking his lion standard of costly emblazonry could not avail him!

Was some poor wretch in the camp bitten, he must look, and the efficacy was the same for him as for the greatest of the host. Look! Look! Look to Jesus! Believe in the Son of God and live! One bronze serpent for all the camp! One Christ for all ranks and conditions of men! What a blessing would it be if we were all enabled to trust Christ this morning! My Brothers and Sisters, why not? He is worthy of the confidence of all. The Spirit of God is able to work faith in all. O poor Sinner, look to Him! Dear Hearers, I may never speak to some of you again and I would, therefore, be pressing with you.

By the hour of death, by the solemnities of eternity I do implore and beseech you accept the only remedy for sin which even God Himself will ever offer to the dying sons of men—the remedy of a bleeding Substitute suffering in your place and stead—believed on and accepted in the heart! Cast yourself flat upon Christ. The way of salvation is just this—rest alone upon Christ! Depend wholly upon Him. The Negro slave was asked what he did, and he said, "I jest fall down on de Rock, and he dat is down on de Rock cannot fall no lower."

Down on the Rock, Sinner! Down on the Rock! The everlasting Rock of Ages! You cannot fall lower than that! I will conclude with a well-known illustration. Your condition is like that of a child in a burning house, who, having escaped to the edge of the window, hung on by the windowsill. The flames were pouring out of the window underneath, and the poor lad would soon be burnt, or falling would be dashed to pieces. He therefore held on with the clutch of death. He did not dare to relax his grasp till a strong man stood underneath, and said, "Boy! Drop! Drop! I'll catch you!"

Now it was no saving faith for the boy to *believe* that the man was strong—that was a good help towards faith—but he might have known that and yet have perished. It was faith when the boy let go and dropped down into his big friend's arms. There are you, Sinner, clinging to your sins or to your good works. The Savior cries, "Drop! Drop into My arms!" It is not *doing*, it is *leaving off* doing. It is not working, it is *trusting* in that work which Jesus has already done. Trust! That is the word! Simple, solid, hearty, earnest trust! Trust and it will not take an hour to save you! The *moment* you trust you are saved!

You may have come in here as black as Hell, but if you trust in Jesus you are wholly forgiven. In an *instant*, swifter than a flash of lightning the deed of Grace is done! O may God the Spirit do it now, bringing you to trust, that you may be saved!

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THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST NO. 975

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

*“The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bid to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bid, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.”
Matthew 22:2, 3, 4.*

IF God grants me strength I hope to go through this parable, but at the present we shall confine our thoughts to the opening scene of the royal festival. Before, however, we proceed further, it is most fitting that we give expression to our deep gratitude that it has pleased the infinite mind to stoop to our narrow capacities, and instruct us by parable. How tenderly condescending is God to devise similitudes, that His children may learn the mysteries of the kingdom! If it is sometimes marveled at among men that great minds are ever ready to stoop, what a far greater marvel that God Himself should bow the heavens and come down to meet our ignorance and slowness of comprehension!

When the learned professor has been instructing his class in the hall in not easily understood matters of deep philosophy, and then goes home and takes his child upon his knee and tries to bring down great truth to the grasp of his child's mind, then you see the great love of the man's heart—and when the eternal God, before whom seraphim are but insects of an hour, condescends to instruct our childishness and make us wise unto salvation, we may well say, “herein is love.”

Just as we give our children pictures that we may win their attention, and may by pleasing means fix Truths of God upon their memories, so the Lord with loving inventiveness has become the Author of many a charming metaphor, type, and allegory by which He may gain our interest, and through His Holy Spirit enlighten our minds. If He who thunders till the mountains tremble, yet deigns to speak with us in a still small voice, let us gladly sit in Mary's place at His gracious feet, and willingly learn of Him. O that God would give to each one a teachable spirit, for this is the greatest step towards understanding the mind of God!

He who is willing to learn, in a childlike spirit, is already in a considerable measure taught of God. May we all so study this instructive parable as to be quickened by it to all that is well-pleasing in the sight of God. For after all, true learning in godliness may be judged of by its result upon our

lives. If we are holier, we are wiser. Practical obedience to the will of the Lord Jesus is the surest evidence of an understanding heart.

In order to understand the parable before us we must first direct our attention to the design of the “certain king” here spoken of. He had a *grand object* in view. He desired to do honor to his son upon the occasion of his marriage. We shall then notice the very *generous method* by which he proposed to accomplish his purpose. He made a dinner, and bade many—there were other modes of honoring his son, but the great king elected the mode which would best display his bounty.

We shall then observe, with sad interest, *the serious hindrance* which arose to the carrying out of his generous design—those who were bid would not come. There was nothing to hinder the magnificence of the festival in the riches of the prince—he lavished out his stores for the feast. But here was a hindrance strange and difficult to remove—they would not come! Then our thoughts will linger admiringly over the *gracious rejoinder* which the king made to the opposers of his design. He sent other servants to repeat the invitation, “Come you to the marriage.” If we shall drink deep into the meaning of these three verses, we shall have more than enough for one meditation.

I. A certain king of wide dominions and great power designed to give a magnificent banquet, with a GRAND OBJECT in view. The crown prince, his well beloved heir, was about to take to himself a fair bride, and therefore the royal father desired to celebrate the event with extraordinary honors. From earth, look up to Heaven. The great object of God the Father is to glorify His Son.

It is His will “that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father” (John 5:23). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is glorious already *in His Divine Person*. He is ineffably blessed, and infinitely beyond needing honor. All the angels of God worship Him, and His glory fills all Heaven. He has appeared on the stage of action as *the Creator* and as such His glory is perfect, “For by Him were all things created that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him.”

He said, “Light be,” and it flamed forth. He bade the mountains lift their heads, and their summits pierced the clouds. He created the water-floods, He bade them seek their channels, and He appointed their bounds. Nothing is lacking to the Glory of the Word of God, who was in the beginning with God, who spoke and it was done, who commanded, and it stood forth. He is highly exalted also as the Preserver, for He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. He is that nail fastened in a sure place, upon which all things hang.

The keys of Heaven, and death, and Hell, are fastened to His girdle, and the government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful. He has a name which is above every name, before which all things shall bow, in Heaven, and earth, and under the earth. He is God

over all. He is blessed forever. To Him that is, and was, and is to come, the universal song goes up.

But there is another relation in which the Son of God has graciously been pleased to stand towards us. He has undertaken to be *a Savior*, in order that He might be *a Bridegroom*. He had enough Glory before, but in the greatness of His heart, He would magnify His compassion even above His power. And He, therefore, condescended to take into union with Himself the nature of Man, in order that He might redeem the beloved objects of His choice from the penalty due to their sins, and might enter into the nearest conceivable union with them.

It is as *Savior* that the Father seeks to honor the Son, and the Gospel feast is not for the honor of His Person, merely, but for the honor of His Person in this new, yet anciently purposed relationship. It is for the honor of Jesus as entering into spiritual union with His Church that the Gospel is prepared as a royal entertainment. Brethren, when I said that here was a grand occasion, it certainly is so in God's esteem, and it should be so in ours. We should delight to glorify the Son of God!

To all loyal subjects in any realm, the marriage of one of the royal family is a matter of great interest, and it is usual and fitting to give expression to congratulations and sympathies by suitable rejoicings. In the instance before us the occasion calls for special joy from all the subjects of the great King of kings. The occasion in itself is a subject for great delight and thankfulness to us *personally*. The marriage is with whom? With angels? He took not up angels. It is a marriage with *our* own nature—"He took up the seed of Abraham." Shall we not rejoice when Heaven's great Lord is Incarnate as a Man, and stoops to redeem humanity from the ruin of the Fall?

Angels rejoice but they have no such share in the joy as we have. It is the highest personal joy to manhood that Jesus Christ, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, was made in the likeness of men that He might be one flesh with His chosen. Arise you who slumber! If there was ever an occasion when you should bestir your spirits and cry, "wake up my Glory, awake psaltery and harp," it is now, when Jesus comes to be affianced to His Church, to make Himself of one flesh with her, that He may redeem her, and afterwards exalt her to sit with Him upon His Throne.

Here were abundant reasons why the invited guests should come with joyful steps, and count themselves thrice happy to be bid to such a banquet! There is overwhelming reason why mankind should rejoice in the glorious Gospel of Jesus and hasten to avail themselves of it. Beside that, we must consider the *royal descent* of the Bridegroom. Remember that Jesus Christ our Savior is very God of very God! Are we asked to do Him honor? It is right, for to whom else should honor be given? Surely we should glorify our Creator and Preserver!

Willful must be the disobedience which will not pay reverence to One so highly exalted and so worthy of all homage. It is Heaven to serve such a Lord. His glory reaches unto the clouds. Let him be adored forever and

ever! O come, let us worship and bow down, let us cheerfully obey those commands of God which aim at the honor of His Son. Remember also the *Person* of Immanuel, and you will desire His Glory. This glorious Son, whose fame is to be spread abroad, is most certainly God—of that we have spoken, but He is also most assuredly Man, our Brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.

Do we not delight to believe that He, tempted in all points as we are, has never yet submitted to be stained by sin? Never such a man as He, head of the race, the second Adam, the everlasting Father—who among us would not do Him reverence? Will we not seek His honor, seeing that now He lifts our race to be next to the Throne of God? Remember, too, His *Character*. Was there ever such a life as His? I will not so much speak of His Divine Character, though that furnishes abundant reason for worship and adoration. But think of Him even as a Man. O Beloved, what tenderness, what compassion, yet what holy boldness! What love for sinners, and yet what love for Truth!

Men who have not loved Him have nevertheless admired Him, and hearts in which we least expected to see such recognition of His excellence have nevertheless been deeply affected as they have studied His life. We must praise Him, for He is “chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” It were treason to be silent when the hour has come to speak of Him who is peerless among men and matchless among angels. Clap, clap your hands at the thought of the marriage of the King’s Son, for whom His bride has made herself ready!

Think, too, of His achievements. We take into reckoning whenever we do honor to a prince all that he may have done for the nation over which he rules. What, then, has Jesus done for us? Rather let me say what has He *not* done? Upon His shoulders were laid our sins. He carried them into the wilderness, and they are gone forever. Against Him came forth our foes—He met them in shock of battle, and where are they now? They are cast into the depths of the sea. As for death itself, that last of foes, He has virtually overcome it, and before long the weakest of us, through Him, shall say, “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”

He is the hero of Heaven. He returned to His Father’s Throne amidst the acclamations of the universe! Do we not, for whom He fought, for whom He conquered, do we not desire to honor Him? I feel I speak with bated breath upon a theme where all our powers of speech should be let loose. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him! Is it not the universal verdict of all who know Him? Ought it not to be the cry of all the sons of men? East and west, and north and south—ought they not to ring the joy bells and hang out streamers on His marriage day, for joy of Him?

Is the King’s Son to be married, is there a festival in His honor? O then let Him be great, let Him be glorious! Long live the King! Let the maidens go forth with their timbrels, and the sons of music make sweet melody—yes, let all creatures that have breath break forth with His praises. “Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.”

II. Secondly, here is a **GENEROUS METHOD** of accomplishing the design. A king's son is to be honored on the day of his marriage—in what way shall it be done? Barbarous nations have their great festivals, and alas, that men should have sunk so low. On such occasions rivers of human blood are made to flow. To this very day, on the borders of civilization, there is found a wretched tyrant whose infernal customs, for I dare not call them by a less severe term, command the murder of hundreds of his fellow creatures in cold blood on certain high days and festivals.

Thus would the monster honor his son by acting like a fiend. No blood is poured forth to honor the Son of Heaven's great King. I doubt not Jesus will have honor even in the destruction of men if they reject His mercy, but it is not so that God elects to glorify His Son. Jesus the Savior, on His wedding day with manhood, is glorified by mercy, not by wrath. If blood is mentioned on such a day, it is His own by which He is glorified.

The slaughter of mankind would bring no joy to Him. He is meek and lowly, a lover of the sons of men. It has been the custom of most kings to signalize a princely wedding by levying a fresh tax, or demanding an increased subsidy from their subjects. In the case of the anticipated wedding of our beloved Queen's daughter, the dowry sought will be given with greater pleasure than upon any former occasion—and none of us would lift a whisper of complaint.

But the parable shows that the King of kings deals with us not after the manner of man. He asks no dowry for His Son. He makes the marriage memorable not by *demands* but by *gifts*. Nothing is sought *from* the people, but much is prepared *for* them. Gifts are lavishly bestowed, and all that is requested of the subjects is that they, for awhile, merge the subject in the more honorable character of the guest, and willingly come to the palace—not to labor or serve at the table—but to feast and to rejoice.

Observe, then, the generous method by which God honors Christ is set forth here under the form of a banquet. I noted Matthew Henry's way of describing the objects of a feast, and with the alliteration of the Puritans, he says, "A feast is for love and for laughter, for fullness and for fellowship." It is even so with the Gospel. It is for *love*. In the Gospel, Sinner, you are invited to be reconciled to God. You are assured that God forgives your sins, ceases to be angry, and would have you reconciled to Him through His Son. Thus love is established between God and the soul.

Then it is for *laughter*, for happiness, for joy. Those who come to God in Christ Jesus, and believe in Him, have their hearts filled with overflowing peace, which calm lake of peace often lifts up itself in waves of joy which clap their hands in exultation. It is not to sorrow but to joy that the great King invites His subjects, when He glorifies His Son Jesus. It is not that you may be distressed, but that you may be delighted that He bids you believe in the crucified Savior and live.

A feast, moreover, is for fullness. The hungry famished soul of man is satisfied with the blessings of Divine Grace. The Gospel fills the whole capacity of our manhood. There is not a faculty of our nature which is not

made to feel its need supplied when the soul accepts the provisions of mercy. Our whole manhood is satisfied with good things and our youth is renewed like the eagles. “For I have satisfied the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.”

To crown all, the Gospel brings us into *fellowship* with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. In Christ Jesus we commune with the sacred Trinity. God becomes our Father and reveals His paternal heart. Jesus manifests Himself unto us as He does not unto the world, and the communion of the Holy Spirit abides with us. Our fellowship is like that of Jonathan with David, or Jesus with John. We feast on the bread of Heaven, and drink wines on the lees well refined. We are brought into the heavenly banqueting house where the secret of the Lord is revealed to us, and our heart pours itself out before the Lord.

Very near is our communion with God—most intimate love and condescension does He show to us. What do you say to this? Is there not here a rich repast worthy of Him who prepares it? Here all your spacious powers can wish, O Sinner, shall be given to you! All you want for time and for eternity God prepares in the Person of His dear Son, and bids you receive it without money and without price. I have already told you that all the expense lies with Him. It was a very sumptuous festival, there were oxen, and there were fatlings, but none of these were taken from the pastures, or stalls of the guests.

The Gospel is an expensive business. The very heart of Christ was drained to find the price for this great festival. But it costs the sinner nothing, nothing of money, nothing of merit, nothing of preparation. You may come as you are to the Gospel feast, for the only wedding dress required is freely provided for you. Just as you are, you are bid to believe in Jesus. You have nothing to do but to receive of His fullness, for to “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”

You are not asked to contribute to the provision, but to be a feaster at the Divine banquet of infinite compassion. How *honorable*, too, is the Gospel to those who receive it. An invitation to a regal marriage was a high honor to those who were bid. I do not suppose that many of us are likely to be invited to the Princess’s wedding, and, if we were, we should probably be greatly elated, for we should most of us feel it to be one of the great events of our lives.

So was it with these people. A king’s son is not married every day, and it is not everybody that is bid to the monarch’s entertainment. All their lives long they would say, “I was at his wedding, and saw all the splendor of the marriage festival.” Probably some of them had never before enjoyed such a feast as the luxurious potentate had prepared for that day, and had never before been in such good company.

My Brethren, nothing so honors a man as for him to accept the Gospel. While his faith honors Christ, Christ honors him. It is no mean thing to be a king’s son, but those who come to the marriage feast of God’s own Son

shall become King's sons themselves—their participators in the Glory of the great Heir of all things! While I am speaking of this generous method, my heart glows with sacred ardor, and my wonder rises that men do not come to the banquet of love which honors all its guests!

When the banquet is so costly to the host, so free to the guests, and so honorable to all concerned, how is it that there should be found any so unwise as to refuse the favor? Surely here is an illustration of the folly of the unrenewed heart, and a proof of the deep depravity which sin has caused. If men turn their backs on Moses with his stony tables, I do not marvel. But to despise the loaded tables of Grace, heaped up with oxen and fatlings—this is strange! To resist the Justice of God is a crime, but to repel the generosity of Heaven, what is this? We must invent a term of infamy with which to brand the base ingratitude.

To resist God in majesty of terror is insanity but to spurn Him in the majesty of His mercy is something more than madness. Sin reaches its climax when it resolves to starve sooner than owe anything to Divine goodness. I feel I must anticipate the period for delivering my message, and as I have described to you the way in which God honors His Son, I must at once proclaim the invitation, and cry to you, "Come to the wedding feast. Come, and glorify Jesus by accepting the provisions of Grace. Your works will not honor Him if you set them up as a righteousness in competition with His righteousness.

"Not even your repentance can glorify Him, if you think to make it a rival to His precious blood. Come, guilty Sinner, as you are, and take the mercy Jesus freely presents to you, and accept the pardon which His blood secures to those who believe in Him." I think when the messenger went out from the King and first of all marked signs of neglect among those who were bid and saw that they would not come, he must have been mute with astonishment!

He had seen the oxen, and the fatlings, and all the goodly preparations. He knew the King, he knew his son, he knew what joy it was to be at such a feast. And when the bid ones began to turn their backs on him, and go their way to their farms, the messenger repeated his message over and over again with eagerness, wondering all the while at the treason which dared insult so good a King.

I think I see him, at first indignant for his Master's sake, and afterwards melted to pity as he saw what would surely come of such an extravagance of ingratitude, such a superfluity of insolence. He mourned that his fellow-citizens whom he loved, should be such fools as to reject so good an offer, and spurn so blessed a proclamation. I, too, am tossed to and fro in soul, with mingled but vehement feelings!

O, my God, You have provided the Gospel, let none in this house reject it, and so slight Your Son and dishonor You. But may all rejoice in Your generous way of glorifying Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of His Church, and may they come, and willingly grace the festival of Your love!

III. We now advance to our third point, and regretfully remember THE SERIOUS HINDRANCE which for awhile interfered with the joyful event. The king had thought in his mind, "I will make a great feast, I will invite a large number. They shall enjoy all my kingdom can afford, and I shall thus show how much I love my son, and moreover all the guests will have sweet memories in connection with his marriage." When his messengers went out to intimate to those who had received previously an express invitation that the time was come, it is written, "They would not come."

Not they *could* not, but they "*would* not come." Some for one reason, some for another, but without exception they would not come. Here was a very serious hindrance to the grand business. Cannot the king drag his guests to the table? Yes, but then it would not accomplish his purpose. He wants not slaves to grace his throne. Persons compelled to sit at a marriage feast would not adorn it. What credit could it be to a king to force his subjects to feast at his table?

No, for once, as I have said before, the subject must be merged in the guest. It was essential to the dignity of the festival that the guests should come with cheerfulness to the festival, but they would not come. Why? Why would they not come? The answer shall be such as to answer another question—Why do *you* not come and believe in Jesus! With many of them it was an indifference to the whole affair. They did not see what concern they had in the king or his son. Royal marriages were high things and concerned high people.

They were plain-speaking men, farmers who went hedging and ditching, or tradesmen who made out bills and sold by the yard or pound. What cared they for the court, the palace, the king, the prince, his bride, or his dinner? They did not say quite that, but such was their feeling. It might be a fine thing, but it was altogether out of their line. How many run in the same groove at this hour?

We have heard it said, "What has a working man to do with religion?" And we have heard others of another grade in life affirm that persons who are in business cannot afford time for religion, but had better mind the main chance. The Lord have mercy upon your folly! Here is one great obstacle to the Gospel—the stolid indifference of the human mind concerning this grandest of all conceptions—God's glorifying His dear Son by having mercy upon sinners!

At the bottom the real reason for the refusal of those in the parable was that they were disloyal, they would not come to the supper because they saw an opportunity for the loyal to be glad, and not being loyal they did not wish to hear the songs and acclamations of others who were. By staying away they insulted the king, and declared that they cared not whether he was a king or not, whether his son was a prince or not. They determined to disavow their allegiance by refusing the invitation. They said in effect, "Anyway, if he is a king and his son a prince, we will do him no honor, we will not be numbered with those who surround his board and show forth his splendor.

“No doubt a feast is worth having, and such a feast as there will be provided were well for us to participate in, but for once we will deny our appetites that we may indulge our pride. We proclaim a revolt. We declare we will not go.” Ah, you who believe not in Jesus, at the bottom of it your unbelief is enmity to your Maker, sedition against the great Ruler of the universe, who deserves your homage.

“The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master’s crib,” but you know not, neither do you consider. You are rebels against the Majesty of Heaven. Moreover, the refusal was a slight to the prince as well as to his father, and in some cases the Gospel is refused mainly with this intent—because the unbeliever rejects the Deity of Christ, or despises His Atonement. O Sirs, beware of this, I know of no rock more fatal than to dishonor Christ by denying His Sonship and His Deity. Sit not upon it, I beseech you—“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

Indifference covered the refusal in the text. “They made light of it,” but if you take off the film you will see that at the bottom there was treason against the majesty of the king, and distaste to the dignity of his son. No doubt some of them despised the feast itself. They must have known that with such a king it could not be a starveling meal, but they pretended to despise the feast. How many there are who despise the Gospel which they do not understand? I repeat—which they do not understand! Almost invariably, if you hear a man depreciate the Gospel, you will find that he has scarcely even read the New Testament and is a utter stranger to the doctrines of Grace.

Listen to a man who is talkative in condemnation of the Gospel, and you may rest assured that he is loud because he is empty. If he understood the subject better he would find, if he were, indeed, a man of candor, that he would be led at least to be silent in admiration if he did not become loyal in acceptance. Beloved Friends, the feast is such as you greatly need, let me tell you what it is.

It is pardon for the past, renewal of nature for the present, and Glory for the future. Here is God to be our Helper, His Son to be our Shepherd, the Spirit to be our Instructor. Here is the love of the Father to be our delight, the blood of the Son to be our cleansing, the energy of the Holy Spirit to be life from the dead to us. You cannot want anything that you ought to want, but what is provided in the Gospel—and Jesus Christ will be glorified if you accept it by faith. But here is the hindrance—men do not accept it—“they would not come.”

Some of us thought that if we put the Gospel in a clear light, and if we were earnest in stating it, our hearers must be converted, and God forbid we should ever try to do otherwise than make it plain and be earnest! But for all that the best ministry that ever was, or ever could be, will be unsuccessful in a measure. Yes, and altogether so, unless the effectual work of the Spirit IS present. Still will the cry go up, “Who has believed our report?” Still will those who serve their Master best have reason to mourn

that they sow on stony ground, and cast their bread on thankless waters. Even the prince of preachers had to say, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, but you will not come to Me that you might have life." Alas, alas, that mercy should be rejected and Heaven spurned.!

IV. So now we must close with the most practical matter of consideration, THE GRACIOUS REJOINDER of the king to the impertinence which interfered with his plans. What did he say? You will observe that they had been bid, and then called. After the Oriental custom, the call intimated that the festival was now approaching, so that they were not taken unaware, but knew what they did.

The second invitation they rejected in cold blood, deliberately, and with intent. What did the monarch do? Set their city in a blaze, and at once root out the rebels? No, but in the first place, he winked at their former insolent refusal. He said in himself, "Perhaps they mistook my servants, perhaps they did not understand that the hour was come. Perhaps the message that was delivered to them was too brief, and they missed its meaning. Or, if by chance, they have fallen into some temporary enmity against me, on reconsideration, they will wish that they had not been so rude, and ungenerous to me.

"What have I done that they should refuse my dinner? What has my son done that they should not be willing to honor him by feasting at my table? Men love feasting, my son deserves their honor—why should they not come? I will pass over the past and begin again." My Hearers, there are many of you who have rejected Christ after many invitations, and this morning my Lord forgets your former unkindnesses and sends me again with the same message, again to bid you "come to the wedding." It is no small patience which overlooks the past and perseveres in kindness, honestly desiring your good.

The King sent another invitation—"all things are ready, come to the marriage," but you will please observe that he changed the messenger. "Again he sent forth other servants." Yes, and I will say it, for my soul feels it, if a change of messengers will win you—much as I love the task of speaking in my Master's name—I would gladly die now, where I am, that some other preacher might occupy this platform if thereby you might be saved. I know my speech to some of you must be monotonous. I seek out images fresh and many, and try to vary my voice and manner, but for all that, one man must grow stale to you when heard so often.

Perhaps my modes are not the sort to touch your peculiarities of temperament—well, good Master, set Your servant aside, and consider him not. Send other messengers if they may succeed. But to some of you I am another messenger, not a better, but another, since my Brethren have failed with you. Oh, then, when my voice cries, "Come unto Jesus! Trust in His Atonement! Believe in Him, look to Him and live!" let the new voice be successful, where former heralds have been disregarded.

You notice, too, that the message was a little changed. At first it was very short. Surely if men's hearts were right, short sermons would be enough. A very brief invitation might suffice if the heart were right, but since hearts are wrong God bids His servants enlarge, expand, and expound. "Come, for all things are ready. I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the marriage."

One of the best ways of bringing sinners to Christ is to explain the Gospel to them. If we dwell upon its preparations, if we speak of its richness and freeness, some may be attracted whom the short message which merely tells the plan of salvation might not attract. To some it is enough to say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," for they are asking, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" But others need to be attracted to the wedding feast by the description of the sumptuousness of the repast.

We must try to preach the Gospel more fully to you, but we shall never tell you of all the richness of the Grace of God. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts above your thoughts, and His ways above your ways. Forsake your sins and your thoughts and turn to the Lord, for He will abundantly pardon you. He will receive you to His heart of love, and give you the kiss of His affection at this hour, if, like prodigal children, you come back and seek your Father's face.

The Gospel is a river of love, it is a sea of love, it is a Heaven of love, it is a universe of love, it is all love. Words there are none fully to set forth the amazing love of God to sinners. No sin too big or too black, no crime too crimson or too cursed for pardon. If you do but look to His dear crucified Son all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven you! There is forgiveness! Jesus gives repentance and remission. And then the happiness which will be brought to you here and hereafter are equally beyond description. You shall have Heaven on earth and Heaven in Heaven! God shall be your God, Christ shall be your Friend, and eternal bliss shall be your portion.

In this last message the guests were pressed very delicately, but still in a way which if they had possessed any generosity of heart at all, must have touched them. You see how the Evangelist puts it, he does not say, "Come, or else you will miss the feast. Come, or else the king will be angry. Come, come, or else you will be the losers." No, but he puts it, as I read it, in a very remarkable way. I venture to say if I am wrong, the Master forgive me so saying—the king makes himself the object of sympathy, as though he were an embarrassed host.

See here, "My dinner is ready, but there is no one to eat it. My oxen and fatlings are all killed, but there are no guests." "Come, come," he seems to say, "for I am a host without guests." So sometimes in the Gospel you will see God speaks as if He would represent Himself as getting an advantage by our being saved. Now we know that herein He condescends in love to speak after the manner of men. What can He gain by us? If we perish—is

He the loser? But He makes Himself often in the Gospel to be like a father who yearns over His child, longing for him to come home.

He makes Himself, the infinite God, turn beggar to His own creatures, and beseeches them to be reconciled. Wondrous stoop! For, like a chapman who sells his wares, He cries, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters. And he that has no money, let him come." Do you observe how Christ, as He wept over Jerusalem, seems to weep for Himself as well as for them. "How often would I have gathered your children together." And God, in the Prophets, puts it as His own sorrow, "How can I set you as Admah, how can I make you as Zeboim?" As if it were not the child's loss alone, but the father's loss also, if the sinner died.

Do you not feel, as it were, a sympathy with God when you see His Gospel rejected? Shall the Cross be lifted high, and none look to it? Shall Jesus die, and men not be saved by His death? O blessed Lord, we feel, if nothing else should draw us, we must come when we see, as it were, Yourself represented as a Host under our embarrassment, for lack of guests. Great God, we come, we come right gladly! We come to participate of the bounties which You have provided, and to glorify Jesus Christ by receiving, as needy sinners, that which Your mercy has provided.

Brothers and Sisters, since Christ finds many loath to honor Him, my exhortation is to you who love Him, honor Him the more since the world will not. You who have been constrained to come, remember to sing as you sit at His table, and rejoice and bless His name. Next go home and intercede for those who will not come, that the Lord will enlighten their understandings, and change their wills, that they may be yet constrained to believe in Jesus. And as for those of you who feel half inclined this morning by the soft touches of His Grace to come and feast, let me bid you come. It is a glorious Gospel—the feast is good!

He is a glorious King—the Host is good. He is a blessed Savior, He who is married, He is good. It is all good, and you shall be made good, too, if your souls accept the invitation of the Gospel which is given to you this day. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." The Lord send His Spirit to make the call effectual, for His dear Son's sake. Amen.

Portion of Scripture Read Before Sermon—Matthew 21

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

MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST

NO. 98

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, AUGUST 17, 1856,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.**

***“But they made light of it and went their ways, one
to his farm, another to his merchandise.”
Matthew 22:5.***

MAN is not much changed since the days of Adam. In his bodily frame he appears to be exactly similar, for skeletons many hundred years old are the exact counterparts of ours. And sure enough, that which was recorded in history as having been done by man centuries ago, might be written again, for, “there is nothing new under the sun.” The same class of men is still to be discovered (although, perhaps, differently dressed) as that which existed ages long gone by. There are still men who answer the character given to others, in His day, by the Savior, “They go their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise,” making light of the glorious things of the Gospel. I am certain I have many such characters here, tonight, and I pray the Lord that I may be enabled to preach to them very solemnly and very pointedly. And I must ask all you who understand the heavenly art of prayer, to pray that God would be pleased to send home every thought into the breast where He intends it to lodge, that it may bring forth the comfortable fruit of righteousness in the salvation of many souls. They made light of it. So do too many in this day! And so will a large portion of my hearers, tonight. I believe that to think lightly of Christ is a sin. And at all risks of being falsely called legalist, or free-willer by those who are wise above what is written, I shall charge it upon you as such, for I hope I shall never belong to that class of Calvinists who do the devil’s work by excusing sinners in their sins!

In the first place, we shall have a few words with you concerning *what it is that the sinner makes light of*. Secondly, *how it is that he makes light of it*. And thirdly, *why it is that he makes light of it?* Then a general observation or two and we shall not weary you.

I. In the first place, WHAT IS IT THAT THE SINNER MAKES LIGHT OF? According to the parable, the person alluded to made light of a marriage banquet which a king had provided, with all kinds of dainties, to which they were freely invited and from which they willfully absented themselves. The spiritual meaning of this is easy to discover. Sinners who make light of Christ, express their contempt of a glorious banquet which God has provided at the marriage of His Son. This is solemn ground to tread upon. Oh, for the teachings of the Holy Spirit!

Taking this parable as the basis of our remarks, we may observe, first, that the sinner makes light of the *messenger who brings him the news that the marriage supper is prepared*. These men refused to come. They went—"One to his farm, another to his merchandise"—and so made light of the messenger. Every sinner who neglects the great salvation of Jesus Christ makes light of the Gospel minister, which is no little insult in God's esteem. It is never reckoned a small offense by our great nation if our ambassador is treated with indifference. And take it for a Truth of God, it is no light thing with God if you despise the ambassadors He sends to you! But this is comparatively little—the ambassadors are men like yourselves—who can well afford to be condemned, if that were all. In fact, we would be glad enough to forgive you if it were in our power to do so and if this were all your guilt.

But these people *despised the feast*. Some of them fancied that the fatlings and other provisions that would be upon the table would be no better than what they had at home. They thought that the royal banquet would be no very great thing for which to give up their merchandise for a day, or to renounce their farming even for an hour. They scorned the banquet—at least, it appears so—because they did not go to it! Oh, Sinner, when you neglect the great salvation, remember what you despise! When you make light of God's Gospel, you make light of Justification by Faith—you make light of washing in the blood of Jesus—you make light of the Holy Spirit! You make light of the road to Heaven—and then you make light of faith, hope and love. You make light of all the promises of the Everlasting Covenant—of all the glorious things that God has laid up for them who love Him and of everything which He has revealed in His Word as being the promised gift to those who come unto Him. It is a solemn thing to make light of the Gospel, for in that Word is summed up all that human nature can require and all that even the saints in bliss can receive. Oh, to despise the Gospel of the blessed God—how mad—how worse than folly! Despise the stars and you are a fool. Despise God's earth, with its glorious mountains, with its flowing rivers and its fair meadows and you are a maniac. But despise God's Gospel and you are ten thousand maniacs in one! Make light of that and you are far more foolish than he who sees no light in the sun, who beholds no fairness in the moon and no brilliance in the starry firmament. Trample, if you please, His lower works, but oh, remember, when you make light of the *Gospel* you are making light of the Masterpiece of your great Creator—that which cost Him more than to create myriad worlds—the bloody purchase of our Savior's agonies!

And, again—these people *made light of the King's Son*. It was *His* marriage and inasmuch as they absented themselves, they did dishonor to that glorious One in whose honor the supper was prepared! They slighted Him whom His Father loved. Ah, Sinner, when you make light of the

Gospel you make light of Christ—of that Christ before whom glorious cherubs bow themselves—of that Christ at whose feet the high archangel thinks it happiness to cast his crown. You make light of Him with whose praise the vault of Heaven rings. You make light of Him whom God makes much of, for He has called Him, “God over all, blessed forever.” Ah, it is a solemn thing to make light of Christ! Despise a prince and you shall have little honor at the king’s hand for it. But despise the Son of God and the Father will have vengeance on you for His slighted Son! Oh, my dear Friends, it seems to me to be a sin, not unpardonable, I know, but still most heinous—that men should ever despise my blessed Lord Jesus Christ and treat Him with cruel scorn! Make light of You, sweet Jesus? Oh, when I see You with Your shirt of gore, wrestling in Gethsemane, I bow myself over You and I say, “O, Redeemer, bleeding for sin, can any sinner make light of YOU?” When I behold Him with a river of blood rolling down His shoulders, beneath the cursed flagellation of Pilate’s whip, I ask, “Can a sinner make light of such a Savior as this?” And when I see Him yonder, covered with His blood, nailed to a tree, expiring in torture, shrieking, “Eli, Eli, lama Sabacthani,” I ask myself, “Can any make light of *this*?” Yes, if they do, then, indeed, it were sin enough to damn them if they have no other sin—that they have lightly esteemed the Prince of Peace, who is glorious and altogether lovely! Oh, my Friend, if you make light of Christ, you have insulted the only One who can save you—the only One who can bear you across the Jordan—the only One who can unbolt the gates of Heaven and give you welcome! Let no preacher of smooth things persuade you that this is not a crime! O, Sinner, think of your sin if you are making light of Him—for then you are making light of the King’s only Son!

And yet, again, these people *made light, also, of the King* who had prepared the banquet. Ah, little do you know, O Sinner, when you do trifle with the Gospel, that you are insulting God. I have heard some say, “Sir, I do not believe in Christ, but I am still sure I try to reverence God. I do not care about the Gospel. I do not wish to be washed in Jesus’ blood, nor to be saved in Free Grace fashion, but I do not despise God. I am a natural religionist!” No, Sir, but you do insult the Almighty, inasmuch as you deny His Son! Despise a man’s offspring and you have insulted the man, himself. Reject the only-begotten Son of God and you have rejected the Eternal One, Himself! There is no such thing as true natural religion apart from Christ! It is a lie and a falsehood! It is the refuge of a man who is not brave enough to say he hates God. It is only a refuge of lies, for he who denies Christ in that act, offends God and shuts up Heaven’s gates against himself! There is no loving the Father except through the Son—and there is no acceptable worship of the Father except through the Great High Priest, the Mediator, Jesus Christ! Oh, my Friend, remember, you have not merely despised the Gospel but you have despised

the Gospel's God! In laughing at the Doctrines of Revelation, you have laughed at God. In reviling the Truth of the Gospel, you have reviled God, Himself. You have bent your fist in the face of the Eternal, your oaths have not fallen upon the Church—they have fallen upon God, Himself! O remember, you who mock at the message of Christ! O remember, you who turn away from the ministry of Truth! God is a Mighty One—remember how severely He *can* punish! God is a jealous God—oh, how severely *will* He punish! Make light of God, Sinner? Why, this, above all things, is a damning sin and in committing it, it may be you will one day sign your own death warrant! Making light of God, of Christ and of His holy Gospel is destroying one's own soul and rushing headlong to Hell! Ah, unhappy souls, most unhappy must you be if you live and die making light of Christ and preferring your farms and your merchandise to the treasures of the Gospel!

Again—I think you, my poor, pitiable Friend, when you make light of all the things I have mentioned, *are making light of the great solemnities of eternity*. The man who lightly esteems the Gospel makes light of Hell. He thinks its fires are not hot and its flames not such as Christ has described them. He makes light of the burning tears that scald despairing cheeks forever. He makes light of the yells and shrieks that must be the doleful songs and terrible music of perishing souls. Ah, it is no wise thing to make light of Hell!

Consider again—you make light of Heaven—that place to which the blessed ones long to go, where Glory reigns without a cloud and bliss without a sigh. You put the crown of everlasting life beneath your feet. You tread the palm branch beneath your unhallowed foot and you think it little to be saved and little to be glorified. “Ah, poor Soul. When you are once in Hell and when the iron key is turned forever in the lock of inevitable destiny, you will find Hell to be a something not so easy to despise! And when you have lost Heaven and all its bliss and can only hear the song of the blessed, sounding faintly in the distance, increasing your misery by contrast with their joy—then you will find it no little thing to have made light of Heaven! Every man who makes light of religion makes light of these things. He misjudges the value of his own soul and the importance of its eternal state.

This is what men make light of. “Oh, Sir,” says one, “I never indulge in any words hostile to God's Truth. I never laugh at the minister, nor do I despise the Sabbath.” Stop, my Friend, I will acquit you of all that—and yet I will solemnly lay to your charge this great sin of making light of the Gospel! Hear me, then!

II. HOW IS IT THAT MEN MAKE LIGHT OF IT?

In the first place, it is making light of the Gospel and of the whole of God's glorious things, *when men go to hear and yet do not attend*. How many frequent Churches and Chapels to indulge in a comfortable nap!

Think what a fearful insult that is to the King of Heaven. Would they enter into Her Majesty's palace, ask an audience and then go to sleep before her face? And yet the sin of sleeping in Her Majesty's presence would not be so great, even against her laws, as the sin of willfully slumbering in God's sanctuary! How many go to our houses of worship who do not sleep, but who sit with vacant stares, listening, as they would, to a man who could not play a lively tune upon a good instrument? What goes in one ear goes out the other! Whatever enters the brain goes out without ever affecting the heart. Ah, my Hearers, you are guilty of making light of God's Gospel when you sit under a sermon without attending to it! Oh, what would lost souls give to hear another sermon? What would yonder dying wretch who is just now nearing the grave, give for another Sabbath? And what will *you* give, one of these days, when you shall be hard by Jordan's brink, that you might have one more warning and listen once more to the wooing voice of God's minister? We make light of the Gospel when we hear it without solemn and close attention to it.

But some say they *do* attend. Well, it is possible to attend to the Gospel and yet to make light of it. I have seen some men weep beneath a powerful sermon. I have marked the tears chase each other—tears, blessed telltales of emotions within. I have sometimes said to myself, it is marvelous to see these people weep under some telling word from God which is alarming them, as if Sinai itself were thundering in their ears! But there is something more amazing than men's weeping under the Word of God. It is the fact that they soon, too soon, wipe all their tears away! But ah, my dear Hearer, remember that if you hear of these things and shake off a solemn impression, you are, in doing that, slighting God and making light of His Truth! And take heed how you do that, lest your own garments become red with the blood of your soul and it be said, "Oh, Israel, you have destroyed yourself."

But there are others who make light of it in a different fashion. They hear the Word and attend to it but, alas, they *attend to something else with it*.

Oh, my Hearer, you make light of Christ if you put Him anywhere except in the center of your heart! He who gives Christ a little of his affections makes light of Christ, for Christ will have the whole heart, or none at all. He who gives Christ a portion and the world a portion, despises Christ—for he seems to think that Christ does not deserve to have the whole. And inasmuch as he says that, or thinks that, he has mean and unholy thoughts of Christ! Oh, carnal Man or Woman, you who are half religious and half profane, you who are sometimes serious, but as often frivolous—sometimes apparently pious but yet so often unholy—you make light of Christ! And you who weep on Sunday and then go back to your sins on Monday. You who set the world and its pleasures before Christ—you think less of Him than He deserves—and what is that but to

make light of Him? Oh, I charge you, ask yourself, this night, my Hearer, are you not the one? Do you not make light of Christ? The self-righteous man who sets himself up as a partner with Christ in the matter of salvation, notwithstanding all his trumpery good works, is such a ringleader among despisers that I would hang him in the very middle of them and bid all like him, tremble, lest they, also, be found slights of Jesus!

He makes light of Christ, again, *who makes a profession of religion and yet does not live up to it*. Ah, Church members, you need a great deal of sifting. We have an immense quantity of chaff now mixed with the wheat—and sometimes I think we have something worse than that! We have some in our Churches who are not as good as chaff, for they do not seem to have been near the wheat at all. They are nothing better than tares. They have come into our Churches, just as they would into a trade-association, because they think it will improve their business! It gives respectability to their name to take the sacrament. It makes them esteemed to have been baptized, or to be a member of a Christian Church. And so they come in by shoals after the loaves and fishes, but not after Jesus Christ! Ah, Hypocrite! You make light of Christ if you think that He is a stalking-horse to get you wealth. If you dream that you are to saddle and bridle Christ and ride to wealth upon Him, you make a grand mistake, for He was never meant to carry men anywhere except to Heaven! If you suppose that religion was intended to gild your homes, to carpet your floors and line your purses, you have greatly erred. It was intended to be profitable to the *soul*. And he who thinks to use religion to his own personal advantage thinks lightly of Christ—and at the Last Day this crime shall be laid to his charge—that “he has made light of it,” and the King shall send His armies to cut him in pieces among those who have despised His Majesty and would not obey His laws!

III. And now, in the third place, I will tell YOU WHY THEY MADE LIGHT OF IT. They did so from different reasons.

Some of them made light of it *because they were ignorant*. They did not know how good the feast was. They did not know how gracious the King was. They did not know how fair the Prince was, or else they might have thought differently. Now there are many present tonight, I dare say, who think lightly of the Gospel because they do not understand it. I have often heard people laugh at religion. But ask them what it is and they know no more about religion than a horse does—and worse than that—for they believe untruths about it and a horse does not do that! They laugh at it simply because they do not understand it. It is a thing beyond them. We have heard of a foolish man who, whenever he heard a piece of Latin mentioned, laughed at it because he thought it was a joke—at any rate it was a very outlandish way of talking—and so he laughed! So it is with many when they hear the Gospel. They do not know what it is and so they laugh at it. “Oh,” they say, “the man is mad.” But why is he mad?

Because you do not understand him? Are you so conceited as to suppose that all wisdom and all learning must rest with you? I would hint to you that the madness is on the other side. And though you may say of him, "Much learning has made you mad," we would reply, "It is quite as easy to be made mad with none at all." And those who have none—and especially those who have no knowledge of Christ, are the most likely to despise Him. Well did Watts say—

***"His worth, if all the nations knew
Surely, the whole earth would love Him too."***

Oh, dear Friends, if you once knew what a blessed Master, Christ is. If you once knew what a blessed thing the Gospel is. If you could once be brought to believe what a blessed God our God is. If you could only have one hour's enjoyment such as the Christian experiences. If you could only have one promise applied to your heart, you would never make light of the Gospel again! Oh, you say you do not like it. Why, you have never tried it! Should a man despise the wine of which he has never sipped? It may be sweeter than he dreams! Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good and, as sure as ever you taste, you will see His goodness! I will venture to say, again, that there are many who make light of the Gospel simply through ignorance. And if that is so, I am somewhat in hopes that when they are a little enlightened by sitting under the Word, the Lord may be graciously pleased to bring them to Himself—and then I know they will never make light of Christ again! Oh, do not be ignorant, "for that the soul to be without knowledge is not good." Seek to know Him whom to know aright is life eternal—and when you know Him, you will never make light of Him!

Other people make light of it *because of pride*. "What is the good," said one, "of bringing me that invitation? Step into my house, my Man, I will show you a feast quite as good as any you can tell me of. Look here! There is good cheer for you. My table is as well spread as any man's. Begging his Majesty's pardon, the King cannot give a better feast than I. I do not see why I should drag my bones about to get nothing better than I can get at home." So he would not go out, for pride. And so with some of you. *You* want to be washed? No—you were never filthy, were you? *You* need to be forgiven? Oh, no—you are rather too good for that! Why, you are so awfully pious in your own conceit that if it were all true, you would make even the angel Gabriel blush to think of you. You do not even think an angel capable of holding a candle to you. What? *You* seek for mercy? It is an insult to you. "Go and tell the drunkard," you say. "Go and fetch the harlot. But *I* am a respectable man, I always go to church or chapel, I am a very good sort of fellow. I may frolic, now and then, but I make it up some other day. I am sometimes a little slack, but then I rein the horses in and make up the distance afterwards. And I dare say I shall get to Heaven as soon as anybody else. I am a very good sort!" Well, my Friend, I do not wonder that you despise the Gospel, for the Gospel

tells you that you are entirely lost. It tells you that your very righteousness is full of sin! That as for any hope of your being saved by it, you might as well try to sail across the Atlantic on a sere leaf as try to get to Heaven by your righteousness. And as for it being a garment fit to cover you, you might as well get a spider's web to go to court in and think it a dress fit to appear in before her Majesty. Ah, My hearer, I know why you despise Christ—it is because of your Satanic pride! May the Lord pull the pride out of you, for if He does not, it will be the fire wood that shall roast your soul forever! Take heed of pride—by pride, the angels fell—how can men, then, though the image of their Maker, hope to win by it? Shun it, flee from it—for as sure as you are proud, you will incur the guilt of making light of Christ!

Perhaps quite as many made light of the good news because *they did not believe the messenger*. “Oh,” they said, “stop a moment. What? A dinner to be given away? I do not believe it! What? The young Prince going to be married? Tell that to fools—we do not believe any such thing! What? We are all invited? We do not believe it, the story is incredible.” The poor messenger went home and told his Master that they would not believe him. That is just another reason why many men make light of the Gospel—because they do not believe it. “What?” they say “Jesus Christ died to wash men from their sins? We do not believe it! What? A Heaven? Who ever saw it? A Hell? Who ever heard its groans? What? Eternity? Who ever returned from that last hope of every spirit? What? Blessedness in religion? We do not believe it—it is a moping, miserable thing! What? Sweetness in the Promises? No there is not—we believe there is sweetness in the world, but we do not believe there is any in the wells the Lord has dug.” And so they despise the Gospel because they do not believe it. But I am sure that when a man once believes it, he never thinks lightly of it. Once let me have the solemn conviction in my heart by the Holy Spirit that if unsaved, there is a gaping gulf that shall devour me—do you think I can go to rest till I have trembled from head to foot? Once let me heartily believe that there is a Heaven provided for those who believe on Christ—do you think I could give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, till I have wept because it is not mine? I believe not! But damnable unbelief thrusts his hand into the mouth of man and plucks up his heart and so destroys him, for it will not let him believe! And, therefore, he cannot feel, because he believes not. Oh, my Friends, it is unbelief that makes men think lightly of Christ! But unbelief will not do so, by-and-by. There are no infidels in Hell—they are all Believers there! There are many that were infidels, here, but they are not so now! The flames are too hot to make them doubt their existence! It is hard for a man, tormented in the flame, to doubt the existence of the fire! It would be difficult for a man, standing before the burning eyes of a God, to doubt the existence of a God after all that! Ah, Unbelievers, turn, or rather, may the Lord turn

you from your unbelief, for this makes you think lightly of Christ and this it is that is taking away your life and destroying your souls!

Another set of people thought lightly of this feast because *they were so worldly*—they had so much to do. I have heard of a rich merchant who was waited on one day by a godly man and when he stopped him, he said to him, “Well, Sir, what is the state of your soul?” “Soul!” he said. “I have no time to take care of my soul. I have enough to do to take care of my ships.” About a week after, it so happened that he had to find time to die, for God took him away. We fear He said to him, “You fool! This night your soul shall be required of you—then whose shall those things be which you have hoarded up for yourself?” You merchants of London, there are many of you who read your ledgers more than your Bibles! Perhaps you must. But you do not read your Bibles at all, while you read your ledgers every day. In America, it is said, they worship the almighty dollar. I believe that in London many men worship the almighty sovereign. They have the greatest possible respect for an almighty bank note—that is the god which many men are always adoring. The prayer book they carry so religiously in their hands is their cash book. Even on Sunday, there is a gentleman over there—he does not think his foreman knows it—but he was sitting indoors all this morning because it was wet, casting up his accounts. And now he comes here in the evening, because he is a very pious man—extraordinarily so! He would shut the parks up on a Sunday, he would—he would not let a soul get a breath of fresh air because he is so pious. But he, himself, may sit half-a-day in the counting house and yet think it no sin! But many are too busy to think of these things. “Pray!” they say, “I have no time for that! I have to pray? What? Read the Bible? No I cannot. I have to be looking over this thing and that thing and seeing how the markets go. I find time to read the Times, but I could not think of reading the Bible,” It will be marvelously unfortunate for some of you that you will find the lease of your lives rather shorter than you expected! If you had taken a lease of your lives for 88 years from this date, you would be foolish enough, perhaps, to spend 44 in sin. But considering that you are a tenant at will and liable to be turned out any day, it is the height of folly, the very climax of absurdity, excelling all that the fool with his cap and bells ever did—to be living just to gather up the pelf of this world and not for things to come! Worldliness is a demon that has wrung the neck of many souls. God grant that we may not perish through our worldliness!

There is another class of people that I can only characterize in this way—*they are altogether thoughtless*. If you ask them concerning religion, they have no opinion at all about it. They do not positively detest it, they do not mock at it, but they have not a thought about it! The fact of it is they intend thinking about it, by-and-by. Theirs is a kind of butterfly existence—they are always moving about, never doing anything—neither

for others or themselves. And these are very amiable people who are always ready to give a guinea for a charity, they never refuse anybody! And they would give their guinea, all the same, whether it was for a cricket match or a church! Now, if I were forced to go back to the world and had to choose the character I would wish to be, the last position I would wish to occupy would be that of the thoughtless man. I believe thoughtless persons are in the most danger of being lost of any class. I know I like, sometimes, to get under the Word a thoroughly stout, stiff, hater of the Gospel for his heart is like a flint. And when it is struck with the hammer of the Gospel, the flint goes to pieces in a moment! But these thoughtless people have thick rubber hearts—you hit them and they give way. You strike them again and they give way. If they are sick and you visit them, they say, “yes.” You talk to them about the importance of religion, they say, “yes.” You talk to them about escaping from Hell and entering Heaven, they say, “yes.” You preach a sermon to them when they are better and remind them of the vows they made in their sickness. “It is quite right, Sir,” they say. And they say the same whatever you may tell them. They are always very polite to you, but whatever you say to them is put aside. If you begin talking to them about drunkards, oh, they are not drunkards—they may have accidentally got drunk, once—but that was a little thing out of the usual way. And bring whatever sin you like to them, you may hit them and hit them, but it is no good, for they are not half as easily broken (speaking after the manner of men) as the real stout-hearted hater of the Gospel! Why, there is a sailor comes rolling home from sea, swearing, blaspheming, cursing. He comes into the House of God and almost the first word is applied by the Spirit for the breaking of Jack’s heart! Another young man says, “I know as much as any minister can tell me, for my own mother taught me and my old father used to read the Bible for me till, I believe, I have got every bit of it in my head. I go to Chapel out of respect to his memory, but I really don’t care at all about it. It is very good for old people. It is quite right for old women and those who are dying. And in time of cholera, it is a very good thing, but I don’t care anything about it just now.” Now, I tell you, you careless people, most solemnly, that you are the very devil’s lifeguards! You are his reserve—he keeps you away from the battle—he does not send you out like he does a blasphemer, for he fears that a shot may haply light upon you and you may be saved. But he says, “Stand by here and if you have to go out I will give you an impenetrable coat of mail.” The arrows go rattling against you—they all hit you—but alas—there is not one of them that penetrates your heart, for that is left elsewhere. You are only an empty chrysalis and when you come to God’s House and His Word is preached, you make light of it because it is your habit to be thoughtless about everything.

Very briefly I must touch another case and then I must dismiss you. You may make light of the Gospel *out of sheer presumption*. They are like the foolish man who goes on and is punished—not like the prudent man, who, “foresees the evil and hides himself.” They go on, that step is safe—they take it. The next step is safe—they take it. Their foot hangs over a gulf of darkness. But they will try one step and as that is safe, they think they will try the next. And as the last has been safe and as for many years they have been safe, they suppose they always shall be! And because they have not died yet, they think they will never die! And so, out of sheer presumption they think, “all men mortal but themselves.” And so they go on making light of Christ. Tremble, you presumptions, you will not always be able to do that!

And, lastly, I fear there are a great many who make light of Christ *because of the commonness of the Gospel*. It is preached everywhere and that is why you make light of it. You can hear it at the corner of every street. You can read it in this widely circulated Bible and because the Gospel is so common, therefore, you don't care for it. Ah, my dear Friends, if there were only one Gospel minister in London that could tell you the Truth. If there were only one Bible in London, I believe you would be rushed to hear that Bible read! And the man who had the message would have no easy go of it—he would be obliged to work from morning to night—to proclaim it to you. But now, because you have so many Bibles, you forget to read them! Because you have so many tracts, you pack up any article in them. Because you have so many sermons, you do not think anything at all of them. Why is that? Do you think the less of the sun because he scatters his beams abroad? Do you think the less of bread because it is the food which God gives to all His children? Do you think the less of water, when you are thirsty, because every brook will afford it to you? No. If you were thirsty after Christ, you would love Him all the better because He is preached everywhere—and you would not think lightly of Him because of that.

“They made light of it.” How many of my hearers, tonight, I ask again, are making light of Christ? Many of you are, no doubt. I will give you, then, just one warning and then farewell. Make light of Christ, Sinner? Let me say, again, to you—you will rue the day when you come on your deathbed. It will go hard with you when the bony monster has got the grip of you and when he is bringing you down the river, to steep you in the Lake of Death. It will go hard with you when your eye-strings break and when your death sweat stands upon your brow. Remember last time you had a fever? Ah, how you did shake! Remember, last night, how you did quake in your bed when flash after flash of lightning came through your window—and how you did tremble when the deep-mouthed thunder spoke out the voice of God? Ah, Sinner, you will tremble worse, then, when you shall see Death for yourself and when the bony rider, on his

white horse, shall grasp his dart and plunge it in your heart! It will go hard with you, then, if you have no Christ to shelter you—no blood wherein to wash your soul! Remember, moreover, after death comes the Judgment! It will go hard with you if you have despised Christ and shall die a despiser. See that flying angel? His wings are made of flame and in his hand he grasps a sharp two-edged sword. O angel, where do you wing your speedy flight? “Hark!” he says, “this trumpet shall tell you—” “And he puts a trumpet to his lips and—

***“Blows a blast so loud and dread,
Never were prophetic sounds so full of woe!”***

Look! The sheeted dead have started from their graves! Behold, the cloudy chariot is wheeled along by cherub’s hands. Mark! There upon the throne sits the King—the Prince. O angel, what in this terrible day must become of the man who has thought lightly of Christ? See there, he unsheathes his sword! “This blade,” he says, “shall find and pierce him through. This blade, like a sickle, shall reap each tare from the wheat and this strong arm shall bind him up in his bundle to be burned. And this great arm of mine shall grasp him and hurl him down, down, down, where flames forever burn and Hell forever howls!” It will go hard with you, then! Mark this man’s word, tonight, go away and laugh at it, but remember, I say to you again—it will be a solemn thing for you when Christ shall come to judge, if you have made light of Him. And worse than all, if you should ever be locked up in the caverns of despair. If you should ever hear it said, “Depart you cursed.” If you should ever mingle your awful shrieks with the doleful howls of lost myriads. If you should see the Pit that is bottomless and the gulf that has walls of fire—it will be a fearful thing to find yourself in there—and to know that you can never get out!

Sinner, this night I preach the Gospel to you. Wherever you go, hear it and believe it! May God grant you Grace to receive it, so you shall be saved. “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believes not,” so says the Scripture, “shall be damned.” To believe is to put your trust in Christ. To be baptized is to be plunged in water in the name of the Lord Jesus, as a profession that you are already saved and that you love Christ. “He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved and he that believes not shall be damned.” O may you never know, by His Grace, the meaning of that last word. Farewell!

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

GUESTS FOR THE ROYAL FEAST NO. 3328

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

***“Then said He to His servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were invited were not worthy. Go you therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, invite to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.”
Matthew 22:8-10.***

IN the previous verses of this striking parable, we see that the Great King had been ungraciously treated by his subjects, and had in his wrath swept the rebels away. But there was the feast still waiting for guests and the time had arrived to celebrate the nuptials of his son. The terror of the royal power had been proven, but it still remained to display the splendor of the imperial hospitality. Therefore, while yet the clash of arms is in our ears, we hear the voice of royal clemency! The din of war and the tramp of warriors have not caused the wedding or its feast to be forgotten, neither has wrath obliterated mercy! We read that “he sent forth his armies, and slew those murderers, and burned up their city,” but in the next line we find the record, “then said he to his servants, go you into the highways, and as many as you shall find, invite to the marriage.” In wrath he remembers mercy. On the heels of his men at arms he dispatches the ambassadors of peace. His power went forth to destroy his enemies, but it also went with his messengers to gather the needy from the streets. Judgment is the Lord’s strange work, but He delights in mercy! Once He smites, but not till He has thrice invited the rebels come to Him. And when at last He overthrows the incorrigible, He takes occasion from it to extend His bounty to many others. Truly, God is Love!

In the present portion of the parable, we are allowed to behold the king engaged with his servants in—

I. A CONTEMPLATION OF THE REFUSAL given to his bounty. The royal host appears, as it were, to be in consultation with his servants. What a conception! The Eternal Father considers the position of affairs occasioned by the infamous conduct of those who rejected the Gospel of His Son! It is clearly no small matter to Him. The Glory of the Only-Begotten lies near His heart. He is set forth as a King surveying the preparations made and considering the lack of guests. “The wedding is ready, but they which were invited were not worthy.” The Divine Mind is pictured after the manner of men, as greatly moved and agitated with the

dilemma before it. There could be no banquet without guests, and yet guests there were none—and in such a case there would be waste, disappointment, dishonor and the lack of that joyous element so befitting the celebration of a marriage! In vain the fatted kine, the choice flour, the wine and the oil if none came to partake thereof. For lack of a better word, we described the condition as one of embarrassment to the host! And so, indeed, it would have been had not the Host been God, Himself, of whose understanding there is no searching! Nothing is dark to Him, but from the human point of view it did seem to be a dilemma, indeed, when Jesus came to His own and His own received Him not—when the hands of Mercy were stretched out in vain all the daylong to a disobedient and gainsaying generation! Perhaps you may yourself have been at much cost to prepare a feast, have exercised much thought to please your company and have counted upon the fellowship of the entertainment—and then through some untoward circumstances no one has come at the expected time! It was a great trouble to you and dampened your joy. Had it been a marriage it would have been far worse.

Now it was not possible in this parable to teach the Doctrines of Foreknowledge and Omniscience, or else the figure would have broken down. No one metaphor can teach all the Truths of God, or all the sides of Truth. We have here the human aspect of the matter, and should carefully note it. The parable is meant to let us see what the thoughts of God are when He sees sinners refuse to come to Him and partake in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. With wonder, behold the Divine Mind as it contemplates the scene. All things are ready, there is nothing more for God to do in the work of our salvation. In order to honor the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing remains but that men believe on Him and receive His Grace! The Lord has fulfilled His promises! His Son has been Incarnate. The active life of holiness, Christ has lived. The passive obedience to the Law, Christ has rendered. If the soul needs spiritual meat, Christ is that meat. If the soul needs spiritual drink, Christ is that drink—and of both meat and drink there is good store in Him. If men, before they can come and honor Christ at the marriage feast, need washing, there is a fountain filled with blood! If they require clothing, there is a robe of matchless righteousness! If they desire adornment, there are jewels of great price. “All things are ready,” nothing is lacking—nothing but hearts to receive the blessing!

As the case stood in the parable, *a certain number of men had been invited*. It seems to be the theory of some theologians that none ought to have been invited but those who were sure to come. They hold, as we rejoice to hold, that there is an Election of Grace. In holding the Doctrines of Grace with a firm grasp, they do well, but they err when they teach that the invitation is to be restricted to the chosen, for here it is as clear as daylight that the first invitation was given to those who never were in the Election of Grace at all! They which were invited proved to be “not worthy,” and yet they were invited, over and over again, honestly and in

good faith. The King said they were invited, and this means that God Himself willed that the rejecters of His Grace should be invited! His servants did not do wrong in inviting them, for the king bade them do so. It has been said, "It is useless to bid sinners come to Christ who are dead and will not come." It is useless as far as *we* can see—useless as to the bringing of them in—but we do not know all God's ends and designs and some things, in which we see no use, may, nevertheless, be necessary to His purpose! We imagine that flowers "waste their sweetness on the desert air," but there is no wastefulness in the Great Householder's arrangements—and the Divine Economy will one day be justified! There are parts of God's plan in which we see the evident utility, and it remains for our faith to believe that all the rest will turn out to be equally filled with wisdom. The preacher of the Gospel is "a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved, and in them that perish—to the one he is a savor of death unto death—and to the other the savor of life unto life." But he is still a sweet savor! We are still to preach the Gospel to sinners and to invite them come—invite them come even though they will not come! We are to continue to invite those who go their way to their farm and to their merchandise. Nor must we fail to call even those who despitely use us. Far wider than the acceptance is the invitation, for, "many are called, but few are chosen." The Divine arrangement foreknew it would be so!

All things are ready, then, and men are invited, but it is said that *they were not worthy*. What is meant by that? Surely the Gospel is not a matter of worthiness, for "in due time Christ died for the ungodly," and He has "come to seek and to save that which was lost." So far as any worthiness of personal righteousness is concerned, there certainly is no worthiness in any son of Adam—and the expression must not be so understood. We need no worthiness of merit in order to come to the Gospel feast—but this is a mode of expression used to denote the fitness of things. It was not fit that men who preferred their paltry possessions to the king's favor, and were traitors at heart, should unite in the festivities of the princely marriage. They thought themselves too good and *this* was their unworthiness! They were too proud, too self-sufficient, too high-minded to be a worthy recipient of bounty and favor. He is the worthy receiver under the Gospel who comes feeling his unworthiness and accepts the Gospel provision as a gift of Divine Grace—but he who will not come because he thinks the Gospel unworthy of him, shows himself to be unworthy of it!

When we determine to forgive an offender, we do not count him unworthy to be restored to our favor until he denies his fault and in defiance of our love insults us again and again. Even then mercy feels that he must be left to himself. He who continues to reject the pardon which the Gospel proclaims and hardens his neck after many reproofs, dying as he now is, will have proved his utter unworthiness of Grace. If a royal alms were to be given away to the poor without regard to their character.

If a poor person came and gratefully received it, his previous life would not disqualify him. But if another should mock at the almoners and ridicule the gift, he would prove that he was not worthy. Not his poverty, but his proud behavior would disqualify him! Dear Friend, are you willing to be saved in God's way, through faith in Christ Jesus? Then rest assured you have all the worthiness that is needed! Stand not back, therefore, because you are sinful! Say not, "I am unworthy," because you have no good works, for self-righteousness would not prove you to be a fit object for Grace, but the reverse, since Grace is for sinners—for the undeserving and the lost!

See you, then, in what position the royal Host was placed? There was the good cheer for the wedding. The dainties were not only at hand, but actually ready. The oxen were not fattening in the stalls, but already killed, cooked and ready for serving. In the East the heat is such that animal food must be eaten at once—and in this case it was already upon the table. More than this, the wedding was ready, the appointed day had dawned. What was to be done? There was one alternative and that was to annul the wedding and let the matter drop. This neither the king nor his son could think of. An invitation had been sent and those who were invited would not come! Wrath in hot haste might have said, "Close the door forever!" But no, God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, neither are His ways as our ways. The Lord might have said when the Gospel was rejected by the Jews, "These are like unto others of the sons of men, they are all reprobate. I will not have mercy upon them, but will ease me of My adversaries." When Jesus came to His own and met so unhand-some a reception, He might have said, "I will return to My place from where I came. If I come here to die for men and men yield Me no better reception in My Infancy than a manger. If they give Me no better occupation than a carpenter. If they call Me by no better name than that of a Galilean. If they afford Me no better entertainment than to be homeless, without a place to lay My head—then will I go back and let them see what will come of it. Let the Covenant be annulled, let the Gospel be re-vo- ked, let mercy end and let the ungrateful race go down to eternal mi- sery!"

But Jehovah is God and changes not and, therefore, we are not con- sumed! It was not in the heart of the king to go back from his purpose, or cease from his bounty. His son's wedding must go on. The feast must be eaten and the banquet must be such as to display his magnificence. To honor his son was the motive which swayed the king in the parable, and such a master motive reigns in the heart of God. "No," said the king, "the wedding shall be furnished with guests. There shall be no disappoint- ment for my son on this happy day. I will yet make my kingdom ring with the fame of his marriage festival! Behold the plan which I had kept back, but which this day I reveal to my servants. My first invitation, as I knew of old, has revealed the insincerity and treachery of those who were in- vited. I now unveil another method which shall assuredly display my

grace and sovereign favor. I will bring in whomever I will to eat bread at this wedding! I will take the base things of the earth to confound the mighty, and things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are." Now, observe this, you who have heard the Gospel so long, but have rejected it—God will not, therefore, recall the Gospel or disannul His Covenant of Love, or call back the provisions of His Grace because not for your sake, but for His Son's sake and for His own honor's sake, He has resolved to go through with this matter! Jesus shall not be Incarnate in vain! The oxen and the fatlings of the Covenant shall not be slain for nothing—good shall conquer evil, mercy shall rejoice over judgment—Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied! The Redeemer's union with His Church shall not be unattended by those rich displays of Divine Grace which shall make it the wonder of all the ages!

Though *those who were first invited, refused*. Though they thought to dishonor the Lord by so doing, *His purpose shall stand* and His chosen shall be saved. Has the Lord been foiled yet in anything that He has attempted? Who has ever restrained the Everlasting One? Or who has said unto Him, "what are you doing?" Did chaos by its wild confusion prevent the ordering of the world? Did not the Spirit move upon the water and bring forth life and order there? When darkness was on the face of the deep, could that resist Him? Did not the words, "light be," scatter the darkness at once? And it shall be so now, in the world of mind as well as in the world of matter, for Jehovah is Lord of spirits and does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower world! Though some think not so, yet full surely is it a sort of atheism to deny the almightiness of God in the realm of mind! In both He rules supremely without violating the nature of either, except it is for His Glory to work unusual miracles. Many cannot understand how this can be unless we reduce mind to the bondage of matter—and conceive of men as machines, destitute of free agency—but in this they lose the Glory of the Truth of God! The *Omnipotence* of God is glorified in the fact that while man has a will, yet God governs him as a free agent. He does not violate the will, and yet knows how, by spiritual forces, to work His own purposes, so that man does as *He* wills. That God rules man as a builder rules his stones and timber is the idea of idiots, but that He leaves them men, in full possession of their freedom, and yet achieves the purposes of His Grace is the Truth of God! He has mysterious cords of love and bands of a man with which to draw men—they are compelled to come in, but yet "the people willingly offer themselves." It is a paradox, and so is every Truth of God, if we are willing to see it all. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it and, therefore, I accept it as all the more clearly in harmony with the attributes of Him whose ways are past finding out. You see, then, that God's great determination is to go on with His Gospel festival. He condescendingly seems *to His servants*, to turn it over in His mind, but it had all been in His plan from old eter-

nity and He now unveils it. The words of the parable lay bare to spiritual minds the mysteries of God's dealings with Israel and the Gentiles—and bring us down to the period when the great Gospel mystery, which had been hidden from kings and Prophets, was brought to light, and the nations were made to see the salvation of God in Christ Jesus, His Son!

Let us pass on to another consideration and observe—

II. THE COMMISSION ENLARGED. “They that were invited were not worthy. Go you therefore” (for that very reason) “into the highways, and as many as you shall find invite to the marriage.”

It was a disappointment to the servants that the often invited guests would not come, but they were to have an abundant recompense in seeing a far more grateful company assembled—and *a far more remarkable assembly than could have gathered at the palace had the invited ones come at their call.* To the servants it must have appeared little short of a catastrophe that guests should be lacking. No feast, especially a royal one, would be complete without willing guests! To force men by violence would not answer the purpose—they must be cheerful, joyful, delighted feasters, or they would turn the wedding into slavery! The problem was how to get these willing and joyful guests—where could they be found? The king knew well where they were and pointed out the method of wisdom when he said, “Go out into the highways where the poor are wandering and where the hungry faint by the way; go out where the many are and invite them come and feast to the full; as many as you find invite to the marriage.” Ah, how did these vagrants of the highways, these tramps, these hawkers, tinkers and beggars who so little expected ever to be invited—who, according to all human calculations were quite uninvitable and unpresentable at court—how did they rejoice to be invited to the marriage? The Gospel which is despised by the proud is sweet to those who are in spiritual destitution! Know, then, that in order to bring in welcome guests to the feast of mercy, the old commission of the Prophets was enlarged in the delivery to the Apostles—they were not restrained to the Jews who were invited, but to every creature! They were sent out into all the world as itinerant commissioners with unlimited power to bid men believe in Jesus! Ministers of Christ, yes, and all Christians are now sent on the same errand—and to all of you is the word of this salvation sent!

Who were to go? “Then said he unto *his servants.*” You see, then, that those went who had gone before and had been rejected, or even despitefully used. And we gather from this that disappointments in our former labors are not reasons for retirement, but arguments for increased activity and that the servants whose messages have been refused should, nevertheless, spring forward and say, “Here are we, send us!” I hear these neglected messengers pleading after this fashion, “Gracious king, permit us to go again. We stood astonished and we wept bitterly as we heard the refusal of Your enemies, but now grant us the joy of conducting others of our fellow subjects into Your royal halls.” If any among us have hitherto spent our strength for nothing, let us beg leave to proclaim the Gospel

again in hope of better success! Those who have had large success are the very last to dream of being excused from further service—they are wedded to the work forever! I would to God that you who have been unsuccessful may be equally so.

To whom were the messengers to go? Their path lay straight before them. Out of doors was their road and the common thoroughfare their field—they were to invite all that they found! I do not understand these words if they do not mean just this—that we are to tell the Gospel to everybody with whom we meet. “As many as you shall find, invite to the marriage.” That is, everybody you see, pass, live with, deal with, know or hear of—everybody that Providence and effort will enable you to reach! Perhaps one of the servants, as he went out, ran into his own brother. “Brother,” said he, “I pray you come to the prince’s wedding! There is a lack of guests and you will be welcome.” Perhaps he went a little farther and met with his sister, or his mother, or his father and at once he cried, “Come, dear ones! Come to the wedding! the king has bid me invite all I meet with, and I have met you—come at once.” Then as he went farther out he saw a beggar in his rags, limping on crutches. He knew him to be a strange character, and not at all in his face, or his limbs, or his garments, fitted to adorn a royal feast—but he said to him, “There is a great feast ready and it is open to you. The king told me to invite all I found.” “Shouldn’t I like it!” said the beggar, “but may I go?” “Yes, beyond all doubt, for he who bade me invite all will not refuse any who come.” The messenger ran on and joined himself to a chariot in which there rode a great nobleman—having invited his lordship, he hastened on to call a thief and a woman that was a sinner, nor did he pause until the time was come to return to him that sent him. Those servants, I should imagine, had an odd experience of many singular characters, outcasts, eccentrics and good-for-nothings! But they did as they were told and it was a great pleasure to them to do so. The singular benevolence of their errand gave it a great charm. They gathered, before long, a motley group—bad and good, rich and poor, high and low, lame, blind, sick and sorry! It was Noah’s Ark over again, for clean and unclean were fetched in, and there were guests enough, though there was quite room for all. They had no fear of calling too many or of inviting the wrong people—their commission from their master gave them ample room and space enough, and they were not slow in carrying it out to the letter. O for Grace to follow their blessed example! Let all Believers try to do so!

It is not ours alone to instruct these who come to us, but to go after men to press instruction upon them. Granted that in this climate we need the shelter of a roof as a rule, yet let it be accepted as a necessary evil and never regarded as a religious requirement, much less as a jail wherein the preaching of the Gospel must be confined! Leave church, chapel, tabernacle, meetinghouse at once, if the masses are not reached by you, and go out into the public hall, the market, or the field if there an

audience can be secured. The Gospel message is not, "Wait within," but, "Go you out!" What says that grand old missionary text? "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Out of your pulpit, Sir! Do not believe in the virtue of that cushion and tassel. Out, I say, into the public places! No, it is not I, but your Lord that bids you! Make the Gospel to be known *in the highways, in the public places—invite as many as you find*. This is the ordained way of furnishing the wedding with guests. The old way of only inviting those to come who have been invited many times before has become a failure—henceforth use the generous Gospel way—seek out the strangers, the hitherto uninvited, the unevangelized, the ignorant, the irreligious! And to them proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord! Some of us must prophesy in public places to the crowds who need a trumpet voice. And others of us must run along the byways and invite men come in little groups or one by one. Away there at the street corners, where the idlers lounge whom no man has hired, go and find guests for your Master! Yonder where a giddy company dance to a defiling song, or where others listen to an idle tale—there bear your Message of Life! Press the Good News upon the hungry at the workhouse door and the felon in his cell! And pass not by the fallen woman, or even her seducer, whose filthy eyes are searching for fresh objects for his lust! Tell the drunk, when you find him sober, of Heaven's wines on the lees well-refined, and the beggar, of an alms most rich and free!

All sorts of persons, bad and good, as many as you find, without exception, you must invite! You need not fear that you will invite an unwelcome guest, nor that too large a company will come. You will never exhaust your Master's provision or His patience. Go and do as He tells you and find as many as you can, for those you bring, He will receive. If there is one whom you, in your unbelief, would pass over, the probabilities are that he is one whom God decrees to bless, for He sees not as man sees and chooses not after man's preferences. You would forget, perhaps, the poor, but, "God has chosen the poor of this world." You might, perhaps, overlook the abject, but, "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The discrimination lies with God—not with you! Who are elect He knows, but you know not, nor should you wish to know till He reveals them—it is enough for you that He has much people in this city. Other sheep the Savior has who are not yet of His visible fold, whom also He must bring in. Go you and be His instruments in the matter! No, pause not, wish not to make a difference. God reveals His discriminating Grace by an universal indiscriminate preaching of the Gospel! He often works by seeking contraries and achieves His purpose by that which man counts foolishness. He is the best judge of fitness and consistency—it is not yours to judge His methods, but to obey His commands.

Thus we have contemplated the enlargement of the Gospel commission. Now let us see—

III. THE COMMISSION FULFILLED. The servants were commanded to go and they went. O for the same ready obedience on our parts. No ser-

vant said, "I am not fit to go," or, "I dare not," but it is written, "*So those servants went out.*" Will that be the case in this Church? The pastor must lead the way—will you go, you deacons and elders, one and all? Who among you will be so base as to withhold? You members of the Church, will you go? Dare you refuse the Divine Call? Sister, will you go? You need not travel far with your feet—your household duties are your highway. Speak to those in it tonight! You, my Friend, yonder, are employed in a workroom where many hands are busy—use, I pray you, your opportunities. Perhaps they find opportunities of ridiculing your religion—make a courageous return by telling them what religion has done for you. Whenever the day of God's power is come, His people are made willing for His service! Before the 3,000 were called at Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. There are two sorts of enquirers and the one always comes before the other—enquiring saints lead on enquiring sinners—"For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." When God's servants go after sinners, sinners come after Christ! That is God's usual rule. "By the foolishness of preaching," which there includes all sorts of Christian teaching, the Lord ordains to save them that believe.

No doubt *every servant went his own way*, for if you observe, the word, "highways," is in the plural. If they had all gone together they would have wasted their strength, but when one went one road and one another, many more would be met with. I think I see them outside the door as they rush out at their master's command! One of the elder servants cries, "Brethren, stop a minute! Let us arrange ourselves and agree to scour the city. You run along the north road, and you traverse the south. You take the east, and I will go the west." No doubt some irregular Brother would say, "I cannot be fettered with rules, I shall go where I can." "Very well," they would say, "go, Brother, but mind you do not loiter." Probably those would be the better sort who accepted the brotherly agreement and so carried it out that the whole city was canvassed and the entire district traversed. See how pleased they all are, how earnest and how swift! How I could wish to have been one of them! Have you such a wish? Well, we can be! We may go at once. It fills my soul with pleasure to think that I am sent to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to poor lost souls! There is no joy like it, except that of seeing them actually saved! These good servants, when they found that the king was so surprisingly generous, that since the nobility and aristocracy would not come, he intended to bring in the beggars and the highwaymen, and those that slept under the hedges—must have felt such joy in spirit that they leaped along and cried aloud, "Whoever will, let him come to the royal wedding, for the king has bid us to invite as many as we find, both good and bad."

So all those servants went forth, but though they went different ways they all found guests, for *they gathered together all as many as they*

found, and there was enough to completely furnish the chamber with guests! When God sends His servants, they go on no fruitless errand! When He makes them willing to go here and there, declaring His mercy, there are sure to be chosen ones in their road! The Lord puts sinners in our way on purpose that we may do them good—and if we are awake to seize all opportunities—God will bless our endeavors.

Though the servants went different ways you will observe they all pointed those they found to one central place. They “*gathered together* all as many as they found.” They all said as they were told, “Come to the wedding,” and to each one as he enquired the way, they said, “Behold the feast.” Wherever the servants were, their fingers pointed to the royal palace. What a mercy it is when an earnest Christian Church has no theme but Christ. When the pastor is set upon bringing sinners to Jesus and all the brotherhood are filled with the same longing! Happy is it when all the testimonies are one! If you step into the Sunday school, the teachers are not preaching up salvation by good works to the little ones, but Jesus only! And if you go into the Bible class, they are not teaching ceremonialism, but cleansing by the precious blood! There are many agents, but they are all working with one design—their spheres vary but not their doctrines—their talents differ but not their messages!

As a result of this agency all kinds of individuals came to the banquet, “*both bad and good.*” In any genuine work of Grace the converts will never be of one class—there will be the rich, Glory be to God when they are brought! There will be the poor and the Lord’s name be praised for it! We may expect to see the children of godly parents converted, but we may also hope to welcome those who never heard the name of God! We have been rejoiced to hear during the last few days of the infidel being converted! It has been a great joy to mark the tears of a woman that was a sinner, and to hear the cries of those who had been accustomed to the drunkard’s settle, while many have come who were aforesaid excellent in character and outwardly religious. When the Gospel is preached to every creature, it gathers together those who in the judgment of men are both good and bad!

But how was it that so many people who were in the highways when the servants rushed out and told them so hurriedly to come, were found willing to accept the invitation? They had received no previous invitation, yet they came—while those who had timely notice would not come. How strange are the ways of men! How stranger, still, the ways of God! We have seen it—seen it to our joy and our grief—to our joy that some who never heard the Gospel before have come to Jesus the very first time they have heard about Him! To our grief because those who have known the Gospel from their youth up have still refused to obey its glorious message! Why was it that they came? They came because *the King who sent the servants, sent a secret power with them.* He had prepared the people in the streets to come!

Our exposition and exhortation shall close with the sweetest word of all. Notwithstanding the first failure, the commission being enlarged and fulfilled, we now see—

IV. THE KING'S DESIGN ACCOMPLISHED—“*The wedding was furnished with guests.*” It had before, everything else *but* guests. Now it has guests also. So, when the Gospel is preached to all nations, the power of God works with it and His eternal purposes are fulfilled! Jesus sees of the travail of His soul. His union with manhood is graced with a joyful festival!

Observe this, that *the king's bounty was, after all, illustrated.* Those who were first invited would not come, they did not care to be receivers of his royal bounty. But now he shines in liberality more than if they *had* come, for everyone tells it—“This king made a feast for beggars, for streetwalkers, for highwaymen and for all sorts of people.” His name was sounded abroad among the many through his condescending goodness! If moralists refuse the Savior, then when He converts the grossly guilty, He shall have a greater name for Grace than ever! The refusal of Pharisees shall redound to His Glory, inasmuch as He invites the publicans. He intended when he killed his oxen and his fatlings that all should be eaten, and he could not have secured this more certainly than by bringing in the famishing poor, for these brought with them ravenous appetites! All the mercy of God is meant to be used and when He converted such as we are, He chose the right way to have His mercy magnified, for we have been receiving of His fullness, Grace for Grace, and are still hungering for more! No part of the banquet of mercy shall go untouched! We need all that is stored in the Covenant. There will be enough for us, but we shall have need of all.

The king intended his feast to promote happiness and *there was ten times more happiness produced by bringing in the poor and needy from the streets, than if the great ones, who were first invited, had come.* What happiness to the hungry to feed on the Bread of Heaven! Never had such a meal been set before them in all their lives! They had not even in their *dreams* thought of sitting at an imperial table! How they looked at each other as they enjoyed the fat things full of marrow! How one smiled at the other and said, “what a feast is this for a hungry soul! I was never filled like this before!” And, oh, since God has brought in some of us, such great sinners, I am sure there are none so happy as we are! None can rejoice so much in pardoning love and adopting Grace and all the riches of the Covenant. Instead of the Lord being defeated in His design of making men happy, He has won a glorious victory through the refusal of His enemies. The Jews refused, but the Gentiles glorify Him more! The regular religionists reject Christ, but the sinners accept Him and are glad.

He intended also that his son should have honor, and surely, if he desired shouts of praise for his son, he found the right men to do it heartily and lustily. If the very respectable people had come, they would have

taken everything very quietly after a mild lukewarm fashion, but the rough men of the streets were all enthusiasm and fervor, and when they had well eaten, how they shouted for joy! What cheers they gave for the king and for his son. Even thus, when Grace brings in the outcasts, they feel that none shall sing more loudly in Heaven than they! None shall love more or praise more. How rapturously ought we to praise the Lord, that passing by the great and noble, He has chosen the base things of this world, and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are!

If the king desired love for his son, he went the sure way to accomplish it when he raked the highways for guests, for they would be sure to love the condescending prince now that they had feasted with him. They would prize so much that day's festival that they would henceforth look at themselves as the prince's own—and be his loyal subjects, his devout admirers forever! They would reverently and joyfully say, "What a king is ours! What a royal word it was to say, 'Go into the highways and bring in as many as you find!'" O how they would love him! If he destroyed a seditious city, he made up for the loss by creating a new band of loyal citizens! Here were men who would serve him with their lives, or die for him in his battles. Such hearts has Jesus won! Now that we have been brought to receive salvation, we would live for Jesus, we would die for Him—

***"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours."***

You who have done so much for me, help me to do all I can for You. God bless every such a lover of the Prince Immanuel!

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

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

“THE WEDDING WAS FURNISHED WITH GUESTS” NO. 2022

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, MAY 6, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The wedding was furnished with guests.”
Matthew 22:10.*

OUR discourse will follow the lines of the parable. A king desired to honor his son right royally. He loved his son well, for he deserved richly of him and therefore, as the most fitting time had come, he resolved to honor him. His son was about to take to himself a spouse—should not his marriage, which is a great event in life—be celebrated with honor? The father determined to honor his son on the joyful occasion by inviting a large number of guests to a sumptuous banquet. Not by the infliction of pain, or the pressure of taxation but by liberality and festivity would the king honor the Crown Prince. It should be an extraordinary feast.

Surely, it would be the simplest thing in the world to gather together a grateful company of guests. One would expect a competition for admission—everybody in the royal domain would eagerly ask for an invitation. But it fell out otherwise. There was a disloyal feeling abroad and it now expressed itself—those who were bid would not come and means had to be used to secure the result spoken of in the text so that “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

The parable is plain. The great Father delights to honor Jesus, his Only-Begotten Son. The Father loves the Son, with whom He is One. The Son has deserved well at the Father’s hands, for He has been “obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” It is the Father’s aim in the work of Divine Grace to glorify His Son, who, as God and Man in one nature, is the channel of Divine Grace to fallen men. He proposes to do this now that the Lord Jesus takes His Church into marriage union with Himself. The incarnate God calls a chosen company, the bride, the Lamb’s wife and celebrates thus early in the day this happy union by a wedding breakfast, to which He invites multitudes to come.

It is a feast of mercy, grace and peace. A marriage feast of delight and joy. The feast is for the glorifying of the Lord Jesus Christ in a very special manner. Can any of us measure the glory which comes to our Lord Jesus by His union with the Church? Angels and principalities and powers, intelligences now existing and all intelligences yet to be created will wonderingly gaze upon the riches of His inheritance in the saints. What a spectacle is this! The Word made flesh that He might dwell among us! Immanuel, God with us, taking unto Himself a company of chosen men to be one with Him forever. In the union of Christ and His Church all wisdom centers—all Grace shines forth.

“The excellency of our God” is to be seen in the salvation of the elect and the joining of them unto the Christ. Our glorious Second Adam was like the first Adam in the garden, for whom no helpmeet was found. Neither cherubim nor seraphim, angels nor spirits, could be fit companions for Him. He says, “My delights were with the sons of men.” He willed that His chosen Church should stand to Him in the same relation as Eve stood to Adam, to be the solace of His heart and the rest of His love. He chose men to be His companions, His friends, His joy, His crown.

One would have thought that every man hearing that manhood was thus to be honored by union with Godhead would flock towards the marriage feast. It would have seemed certain that all would desire to know this heavenly mystery, and as soon as they knew it, would press forward to be partakers in its bliss. Alas, this is not the case. And this morning my business is to tell you the story of how the purpose of Divine love appeared in peril but how, in the end, it is accomplished. And, according to the language of the text, “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

I. Our first point is, that IT SEEMED AS IF NONE WOULD COME. The wedding feast was prepared—oxen and fatlings were killed—all things were ready. But where were the guests? Those first invited and naturally expected, would not come. Previous notice had been given them of the festival and afterwards a summons had been sent to say that the hour was come. But, instead of joyfully responding, they would not come.

These were, first of all, the Jews—to whom the Gospel had been given by the Law and the Prophets long beforehand. “He came unto His own but His own received Him not.” Israel was not gathered—few out of the chosen nation recognized the Messiah. He came with a feast of mercy for them but they would have none of it. He called and they refused.

Today this same class will be found among the children of godly parents. Dedicated from their birth, prayed for by loving piety, listening to the Gospel from their childhood and yet unsaved. We look for these to come to Jesus. We naturally hope that they will feast upon the provisions of Divine Grace and like their parents will rejoice in Christ Jesus. But, alas, how often it is the case they will not come? Some such are here this morning. We greatly grieve over you. You do not choose your father’s God, nor accept your mother’s Savior. Ah me! If you will not come, who will? If you, who are taught concerning salvation by Divine Grace, yet refuse it, how can we wonder that the children of the godless and the profane reject our message? Who will come if *you* will not?

Dear Hearers, some of you are not privileged with godly parents but you have been for many years willing listeners to the Word of Life and yet you do not accept Christ Jesus as yours, nor accept the provisions of His Grace. You do not joy with Him in His union with His chosen, for you do not love Him. How sad this is! Well may the dispirited preacher mourn and fear in his heart that the great festival of love will prove a failure! If such as you are will not come—how will the wedding be furnished with guests?

The outlook grew worse still when they came not though they were reasoned with. When they would not come, the king sent other servants to bring them to a better mind. And this was the form of His reasoning—

“Behold, I have prepared My dinner, My oxen and My fatlings are killed and all things are ready—come unto the marriage.” No kinder argument could have been used—there was an appeal to all that was noble in them, and had they been worthy, they would have come at once. I can well understand that the servants would repeat their lord’s message with special eagerness, as they thought of His waiting in the palace and watching for the guests.

They would cry to those who hesitated, “You have waited long enough, come at once. The marriage cannot be delayed, why should you delay? Tarry no longer. Today if you will hear His voice harden not your hearts.” Still they made light of it. When you have been invited to Jesus many a time—when tearful earnestness has pleaded with you and yet men of God have had to return to their Master, saying, “Who has believed our report?”—it becomes a sorrowful business and our anxious fears cannot see how the wedding will be furnished with guests. This would have been an overwhelming surprise to us if Jesus had not declared of men in His own day, “You will not come unto Me that you might have life.” If they refused *His* pleadings, we cannot wonder that they reject *our* sayings. Still it is a mournful fact, that “Many are called but few chosen.”

The case looks darker, still, when we notice that, though reasoned with by new messengers, they did not come. It is said, “He sent forth other servants.” I tell you from my very soul that if my Lord will only bring you to the banquet of His Grace, I care not who shall be the successful messenger. If you will not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life through what I have to say, may the Lord remove me and send someone else to whom He will give power by His Grace to reach your hearts. I shall be glad to remain in this pulpit for years to come but not at the cost of a single soul, if somebody else can preach to you more efficiently, if somebody else can get at your hearts better than I have done, may the Lord allow me to retire for your good!

Do you wish it? “He sent other servants.” A preacher may be too rhetorical—let a plain-speaking person be tried. He may be too weighty—let another come with parable and anecdote. Alas, with some of you the thing wanted is not a new voice but a new heart. You would listen no better to a new messenger than to the old one. After so many good men and true have spoken—after Paul and Apollos and Cephas have all failed—how shall the wedding be furnished with guests? If you look at the various characters who would not come you will see more and more cause for sorrow. Of some we simply read that “they would not come.” They made no excuses or apologies but curtly said they would not come. That was the end of the matter.

Many dismiss the Gospel at once. They are not to be reasoned with—they do not want it and will not have it. A large class of the community have heard of the way of salvation but they care nothing for it. It is not with them lack of information but want of inclination. They have neither mind nor will for heavenly things. A second class made light of it. They were indifferent to royal honors and duties. They were taken up with the care of what they had in possession and went their way, each man to his

farm saying, “I have worked hard to get my farm and I cannot afford to let it lie idle.”

Another was taken up with the care of getting an estate and went to his merchandise, saying, “I have nobody to keep my shop. I must mind the main chance. If you do not look alive, everybody will run over you. I must attend to my buying and my selling.” The worldly-wise make up a very numerous class. The rich man cannot be religious—his position in society prevents it. The poor man cannot mind the things of God—he is worn out by earning his daily bread. Thus they all make excuse. Lord, when so many are unwilling and so many more are occupied with other things, how shall the wedding be furnished with guests?

A third class were violently opposed—they would not be bothered, they had no patience with religious cant—they “took His servants and entreated them spitefully and slew them.” These are not so numerous as the others. But yet they are found among us. Skeptics, swearers, revilers of godliness and “modern thought” men—these revile the Cross and are ferocious against the Gospel. When we see these raging, we are apt to ask very mournfully—How can the wedding be furnished with guests?

The most dreadful thought of all remains—some of the invited had already perished. The King in His wrath sent His troops and slew the murderers of His messengers and burned their city. While I have been preaching, many of my hearers have died. Where are they now? If they died without Christ they are now past hope. Ah me! They can never enter now, for the door is shut. If they died in their sins, they are in the outer darkness—where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. When you think of it, this is a dark prospect. Men are dying, dying without hope. And those who are yet alive are resolved to perish in like manner, for they are earnestly invited to the feast of love but they refuse to come. How can the wedding be furnished with guests?

The King tells us the real reason why they would not come—they were not worthy. Those who were invited specially and about whom there was the greatest hope had nothing in them to encourage that hope—they were not loyal, they were not kind-hearted, they were not honest, they were not worthy—else they would have come to do honor to the Son of their King. Their not coming revealed the enmity of their hearts. It was a wretched way of showing their spite to the Prince upon His wedding day. It is horrible that men refuse Christ and Heaven out of enmity to God. Rejecters of Christ are unworthy of pardoning Grace, unworthy of a dying Savior, unworthy of those marriage bonds into which Jesus enters with believing hearts. They are not worthy in the Gospel sense of worthiness, and of course, they were far less worthy in a legal sense.

The most mournful spectacle in the world is a heart which refuses the mercy of God. Objection is sometimes made to the doctrine of total depravity. I do not know what adjective can be too strong to describe human depravity when I perceive that it refuses God under His loveliest aspect—God in the greatness of His love, God sparing not His own Son. If men turn away from God in anger I can understand it. If men turn aside from God in justice I can understand it. But when they so hate God that they will not even have His salvation—when they refuse pardon through the

precious blood of Christ, when they will sooner be damned than reconciled to God—this shows that their heart is desperately wicked. The Cross rejected is the clearest proof of the heart depraved. There I leave this mournful subject and go a step further. Certainly it did seem as if the wedding would not be furnished with guests.

II. Secondly, IT WAS A MOURNFUL PROSPECT. Imagine that there had been no guests at the wedding feast—what then?

First, it would have been greatly to the King’s dishonor. The Crown Prince is married and nobody comes to the wedding! The feast is free, costly, plentiful but nobody will come to it. What an insult! The banquet hall is lighted and the minstrels are in their place but no eyes or ears are charmed. Oxen and fatlings make the tables groan but none are there to make the hall resound with shout and song. What a wretched spectacle! Empty halls, unfurnished benches, meat uneaten carried out to the dogs! History does not record a more deliberate and unmistakable insult.

Let me translate the parable. If no souls are saved, if the great plan of redemption does not save, what a farce the whole business will be! What a dishonor to the name of the great God! Look at the supposition that you may see the impossibility of it. Think for an instant of a defeated, disappointed, dishonored Jehovah, Can it be? And yet, if the wedding had not been furnished with guests, the king would have been disappointed and insulted in the most tender point. If the chosen are not saved, if men are not brought to Christ, then the glorious name of the God of Grace is dishonored. Do you think it is possible?

In the next place, suppose none had come to the wedding feast. Then the king’s son would have been grieved. His wedding and nobody there! If it were your own, perhaps you could put up with it. For you do not stand in so public a position as the king’s son and you have not provided so vast a banquet. But the king’s son! Only imagine that it is his wedding-day and the servants are mustered in the hall but not a single guest arrives. He has no one to congratulate him upon the happy day, no one to wish him well, no one to welcome the bride.

Now, the same is true of our Lord Jesus Christ—if He dies and men do not believe in Him. If He rises again and men do not accept Him. If He enters Heaven as a Prince and a Savior and yet no one receives repentance and remission, where is His honor? Where is His Glory? Look at the dreadful supposition and think whether it can be. I am sure, as you gaze upon it, you will say, “Impossible! A bleeding Savior cannot die in vain. Our Christ could not in death have paid down the ransom price for nothing. He could not have stood a Substitute for men and yet see men lost after all!”

If no guests had arrived, how disappointed would the Bride have been! She, too, would have had to share in the failure of the day. Her wedding would not have been remembered with pleasure. She would have been happy in the Bridegroom but also unhappy because of the unkindness shown to Him. In vain her rich apparel and her costly ornaments—for there are no eyes to gaze upon them. If souls are not saved the Church misses her greatest joy. When men believe in Jesus, how delighted we are! Our hearts leap for joy when men repent. But if sinners are not saved, if

the preaching of the Gospel is in vain, if they will not come to Christ—then are saints full of heaviness and the Church cries out in her anguish, “Have you forgotten to be gracious?”

Had none come to the marriage feast, a store of provisions would have been wasted. The King says, “My oxen and my fatlings are killed.” See the bullocks roasting whole! See yonder fatted calf killed for the feast! Mark how the sheep are led to the slaughter! All this will remain untouched. Yonder dainty dishes and flowing bowls and luscious fruits will have none to enjoy them. It will be a wretched business, indeed! I want you to look at the dreadful picture till it vanishes out of sight. Can it be that Jesus has made Himself the heavenly bread and none will feed on Him, or at the best a very few? Can it be that He has provided a robe of righteousness and nobody will wear it? Is Heaven prepared and will it remain half occupied? I do but suppose it for the moment—to make you see what a melancholy fact a failure in the scheme of mercy would be.

Would it not have meant, also, the enemy’s triumph? The King’s foes would have heard of it and laughed Him to scorn. At a royal wedding He could not command guests! How they would scoff at His wasted provision! “Ha, ha! Ha, ha!” The story would have been told on every ale-bench. The sons of Belial would make rare mirth of it. The King, the Prince, the Bride would all have been ridiculed, because of a wedding in empty halls, a feast with phantom guests! I do not believe that God intends to let Satan triumph in this way. I cannot imagine that He will allow the powers of darkness thus to open their wicked mouths against Him. If free will refuses the gift of God, Free Grace will come in and win the day.

I have shown you already how free will threatens to empty the banquet hall and dishonor the King, the Son and the Bride. And if the business had been left to the free will of man, this is the result which would have come of it—a God dishonored and men preferring to die rather than accept life through Jesus Christ. Then it could never have been said that “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

III. Let us go a step further and notice that in the parable THIS CATASTROPHE WAS GRACIOUSLY PREVENTED. “The wedding was furnished with guests.”

We are very much in the same case today as the servants were in when the invited ones would not come. We preach and teach the Gospel but we have to complain that so many will not come to the banquet of Divine Grace. God gives us many souls but not so many as we desire. We are eager for many more and we begin to be afraid lest, after all, God should not be glorified as we wish that He should be. In the parable an unfurnished banquet was prevented and so it will be in the reality. How was the calamity averted? It was prevented, first, by a fuller invitation. At first the heralds only called those who had been previously bid, a sort of aristocracy of hopeful persons.

As these would not come, we read, “Go you therefore into the highways and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage.” They went out, not to a select band but to all whom they might find. Brethren, it is a grand thing when we get a clearer idea of what the Gospel really is. The more evangelical our notions become—so that we are prepared to preach the

Gospel to every creature under Heaven and to say, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—the more we may hope for large success. If, by my preaching, I lead a man to look at *himself*—to see whether there is anything in him which entitles him to believe—I practically hide the Gospel from him.

If I preach only character so that the man mainly enquires whether he has that character, I fix his eye upon *himself*. And this is not what I should aim at. If I go forth and gather together as many as I find, both good and bad, then their thoughts are on the banquet rather than on themselves. We want men to look to Jesus, and therefore we cry, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” When we get upon clear Gospel lines and keep there, we may expect to see the arm of the Lord revealed and the wedding furnished with guests.

Again, the invitation was now given more publicly. They had simply gone to the houses of the invited guests and said, “All things are ready—come.” But now the servants go to the chief places of concourse. And they cry aloud and spare not among the crowds of men. One has gone to the market. Another is preaching where four ways meet. Hark to the voice of one upon the village green and to the songs of others as they traverse the back slum. You cannot now go along a street without hearing the news of the great wedding feast. Many will be brought in when many are eager to bring them in. God is pleased to acknowledge the means which He has Himself ordained.

The more constant and public the proclamation of the Gospel becomes, the more numerous will men be saved through the Spirit of God. Then is the set time to favor Zion come. We are not to hide our lamps under a bushel. He that knows the Gospel should speak it out as plainly as he can and let his voice be as the silver trumpets of jubilee—that every ear may hear. It came to pass that the king’s message was more widely made known and thus “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

Another matter assisted—the servants were now thoroughly zealous. I am sure I should have felt dreadfully agitated to see all those provisions and none coming to eat them. Think of the halls decorated, the cooks working day and night, the big fires burning, bullocks roasting, the wines positioned on the lees and yet no guests. It would have worried me greatly and you, too. You would have said, “It cannot be, it must not be, we cannot bear it. The King, how sad He must feel! The good Prince, how bitter it is for Him! The dear Bride, what must be her sadness when this great insult is put upon her? “I must fetch in some guests, or die in the attempt.”

I am sure we should have traveled six ways at once if we could. We should have invited with a thousand mouths if possible. Getting hold of one man’s coat and of another man’s sleeve, we should have compelled them to come in. This, also, is the Lord’s way of blessing men. He excites His own people, makes them sorrowful for the sins of the times, and then they grow earnest and troubled and so they lay themselves out to snatch men as brands from the burning. “As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” The want of travailing causes the absence of conversion. When we begin to sigh and cry and mourn because the ways of God

are forsaken—then our earnestness moves the heart—both of God and man—and the guests come to the wedding.

Again, the calamity of a wedding without guests was prevented by a certain secret power which went with the messengers. We read that they “gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good.” They did not merely invite them but they gathered them in. Now people are not to be gathered in great numbers all of a sudden and led to a feast by mere words. Words are but air. There is nothing in our words to make men come to Jesus unless the Lord works by them. Yet the guests did come in shoals. An influence went with the words of those servants which drew the people together. They could not wish to stay away. They came gladly. Their wills were sweetly inclined and they thronged the palace.

Beloved, all the hope of our ministry lies in the Spirit of God operating upon the spirits of men. I want all the members of this Church to feel this more deeply and practically than ever. Do not put trust in the preacher—if he happens to be away, do not think that God is tied to him. Look for a blessing upon the Gospel itself—whoever preaches it. If the Holy Spirit is with us we shall see thousands flocking to Jesus. No sinner will ever come to Christ apart from the quickening, enlightening, drawing, converting power of the Holy Spirit supernaturally exercised upon the conscience and heart. Let us believe this.

And next, let us be assured that the Spirit of God is with us and let us then go forth with all boldness. To the street corner, the cottage, the lodging house, the wayside—let us go forth and publish abroad the invitation of the great King—“My oxen and My fatlings are killed and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.” Thus you have seen the outward means by which the Holy Spirit brings men to Jesus and the wedding is furnished with guests.

IV. I close by noticing, in the fourth place, that IN THE END THE FEAST WAS A GLORIOUS SUCCESS. “The wedding was furnished with guests.” Guests are a part of the furniture of a wedding feast. You may pile on your gold and silver plates, hang up your banners, load your tables and sound your music—but if you have no guests, the feast is a failure. It is our solemn conviction that the Lord our God has never failed yet and that He never will fail. We believe that the Lord’s eternal purpose will stand and that He will do all His pleasure. We believe in no blind fate, but we trust in a predestination which is full of eyes and which accomplishes its purpose to the least jot and tittle.

God’s greatest work is redemption—will He fail in it? Salvation is the focus of His Glory—shall this be frustrated? If God were to fail in connection with the Cross, it would be a failure, indeed. God would be dishonored and His crown jewels cast into the mire. But it shall not be. Turn to the parable and we find there were sufficient guests—“the wedding was furnished with guests.” There were as many guests as were necessary to the honor of the King and His Son and His Bride. Oh yes, in the gathering up and consummation of all things, the wedding of the Lord Jesus will be amply furnished with guests—“He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.”

There will be no disappointment to Christ at the Last Great Day. Satan may whisper disaster and disappointment to us at this hour and for the moment it may seem as if the forces of darkness triumphed. But the end is not yet. The will of God—so full of grace and mercy—shall be accomplished, the preparations of Divine Grace shall be used and the purpose of love fulfilled. As the wedding was furnished with guests, so shall Heaven be filled with “a number which no man can number.”

The feast was more of a success than it would have been had there been no opposition. The persons who came to the wedding were more grateful than the first invited might have been if they had come. The richer sort had a good dinner every day. Those farmers could always kill a fat sheep. And those merchants could always buy a calf. “Thank you for nothing,” they would have said to the King if they had accepted His invitation. But these poor beggars picked off the streets had not tasted meat for months. Their half-starved bodies welcomed the fatlings. How glad they were!

One of them said to the other, “It’s a long time since you and I sat down to such a meal as this,” and the other answered, “I can hardly believe that I am really in a palace dining with a king. Why, yesterday I begged all the day and only had two pence at night. Long live the King, say I, and blessings on the Prince and His Bride!” I warrant they were thankful for such a feast. They said it was an ill wind that blew nobody any good—because their betters had refused to come—there was now room for them.

When the Lord saves great sinners such as you and me, He wins warm hearts for Himself. When the Lord saves unlikely ones, He gets unusual thankfulness. When He brings in the drunkard and the profane, the unclean and the hardened—and makes them pure and holy and puts them among the children—what gratitude He gets! The Pharisee may ask Christ to a cold dinner but it is the woman that was a sinner who will wash His feet with tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head. If some of you moralists get saved—and God grant you may!—you will never prize the precious blood so much as those do who are washed by it from foulest stains.

The joy that day was much more expressed than it would have been had others come. Those ladies and gentlemen who were first invited—if they had come to the wedding—would have seated themselves there in a very stiff and proper manner. Dear me, what a fine thing propriety is! And yet, what a dead thing it is! One said to me the other day, “I have gone to my place of worship for many years and nobody ever did speak to me that I know of and nobody ever will. For we are all too respectable to know one another.”

You know the dignified style of self-satisfied people. Among such there is no cordiality, no freshness, no sweet naturalness. Did you ever attend a breakfast or a dinner of beggars? Did you ever see a company of very hungry people feeding to their heart’s content? They make a merry clatter. They are not muzzled by propriety. They are glad at the sight of every dish. They look at the waiters as angels. And when the hurraing comes to be done, you admire the strength of their lungs. The dull monotony of

respectability knows no joy like that which comes to poverty when it feasts to the full at the table of bounty.

The Crown Prince was happier that day among His poor subjects than He would have been among the grandees and the fashionables. Those paupers, those laborers, those tramps, those hedge-birds—those were the fellows to make merry! To whom much is forgiven, the same loves much. Up in Heaven they sing like the voice of many waters and like great thunder because they have been cleansed from many sins and have partaken of great grace. Let the Pharisee and the moralist refuse the Gospel. There are those about who, in accepting it, will do it greater honor than those dull souls could ever render to it. Thus the wedding was furnished with guests who expressed their joy enthusiastically.

How the provisions were relished! It does one good to see a hungry man eat his food. To him even every bitter thing is sweet. He does not turn over his food and cut off every little bit of gristle, as some of you do because of your delicate appetites. The true Gospel hearer hearkens to the text—“Eat you that which is good and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” He does not act the critic and laugh at this expression and that. He is too sharp-set to be particular about the dishes and the carving. We marvel sometimes at the capacity of hungry men. There is no end to it.

And it is the same with spiritual as with natural hunger. I think I can tell what happened at that wedding—the Bride nudged the Bridegroom and said, “See these poor people eat! Is it not a pleasure to give one’s oxen and fatlings where they are so much needed?” The Bridegroom was as happy as He could be, for He was of a sympathizing heart and He greatly rejoiced in the joy of the poor people around Him. The King Himself that day was gladdened as He saw what a gallant company of trenchermen they were and how there was no bickering, nor finding fault but only unbroken enjoyment and gratitude. The choicest kind of guests had been collected if the object was to give joy.

Ah, dear Friends, if you have a deep sense of sin, you will greatly love Free Grace and dying love. This is the lack of certain gentlemen who are always finding fault with the Gospel—they never knew their own state by nature and by practice and therefore they do not prize salvation. If they had felt a few lashes of the ten-thronged whip of the Law upon their bare consciences, they would relish Gospel forgiveness far more. He that has been in the prison of conviction prizes blood-bought freedom. He that has felt the chains of sin values the liberty wherewith Christ makes him free.

So I say that inasmuch as these poor creatures were brought in from the streets and their splendid appetites enjoyed the feast—the wedding festival was no failure but all the greater success—because of the King’s enemies. The wedding was furnished with guests—guests who enjoyed the abundance provided by the King. Certainly, the occasion became more famous than it would otherwise have been. If the feast had gone on as usual it would have been only one among many such things. But now this royal banquet was the only one of its kind—unique, unparalleled. To gather in poor men off the streets, laboring men and idle men—bad men and good men to the wedding of the Crown Prince—this was a new thing under the sun.

Everybody talked of it. There were songs made about it and these were sung in the King's honor where none honored kings before. In the kitchens, among the servants, this was a fine story to tell by the fireside while Mary and Jane wished they had been there to see. In every lodging house for years to come this would be the favorite story—the tale of the poor man's Prince and the needy man's Queen. On the exchange and in the market men talked of the brave Bride and Bridegroom who had defied the customs of fashion and had done a deed so daring in its goodness. Was ever such a thing heard of before?

Here was a feast for men who never feasted before! Sensible men said, “And nothing could be better—they were feeding those that wanted feeding—they were giving good cheer to those who have little enough of it.” Among the poor, themselves, the Prince's name was very famous while the portrait of the Princess was nailed up over the mantel. Children said to one another, “My father went to the wedding of the imperial Prince.” To many it seemed like a story out of the Arabian Nights. It did not read like a piece of common history at all, but like a fairy tale of the age of gold.

Dear Friends, when the Lord saved some of us by His Grace, it was no common event. When He brought us great sinners to His feet and washed us and clothed us and fed us and made us His own—it was a wonder to be talked of forever and ever. We will never leave off praising His name throughout eternity. That which looked as though it would defame the King turned out to His honor and “the wedding was furnished with guests.”

One thing more—the king's liberality was all the better seen. If those who were first bid had put in an appearance they would have come arrayed in their own scarlet and fine linen. Some of the gentlemen would have bought a new suit on purpose. You may depend upon it—all the cunning women in the city would have been employed to get their Ladyships ready for the banquet that they might have honor in the court that day. Now these fine clothes would have been more for the glory of *those who came* in them than for the honor of the *King*.

There was nothing of this among those who were gathered from the highways. They were in sorry gear. It was difficult, perhaps, in some cases, to tell which was the original stuff of their garments, so patched and mended they were. Anyhow, they were a ragged regiment. And what was the consequence? Why, then they must all be dressed in the Prince's own livery and all the glory of their apparel must be unto Him. He said to His servants, “Go to My wardrobe. Bring forth changes of raiment.” Everyone that came in to the feast was invited to put on the King's wedding garments. When He came in to see the guests, it was a grand sight, for everybody was royally arrayed.

The king's wedding robes were much better than His subjects' best suits. It was a grand sight to see so many all in one royal livery—every guest wearing the uniform of mercy. So is it with us poor sinners saved by Divine Grace. If we had possessed any true righteousness of our own we should have worn it. But now we count our own righteousness but dross and dung that we may win Christ and be found in Him. His righteousness decorates all the saints—they could not be better arrayed. Thus is the

feast made more glorious than it otherwise would have been and the wedding is furnished with guests.

How I wish that I could gather in many this morning, both bad and good! I mean by good, those who are comparatively so as to their moral conduct. You are bid to come to the wedding feast of love. But even if you are bad and obliged to admit that you are so, I am equally anxious to gather you in to the feast. Do you ask me—What are we to do? What were these persons to do? To come just as they were and freely receive what the King had freely provided. Sometimes at our treats for Sunday school children, every child is told to bring his own mug and plate. But it is not so with our great King. His banquet is too royal for that. You are to bring nothing.

Still, everybody must go home and wash, must he not? No, the washing and the clothing shall all be done for you at the King’s palace. Come as you are. “But what do you mean by coming?” We mean trusting—trust your soul with Jesus Christ and He will save you. *Trust* Him and you shall know that He died in your place, so that believing in Him, you shall not perish but have everlasting life. May the Holy Spirit lead you to believe in Jesus, that is, trust Him.

I have told you the Gospel and the whole of it. Trust the crucified Savior and you shall live. Jesus says, “Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Do not look *within* to see what is there but *look to Jesus* hanging on the Cross. A look at Christ crucified will save you. Look, dear Hearers, young as you are, look to Jesus now! Look, you gray-headed men and women who have never looked before—look now! Strangers and foreigners who have not heard this word before, there is life in a *look* at the Crucified One for you! You guiltiest of the guilty and you most amiable of the amiable, turn away from anything there is in yourselves—bad or good—and look to Jesus only.

Receive from Jesus all He brings you—pardon, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, Himself. He that comes to a wedding feast has nothing to do but to eat and to drink. Give your mind up to this delightful exercise. Take the food which God provides you. You shall do good works afterwards! For they will follow as a *consequence* of the strength which comes of receiving heavenly food through faith. But just now eat, drink and be merry, as becomes a Prince’s marriage. May the Father be pleased, His Son be honored and His Church be comforted through you! Amen and Amen.

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WHAT IS THE WEDDING GARMENT? NO. 2024

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MAY 20, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“And when the king came in to see the guests he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how came you in here not having a wedding garment?”

And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness;

there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 22:11-13.

Two Sabbath mornings ago I preached from this parable and I trust many were encouraged by it. But I noticed among enquirers who came to see me afterwards, a desire to know about the wedding garment. For they feared lest, in coming to join the Church, they should come like the man of whom I shall now speak. Many true hearts are extremely sensitive to the impression of fear and they seem to be on the watch for reasons for anxiety. I do not condemn them—on the contrary I wish there were more of such holy tremblers. It is much better to be afraid of being wrong than to be indifferent as to what you are. I perceive among the very best of the saints a considerable number who are deeply anxious as to their state before God.

Those who will one day be cast out of the wedding feast are feeding themselves without fear, while those who have the most right to enjoy the banquet are full of gracious anxiety. Solomon says, “Happy is the man that fears always”—he will cling closely to his God and that will make him happy. He will not run risks like the presumptuous and so he will be happy. Holy fear spreads few banquets but it takes care that when there is a feast we go to it in a wedding garment.

My chief object this morning will be to allay the fears of gracious ones. If they understand what the wedding garment really is, they will probably discover that they are wearing it. And, if not, they will know in whose wardrobe that garment of joy is to be found and they will gladly ask to be arrayed therein. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, give a wedding joy this morning to each wedding guest, by causing him to see for certain that he is clothed in the wedding robe.

Immediately after our text, we find these solemn words—“Many are called, but few are chosen.” This is a conclusion drawn from the whole parable in which we see processes at work which separate the chosen few from the many who are called. A distinction was made by the summoning of the invited guests. The simple delivery of the invitation set a difference between the loyal and the rebellious—a distinction most marked and decisive. So it is in the preaching of the Gospel—we preach it to every creature

within our reach. Lovingly, tenderly, earnestly. Not so well as we would, but still with all our heart we call men to the royal feast of Divine Grace.

And straightway the very invitation begins to gather out the precious from the vile. Pure Gospel preaching is very discriminating. You can tell Cain from Abel as soon as the sacrifice is the subject. Preach salvation by Divine Grace and you find that some will not have it at any price. Others postpone all consideration of it and a third party raise questions without end. Still do men make light of it and go their way to their farms and to their merchandise. Thus, dear Friends, every Sabbath Day, without our attempting to sit in judgment on men, the Gospel is, in itself, a refining fire.

In the Gospel the Son of David has a throne of judgment as well as of mercy. When men will not have Christ and His Grace, the Word preached by His humble servant drives them away and they go with the chaff. But the work of discrimination is not finished after the Gospel has been heard and men have been brought into the Church. Alas, even in the Church division has to be made. Indeed, it is there that this is most fully carried out. "His fan is in His hand and He will thoroughly purge His floor." If He uses a scourge nowhere else, He will be sure to use it in His own temple.

Among the sheep there are goats. Among the virgins there are foolish ones. And among the guests at the wedding feast there are those who have not on the wedding garment. Until we come to Heaven itself we shall always discover necessity for the work of self-examination. Even in the Apostolic College Judas carried on his dishonesty, as if to warn us that no rank in service, no honor among Brethren, no length of experience can screen us from the necessity of saying, "Lord, is it I?" when His warning voice says, "One of you shall betray Me."

In our text we see a man who has hearkened to the invitation and has come into the feast and thus has passed the first test. And yet he is unable to abide the second. He has been received by the servants but he cannot deceive their Master. The King detects him as a spot in the feast and he is cast out from the palace of mercy into the outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. May none of us be of this sort.

I shall endeavor to answer four questions naturally arising out of the parable. First, what is meant by the king's coming in?—"when the king came in to see the guests." Secondly, what is the wedding garment? Thirdly, who is he that has it not? And fourthly, why did he stand speechless when he was asked, "How came you in here not having a wedding garment?"

I. May the Holy Spirit help us while we consider, first, WHAT IS MEANT BY THE KING IS COMING IN.

"The king came in to see the guests." They were all reclining at the tables, for "the wedding was furnished with guests." They gathered while the sun was up but darkness covered the world outside when "the king came in to see the guests." They had feasted and now the king came to honor the assembly.

It was the crown and the culmination of the feast. No matter how dainty the viands, nor how bright the hall, the feast has not reached its height till his majesty appears in gracious condescension. It is so with us, Beloved, in reference to our greater King. When we are gathered in this house, which has often proved to us a palace of delights, we never reach the height of our desire till the Lord manifests Himself to us. You delight to hear the preacher and to join in the song and to say Amen to the prayer but these are not all. Your heart and your flesh cry out for God, for the living God—you look to behold the King in His beauty.

When the glorious Father reveals Himself in Christ Jesus, then the Sabbath is a high day, for our prayer is answered, “Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.” Our glorious King is not always equally manifest in our solemn assemblies. Doubtless because of our sins He hides Himself. In truth He is always with us. For the feast is His and the hall is His and every guest is brought in by His Grace and every dish on the table is placed there by His love. But yet there are times when He is specially seen among His people. Then our communion with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, is sweet, indeed.

These are seasons of gracious visitation—times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When the King comes into the assembly, the preaching of the Word is in demonstration of the Spirit and in power. Then the day of Pentecost has fully come, the Spirit is abundantly outpoured, souls are saved, saints are edified and Christ is glorified. The spiritual soon detect the Divine Presence and the shout of a King is heard in the camp. When I think of it, my heart cries out with Isaiah, “Oh that You would rend the heavens, that You would come down, that the mountains might flow down at Your presence!”

The presence of our God brings with it heavenly happiness, solemn content and overflowing joy. Well does Dr. Watts sing—

***“The King Himself comes near,
And feasts His saints today;
Here we may sit and see Him here,
And love and praise and pray.”***
***“One day amidst the place
Where my dear God has been
Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin.”***

Beloved Friends, you know better than I can tell you when the King is near and you know sorrowfully when He is not in the assembly. Alas, from how many congregations is He absent and that absence not mourned! When the Lord is gone we spread our sails but there is no wind—we bring the sacrifice but there is no fire. The wedding would have been a failure without guests. But what would the feast have been if the host had refused to come in and see the guests? But the King came in in due time. Yes, came in among that crowd of wayfarers gathered from the highways at a moment’s notice and His presence crowned the festival with honor and rapture.

This coming in to see the guests indicates a glorious Revelation of Himself. When the King saw the guests, the guests saw Him. But, inasmuch as His sight of them was the more important sight of the two, the chief thing is mentioned while the minor matter is implied. Do we know what it is to see God? This is the special privilege of the pure in heart. When the Lord's way is in the sanctuary, then His sanctified ones behold Him. Spiritual eyes have looked to Jesus by faith and He says, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." Have you ever been like John in Patmos, ready to swoon away because of the Revelation of the Father in Christ?

When Jesus has been set forth evidently crucified among us, we have in Him beheld the face of the great King and our hearts have leaped for joy so that we have been ready to leap into Heaven itself if the word had been given. When Augustine read those words, "You can not see My face and live," he was bold enough to answer, "Let me die to see Your face." Blessed vision!—

***"Lord, let me see Your beauteous face!
It yields a Heaven below;
And angels round the throne will say,
It is all the Heaven they know."***

The King delights to see His guests and His guests delight to see Him. Then is our worship full of bliss and no place out of Heaven is so like to Heaven as the place of our assemblies. We read in the Gospel of John—"Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." And well they might be. Then are we glad, also, when we distinctly discern Him as our Lord and our God. My own soul knows this joy unspeakable but because it is unspeakable, I say no more.

For the King to come in and see the guests includes a manifestation of special favor. He comes in, not to judge the guests but to look upon them. You that were here last Thursday night will remember my text—"Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name" [Psa. 119:132]. The Lord is accustomed to look with favor upon those who love His name, for He is pleased with them. O Brothers and Sisters, when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit—when the Father lifts upon us the light of His countenance—then our summer weather is come! Can anything be compared with the favor of God? The smiles of kings, the friendships of emperors—do not mention them in the same breath.

Some of you know that the Lord loves you. Yes, that He loved you from before the foundation of the world and He will love you when the world has ceased to be. Oh that the King would come here this morning in that sense and look into all your faces and give you all the full assurance that you are in His heart and shall be there to all eternity! Oh that this whole Church may be a living temple in which the Lord shall delight to dwell. May every stone of it be brilliant with the reflected light of His favor. May all our testimonies and labors be acceptable unto Him and may He be very gracious at the voice of our cry!

O Jehovah, manifest Yourself here as You did between the cherubim! For Your sake we have borne reproach—Lord be our glory! We have held fast Your Truth. We beseech You, let the light of Your countenance encourage us!

But here is the solemn point to which I call your attention—this visitation brings with it a time of discovery and searching of heart. When the King comes in to see the guests, the light grows stronger and hidden things are revealed. For all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. When the Lord visits His Church, His fire is in Zion and His furnace in Jerusalem. Then the man without a wedding garment is winked at no longer. You can go on sleeping as a Church when God is away and no members will fall off. For those who know not the Lord will come in and go out among you as before.

The dead will remain quiet till the Lord sounds the trumpet of resurrection—mere professors will not know that they are making a false profession but will remain at ease in our solemn feasts. But when the King comes in, all things are changed. “Who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap.” You cannot receive abundant spiritual life into the Church without the discernment of the unworthy and the expulsion of the spiritually dead. One goes away because he is offended at the doctrine, another is grieved at the heart-searching experience, and a third feels himself too sternly rebuked as to his life.

Thus the Lord’s visitation of Divine Grace becomes an assize of judgment and the finger of the Lord writes upon the wall, “You are weighed in the balances and are found wanting.” If the Lord our God were to come into His Church today there would be an awful shrinkage among the number of His guests. A panic would seize the assembly and the door would be blocked with men hastening to escape His eye.

Look how the king’s discernment is recorded in the text. One man, only, had refused to put on a wedding garment. But the king at once fixed His eye upon him. The Savior, by a kind of heavenly charity, mentions only one intruder but I fear we must regard the one as the type of many. If the King should come in at the time of our communion, I am afraid He would detect more than one. Still, if there were but one, he would concentrate His gaze upon that one and speak to him by himself. If you are the only person who has dared to enter the Church knowing that you are not converted, the King will spy you out.

If you make a profession of religion out of bravado and keep it up by sheer deceit, you may hide yourself away among your family connections, or think that your respectability will screen you. But you are mistaken. You have to deal with One whose eyes are as a flame of fire and He will so unmask you that you will not have a word to say in your own defense. This is a solemn matter. It will not make the true-hearted wish the King to stay away but those who are willful deceivers may well tremble. The King does come to this Church. He is specially present in the midst of this people and the consequence is that His judgment is strict with us. I have

seen the rod of His discipline here in a very striking manner. I have seen the fair professor wither in the heat of love and the rootless Christian dried up in the noontide of Divine Grace.

He might have gone on very well in any other Church but he has not been able to abide the brandished sword of the Spirit and its dividing asunder soul and spirit, joints and marrow. He has not been able to sit it out but has been obliged to go away and find an easier rest. Just in proportion as we really have the King in the midst of us making glad the saints, we shall have the King in the midst of us discerning the false and casting them out. First into the outer darkness of the world, which lies in the Wicked One and at last into the outer darkness of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Still, be the result what it may, our prayer this morning is, "God be merciful unto us and bless us. And cause His face to shine upon us."

II. Now I would answer the second question—WHAT IS THE WEDDING GARMENT? You are probably aware that this has been a point greatly disputed among theologians. Is the wedding garment justification, or sanctification, or what? I am not going to be theological and bring doctrinal matters to the text. But I shall read the parable as it stands and interpret its details by its general run. It is called a "wedding garment"—a garment suitable for a marriage feast. Let us *translate* the figure rather than attempt to rivet a doctrine to it. What does a wedding garment mean? What is that which we must have in connection with our Lord's marriage or be cast out forever?

I think I may say plainly that it must signify a distinguishing mark of Divine Grace. Everybody does not wear a wedding garment—he who wears it has put it on because he is a wedding guest. You know the wedding guest at once by his attire. He dresses in a way which would be considered singular if he were so arrayed every day. Your steady citizen indulges in a white waistcoat on the nuptial occasion but he never dreams of going down to his office in the city in such gear. True members of the Church of God wear a distinguishing mark. If you are not different from other people, you have no right in the Church of God. If a servant can live with you for years and never discover your love to God, I should think there is none to discover.

If you are just the same as those you lived with in your former days, if you have undergone no change and are like the rest of men, you have not the distinguishing mark which sets forth your right to be in the Church of God. There ought to be a something about us which sets us apart—a something which can be seen and understood by common people, even as a wedding garment could be seen and its meaning at once perceived. Your religion must not require a microscope to perceive it, nor should it be so indistinct that few can discover any meaning in it. It should be as visible as the white garment which was worn by Easterns at a marriage. Is it so?

I may boldly add here that the wedding garment was a distinguishing mark of Divine Grace. For as these people were fetched in from the highways they could not have provided themselves with wedding garments. It

is the custom in the East for a king to provide robes for his guests. Therefore this wedding garment was a mark of Divine Grace, freely given and received. Is there, then, a something about you which the Lord in love has given you? Do you differ from others, not in natural attainments but in spiritual Grace? Does the difference mainly lie in what God Himself has done for you? That is the question involved in the symbol of the wedding garment.

Do you differ from what you used to be. Do you differ from what you were years ago? Do you differ from those with whom you used to associate, so that you seek other company and turn aside from those who once were charming fellows to you? If so, you have on the wedding garment. It is a distinguishing mark. I do not mean to put this in a way that would grieve anybody here unless they ought to be grieved. But if they ought to be grieved then we would have them cry to God for renewal by His Grace. May the Lord make you to wear His livery! May He give you the spot of His children and cause you no longer to be of the world! A distinguishing mark is plainly the first meaning of the wedding garment.

In the next place, it was a symbol of respect for the king. To be fit for His company, the dress must be special. The absence of such a dress was, in the case before us, the badge of irreverence and disloyalty. This man said to himself—"I will feed at the feast without acknowledging its intent. Whoever stops me, I will push my way in and I shall sit there in my everyday garments to let the king know that I do not respect Him in the least and will not wear the robes He provides." It is as if you had lost a son and some wretched man should say, "I will attend the funeral in a wedding suit. I shall thus wound the feelings of the mourners and show my contempt for the whole affair."

What an insult it would be! To turn the picture. Suppose you were being married and somebody forced his way into the wedding dressed in mourning, with crape upon his hat and black kid gloves upon his hands? What a wanton insult! If such impudence were met with a horse-whip, who would be surprised? Now, this man acted in that fashion—he had no respect for the king—he showed his traitorous nature in the worst possible manner—spiting the King in His own halls upon a tender occasion.

Dear Friends, I trust that you can truly say, "I have on the wedding garment of reverence for the King. I do not despise the Lord God. But I bow before Him in true worship. I would come into His Church, not to dishonor Him but to give glory to His name." The wedding garment was a token of respect to Him who had provided the feast and presided over it—judge this day whether you have on the wedding garment, by enquiring whether you honor and reverence the Lord God and labor to be obedient to Him in all things.

The wedding garment was, moreover, a token of honor for the Prince. Those who put on the wedding garment did as good as say, "We join in the joy of the Prince and come here today to show our attachment to Him, and to wish Him joy of His Bride." My Hearers, do you feel a love to the Lord Jesus Christ? Many do not. I grieve to say we have a race of men sprung

up nowadays who call themselves Christians who pour contempt upon His precious blood and ridicule the substitutionary sacrifice. Dreadful assertion! But it is a matter of fact.

The name of Jesus, why, it is to our lives what the sun is to the skies! What the rivers are to the plains. Nothing makes us so glad as thoughts of Jesus. I am sure when I hear a sermon about Christ, my Master, my very heart grows warm within me! Is it so with you? Well, then, you have on the wedding garment. That is to say, you do truly, though it is but in a simple way, pay homage to the Prince of Peace. You love the Name and Person of Jesus and you come into His Church because you do so. The wedding garment also signified a confession of sympathy with the great occasion. Every man who ate of the fatlings, every man who drank of the wines, every man who gave his presence, was a helper in the honors of that wedding feast, save only this one intruder, who would not even pretend to join in the joy for he refused the simple act of putting on a robe fit for the feast.

Dear Friend, do you feel sympathy with the Lord's purposes of Divine Grace? Do you rejoice that Jesus finds a Bride among our race? Do you bless God for the Covenant of Grace, which includes incarnation, redemption and sanctification? Do you bless the name of the incarnate God for taking into everlasting union with Himself a people prepared of the Lord? Well, then, you are in sympathy with the marriage of the Lamb and you have a right to be present at the feast. You evidently wear the wedding garment which denotes your joy in Christ, your interest in His Church, your part and lot in the joyous work of His salvation.

The wedding garment means, in a word, conformity to the requirements of the occasion. It was a wedding and the guests must put on a suitable dress. This man refused to put it on. He was proud and would not wear the gift of Divine Grace. He was self-willed and must needs be singular and show his independence of mind. The regulation was by no means irksome and to the rest of the guests the commandment was not grievous. But this man would have his own way in defiance of the Lord of the feast. What could come of such folly?

Now, Beloved, one of the requirements of the feast is that you, with your heart, believe on the Lord Jesus and that you take His righteousness to be your righteousness. Do you refuse this? If you will not accept the Lord Jesus as your Substitute, bearing your sins in His own body on the tree, you have not the wedding garment. Another requirement is that you should repent of sin and forsake it. And that you should follow after holiness and endeavor to copy the example of the Lord Jesus. You are to possess, as the work of Divine Grace, a godly and upright character. Have you such a character? Even though you are not perfect, inasmuch as you follow after righteousness, you have the wedding garment. You say that you are a Christian—do you live like a Christian? Are you in a position and condition which agree with the Gospel feast? If so, you have on the wedding garment.

Those who came unto the feast were, when they came, both bad and good—so that the wedding garment does not relate to their past character but relates to something with which they were invested when they came to the banquet. The putting on of a wedding robe cannot refer to an elaborate ceremony, or a feat of the intellect, or to a deep experience of the heart. And yet it involved joining in the wedding, or not joining in it. It involved reverence for the King and homage to the Prince and sympathy with the whole matter. Look well to yourselves and see whether you truly yield yourselves to the Lord and agree with Him in the whole matter.

III. Thirdly, WHO IS THE MAN THAT HAS NOT ON THE WEDDING GARMENT?

I should say, first, he is the man who rejects God's revealed Gospel that he may follow his own thought and his own wisdom. He says that he is loyal to Christ and he expects all his fellow guests to be firm friends with him, for is he not in the banquet as much as they are? But he does not mean by loyalty what they mean by it. He is among Believers but he is not truly of them. He talks about atonement. He does not mean substitution. He talks about the divinity of Christ. He does not mean the Godhead of Christ. He talks about justification by faith. But he does not mean the old-fashioned doctrine.

He speaks of regeneration but means evolution. He girds himself with the garment of philosophy but he refuses the robe of Revelation, for the cut of it is too old-fashioned for him. He is no more a wedding guest than he is a clown—perhaps, not as much so. He wears raiment in which the robe of righteousness and the garments of gladness are not to be seen. The looms of Free Grace and dying love have never woven him a wedding dress. His robe is not of God's provision. It is from his own wardrobe. He glories in his own culture and not in the Revelation of God, nor yet in the work of Divine Grace upon the heart. He is in the Church but he is not in Christ. He has a name to live but he is dead.

The next person who has not on the wedding garment is the man who refuses the righteousness of God because he has a righteousness of his own. He thinks his work-day dress good enough for Christ's own wedding. What does he want with imputed righteousness? He thinks it immoral—he who is himself immoral! What does he want with the precious blood of Jesus? He does not need to be washed from crimson stains. He writes a paper against the sensuousness of those persons who sing—

***“There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins.”***

His own righteousness, though it be of the Law and such as Paul rejected, he esteems so highly that he counts the blood of the Covenant an unholy thing! Ah me, the insolence of self-righteousness! Its pride is the very chief of sins, for it slights the righteousness of God. Practically, the self-righteous man does not see any wedding in the Gospel system. He does not see anything in the Gospel to make him glad, nothing for him to sing about, nothing to make him shout for joy of heart. He will not praise the Prince. Not he! He is under the Law and he is content to be a slave. He

is trying to save himself by his own works and Law knows no holidays. He is not a wedding guest but a mere drudge.

Another sort of person has profession without feeling. If he were outside of the Church his conscience might trouble him—he has come inside of it, and now he says to himself, “It is all right.” He does not care to watch his feelings. He never had any—he would rather not have any. To the power of the Word he is a stranger, though he knows the letter of it. As to repentance and the burden of sin, he never knew them and does not want to know them. He thinks Mr. Bunyan must have been superstitious or morbid when he wrote “Grace Abounding.” Joy in the Lord is equally a thing unknown to him, for he hates all excitement. He has no solemn depressions and no raptures, for he has no spiritual life.

As he has no holy feeling, so he has no holy action—he is a Christian, he says. But having put up the sign-board, he drives no trade. His religion operates far more upon his boots and his hat than it does upon his heart—that is to say he comes out respectably dressed on a Sunday but his religion never affects his conduct. Nobody can find much fault with him except that he is as dead as a door nail. He commits no gross sin, he certainly performs no brilliant deeds of piety. Spiritually he is a very well washed corpse—and that is all he is.

We have others who are in the Church who think that what they have done themselves, or what nature has done for them is quite enough. They do not seek anything supernatural. They do not want any wedding garment more than their everyday coats. They are quite reputable in appearance even now, and with a little touching up they will be good enough without the new birth and without the Holy Spirit. Alas, my Hearers! All that nature can ever do for you will leave you on the wrong side of Heaven. You may cultivate nature to its utmost—it will never bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. “You must be born again.”

If you have not come into living contact with a living Savior by the work of the Holy Spirit you may be in the Church but you are not in Christ and have not on the wedding garment. Why, some dare to come into the Church who have not even common morality. It is shocking we should have to say it, but nowadays we meet with those who call themselves Christians who can drink upon the sly, who can commit uncleanness with their bodies, who can be dishonest in their trading, who can be liars, who can hate their own flesh and blood and be at enmity with their Brethren—and yet dare to come to the communion table!

In the highlands of Scotland it was at one time difficult to get Christian people to come to the Lord’s Table, for they so trembled under a sense of their unworthiness. We do not want to push this too far, but that is a great deal better than that unholy daring, which is to be found in the minds of so many who serve Christ and Belial. God save His Church from degradation! Unholy professors have not on a wedding garment—their outward robes by no means befit the King’s feast. They are a dishonor to Him.

I do not see how that man can be said to have on a wedding garment who takes no interest in the work of the Church. You see, when a man puts on the wedding garment, he does as good as say, "I am interested in the wedding. I wish God's blessing to the Bride and Bridegroom." But many come in now to the King's feast who do not care a snap of the finger for the Church of God, nor for Christ, either. They come in because a sort of selfishness makes them anxious to be saved. But as to the Bride, the Lamb's wife, they do not care whether she starves or flourishes.

Sad and wretched business this! If members of the Church only distribute tracts or attend meetings for prayer—if they are doing this and show an interest, thus, in the wedding—they have on the wedding garment. But if all they do is simply listen, either to criticize or to enjoy, but never work for Christ, nor pray for Christ, they have no sympathy in the wedding feast and therefore they have not on a wedding garment.

IV. To close, WHY WAS THIS MAN SPEECHLESS? We do not often meet with people who have no excuse. Excuse-making is the easiest trade out. A man can make an excuse out of nothing at all, or out of what is less than nothing—out of a direct lie. But here was a man who could not speak? Why was that?

Well, I think, first, the affront was too bare-faced. "How came you in here?" If he did not like the King he should have stayed outside. There was no need why he should come in at all and there, display his malice. If any of you are resolved to be lost, you need not add to your eternal ruin by making a profession of religion—for hypocrisy is a superfluity of naughtiness. But this man willfully refused the wedding garment. Now those dear souls I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon do not willfully refuse the Lord's Grace—I am sure they do not. Oh no, they are afraid they are not right but they do not wish to be wrong. Such are not among those whom this parable condemns.

Next, the affront was so audacious. "How came you in here?" said the King. He must have pushed by the deacons at the door. The fellow would come in. When the king said, "Bind him hand and foot," I think it was because he had used hand and foot to get in. He would get in. He said, "I will get in. I will defy the King to His face and sit in among His guests without a wedding garment." You, dear Friend, do not wish to do that—I am sure it is the last thing you would do. Why, we have to persuade you to come in at all. For you are so tenderly jealous lest you should be mistaken. Do not let this parable condemn you.

But why was the man speechless? I answer once more, because it was the King Himself who spoke to him. Ah, if I speak to you, what am I but flesh and blood? You do not mind me! But if the King Himself were here today, and He said to any one of you, "Friend, how came you in here not having a wedding garment?" the tone of His voice, the glory of His presence, would flash in upon your hearts—you would be obliged to feel it and you could not invent an answer. If you do not love Him, if you have no reverence for Him, no sympathy with His Son, you will be speechless before His bar.

Lastly, the reason why he was speechless was because, even if he could have spoken and been free from terror, there was nothing to be said. He could not cry, "Lord, I did not know it." He saw all the rest with wedding garments on. He could not say, "Lord, I could not get a wedding garment"—each one had received a garment gratis and he might have received the same. He could not say, "Lord, I was pushed in here by somebody else." No, he had willingly chosen to come and to defy the rules. The guests had all looked at him—some had edged a little way off from him.

Some had tenderly said, "Brother, will you not put on the wedding garment?" He answered, "No." "Will you not go out before the King comes in?" "Why," he said, "I came on purpose to defy Him. I mean to keep my place." I do not wonder that the king said, "Bind him hand and foot and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Our Lord Jesus Christ says very strong things about the future of the wicked. I have been accused of representing the state of the lost in too horrible a manner. I have never gone beyond the dreadful descriptions given by our Lord Himself.

Do not risk your eternal future. Come to the Church of God and join it but do not join it unless you love the Lord. Do not come to the Gospel feast unless you reverence the King. Unless you love the Prince. Unless you are in sympathy with the great work of Divine Grace which is pictured as a wedding feast. If you have sympathy with the wedding, love to the Bridegroom, and delight in the Bride, then come and welcome. For you have the wedding garment.

I am thinking just now of all those other hundreds of people at the wedding, all of them clothed with the wedding garment. What joy they felt! Many had been bad and all had been poor—but they all had the wedding garment and not one of them was cast out. If you will but put your trust in Jesus and so honor the Son—and rest in the love of the Father and so honor the King, it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." God bless you for Jesus' sake! Amen. Amen. Amen.

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THE WEDDING GARMENT

NO. 976

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 19,
1871,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how came you in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.”
Matthew 22:11-14.

APPARENTLY the parable of the marriage feast would have been complete without this addition, but there was infinite wisdom in appending this sequel. This is seen practically in the experience of the Church of God. Those who are permitted to see large additions to the Church will find this parable of the wedding garment to be singularly appropriate and timely. Whenever there is a revival and many are brought to Christ, it seems inevitable that at the same time a proportion of unworthy persons should enter the Church. However diligent may be the oversight, there will be pretenders creeping in unaware who have no true part or lot in the matter, and hence, when the preacher is most earnest for the ingathering of souls to Christ, he needs to couple with it a jealousy, lest those who come forward to make a profession of faith should be moved by carnal motives, and should not really have given their hearts to God.

We must use the net to draw in the many, but all are not good fishes that are taken. On the threshing floor of Zion the heap is not all pure wheat—the chaff is mingled with the grain—and therefore the winnowing fan is wanted. God's furnace is in Zion, and there is good need for it, for the gold is yet in the ore and needs to be separated from the dross. Wood, hay, and stubble-building is quick work, but it is a waste of effort. We need continually to examine our materials, and see that we use only gold, silver, and precious stones.

It is most necessary in times of religions excitement, to remind men that godliness does not consist in *profession*, but must be proved by inward vitality and outward holiness. Everything will have to be tested by a heart-searching God, and if, when He comes to search us, we are found wanting, we shall be expelled even from the marriage feast itself. For there is a way to Hell from the very gates of Heaven. In a word, it is well for all men to be reminded that the enemies of the great King are not only outside the Church, but they are even in it.

While a part refuse to come to the wedding of His Son, others press into the banquet and are still His foes. May God grant that this subject may have a heart-searching effect. May it be as the north wind when it blows through the marrow of the bones. May it lead us to desire to be searched and tried of God, whether we are truly in the faith, or are reprobates in His esteem.

The parable may be discoursed upon under five heads. Here is *an enemy at the feast*. Here is *the king at the feast*. That king becomes *the judge at the feast*. And hence the enemy becomes *the criminal at the feast*. And swiftly is removed by *the executioner at the feast*.

I. We see in the text AN ENEMY AT THE FEAST. He came into the banquet when he was bid, but he came only in appearance, he came not in heart. The banquet was intended for the honor of the son, but this man meant not so. He was willing to eat the good things, but he intended no respect to the prince. He did not, like others, say, "I will not come, for I will not have this man to reign over me." But he said, "I will come, but it shall be in such a way that the royal purpose shall not be served, but rather hindered. I shall be present as an onlooker, but take no share in the ceremony. I will, on the contrary, show that I have no care for the business in hand, except so far as it serves my turn."

The man came in the full exercise of self-will and self-love. He resolved to yield no homage, but to assert his independent self-sovereignty. He would show the king even at his table, where his bounties were so largely dispensed, that he was not afraid to affront him. When he came to the door of the feast, he found the guests all putting on the garment suitable for the marriage banquet. As here, in our own country, at a funeral, each mourner is expected to put on the articles of mourning which are provided, so at the wedding feast each person was expected to wear the bridegroom's favors, the garment which, as a badge, marked him as an attendant at the wedding, and as one who rejoiced in it.

While others cheerfully put on this wedding dress the traitor would not. He resolved to defy the rules of the palace, and to insult the king by appearing in his own garments. He scorned to wear the livery of respectful joy, he preferred to make himself conspicuous by his daring insolence. The badge was intended to show that the wearer was a real participator in the joy of the feast, and for that very reason he would not put it on. He did not acknowledge the king nor the prince, nor care one whit about the gladsome event.

He had no objection to be there, to eat the dainties, or recline upon the seats, and see the pomp and the show, but he was only in it, and not of it. He was there in body, but not in spirit. Are there not crowds of people whose union to the Church is nothing better than an insult to God? Custom sways them, and not sincere faith. They have no regard to the great Head of the Church or to the heart-searching God. They treat Church membership as a trifle, and have no tenderness of heart touching the matter. They, in effect, say, "The Table of the Lord is contemptible." "Spots are they in our feasts, feeding themselves without fear."

Many a time the question has been asked, "What was the wedding garment?" It is a question which need not be curiously pried into. So many answers have been given that I conclude that if our Savior had intended any one specific thing He would have expressed Himself more plainly, so that we should have been able, without so much theological disputing to have understood what He meant. It seems to me that our Lord intended much more than any one thing. The guests were bid to come to the wedding to show their respect to the king and prince. Some would not come at all, and so showed their sedition.

This man came, and when he heard the regulation, that a certain garment should be put on, comely in appearance and suitable for the occasion, he determined that he would not wear it. In this act of rebellion, he went as far in opposition as they did who would not come at all. And he went a little further, for in the very presence of the guests and of the king, he dared to declare his disloyalty and contempt. Alas, how many are willing enough to receive Gospel blessings, when they are still at enmity with God, and have no delight in the Only-Begotten Son. Such will dare to use the forms of godliness, and yet their hearts are full of rebellion against the Lord.

The wedding garment represents anything which is indispensable to a Christian, but which the unrenewed heart is not willing to accept, anything which the Lord ordains to be a necessary attendant of salvation against which selfishness rebels. Therefore it may be said to be Christ's righteousness imputed to us, for alas, many nominal Christians kick against the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of the Savior, and set up their own self-righteousness in opposition to it. To be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith, is a very prominent badge of a real servant of God, and to refuse it is to manifest opposition to the Glory of God, and to the name, Person, and work of his exalted Son.

But we might with equal truth say that the wedding dress is a holy *character*, the imparted righteousness which the Holy Spirit works in us, and which is equally necessary as a proof of Grace. If you question such a statement, I would remind you of the dress which adorns the saints in Heaven. What is said of it? "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Their robes, therefore, were such as once needed washing. And this could not be said in any sense of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was always perfect and spotless.

It is clear, then, that the figure is sometimes applied to saints in reference to their personal character. Holiness is always present in those who are loyal guests of the great King, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Too many professors pacify themselves with the idea that they possess imputed righteousness, while they are indifferent to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. They refuse to put on the garment of obedience, they reject the white linen which is the righteousness of saints. They thus reveal their self-will, their enmity to God, and their non-submission to His Son.

Such men may talk what they will about justification by faith, and salvation by Grace, but they are rebels at heart—they have not on the wedding dress any more than the self-righteous, whom they so eagerly condemn. The fact is, if we wish for the blessings of Grace, we must in our hearts submit to the rules of Grace *without picking and choosing*. It is idle to dispute whether the wedding garment is faith or love, as some have done. For all the Graces of the Spirit and blessings of the Covenant go together.

No man ever had the imputed righteousness of Christ without receiving, at the same time, a measure of the righteousness worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Justification by faith is not contrary to the production of good works—God forbid! The faith by which we are justified is the faith which produces holiness, and no man is justified by faith which does not also

sanctify him, and deliver him from the love of sin. All the essentials of the Christian character may be understood as making up the great wedding garment. In one word, we put on CHRIST, and He is “made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”

The wedding garment is simply mentioned here as being a *test* of loyalty to those who came to the marriage feast, and as a mode by which rebellion was avowed and loyalty made apparent. Here was a man, then, who came into the Gospel feast, and yet refused to comply with the command which related to that feast. He willfully preferred self to God. His heart was full of enmity and pride. He despised the gifts of Grace. He scorned the rule of love, he stood a defiant rebel even at the banquet of mercy which his king had spread.

His sin lay, first of all, in coming in there at all without the wedding garment. If he did not mean to be of one heart with his fellow guests and his lord, why did he come? If a man does not intend to yield himself up to God’s will, why does he profess to be of God’s Church? If a man is not saved by the righteousness of Christ, why does he profess to be a believer in Christ? If he will not be obedient to Christ’s holy will, why does he pretend to be a follower of Christ? It is a grave mistake for any person to imagine that he can be in the Church of God to his own advantage unless his heart is renewed, unless he believes what he declares, and sincerely loves the rule under which he professes to put himself.

The intruder’s sin was aggravated by the fact that after he had unlawfully come into the feast he still continued there without the wedding robe. He does not appear to have had any compunction, or to have thought of mending his error. Only when the king came in and said, “Take him away,” had the insolent rebel any idea of removing. Had he come in there, as I fear some of you have come into the Church, by mistake, thinking that there was no need of the wedding dress, when he looked around and saw all other persons wearing it, and observed that it was the peculiar mark of a guest, he would have felt uneasy and have gone to those who kept the royal wardrobe to get such a robe for himself.

And then his sin in the matter would not have been laid to his charge. But he persisted in remaining where he was, and as he was. O my dear Hearers, if you have already perpetrated the sin of union with the visible Church of God without having the prerequisites, without being, indeed, submissive to God in heart and desirous to honor Christ, I entreat you, seek what is wanted! Seek faith in God, seek a new heart, seek holiness of life! Seek to become a loyal subject of the King, and be not content until you have these things. For the King will soon come in. He gives you time as yet. May He also give you Grace to see to it that, being now where you ought never to have been, you may yet make your position a right one by obtaining that which will justify you in remaining where you are!

The guest in his own clothes was a speckled bird among that company. It was possible for him, even then, to have become one of them, but he would not—he continued to defy the king. This persistence he retained though he probably knew the fate of those who had refused to come. He knew that the king had sent forth his armies and destroyed those wicked men who had molested his messengers, and yet he dared to recline at his ease in the very teeth—defying the terrible power of the monarch. He made his brow as brass and hardened his heart as adamant, and forced

his way into a position where his seditious spirit would be able to display itself conspicuously.

He said within his soul, "I care nothing for this marriage. I will make sport of it. I will intrude myself into that feast and show my contempt. I will take the provisions, but the son shall have no honor from me, and the king shall not find me bend my will to his command." Thus he had the audacity to disport himself as a willful rebel at the feast of mercy. Are there any such among you here? The tendency will be for those who are not so to begin to condemn themselves. I know already one who has said, "I am that guest that had not on a wedding garment."

She is *not* that one, for she is not even a member of the Church, and therefore it cannot concern her. But many like her write bitter things against themselves. Another will be saying, "I am that one," whereas, if there is one that lives near to God and whose desire is to be like Christ, and to be in all things conformed to the Divine will, he *is* the man. You who are most assuredly right will probably be suspicious that you are not, and you who are insincere and have never submitted yourselves to the will of God will probably say, "What does it matter? I am doing as well as others. I give as much, I attend the means as much—surely there can be no cause for concern in me." God grant that you may feel anxiety and fear before the Lord.

II. We pass on to the next point—THE KING AT THE FEAST. "The king came in to see the guests." What an honor and privilege this was to the poor creatures whom his royal munificence had brought together! Was it not, indeed, the chief point of the entire festival? One of our greatest joys is to sing—

***"The King Himself comes near
And feasts His saints today!"***

What would Church fellowship be if it had not the fellowship of God with it? To sit with my dear Brethren and rejoice in their love is exceedingly delightful. But the best wine is fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. The king did not provide the banquet and leave his guests to eat by themselves, but he "came in."

And into every Gospel Church gathered according to His command the King will come. I am sure the most fervent desire of this Church is that the King may personally visit us. We trust He is with us, but we want Him yet more fully to reveal Himself. Our cry is, "Come, great King, with all Your glorious power, with Your Spirit and with Your glorious Son, and manifest Yourself to us as You do not unto the world."

When the king came into the banqueting chamber *he saw the guests*, and they also saw him. It was a mutual revelation. Ever sweet is this to the saints, that their God looks upon them. His look brings no terror to our minds when we are loyal and loving. "You, God, see me" is sweet music. We desire to abide forever beneath the Divine inspection, for it is an inspection of unbounded love. He sees our faults, it is to remove them! He notes our imperfections, it is to cleanse them away! Behold me, O great King, and lift up Your eyes upon me, accepting me in the Beloved. What joy it is to us who are saved in Christ Jesus that we also can see Him!

"Through a glass darkly," grant you, we behold Him, for as yet we are not fit to behold the full splendor of His Godhead! But yet how sweetly does He reveal Himself to our souls and unveil His eternal love. Then it is that the feast is most fully a banquet of wine, when the banner of love

waves over us, and the king's voice fills us with unspeakable delight. The king came in to see his "guests." This, I say, was the crowning point of the entire banquet. Observe, that he came in after they were in their places. They did not see him before they had entered his halls. When an inferior entertains a superior he always advances to the door to meet him and waits till he comes.

If her Majesty the Queen were entertained by one of her nobles, he would be in waiting, and at the threshold would meet her. But when a superior entertains an inferior the inferior may take his seat at the table, and when all is ready the noble host will come in. It is so in the banquet of mercy. You and I see nothing of God, by way of communion with Him, until first we have been brought in by the message of mercy to the marriage feast of the Gospel. For, indeed, until then a sight of God would strike us with terror—

***"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find.
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.
But when Immanuel's face appears
My hope, my joy, begins!
His name forbids my slavish fear
His Grace removes my sins."***

When I get to the banquet of mercy, then it is that I can dare to look at the King of kings, but not till then. What a joyous sight, a vision of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Father of Glory as He appears in the Gospel, feasting us upon His fatlings! An incarnate God makes God visible to us and makes us happy in the sight. "How can you see My face and live?" was the old question, but, behold, it is answered this day. At the marriage union of Christ with His people we see the face of the King in His beauty, and our souls not only live, but we have life more abundantly.

Observe, dear Brethren, that the King has special times for this. He is not always in the festal chamber. To our sorrow we sometimes miss the King's Presence at His table. We have the ordinances always, but we do not always enjoy the God of the ordinances. The means of Grace are abiding, but the Grace of the means will come and go according to the sovereign good pleasure of our God. The King has His times of coming in. These are glad times to His people, but they are trying times to the majority of professors.

When are these times? So far as unworthy guests are concerned, the times of God's visitation are those seasons when character is manifested. All times and periods do not reveal character. A lion may lie all day asleep, you may scarcely know but what it is tame. But when the night brings the time for it to go forth to its prey, then it howls, and displays its ferocity. And so an ungodly man may lie down in the Church of God with the lambs of the flock, and nothing may lead you to suspect his true character.

But when the time comes for him to make profit by sin, or to get pleasure by sin, or to escape from persecution by sin, then you find out what he is. These providences are the King's coming in to scrutinize the "guests." Changes in the conditions of the Church, changes in the condition of the individual—all sorts of Providential events go to make up the great sieve by which the wheat and the chaff are separated. A great and

most solemn coming in of the King to see the guests is, when having looked over the Church, unknown to us, He decides that such-and-such a hypocrite has had space enough for repentance and time enough for mischief, and must now be summoned to the dread tribunal by death.

The time when the King comes in to see His guests is not the Last Judgment, for that is the coming of the Son and not of the Father. And if it were intended in the parable, we should read that the *prince* came in to see his guests. We are led to view the king himself as continually judging professors and detecting the rebels who place themselves among the saints. By this judgment of God men are taken away from the Church in their transgressions, bound hand and foot, and cast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I do not know, my dear Brethren, when God may be visiting this Church, and taking away the men that are rebels in our midst. But I do know that when professors die it is not certain that all of them sleep in Jesus, but some of them are rooted up, like tares from among the wheat, and are bound up in bundles to burn. The division is going on constantly. The King's Presence is known to Believers in the joy which they feel, but it is made known to hypocrites by His cutting them off and appointing them their portion in eternal woe.

If, however, there is any one time when we may be quite sure that the King comes in to see the guests, it is after large ingatherings from the world. For notice here, when the servants had gathered in guests in large numbers, it was *then* that the king came in. Now it will be after the time of revival which we are feeling just now, when I hope a great many will be added to the Church, that the Lord will search and sift us. If there has been no visitation of the Church before for purposes of love or judgment—for they go together—we shall be quite sure to have such a visit from the great Lord Himself at this time.

III. Solemnly think of THE JUDGE AT THE FEAST. To all the rest at the festival he was the king, the beloved monarch, the munificent donor of a splendid banquet, and all eyes feasted as they looked at him—it was joy enough to behold the king in his beauty, and to see his son with all his royal jewels on, attired for the wedding feast. But he was a *judge* to the hypocritical intruder.

The day of comfort to his saints is also the day of vengeance of our God. He who comes to comfort all that mourn comes at the same time to smite the rebellious with a rod of iron. The Judge begins, as you perceive, by *seeing*. "He saw there a man." What eyes are those of Omniscience! The parable represents but one such man as present, yet the all-seeing king saw him at once—he fixed his flaming eyes on that one! I suppose it was a greater crowd than this, but the king fixed his eyes on the solitary offender at once.

Does the parable speak of only one because we may expect to find only one hypocrite in a Church? Alas, there have been many such at the wedding feast, but one only is mentioned to show us that if there were but one, God would find him out. And, being many, the sinners in Zion may be the more sure that they will not escape. It is possible that none of the guests may have noticed the man's garments—the parable makes no remark upon any expostulations made to him by others. Perhaps they were

all so taken up with the sight of the king, and so glad to be at the feast themselves, that they had no heart to make remarks upon others.

But this is certain—the king detected at once the absence of what was requisite to the marriage feast. It was not the presence of anything offensive, but the absence of something which was requisite. He did not say to the unworthy guest, “You have rags upon you,” or “you are filthy,” or “you have an unwashed face.” He enquired solely into the absence of the peculiar badge which denoted a loving guest. God will judge, and does continually judge His Church upon this question, the absence of what is absolutely necessary to being a Christian, the absence of honoring the Son, and obeying the Father.

O Soul, if you are a professor of religion, and yet do not love Jesus, and do not fear the great King of kings, you lack the wedding robe, and why are you here? The King will see at once that you lack it. Your morality, your generosity, your high sounding prayers—yes, and even your eloquent discoursing—these cannot conceal from Him the fact that your heart is not with Him. The one thing necessary is to accept loyally the Lord as King. The king next began to deal with the rebel. Note how he spoke with him. He took him on his own ground. It was too high a day for the king to use rough speech.

The man pretended to be a friend, and he addressed him as such. But though the word, I doubt not, was uttered softly, it must have stung him if he had any feeling left. Judas exemplified in his own person this character. When he gave the Savior the traitor’s kiss, our Lord addressed him as “Friend.” He pretended to be a friend. A friend, indeed, to insult his king at his own table and to select for the insult the delicate occasion of the prince’s marriage to which he had been hospitably invited! This was infamous! Friend, indeed! Where will you find enemies if such shall be called friends?

The king put it to him, “How came you in here?” What business have you here? What could have induced you so maliciously to defy me? To smite me in my most tender point, and mock my guests, and trample on my son? Did you intend such daring insolence? “How came you in here?” In *here*? Was there nowhere else to pour forth your sedition, no other spot in which to play the traitor? Need you come into my palace, and to my table, and before my son on his wedding day, to reveal your enmity? Was there a need to do this?

So may the Lord say to some of us. “Were there no other ways to sin, but that you must profess to be My servant when you were not so? Were there no other bowls that you could drink from, that you must profane the cups of My Table? Was there no other bread that you could put into your wicked mouths but the bread that represents the Body of My Son? Had you nowhere else to sin in that you must sin in the Church? Could you do nothing else to show your spite but that you must make a lying profession of faith in My Son who bled upon the Cross to redeem the sons of men? Could you assail Me nowhere else but through the wounds of My Only-Begotten Son? Could you vex My Spirit by no other means than by pretending to be My friend, and thrusting yourself in here, while defiantly rejecting that which was necessary to do Me honor, and to do My Son honor, at the festival of My Grace?”

I dare not dwell upon the topic. I give you the text. I pray that your conscience may preach the sermon. Notice, however, one thing, and that is that the king, when he thus turned a judge, dealt with this man only about himself. "How came *you* in here?" Did I hear a whisper in someone's mind, "Well, if I am unfit to be a Church member, there are a great many others who are in the same condemnation." What is that to you? See to yourself! When the king came in to see the guests he did not say to this man, "How came yonder persons here without the wedding garment?" His dealings were personal with him alone—"How came *you* in here, not having on the wedding garment?"

Professor, look to yourself, look to yourself! Let your charity begin at home. Cast out the beam from your own eye, and then may you see clearly to cast out the mote that is in your brother's eye. He fixed on the one man, made him his entire audience, and directed to him the solemn question, "Friend, how came you in here?" Ah, my dear Hearers, as the pastor of this Church, it has been a very great joy to me to see our numbers increased. Many have been added to us, and many have gone forth from us to form other churches. My joy has been constant in God concerning this matter.

Our Beloved Brethren associated with me in office have done their best to keep any of you back who have sought membership in whom we could see no fruits corresponding. We have not used our office deceitfully—as in the sight of God we have tried to be neither too severe nor too lax. But for all that I cannot but know that there are some of you who are not Christians though you bear the name.

Like those of old, you say you are Jews and are not, but lie. I am not now speaking of any who have fallen into sin and have suffered our rebuke, or have been separated from us by excommunication and yet remain in the congregation. I mean others of you whose lives are all that could be desired openly, and yet there is a worm at the heart of your profession. You are not vitally godly! You have a name to live, and you keep that name untarnished as yet, but you are dead. Search yourselves! Do not from this tabernacle descend into Hell. Let your prayer be, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men."

I am as concerned about myself as about you, that I should be found "accepted in the Beloved," lest after having preached to others I myself should be a castaway! Do let it be a matter of solemn anxiety with each one. If you have never come to Jesus, come now. If you have never sought holiness of life, seek it now. If you have never had the wedding garment, it is yet procurable—go to Him, by His Grace, who freely gives it—the Lord will not refuse you! Go today and He will accept you.

IV. He who was the unworthy guest is now THE CRIMINAL AT THE FEAST. The king has now become a judge to him. The question has been personally put to him, and he is *speechless*. Why is he silent? Surely it was because he was convicted of open, undeniable disloyalty. No evidence was required. He had come there on set purpose with malice aforethought to display his disloyalty, and had done so in the presence of the King. I do not think he represents at all a person who enters the Church through ignorance, with a sincere, but ignorant intention. No, he portrays one who makes a profession without care to make it true—willfully despising the Lord's commands.

He is a man willing to be saved by Grace, and professing to be so, but refusing to acknowledge his duty to God and his obligations to the Son. He was speechless. He could not have chosen a worse place, nor a more impertinent method of ventilating his disloyalty than that which he selected. There was nothing he could say in self-defense. At that moment, when the king looked him through and through, he saw the full horror of his position. His loins were loosed, like Belshazzar of old when he saw the handwriting on the wall.

He saw now that his time to insult was over, and the day of retribution had come. He was taken in the very fact and could not escape. He had been guilty of a superfluity of naughtiness, of an unnecessary extravagance of wickedness in coming into the feast to air his pride. He had committed a suicidal intrusion. He might have kept himself away at any rate, and not have thrust himself into the Judge's presence. He saw now that the cause of sedition was hopeless—the king was there and he was in his power and none could rescue him.

Why did he not burst into tears? Why did he not confess the wrong? Why did he not say, "My King, I have insulted you, have pity upon me"? His proud heart would not let him. Sin made him incapable of repentance. There is a verse in one of Hart's hymns which runs thus—

***"Fixed is their everlasting state.
Could they repent, it is now too late."***

That is true enough, but it supposes an impossibility, and I think it would have been far better to have said—

***"Fixed is their everlasting state.
They can't repent, it is now too late."***

Because the sinner goes on to sin, he continues still to suffer. He will not turn, he cannot turn. As the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, so when sin has reached its height the man cannot bend, or bow, or retrace his steps.

Oh, if he could have repented even then! But he could not. And the tears that came after the king had pronounced the sentence were no tears of penitence, but only of despairing pride. He stood speechless. It was not only that he had no excuse, but he would not confess his wrong. Have I anyone here in such a condition of heart, that while he has been sinning by making a false profession, and knows it, yet he sullenly refuses to confess his fault? Yield, Man! Yield at once! Fall at the King's feet at once!

Even if you are not a hypocrite, if you have any suspicion that you are, fall down and say, "My King, make me sincere. I submit myself to Your will, and am ready to put on the wedding badge. If there is any method by which I can honor Your Son, I cavil not at it. Let me wear His colors, and be known by all men to be truly a lover of the great Prince."

V. But now, lastly, while he stood speechless in the king's presence, the king gave place to The EXECUTIONER, for he uttered these words, "*Bind him hand and foot.*" He was lawless, make him feel the Law. He said, "I am free, and I will do as I like." Let him never be free again—bind him, pinion him. Executioner, do your duty, prepare him for death!

Alas, there are some who are bound and pinioned even before the breath is out of their bodies. In their dying hours false professors have often found that they could not pray, and could not repent. Like dying Spira, that arch-hypocrite and apostate, they have been sensible of mis-

ery, but not penitent, and no Gospel promise has availed to comfort them. Their hearts were seared, they were twice dead before they were dead.

Then came the sentence, "*Take him away,*" which is sometimes executed by the Church in her excommunications—deceivers are taken away from the Gospel feast by just discipline—but which is more fully carried out in the hour of death, when the man's hope fails him. Ah, Sirs, what will you do if you have no true Grace in your hearts when you are taken away from the Lord's Table, taken away from the Baptism in which you gloried, taken away from the doctrines of the Gospel which you understood so well by head, but which you did not know in your *heart*?

John Bunyan's description of the man dragged by seven devils, bound with cords, comes up before my mind. "Bind him hand and foot and take him away." How thankful I am that the servants who brought them in are not the same who were commanded to take them away. The *Douloi* brought them in, the *diakono*i took them away. The King has a special order of servants for the taking of deceivers away. His angels do that in the hour of death—they execute His vengeance. He gives us ministers a better office—He bids us be His heralds of mercy.

Then the judge said, "*Cast him,*" fling him like a useless, worthless thing. That wretch has dared pollute my marriage feast, cast him away, as men fling weeds over the garden wall or shake off vipers into the fire. There is none in Heaven or earth thought more despicable, more fit to be thrown away as rubbish and offal, than a man who had a Christian name, but had not the essentials of the Christian's nature. Cast him away. Where? "*Into outer darkness*" far from the banquet hall where torches flame and lamps are bright. Drive him out into the cold, chilly midnight air. He has once seen the light, it will be all the darker now for him when he is driven into the dark.

There is no darkness so dark as the darkness of the man who once saw light. Cast him into the outer darkness. What will he do there? We are not told what would be done to him, it was not necessary. We learn elsewhere as much as could be revealed to us, but we are told *what he did*, for "there shall be weeping." Not the rush of tears which gives relief but the everlasting dropping of scalding tears which create fresh sorrow and enlarge their own source. The outcast shed no tears of regret, but of sullen disappointment, because he could not, after all, dishonor the king—and had even served to illustrate the royal justice and power, and so had brought glory to the king whom he hated in soul.

Then came the "gnashing of teeth," caused by wrath and envy because he could do no more mischief. No sorrow is equal to that of a malicious spirit that, having attempted a daring deed of atrocious wickedness, has been defeated and has contributed to the triumph of the good and excellent! The misery of Hell is not a misery which God arbitrarily creates. It is the necessary result of sin—it is sin itself come to ripeness. Here you see the picture of the man who was insolent enough to come into the Church without being a Christian, and now forever he gnashes his teeth against that Glorious Majesty of Heaven which it will never be in his power to injure, but which it will always be in his heart to hate?

And this will be his Hell—that he hates God. This his darkness—that he cannot see beauty in God. And this the outerness of the darkness—

that he cannot enter into God's will. "Depart you cursed," is only love repelling that which is not lovely. It is only Justice giving to man what his fallen nature craved after. "Get away from Me, you did not honor Me. When you did come to Me it was with your lips only. Go where your hearts were—depart from me, you cursed." Oh, may God grant that no one here may come under the lash of this terrible parable, but may we be found of the Lord in peace in the day of His appearing.

You see, then, how the Lord sifts us. First, we are sifted by the preaching of the Gospel, and many will not come—there is one heap of chaff. Next, by the judgment of God in His Church, and others are found wanting—there is another heap of chaff. Ah, when this is done, and the two great sieves are used, shall we be found among the wheat? Do you say, "the sermon has nothing to do with me, I never made a profession, I shall go home easy enough."

Come here, Friend, I must not let you go. There is a vagabond brought before the magistrate accused of theft. He says he is perfectly innocent, but he is convicted, and has to suffer for it. After him comes a bragging fellow, who says, "I do not make any profession of being honest, I rob anybody I can, and I mean to do so, I do not pretend to keep the Law." Why, I think the magistrate would say, "I condemned the man who did at least *pretend* to something decent, but to you I give double punishment! You are evidently incorrigible, and your case needs no consideration."

You who do not say you are Christians, who confess you are not—you declare yourselves the enemies of Christ! Get no comfort, therefore, out of this parable I pray you, but yield yourselves to the Savior, and believe in Him, for he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—*Epistle of Jude.*

The attention of all our friends is earnestly directed to the SERIES OF SPECIAL SERVICES AT THE TABERNACLE. In order that London friends may unite with us, we publish the meetings week by week, and at the same time our country friends can join with us in spirit—**Lord's day, February 26**—Sermon to the Sunday School and young people generally. By C. H. S., at 3 p.m. **Monday, February 27**—Prayer Meeting for females only, at six. Young peoples' Prayer Meeting at the same time. At seven Elders and Deacons will deliver addresses to the unconverted at the usual Prayer Meeting. **Tuesday, February 28**—Great meeting of butchers' men invited by Mr. Henry Varley. Addresses in the Tabernacle at 7. (Tickets). C. H. S. to preside. **Wednesday, March 1**—Prayer Meetings at the houses of our friends according to list, which will be issued. May the prayers of all the households be heard in Heaven. **Thursday, March 2**—Mothers' Prayer Meeting at six. Meeting for persons under concern of soul at half-past eight after the lecture. Fathers' Prayer Meeting at 8:30. **Friday, March 3**—Meeting of our young friends above fifteen, and yet unsaved. Tea at six. (Tickets to be had of the Elders).

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THE ANGELIC LIFE

NO. 842

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 22, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage,
but are as the angels of God in Heaven.”
Matthew 22:30.***

WE must, all of us, develop one way or the other. Manhood, as we see it here, is but the green blade, or, at the best, the corn in the ear—the full corn in the ear will only be seen in the world to come. We must either descend or ascend—none of us can remain in the position which he occupies today. Some are sliding every hour downward, descending by the force of evil habits. More and more do they become the serfs and slaves of Satan, and by consequence, more and more developed into *his* image. They can find their doom written in these words, “Depart into everlasting fire in Hell, prepared for the devil and his angels. You followed Satan, you grew more and more like he is, and now receive the heritage appointed for him.”

On the other hand, he who by repentance and faith is brought into the fellowship of the Gospel, receives Grace upon Grace—he advances from glory to glory, in a more perfect resemblance to heavenly beings. And, at the last, angels having rejoiced over his repentance—angels to whom he had become as—carry his soul into the bosom of God! Which shall it be with you, Man? Will you ripen for the golden sickle and for the harvest-home of Heaven, or will you blacken for the scythe of iron which shall mow you down to be bound up in the bundle with your fellows and consumed as tares? One or the other it must be.

O may infinite Grace overcome our natural tendencies and may we be among those who go from strength to strength until they ascend into the hill of the Lord and are made like the angels! Without further preface, the subject of this morning's discourse will be in what respects the life of spirits before the Throne is like that of angels. And then, secondly, we may have, perhaps, a few practical thoughts about the commencement of the angelic life while yet here below.

I. First, then, IN WHAT RESPECTS ARE THOSE SAINTS WHO HAVE PASSED THE STREAM OF DEATH LIKE THE ANGELS? The likeness, though it lies in many points, more or less prominently may be seen, I think, distinctly in five particulars.

1. The saints of God are like the angels as to the qualities of their persons. In one matter they always *were* alike, namely, that both angels and saints are creatures of God and must, by no means, be looked upon in any higher light. A false church has commanded its votaries to pay religious homage to angels, contrary both to the example and the express precept of Holy Writ. The angels are no more to be adored than saintly men, and neither the one nor the other can be worshipped without incurring the sin of idolatry.

Take two parallel cases. When John, seeing an angel, taking him for his Lord, bowed down to worship him, the answer was, "See you do it not, for I am of your fellow servants, the Prophets. Worship God." When the heathens, at Lystra, brought forth bullocks and sheep and were about to do sacrifice unto Paul and Barnabas as unto Mercury and Jupiter, these holy men tore their clothes and declared that they were men of like passions with others. Angels and holy men refuse all kinds of worship—they unanimously sing, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto the name of Jehovah be all the praise." Oh, the longsuffering of God in tolerating that *apostate* and *accursed* church which has dared to set up both saints and angels, men and women, and I know not what besides, as objects of reverence in rivalry of the Lord of Hosts!

That is but incidental, however. The saints of Heaven are like the angels in their persons in the fact that sex is forever obliterated there. "They are neither married nor given in marriage"—from which I do *not* gather that so much as may be spiritual in the *feminine* character, or anything that is mental in the *masculine* character will be destroyed—but that in the bodily frame all that which divided the sexes will be no more.

I imagine that saints before the Throne of God may, some of them, exhibit that exquisite tenderness, that heroism of affection which will indicate them to have been holy women here below, and that other spirits in their special force and vigor, courage and zeal may reveal, even in Glory, the fact that in the Church militant they were among the valiant men of Israel. Why not? Yet all else that is carnal in male and female must be gone and we shall be one in Christ Jesus—in whom there is neither male nor female.

Marriage will be out of the question. This is linked with a further likeness, namely, that the spirits above are like to angels in their immortality. They cannot die. Such a thing as a funeral knell was never heard in Heaven! No angel was ever carried to his grave—though angels have been in the sepulcher—for there sat two, at the head and the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. They were *visitors*, not dwellers there. There is nothing about angels upon which the death-worm can feed. No sepulcher could encase their free spirits and the bonds of death could not hold them for a moment.

So is it with the freed ones who have passed through the grave and are now with Christ—they cannot die. Ages upon ages may roll on. Eternity's ceaseless cycles may continue, but there shall be no gray hairs of decay upon the heads of the immortals! Celestials shall never decay. For this reason, therefore, the population of yonder realms needs never to be repaired by births. *Here* it is a perpetual struggle—life contending with death—death marking its universal victory, scarring the face of the earth with tombs. But life triumphant still, ever sending little children to gather flowers above the graves. The flood of life, though apparently drunk up by the Behemoth of death, still rolls on, a broader and deeper torrent than before.

Therefore are they like the angels in Heaven, since there is no death, and consequently no necessity of birth to repair the waste of population. We have reason to believe, also, that since these spirits before the Throne are like the angels even when the resurrection trumpet shall be sounded, and the spirits, disembodied for a time, shall be again clothed upon, they shall be like the angels in the fact of the maturity of their being. In Heaven babes will be no longer babes. He who was a babe here shall be fully developed there. Neither shall there be in Heaven the weary old man tottering on his staff—he shall not carry, there, his failing eye and trembling knee. He shall be in the glory of his purified manhood, and feel no decay.

The child shall be as though he were a 100 years old, and the aged man shall wear more than the honors of his youth. I read not of angels either as youthful or waxing old—they stand ever in a blessed *perfection*—and so shall the saints of God ever be both physically and spiritually. “You have the dew of Your youth,” O Jesus, and that same dew falls upon all the plants of Your right-hand planting. We suppose, too, that all the spirits before the Throne are like angels in the matter of their beauty. The disembodied saints are fair in the eyes of Jesus, even as they are. And when their spiritual bodies shall rise all radiant with “the glory of the celestial,” then shall their comeliness be seen of all. “It is sown in dishonor,” says the Apostle, “it is raised in glory.”

Whatever of dishonor there might have been in the uncomely features of the poor creature whom we committed to the earth, there shall be no deformity to mar the countenance of the nobler thing which shall rise from the sepulcher at the bidding of God. “It does not yet appear what we shall be,” but that we shall be lovely beyond expression is most certain, “for we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is.” There will be a glory about risen saints which will even transcend the glory of angels, for unto them He has never said that they should be made like unto the Only-Begotten. But this is the portion of all the blood-bought and blood-washed—that they be fashioned in the likeness of Christ when they shall see Him face to face!

As we shall resemble the angels in beauty, so, no doubt, we shall also equal them in strength. “Bless the Lord, you His angels that excel in strength.” Thus says the Apostle, “It is sown in weakness; it is raised in *power*.” What kind of power that will be, we may guess. There will be an enlarged mental capacity, a far more extensive spiritual range. So far as the new body is concerned there will be an amount of power in it of which we have no conception. What we shall be, Beloved, in the matter of strength, we cannot tell. But this we know, that we shall not need so constantly to stretch our weary frames upon the bed of rest and to lie half our time in unconsciousness—for we shall serve Him day and night in His Temple! And this indicates a degree of unweariedness and physical endurance to which we are total strangers now. We shall in this, also, be as the angels of God.

Just then, for a minute, let your thoughts foresee that blessed personality which shall be yours when this present age is past. You suffer today. You are, today, despised and rejected. But as from yonder creeping caterpillar, or from this dried up chrysalis, there will arise a lovely creature with wings colored like the rainbow. So from your poor groaning humanity there shall come forth a fair and lovely being! And your spirit, also, shall cast off the slough of its natural depravity. It shall be rid of all the foulness and damage of its sojourn here below, and your whole man shall be restored a goodly fabric—a temple glorious to look upon in which God shall dwell with you—and in which you shall dwell with God!

2. Now, secondly, there will be a likeness between the angels and glorified saints in the matter of character. “Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven,” teaches us that angels do the will of God perfectly, cheerfully, instantly, unweariedly and with the highest possible eagerness. So do those blessed spirits to whom it is given to see Jehovah’s face—it is their delight to do the will of their Father who is in Heaven. Whatever the Lord may charge them to do, it is their Heaven to perform—for in Heaven the will of the Lord is the will of His people.

Here below, my Brothers and Sisters, to will is present with us, but how to *perform* that which we would, we find not. We would be holy, but we find another law in our members warring against the law of our minds. We sigh and cry by reason of the sin that dwells in us, till we say, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But angels know not what it is to be fallen! They have never fought with any temptations from within, though once assailed by the great temptation from without by which Satan and his followers fell from happiness.

They carry about with them no inbred sin. They find no heavy clay to clog their celestial ardors. They have not to lament lascivious desires, or covetous cravings. They have no proud thoughts which must be cast

down, no depressions of spirit, no taunts of unbelief, no motions of self-will. They serve God without a slur in their obedience. No thought of sin ever taints their soul. No syllable of evil ever falls from their holy lips. No thought of transgression defiles their service. So is it with the saints who dwell in Glory with them. They, too, are without fault before the Throne of God. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and the Spirit of God, like a refining fire, has purged out of their nature everything that is evil! They are this day as pure as God Himself in the righteousness of Christ, and in the inwrought purity which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Do you not long to be with them, if it were only for the sake of this purity? Deliverance from sin will be an escape from all sorrow, and the obtaining of perfect holiness will be the climax of delight. Oh, if we could but perfectly serve God we would make no conditions about place! Perfection in a *dungeon* were infinitely better than the least sin in a palace! If one could be quite delivered from all evil and it were possible that such a spirit could suffer physical pain, yet the joy of being rid of sin would make amends for all the torment that could possibly be heaped upon the body.

Brothers and Sisters, this portion is yours and mine! Fighting today with sin against deadly odds, and often tempted to fear that we shall be defeated, we may rest assured that we shall conquer through the blood of the Lamb! Yonder is the crown—let your faith grasp it! Persevere courageously, for all things are possible to him that believes. The most inveterate habit may be broken! The lust that overcame us yesterday shall overcome us no more if we rest in the power of the indwelling God, and in the might of the reigning Savior! Only be of good cheer, for through Jesus you shall overcome, and the crown shall be yours world without end!

3. Thirdly, the souls of the blessed are like angels as to their occupation. Angels, we read, stand around the Throne of God in sacred worship. They cast their crowns before the Throne upon the glassy sea and worship the Lamb forever and ever. There is never a moment, whether earth is swathed in light or clothed in darkness, in which the Son of God is not adored by 10,000s times 10,000s of these celestial spirits! Cherubim and seraphim veil their faces before the ever-living Son of God. Worship is their perpetual avocation.

Even so is it with all those whom Christ has redeemed with blood. They, too, are forever worshipping. Unto Jesus they pay their perpetual love. The elders are represented as standing before the Throne with their vials full of sweet odors, and their golden harps, representing the perpetual and acceptable praises of the glorified Church. Oh, how sweet worship often is on earth, but what must it be in Heaven! We love our Sundays and the place of our assembling becomes very dear to us because it is no other than the House of God to our souls! But oh, to worship *perfectly*,

without distracting thoughts and wandering minds—how blessed will it be!

Angels are described in Scripture as being occupied in holy song. John heard the voice of an innumerable company of angels. They join in the strain which goes up before the Throne, ascribing honor, and glory and majesty to the Lamb once slain. In this same chorus the glorified spirits eagerly unite—and even sweeter is their note—for angels cannot praise the Lord Jesus for having washed them in His blood, and this is the loudest of all the notes. The blood-washed contribute peculiar richness to the strain, as their joyous hearts lift up the chorus, “Worthy is the Lamb! For He was slain, and has redeemed us unto God by His blood! The Lord shall reign forever and ever.”

Oh, that heavenly song! Would that some stray notes would visit my ears even now, that I might learn how to speak thereof! Hear what John says of it: “And I heard a voice from Heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung, as it were, a new song before the Throne and before the four beasts.” Glory be unto Christ today! Though we cannot join in the seraphic song as we would desire, we send up our contribution of heartfelt praise to Him that lives and was slain.

In addition to adoration and praise, we have much reason to believe that angels spend their existence in a wondering study of the ways of God, especially of God’s gracious acts. “These things,” said the Apostle, “the angels desired to look into.” That they are not *perfect* in knowledge is quite certain, for “of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven.” They are continually *increasing* in knowledge, and it appears from the book of Daniel that they ask questions and long to be instructed.

That vision which Jacob saw, in which the angels of God were ascending and descending upon the ladder, pictures to us the contemplations of Divine spirits who are ascending and descending in meditation upon Jesus—studying the glories of the Incarnate God—His descending into the tomb—and His triumphant ascent to His Father’s Throne. Their contemplations are constantly hovering about the Cross and the doings of the Incarnate God. Such, surely, will be the occupation of the blessed. The difficulties today which stagger us will be explained to us in Heaven. “What you know not now, you shall know hereafter.”

Mysteries too deep for our present plumb-line will yield up their treasure to us in another state for here we know in part, but there shall we know even as we are known. Truths but dimly guessed at and perceived in shadow, shall be seen in clearer light—“for now we see but as in a glass darkly, but then face to face.” Scholars in Christ, how you will grow in knowledge there! You loving students of the inspired page, how you will

revel in Divine teachings there! The best of commentaries shall be the Author's own explanation. He who wrote the Scriptures shall be with you! And you shall ask Him, "What did You mean by this dark saying?"

Or, perhaps, we shall get altogether beyond the letter, and need no more the words and sentences, but shall feed on the opened Spirit, the celestial *meaning* of the heart of God! Certainly we shall be like the angels, since our studies will be all absorbed in devout and Divine things. The angels of Heaven gaze upon the face of God! This is a Scriptural expression, not mine, for our Lord says that, "in Heaven there angels do always behold the face of your Father, who is in Heaven." And what must that be? Brethren, you are not to give a carnal meaning to these words, as though God could be seen with eyes either angelic or human—for He is not to be seen with these dull optics—God is a Spirit, and spirits, only, discern God by thought and mental apprehension.

But what an apprehension of God that must be which is intended by the expression, "They do always behold the face of God!" Moses, the master spirit of the old dispensation, asked to see God, but he was only indulged with a sight of what our version calls His back parts, but which should more fittingly be described as the flowing train, the skirts of the Almighty's splendor. This was all he could see, though his eyes were more strengthened than that of any man under the legal dispensation. But, Brothers and Sisters, we in Heaven, like the angels, shall see His face, and His name shall be on our foreheads—

***"Father of Jesus, love's reward,
What raptures will it be,
Prostrate before Your Throne to lie,
And ever gaze on You!"***

Still, we have not exhausted the occupations of the angels. These which I have already mentioned are rather contemplative—worship, song, study, and Beatific Vision. But the flaming ones above have occupations which are connected with earth. For instance, they feel sympathetic joy. We should not have known this if Jesus had not said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." I believe this, that the souls of men redeemed will have the same kind of joy. And I can imagine the soul of the Believer rejoicing over the child that was left unconverted, saved after its parent's ascent into Heaven—saved through the prayers which a mother left behind her, bequeathing them upon her dying bed as her best and most sacred legacy.

Many fathers have seen their posthumous spiritual children born to them through prayers they offered on earth, but not fulfilled until after the prayer had been exchanged for praise. I sometimes think—it may be fancy—that if in Glory I ever shall withdraw my eyes from the sight of my Lord, if ever I may pause the song to my Well-Beloved for a moment, it

shall be to gaze over the battlements of Heaven, to see how the Church on earth among which I labored may be prospering!

Surely those venerated men, who before ministered to this flock, must feel a peculiar joy in our prosperity—and as the news is telegraphed from earth to Heaven that hundreds have been born to God, and that the Word among us has been quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword—if the angels rejoice, I cannot believe but what the glorified spirits, far more akin to repenting sinners than angels are—must have a yet deeper sympathy, and feel a yet more exultant mirth!

Still, I must pass on. Angels are engaged in Heaven, we are told, in untiring service. Gabriel flies, at his Lord's word, whether it is to Mary, or to the shepherds, or to the King. It matters nothing to the angel whether he descends to smite the hosts of Sennacherib, or to be the guardian of a little child. It has been well said that if two angels were dispatched to earth, and the one were to rule an empire amidst all terrestrial splendor, and the other were to perform the drudgery of a kitchen servant, the angels would have no choice so long as they knew their Lord's mind. Whichever God wills, they will. For those bright spirits consider not themselves, but only the good pleasure of their God!

We little know what they do for us. There is a wondrous guardianship exercised secretly by them over all the royal seed of Heaven. They are always engaged. They are never idle. They are never to be found where Satan offers mischief, still, for idle spirits to perform—but day without night they serve their God. Lastly on this point, they are constant attendants at the courts of Heaven. Wherever Jesus is, we have the angels round about Him. "When He shall come, in the glory of His Father, with all His holy angels with Him." When the prince moves, the courtiers go with the king. Wherever the king may be, there are the gentlemen-at-arms. There are his bodyguards. So, wherever King Jesus is, there are His angels. "The chariots of God are 20,000, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them."

The great King immortal and eternal, who girds His sword upon His thigh and rides out to battle, goes not forth alone—legions of angels follow at His feet! When He makes war against the devil and his angels, all these, His watchers and holy ones—the flaming cherubim and fiery seraphim—are at His right hand, like veteran bands. Such shall be the engagements of each glorified soul. We know not what may be our sacred tasks in yonder skies—it were vain for us to surmise—but we shall not be idle, for it is written, "They serve Him day and night in His Temple."

I have thought that as angels are but the servants, they are sent out of doors to do the Master's field-work in the far-off portions of the universe. But we, who are His children, shall serve Him day and night in His Temple at home—for is it not written, "They shall dwell in the house of the

Lord forever”? Ours shall be housework, home service in His immediate Presence. We shall be like that angel who stood in the sun—we shall dwell forever in the full blaze of the Presence of the infinite God! We shall be equal to the angels, and made like they, then, in the respect of occupation, as well as in that of character and person.

4. Lest I weary you, I will add but a few words on the fourth point, though I think it a very important one. We shall be like the angels in heavenliness. Here we come to the vital meaning of the text. They are not married or given in marriage. They have other things to think of, and they have other cares and other enjoyments. They mind not earthly things, but are of a heavenly spirit. So is it with the blessed spirits before the Throne of God. To eat and drink, to be clothed—these are things which fret their minds no more. To keep the house, to maintain the children, to thrust the wolf from the door—such anxieties never trouble celestial spirits.

Brothers and Sisters, this is one of the things which makes the great change so desirable to us—that after death our thoughts, our cares, our position, our desires, our joys will all be in God! Here we want externals, here we seek after carnal things, for we must eat and drink, and be clothed and housed. Here we must be somewhat hampered by the grosser elements of this poor materialism. But up yonder they have no needs like our own. They consequently have no desires of an earthly kind—their desires are all concerning their *God*. No creature drags them downward. They are free to bow before the Creator, and to think alone of Him, to—

**“Plunge into the Godhead’s deepest sea,
And bathe in His immensity.”**

Oh, what a deliverance that must be! Because if now for a minute or two we soar to more sublime things, and climb as upon the top of Pisgah to look down upon the world, we are called to descend again into the valley and the noise and dust of the battle. But there, forever and ever we shall abide in the loftiness of heavenly things, absorbed with the Glory which shall then be revealed!

5. Lastly, we shall be like the angels, when in Heaven, as to our happiness. The bliss of angels and the glorified is complete. They possess always the Divine approval—this is a fountain of joy. They know they have complete security—this is another well-spring of peace. And they have suitable engagements with which to occupy their existence—and this is a wellhead of happiness. They have unbroken rest—yes, their *service* is rest—and rest is *bliss*. They have great capacities for knowing, and understanding, and enjoying. And an enlarged capacity, well filled with so grand a Subject, guarantees perpetual felicity!

We shall be such. My words would utterly fail, and therefore I shall not attempt to describe the bliss of Heaven. Whatever it may be, it will be ours if we are Believers. Least of all the family, yet believing in the precious

blood, it is yours! It is not of some, but of all it is said, "They are as the angels of God in Heaven." Now, unhappily for me, my time is nearly gone, and I wanted to enlarge upon the second head. The subject is too large for a single sermon. I must, therefore, give you an outline of what might have been said of the second part.

II. I would speak of THE ANGELIC LIFE ON EARTH. If we are to be like the angels of God in Heaven, it will be well to have an outline of it here—to give ourselves to the commencement of angelic life even here. We ought to do so. Our Lord is called an angel. He is the Angel of the Covenant—we ought to be like He now—therefore, we ought to have a present resemblance to angels.

Ministers are especially called to this, for this is one of their names. John writes to the *angels* of the seven Churches. Ministers are the messengers of God to the sons of men. They should be like that angel who flew in the midst of Heaven having the everlasting Gospel to preach to every creature. And, as the angel sounded that trumpet, so, as often as the time comes, and the assembly is gathered together, the Christian minister should have his trumpet ready, and that trumpet should give no uncertain sound. That we may be like angels here below is a certain fact, for we read of Stephen that his face shone, and even they who stoned him saw him as an angel of God.

Why should we not be like angels, for did not men in the wilderness eat angels' food, and may we not spiritually live on angels' meat today? May we not sing—

***“Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming Grace and dying love”?***

Yet these are the daily meat and the daily drink of all the saved souls! We can be like angels in our occupations. First, it is ours, as it was theirs, to declare the Word of God. We read of the Word published by angels. We read of the angels flying through the midst of Heaven with the everlasting Gospel. My Brothers, according to your ability, be like the angels of God in this and publish abroad the plan of salvation! Each of you, according to his ability, tell others of the salvation of Jesus Christ. You will never be more angelic than when God makes you the messengers of His Holy Spirit to the hearts of men.

Be it ours to imitate the angels in fighting a good fight while we are here. We read that Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels, and the dragon was cast down. The fight is going on every day. Michael is the Lord Jesus, the only Archangel. We, like He, and under Him, must stand as champions for the Truth of God, never to surrender, but being prepared to suffer, even unto blood, striving against sin. With undaunted courage, and a conscience that cannot be violated, let us stand fast for the one Lord, the one faith, and the one Baptism until He

shall come who shall call us to the reckoning, and shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servants." Like angels, then, let us teach, and like angels, fight for the cause and for the crown of Christ!

Ours, too, let it be, like angels, to oppose the way of rebels. When Balaam was on his road to attempt to curse Israel, an angel stood with a fiery sword and made him pause. How often may a good man do that with the ungodly! Wicked men have frequently felt, in the presence of gracious spirits, that they could not speak profanely, nor sin desperately. A good man's presence has cast an awe over the whole company. You ought, by your example, to say to the world, "Rebel not against God." Even if you speak not with your tongue, the eloquence of your *life* should be a constant check upon the pathways of sin.

Not content with this, let it be ours to be the means of setting free those who are the prisoners of hope—God's prisoners. The angel came to Peter, smote him on the side, knocked off his chains, opened the gate, and led him out into the street. May you and I do this to some of those who, under conviction of sin, are smarting and suffering but have no liberty. Go today, if you have opportunity, and try to strike some sleeper on the side and speak an earnest word. Say to him, "Why do you sleep, with death and judgment so near?" And when you see him aroused, bid him follow you, as you shall open door after door of gracious promises to him and bring him into the wide street of liberty in Christ by simple faith. You can all be angels of this kind. It needs not that you be preachers. If you find out the disconsolate, you may bring them to Jesus in the house as well as in the great assembly.

And, then, Beloved, let us also imitate the angels in our ministering comfort to those who are saved. When Elijah was faint under the juniper tree, an angel appeared to him and pointed to a cake that was baked upon the coals. An angel said to Paul when he was on shipboard, "Fear not." Often have angels visited godly men with this message, "Fear not." O you that love the Lord, and are happy in Him, yourselves, be angels in this—comfort others with the same comfort with which God has comforted you this day. This very day there may be sitting near you some weeping Hannah who needs a message from God which can only come to her poor broken heart through your lips. Tell others of the goodness of God, as shown in your experience. Bear your witness to the goodness and loving kindness of the Shepherd who fails not His flock, and in this way you shall be angels of mercy to tens of thousands if the Lord spares you and gives you opportunity.

We may imitate angels in another respect—namely that we may always be watching over souls. You Sunday school teachers ought always to be angels. Do we not read of the little ones whom Christ took into His arms and said, "See that you despise not one of these little ones, for in Heaven

their angels do always behold the face of God”? Sunday school teachers, this is your mission—see that you act it out! Angels bear us up in their hands, lest at any time we dash our foot against a stone. “For the angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him.” Believers, learn to camp round about your fellow Christians! Help to save them from temptation and sorrow. Bear up, in your hands of sympathy, such as you can assist. Take away the stumbling block from the way of any who are apt to fall. Bear them up in your hands lest they dash their feet against a stone. You can thus be angels of God here below.

In addition to all this, is it not written, “Bless the Lord, you His angels”? “Let all the angels of God worship Him”? Well, then, you can be like the angels, now, by being always in a state of praise. Let no murmur escape your lips! Let no complaining dwell on your heart! Praise God though the sun shines not! Praise Him though the mists and fog are thickening! Praise Him though the winds should howl and the rain descend! You are not to be ruled by circumstances! Angels praise Him in the night as well as in the day! Let us do the same!—

***“Praise Him while He lends you breath,
And when your voice is lost in death
Let praise employ your nobler powers.”***

Thus have I set before you the attainments to which we shall come and the opportunities we have, even now, by the Holy Spirit’s effectual power of forestalling those attainments. May you be desirous of beginning the angelic life. And remember, the door to it is at Christ’s Cross. Go where angels gaze with wonder, and you gaze with repentance! Go with your eyes full of tears for sin, and trust in Him who died for sinners, and the Lord of angels shall be your Lord, and the palace of angels shall be your home forever and ever. Amen.

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QUESTIONS OF THE DAY AND THE QUESTION OF THE DAY NO. 1093

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 26, 1873,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“What do you think of the Christ?”
Matthew 22:42.***

IT was a custom among the Jews before the Paschal Lamb was killed to shut it up for several days for examination. It was at first selected with great care, for it must be “a lamb without blemish, a male of the first year,” and lest at the first choice some blemish should have been overlooked it was continually inspected from day to day. It was meet that the Lamb of God's Passover should pass through a similar ordeal. It is remarkable that our Savior, during the days which preceded His being offered up for us on Calvary was examined and questioned, both by friends and foes. The sharpest eyes were brought to bear upon Him—eyes made preternaturally keen through the malice of wicked hearts. He passed under the scrutiny of Pharisees, of Herodians, of Sadducees, and of lawyers. They tested Him in all parts and tried Him from all points, yet they found no fault in Him. “They marveled, and left Him, and went their way.” And, like Pilate, they found no fault in Him.

Read the chapter before us in that light and it becomes singularly interesting, as exhibiting the unassailable perfection of our Divine Redeemer. Let us pray that when we are proved and tested we, also, may endure the fiery trial and be found to be pure gold. As they tried our Master, so will they also try us—may we, through His triumphant Grace, endure even to the end. As I looked upon our text in my study, another current of thought passed through my mind. The text stands in a remarkable connection. The chapter which contains it opens with the parable of the wedding feast. The marriage banquet was spread, the guests were invited—they would not come—and therefore special messengers were sent to compel as many as they could find to partake of the feast. Then as to warn ministers in all generations that the greatest hindrances they would ever meet with would arise from the quibbling, critical spirit of mankind, we have in the same chapter a long account of the various cavilers that assailed our Lord.

When we preach the Gospel, men do not repel us point blank by telling us that there is no importance in our message—instead they suggest difficulties, propound frivolous enquiries, or fly off at a tangent upon some other less important topic. They evade the pursuit of the Gospel by plunging into the mists of debate. Like the cuttle-fish, which escapes by clouding the water all around it, so do they avoid the invitations and declarations of the Word of God by raising questions of a secondary character. It was so in Christ's day. His adversaries met His arguments with quibbles,

or with wrangling. It is certainly so now. We cannot get at men—they stave us off, they parry our home thrusts and baffle us by hiding behind the shields of evil questions.

We cannot get close to them—they lie entrenched behind the ramparts of disputation. With other questions they push off the main question and keep far from them the soul-saving Truth of God. The Lord Jesus Christ here teaches His ministers the art of leaping over the sinner's defenses, dashing into the center of his stronghold and smiting him with the edge of the sword by means of the enquiry—"What do you think of the Christ?" We should deal with matters of disputation as He did—answer them, as far as they are to be answered, with wisdom and prudence. But then He would have us carry the war into the enemy's country and attack the human conscience with the demand, "What do you think of the Christ?"

This morning I purpose, first, to speak upon questions of the day and then to press home upon you *the* question of the day—the question of all questions in which life and death are wrapped up.

I. First, a little upon some of the QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, not with any intent of interesting you in them, but rather of calling you somewhat away from them lest they too much engross you. The first question of the day is nearly akin to that which was proposed to our Lord by the Pharisees and the Herodians. It deals with the connection between politics and religion, the vexatious question of Church and State. How far does Caesar's rule go? Where does it end? And where are we amenable to God alone?

This enquiry, in a very practical shape, presses upon the Dissenters of England. I very largely attribute the partial decline of religious prosperity in some of our churches to the interest which has been taken in the questions which naturally arise out of the unscriptural and adulterous connection at present existing between the Church and the State in this land. We have, each of us, a certain amount of mental power, of time, of energy and no more—and if it is a necessity, as it is a necessity—that every Non-conformist should contend for his rights and liberties and should never rest till perfect religious equality is established in the land—then so much of our strength is taken away from higher and better matters to attend to that which, nevertheless, it is unavoidable that we should consider. It is not possible for us to cease from our efforts to obtain deliverance from the degrading yoke which now burdens us.

We are told that we enjoy toleration—the very word is insult! What would the members of the dominant sect think if we talked of tolerating *them*? We shall never be satisfied until all religious communities stand upon an equal footing before the Law. Caesar has no right to demand of us that we shall support the religion or the superstition which he chooses to select. An Established Church is a spiritual tyranny! We wear no chains upon our wrists, but on our spirits our oppressors have thrust fetters which gall us worse than bands of steel. We are compelled, as a part of the nation, to support, through taxation, a church whose business it is to pull down that which with prayers and tears we live to build up and would even die to maintain.

As Protestant lamenters, we see the Truths we preach assailed by an army of Anglican Papists whom we are compelled to support that they may oppose our most cherished designs! Popery is this day installed and endowed among us and we are compelled to acknowledge its puppets as the clergy of our own national Church! That which our fathers died to overthrow we are compelled to support! We cannot help being indignant—we should be less than men if our blood did not boil within us at such injustice! If men want Popery, or any other form of error, let them pay for it themselves and call it their own—but to foist their superstition on us as part of the nation is an oppression against which we appeal to the Judge of all the earth! Men cannot long bear to be saddled with the maintenance of a superstition which they abhor—least of all can the descendants of the Ironsides endure it, who, though they have laid aside all carnal weapons, cannot quite forget the fields on which their fathers made the Cavaliers feel the weight of their right arms!

The insult to our consciences which is embodied in the present Church and State is a daily provocation to us as men and Christians. Of the present unrighteous domination I would say, Down with it! Down with it, all you who have a spark of justice left in your souls! As for us, we will never rest till we are free from this excuseless injustice and free we will be, as sure as God, the God of righteousness yet lives!

Now, we cannot think about all this and be earnest about it—we confess it and are grieved it is so—without very much of our strength running in that direction. And that is strength which we would rather spend upon pure, spiritual religion. We desire to be always and alone preaching Christ. We desire to be building up His Church and living at peace with all our brethren. We need, in all things, to be giving unto God all our heart and soul and strength. But this altercation concerning God and Caesar will come in. It imperatively demands our attention and so it distracts us in a measure from our higher work and, therefore, the sooner it is done with the better. We cannot be always taken up with this matter. We count the Gospel to be worth 10,000 times as much.

The Savior, when the Caesar question was brought forward, answered it most completely. They said, “Shall we pay tribute to Caesar?” “Whose money is this?” said He. “Caesar’s money.” “Very well. You have evidently submitted to Caesar’s government, you are under his sway. Therefore pay to him the tax which he demands of you, but still by no means forget that you are under God’s government. Therefore render unto God the things that are God’s.” He drew a line of distinction here which always ought to be maintained. “To Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” To maintain order, to repress crime, to preserve individual liberty, to protect each man’s rights—this is Caesar’s business.

To teach us religion? Is Caesar to do that? God forbid, for what religion will Caesar teach us? Is he a Pagan? He will enforce idolatry! Is he a Papist? He will ordain Popery! Is he an atheist? He will establish infidelity. Remember the days of Queen Mary and see what Caesar is capable of when he meddles with religion! It is none of Caesar’s business to deal with our consciences! Neither will we ever obey Caesar in any matter which touches conscience. He may make what laws he will about religion, but by

our loyalty to God we pour contempt on Caesar when he usurps the place of God! He is no more to us than the meanest beggar in the street if he goes beyond his own legitimate authority.

To Caesar, Caesar's politics to politicians. Obedience, cheerful and prompt, to civil rulers. To God, and to God only, things that are God's! And what are these? Our hearts, our souls, our consciences. Man himself is the coin upon which God has stamped His image and superscription (though, alas, both are sadly marred!), and we must render to God our manhood, our wills, our thoughts, our judgments, our minds, our hearts. Consciences are for God. Any law that touches a conscience is null and void, ipso facto, for the simple reason that kings and parliaments have no right to interfere in the realm of conscience. Conscience is under law to none but God. We do not believe in liberty of conscience towards God. We are bound towards Him—to believe what He tells us and to do what He bids us—but liberty of conscience in respect to all mankind is the natural right of every man of woman born and it ought to be tenderly respected. Our Lord, here, lays the controversy to sleep by telling us to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

Now, if there is any person here who is unconverted, but whose mind is much occupied with the Church and State dispute, whichever side of the question he may take up, I would earnestly say to him—important as this is and to some of us it is the question which, next to our soul's salvation, weighs most heavily on our hearts—yet still, first of all, attend to the more serious enquiry—"What do you think of the Christ?" Is He the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Mighty God, in your esteem? Are you saved by Him? If not, I would bid you waive the topic upon which we have just now spoken until the higher question is answered.

When a man is at the point of death the question is, what can we do to restore him? When the vessel is going down, the one thing necessary for every man is, "how can I get to the boat?" Sometimes in a desperate case, as that of sudden shipwreck, the love of life may drive men to do even more than they should do for themselves and tempt them in their mortal terror to become forgetful of the claims of others. O, I wish that something like that excess of diligence, if such could be, would come upon men's hearts with regard to their souls. There are enough saved men who can fight out the ecclesiastical dispute—you unsaved ones had better go to the Cross—and there seek and find salvation. The question has, doubtless, vast importance, but with you the far more important matter is to believe in Christ!

Suppose you were to die tonight? It would then be a small matter to you what may be done in the next session of Parliament with the question of the separation of Church and State. If you have to stand before the bar of God before this year is out, the Established Churches will be of small account to you if you are banished from Heaven and hope! Therefore, see to it, I pray you, that no business interferes with the business of your soul!

A second problem of the age also crops up in this chapter—the enquiry into the details of the future state. I think none of us remember a time in which so many strange theories have been brought forward with regard to

the doom of the ungodly and the condition of the righteous. Some are teaching, and teaching with great vehemence that Believers, as well as others, die at the time when they depart out of this world and that there is no more existence for the righteous until the day of the resurrection! They teach that there are no such things as immortal souls, but that even the godly dissolve into dust and cease to be until the resurrection raises them out of the grave.

Now these are solemn topics and I believe that it is highly necessary to be orthodox upon them. I do not think any man wastes his time who stands up to defend the old faith with regard to these things. I am persuaded that the generally received views are truthful and healthful and that the novelties which swarm around us will breed abounding mischief. Still, for all that, there are other matters to be thought about besides that carnival of errors which comprises soul-sleeping, annihilation, universal restoration and the like. There is a prior question, and that is, "What do you think of the Christ?"

However, since the facts of the future ought to be known, our Savior dealt with the Sadducees' heresy. The Sadducees, believing in pure materialism and denying the resurrection, the Savior declared to them the certainty of a future state and took out of their hands a weapon of fancied difficulty. In answer to their question about the woman married seven times, He declared that in the next world men are neither married nor given in marriage—where death's ravages are unknown there is no need of reproduction. Since the Sadducees denied that there were angels, our Lord, without noticing their skepticism, declared that the risen ones are as the angels of God—thus killing two birds with one stone. He corrected their views as to what men would be in the other world and quietly confirmed that there are spirits called angels.

Then the great Teacher proved beyond question the continuous existence of the saints by reminding the Sadducees of the Voice that spoke out of the bush to Moses. The Pentateuch was the great authority of the Sadducees—they did not reject the other Inspired Books—but they held the writings of Moses in superior veneration. Therefore our Lord, with wisdom, selects from the book of Exodus and quotes the Words of the Lord's address to Moses out of the bush, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He then added a well-known Jewish axiom, "God is not the God of the dead but of the living," and routed the skeptics in one battle! It followed clearly enough that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not alive in Moses' day. They were in their graves—that was certain—therefore it was equally certain that a something which was truly Abraham was not in the grave, but was somewhere else. That is to say, that the *souls* of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were living, and living in the possession of God, though their bodies had been consumed by the worm.

There was the Savior's argument. The Patriarchs, as to their bodies, had been dead for some generations. Yet God called Himself their God! Therefore, in the truest sense, they could not be really dead, but must still exist. It has been said that the nerve of this argument lies in the fact that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were, as to their bodies, dead at the time—that

is true, and yet the argument would be strong if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been alive at the time. Note this well, and consider the point. When God says to a man, "I am your God," what an infinite blessing He bestows and how much the words imply! As long as God exists He belongs to that man and, therefore, the man *himself* must exist as long as God does—for that which does not exist cannot possess anything! That which possesses anything must itself exist—therefore it follows that as Abraham and all other saints must forever possess God, as their God, according to the Word—"I am your God"—therefore they must eternally exist.

In order to receive and experience the sum and substance of the Divine promise, nothing less than eternity will suffice. When God bestows a blessing upon a man, He gives him such a range of being as shall give him the capacity for enjoying that blessing. Temporal blessings have attached to them a natural being. The vast *spiritual* blessing of possessing God is infinite and needs an everlasting existence for its enjoyment. The saints are still living or else God could not be their God—and the saints are still conscious, for God is not the God of unconscious things that by hundreds of years together neither think nor feel. He is the God of those who are living in the sense of being *active*. They still worship and adore. They still love and serve. Their rest with Jesus is not that of unconsciousness. They are living—not merely existing—but living unto the living God.

This was our Savior's proof and it is one which is overwhelmingly convincing. The doctrine of the continued existence of the righteous is bound up with that of the resurrection. Immortality and the resurrection are kindred Truths of God. When God said, "I am the God of Abraham," He did not say "I am the God of Abraham's soul." If He had, the existence of Abraham's soul would have fulfilled the promise. But, "I am the God of Abraham," includes the whole of his person and Abraham was body as well as soul—it was necessary, therefore, that Abraham's *body* should rise to enjoy the fullness of God. There was, as a learned writer observes, an advance all the way. God was the God of Abraham while he was in the body of this death. He was the God of Abraham when unclothed and He will be the God of Abraham when he is clothed with his house which is from Heaven.

Now, my dear Hearers, I would at once call you back to the main point. These questions ought to be thought of and you should receive the teaching of Christ about them and yield to none of the inventions of these evil days. Yet is there for you this more pressing question—"What do you think of the Christ?" Have you a part and a lot in Him? Are you saved by Him? It seems to me mere folly for an unconverted man to be asking, "What is the nature of Heaven? What is the form of the resurrection body?" Did you ever see a poor, shivering, miserable beggar in the street, starving for lack of food, and yet curious about the exact details of the imperial revenue for the current quarter of the year? What business can that be of his? Is not this his first business—to win a morsel of bread? And should it not be *your* first concern, as a man, that you should be pardoned? That you should be accepted before God? That you should be saved from Hell?

Speculations upon the Second Advent and the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel—what have they to do with you while you are without Christ? Are you mad, you unsaved ones? Will you gratify curiosity while your souls are perishing for lack of the knowledge of Christ? The wrath of God abides on you! You are like a man in a condemned cell waiting for the day of execution! Is this a time to be puzzling your head about things which concern others, but which as yet certainly do not concern you? “What do you think of the Christ?” Put other things aside till that is settled. Then you shall attend to them in order, according as God shall help you.

There are, however, other questions which will arise—questions upon theology. One of these was asked of our Savior by the Pharisees. They wanted to know which was the first and chief Commandment. They believed that Moses had given them 365 Commandments, corresponding to the number of days in the year and that he had given them 248 prohibitions. They made a great point of knowing the exact numbers. Among them there were great disputes as to which entailed the more sin—the breaking of this or the breaking of the other command. Some maintained that the ceremonial ordinances were more important than the moral commands. Another party held that the ceremonial precepts were very secondary as compared with the moral Law.

Scribes and lawyers wrangled without end. Our Savior answered their question by telling them that the love of God and the love of their neighbor were the two great Commandments and so He ended that matter. But He did not permit their thoughts to stay there. He pushed on to the more vital question, “What do you think of the Christ?” At the present day, if you speak to a man about his soul, he will ask you, “Are you an Arminian or a Calvinist?” To this we reply, “Dear Fellow, are you saved? That is your matter. We will tell you what we are another time. For the present you need a Savior and *there* ought your mind to settle.” “Well,” he says, “what is your opinion in reference to Baptism?” Our answer is ready enough, for we see the Lord’s will plainly enough in His Word, but we beg you to think more of Jesus than of ordinances.

“But,” says the quibbler, “are you Presbyterian in church polity, or do you favor Episcopacy?” Dear Friend, what has that to do with you? Have you passed from death unto life? That is the point. A man is drowning and I put out my arm to rescue him, but he will not grasp my hand till I can assure him that I pronounce a certain Latin word correctly—is he not an idiot? My dear Fellow, right quantities or false quantities are inconsiderable things compared with your being drowned—let us get you on dry land, first, and then we will talk about long vowels and short ones. So also we cannot afford to split hairs while souls are being lost. We are far from saying that any doctrine is inconsiderable and that any Truth of God is unimportant—a grain of Truth is worth dying for—still, there are solemn facts to be thought of *before* we come to controversial doctrines.

There are persons who will say, “But how would you celebrate the Lord’s Supper?” I reply, “We do not celebrate it at all with such as you are. Until you know the Savior we have no Lord’s Supper for you whatever.” “But,” he says—and he begins to question you whether there should be an altar of stone or a table of wood, and whether the elements should be dis-

pensed by a priest or by a minister, or by a common Christian—“These are very weighty matters, and I must have them all solved at once.” Dear Friends, we also think them weighty and our testimony about them never hesitates, but we are not going to dispute with you, for we earnestly entreat you, first of all, to know Christ and Him Crucified! Make your calling and election sure and then we will be ready to give you reasons from the Word for our faith and practice. At present, “What do you think of the Christ?” is the one sole enquiry which demands your care.

I think I spoke out plainly enough, just now, upon the first question referring to politics and religion to let you know that I am by no means lukewarm on minor points. And I would speak with equal definiteness here about doctrines and ordinances if it were necessary to show you that I do not undervalue them. But for all that, “What do you think of the Christ?” is far above all other questions for a man who is unredeemed. And I do beseech you not to let those other points destroy you, as they may do by taking away your thoughts from the one thing necessary. Till you are saved you need your mind concentrated on the one essential point. After that we will teach you to observe all things whatever the Lord has spoken.

Just now, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved,” is the most important text in the Bible for you to consider.

II. Now let us come to the second part of our subject—THE QUESTION OF ALL QUESTIONS, the question of the day, the question of all days until days shall end—“What do you think of the Christ?” Observe that it is an enquiry which concerns the Savior. “What do you think of the Messiah, the Sent One, the Christos, the Anointed One of God?” Do you think His errand was necessary? Was there a need for such a Person to come here? Was a Savior necessary in your case? He came to save men from their sins—have you any sins? Have you sins from which you cannot escape of yourself, for which you can make no atonement yourself? Have you felt this? Do you feel it now?

If you say you have no sin, your thoughts of Christ will be that He was a needless commissioner from Heaven as far as your case is concerned. He came not to call those who need not to be saved—why should He do such a work of supererogation? Have you felt sin? Do you confess it? Do you believe, therefore, that God, in sending Christ to save His people from their sins, has done a gracious and merciful act? Do you accept the Person whom He has sent? Are you willing to be saved by Him? Are you willing to be saved on His terms, which are that you yield yourself up to Him, that He shall be your ONLY Savior, that He shall have all the glory of your salvation, that you shall not be saved by any merit of your own, but be pardoned through His blood and righteousness? Do you agree to that? Does your soul say, “Yes,” to that before the living God? If so, your thoughts of Christ are right. But if not, if you kick at His sacrifice and say, “I see no need for it.” If you think it insufficient to put away sin and if, therefore, you do not trust in Him, then you have made God a liar by not believing His testimony concerning His Son!

But I trust that this morning your thoughts of Christ are just these—“I am a sinner deserving punishment from God. I see that God has punished

sin in Jesus Christ and I trust myself in Christ, the atoning Sacrifice, wholly and alone. I give myself up to Christ Jesus that He may save me, that He may rule me, that He may make me holy even as He is holy. If He will but have me, I have no opposition to Him. No, I feel, on the contrary, a complete yielding of my soul to His Divine will, happy to be saved by such a Savior.”

I am favored, indeed, to be addressing persons who feel this in their very souls! Whatever else you have to perplex you, Beloved, always hold to that and let your thoughts of our dear Savior ever be humble, ever sweet, and ever pleasant to your hearts. Then shall you be strong for sacred service! But never, never, never cease to think well of Jesus. Please notice that this question not only concerns the Savior, but it concerns the Person of the Savior and this is a point too often forgotten. We speak of the Lord’s teachings and doings, but we ought, more often, to remember that He is a *real* Person—not a name, or a fiction—not a shadow that has passed across the historic page, but a Man of whom we may ask the question—“Whose Son is He?” as the Master asked it here.

Now, shall I put the question to you? What do you think of the Person of Christ? Do you understand how Sonship and Lordship blend in Him? Do you understand Him to be the Son of David and, therefore, yielding obedience on earth, both to man and to God, He became the Servant of servants for our sake? Do you believe He was obedient, even unto death—and yet do you comprehend that He is Lord of all, that the government is upon His shoulders? Is Christ your Savior and yet your Master? Has He washed your feet and yet do you bow down and kiss His feet? Has He done all for you and now do you feel that He is enthroned in your heart’s best love and that you would do anything and everything for Him?

Jesus bleeding on the Cross and yet exalted on the Throne—can you reconcile these two things? The crown of thorns and the crown of universal monarchy—have you seen how these two are united in His blessed Person? What do you think of Christ—Sonship and Lordship blended? And have you seen, and does your faith know that He is both Human and Divine—Son of David, truly such by natural descent—Son of God, also by Nature and Essence? It is no use our mincing words—we cannot believe in the salvation of a man who does not believe in the Deity of Christ! We would have the utmost charity possible, but we must have honesty, too, and it seems to us that the rejection of Christ as God is the rejection of His salvation altogether!

Beloved, have you accepted Christ, the whole Christ, the Man Christ, the God Christ, Immanuel, God with us? Is He your trust? If not, may the Lord bring you to look the question in the face before any other. Put all the rest in the background and consider this—Have you thought rightly concerning God in Christ Jesus, the Savior of men? Have you thought rightly of Him, too, in the matter of the opposition which is rendered to His kingdom and yet of the sure conquest He will gain?

Notice how the Holy Spirit has led David to write concerning it, “The Lord said unto my Lord, sit you at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.” Christ is opposed. Do you see it? Do you also lament it? Does your faith, at the same time, grasp the thought that all this oppo-

sition will be overcome, that Christ will yet sit upon the Throne of His Father David and will sway His scepter over the most fierce of all His adversaries? Oh, it is well when we can get to this—Christ in my own soul fighting with sin! Christ resisted by my depravity and corruption! And yet Christ sure to reign and sit as King when all my sins are overcome and all my corruptions overthrown! It is a blessed sight to see the struggling and soon the triumphing of the Savior and to think of Him in that respect! I exhort you to make sure work about the Divine Person of our dear Lord Jesus Christ and to let all other things go or wait their turn for many a long day until you know Him and are found in Him—and are saved with a complete salvation in Him!

But I must pass on a little further. This question is not only about the Redeemer and His Person, but it is about thoughts. “What do you *think* of the Christ?” It has been said that we shall not be hanged for our thoughts. It may be. But many have been *damned* for their thoughts. Indeed, this is the *source* of damnation—that men will think amiss—and from thinking amiss go on to speak and act amiss. “What do you think of the Christ?” This is a searching enquiry to some, for their relations to Christ consist of anything else you like except *thinking*. Many who attend a place of worship never give themselves the trouble of thinking. They say a prayer night and morning, but as to *thinking*, that is out of the question. They go to their “sacraments” and they do not mind how often, but they never think. What is a priest but an invention to think *for* me, to do my religion *for* me? But the question is, “What do *you* think of the Christ?”

If there is no thought in your religion, there is no life in it! Man invents mechanical forms and modes in order to get away from the horrible necessity of thinking, but in so doing he destroys his soul. Every man should do his own thinking and do it at home, too, and not need to put it out for somebody else to perform it for him. The mind must exercise itself towards God and if it does not, our worship is dead worship. Our Savior suggests to us that we must think and think of Him—“What do you think of the Christ?” Is it a pleasure to you to *think* of Christ? Do you so love Him, is He so comely in your esteem that you delight to *think* of Him? Do you frequently *think* of Christ, just as you often think of those you love? And do you naturally *think* of Christ just as we naturally think of food without being reminded of it, seeing we have to live upon it and therefore inward appetites render impossible to forget?

Have you a *passion* for Christ? These are the kind of enquiries which try a man. Is your nature so changed that Christ has become your Friend and therefore you delight in Him? Has He become your food and therefore you inevitably long for Him and must do so because of new appetites and cravings within your nature? Do you think of Christ joyfully? Can you say—

**“In the heavenly Lamb
Thrice happy I am,
And my heart it does leap
At the sound of His name?”**

Do you think of Christ, desiring still nearer access and a clearer view of Him, sighing out with sacred love-sickness, saying, “O that I were with Him where He is, or that He were with me where I am”? Do you think of

Him with admiration, wondering at the Altogether Lovely One? Do you think of Him with an ardent wish to be conformed to His image, saying, “Gracious Savior, make me like Yourself”? Do you think of Him with practical love, so that you help His cause, succor His poor people, proclaim His Truth, aid His Church and pity sinners for whom He shed His blood?

Do you so think of Christ as to speak well of Him and commend Him to the love of mankind? Do thoughts of Jesus keep you back from sin and incite you to continue in the paths of holiness for His name’s sake? Do you so think of Christ that you pray *for* Him, that you give *to* Him, that you work *for* Him? “What do you think of the Christ?” Is He worthy of your actual, practical, diligent service, or is it to be all talk and idle chat and broken resolutions and vain professions? “What do you think of the Christ?”

Then notice, the question is about your own thoughts. How pleased we all are with the work of judging other people. There are certain persons to whom, if you will speak against all Churches and all religious people, and say, “How all are departing from the Truth and all going aside,” you are furnishing them with the sweetest possible nuts. They delight in sacred scandal! Now it may be true that everybody is very bad, but I do not particularly see what I have to do with that. The main thing, at any rate, for the most of you to consider is—“What do you think of the Christ?”—you! “Ah,” says one, “I like to see abuses exposed.” Very well, come here and let us turn your heart inside out. “What do you think of the Christ?” “I like a searching ministry,” says one. Very well, then let this question search you and go right through your soul like a hurricane—“What do you think of the Christ?”

“Alas, my neighbors are great Sabbath-breakers.” What are you, Sir? Cannot you break the Sabbath and yet attend a place of worship? Do you not carry burdens in your soul on Sunday—and is it not ordained to be a day of rest for the mind as well as for the body? “Ah, but some of my neighbors are very erroneous in their doctrine.” What are you the better for your orthodoxy? That is the point. May it not involve more sin to have the light and not to act upon it than to be in the dark altogether? I beseech you, each man, each woman for himself—put the question to your own soul, “What do you think of the Christ?” How many times after a sermon have you said, “I wonder how So-and-So could sit still and listen to that part of it. I thought as I was sitting there what a home-thrust the preacher gave So-and-So”?

Were such thoughts right? Is that the way to hear the Gospel? Are we not to hear for *ourselves*? Should there not be a *personal* application on all matters? I push home this demand with vehemence—with leave or without leave, I beseech each one of you to answer to this enquiry—“What do *you* think of the Christ?” And here let me close by saying that this question, though it only deals with *thoughts*, is entangled with every other spiritual subject. If you not right *here*, you are right in nothing. The hymn says correctly—

**“You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of HIM.”**

I never knew a man think little of the Savior but what he thought little of sin. There was never a man who thought little of the Mediator but what he

had very strange ideas of the Godhead. Never a man went astray in his thoughts about Christ but he also was going wrong in his thoughts of himself. If you know Jesus to be a Savior to the fullest, putting away all sin by the Sacrifice of Himself—then you will know yourself to be a sinner, with sin *to* put away—and soon you will know yourself to be a saint with sin *put* away and so you will get right ideas of everything else.

Go to the Fountainhead, I pray you! Make heart-work of that essential question—“What do you think of the Christ?” If you would allow me to catechize you upon your spiritual state, I shall not treat of any peculiarity of creed or sect, but I shall begin and end with this one thing—“What do you think of the Christ?” If a man has a disease in the vitals, the mere adornment of his person will avail little—the inward parts must be set right. And if you are wrong in reference to the Lord Jesus, the evil must be remedied by the Grace of God or you will die eternally! Remember, if our views of Christ are wrong, our state is wrong. When a man is born-again he knows Christ. He may think he knew Him before, but he did not, for only the *spiritual* man understands spiritual things. If your present state is wrong, your future state will be wrong unless you are set right in reference to the Lord Jesus, so that the question before us encompasses both time and eternity.

Do I address any Brother or Sister here who is already saved, but who possesses a scant measure of joy? Dear Brother or Sister, I should not wonder but what the reason of your despondency may be mean, unworthy thoughts of Christ Jesus! If you knew more about your union with the living Savior, about the perfection that is given to all His people through His blood and righteousness, surely your joy would overflow and your despondency would cease! If we permit groveling ideas of our Lord to dwell in our minds, our whole spiritual nature will decline in consequence. Narrow notions of the Redeemer narrow our love to Him and our enterprise for His glory. Low thoughts of Christ will palsy the strongest arm, but a great Savior greatly loved, leads to great deeds.

See Him to be lovely beyond all things and let Him engross your heart and fire your spirit and He will make a man of you to the fullness of your manhood so that you shall serve God to purpose. Let not Jesus be a shadow to you, or your religion will be unsubstantial. Let Him not be just a name to you, or your religion will be nominal. Let Him not be just a myth of history, or your religion will be mere fancy. Let Him be not just a teacher, or you will lack a Savior! Let Him be not alone an exemplar, or you will fail to appreciate the merit of His blood. Let Him be the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the All in All of your spirits.

As He is God’s Beloved, so let Him be your Beloved! As He is Lord of lords, let Him be your Lord and when any enquire of you, “What do you think of the Christ?” tell them, “He is all my salvation and He is all my desire.” Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SEASON—Matthew 22.

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THE ALTAR

NO. 831

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 20, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.**

***"The altar that sanctifies the gift"*
*Matthew 23:19.***

Had man remained perfect, his communion with God would have been as unrestricted as that of an obedient child with an affectionate father. Adam might have worshiped his God acceptably anywhere, at any time, and in any mode he chose. Had there been literal offerings as well as sacrifices of *praise*, he might have brought before his God the delicious fruits of the garden or poured forth libations from Eden's golden-sanded river—and these might have been presented on the high places of the earth or in the shady groves, or amid the verdure of the plains—anywhere the Lord would have received the grateful offerings of men whose hearts were perfect towards Himself.

But the Fall intervened. Man became a rebel to his King. Man, by his depravity of nature, was placed far off from God, and his once unrestricted fellowship with Heaven was brought to an end. Mercy gave tidings of renewed communion, but the good news came by slow degrees. And meanwhile, if man would approach his God, it must be under rules and regulations which should remind him of his changed estate. If he is permitted to draw near to his offended God at all it is a great favor, and he shall be made to learn by the way of coming how great that favor is. He shall, before a fuller ceremonial is revealed, only be allowed to offer a *bleeding* sacrifice.

He shall not present to God that which costs him nothing—the growth of the soil—but he must bring a *victim* from his flock or herd, and by his own hand he must cause the victim to suffer and die, for God will accept only a life poured forth in blood as a sacrifice from man, whose own life was forfeited to justice. And while rules and regulations were laid down as to sacrifices, *altars* were also under commandment—they must be built of earth or unhewn stone—and at the last all altars of burnt-offering were suppressed, save one only, the consecrated bronze altar of the tabernacle. All the rest of the world was left without altars.

One spot was selected, and only one. First in the place where the tabernacle was pitched, and afterwards the temple of Jerusalem, the altar for bloody sacrifice was set up. And everywhere else, when men offered to God on their high places, they did so in defiance of His command. Prophets might make exceptions to the rule, but for the many, the unbending rule was that *all* sacrifice must be made at the *one* holy altar. Brethren, the *outward* Truth of God clearly reveals to us its *inner* meaning. We must, had we remained innocent, have brought before God every day the thank-offerings of our hearts *without a mediator*—but we are guilty and our holiest acts are the deeds of imperfect men—and our purest worship is the worship of fallen beings.

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. And before we can be accepted in our best things, there must be the shedding of the blood which takes away sin. There is no door of acceptance for us except through the merit of the great Surety who solemnly laid down His life for His people! There is but one way by which we, who have been washed in the blood of Jesus, can offer unto God our humble service and our loving hearts, namely, through Jesus Christ who stands as the type of that one and only permitted altar! To Him we must bring ourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God—for it is only by Jesus Christ that this reasonable service can be accepted of the Most High.

In the one altar of the tabernacle or the temple, we see a type of the Person and merit of our glorious Lord Jesus, and learn that apart from Him there is no acceptable worship—for this is the Truth of God which we desire, this morning, to teach. Many mistakes have been made through applying the emblem of an altar to matters to which it has no correct reference. There was but *one* authorized altar of Jehovah, as we have already noted—that one altar finds its *fulfillment* in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. But through loose talking, if not through doctrinal error, other things have come to be called altars which are *not* so—certainly not such altars as meet the requirements of my text, for they do not *sanctify* the gift and are not *greater* than the gift.

Frequently have we seen the Cross spoken of as an altar. Upon the Cross, as upon an altar, our Lord is said to have been offered as the great Sacrifice for sin. But the expression is mere poetic flourish and no more. As a Man, Jesus died on the Cross and the wood to which He was nailed was a *gallows*—not an altar—it was never appointed as such by God, nor is it ever so called in His Word. The cross of wood was simply the *instrument* of our Savior's torture and death, and is no more to be revered than the whips of Pilate or the spit of the scoffers. The Cross used at Calvary, and all other crosses, whether of wood, or stone, or gold, are no more to be esteemed than the same material shaped in circles or squares.

Indeed, if we are to attach any kind of *moral* quality to the material and visible form of the Cross, it is rather a thing accursed than a thing to be blessed, for the Divine curse fell on everyone that was hanged on a tree. Certainly this fancied altar of the Cross in no way sanctified the victim. What honor did our Lord Jesus derive from the tree on which He hung? What virtue came from this so-called altar to make God's unspeakable gift acceptable? A piece of wood and nothing more was that Cross! It could give no sanctity to Christ and we ought never to use words concerning that piece of timber which would in any way lead men to associate its material substance with the meritorious work of Christ.

It is to be feared that the constant use of the emblem of the cross, in itself as innocent as an oval or a square, often leads men into a species of idolatry. When I see a cross embossed on Bibles, worked out in jewelry or fashioned gold, I cannot but think how contradictory it all seems—the Cross, a thing of shame, the instrument of our Lord's execution by those who abhorred Him—and yet worn as an ornament! Surely men might as well wear at their girdles the dagger with which their friend was stabbed! Why do not the ladies wear a gallows from their necks? For what more or

less is a cross? Such was not the cross which Paul gloried in—he would have despised such idolatry.

Paul gloried in the Gospel, which is a spiritual cross, and he says of it, “By which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.” Which of those cross-wearers was ever crucified to the world by the cross which dangles on their bosoms? The sign of the cross, when revered, is much the same as the bronze serpent when Israel fell to adoring it—it must be broken and Christian people should discountenance its use. Clearly it is no altar! We occasionally read, and especially in poetry, of the “altar of the heart,” but is not that also a misnomer, and may it not one day lead to doctrinal error? The heart an altar? It certainly does not *sanctify* the gift!

If there is anything in the gift that is acceptable to God its sanctity must come from its being offered on a very different altar than that of our poor, corrupt, and depraved heart! I know the meaning is that *sincerity* makes our service acceptable, but I doubt the truth of that assertion, for however sincere our devotions may be, *apart from the Atonement of Jesus*, God does not accept them! Sincerity there must be or there can be no offering made to God at all—but still, all the sincerity that ever dwelt in human bosom could not make an offering to be received of God unless *faith* found an altar in *Jesus* and relied for acceptance upon the grand Sacrifice and finished Atonement of the Mediator. Talk not quite so loosely lest mischief come of it.

A more common and dangerous mistake, however, is to call the *table* which is used for the purpose of the Lord’s Supper an altar. If it had been called a house, or a horse, or an angel—either title would have been quite as correct a name—for there is no likeness whatever between the table of communion and an altar. The mistake is offensive and the mischief flowing from it is most terrible. All through Scripture we read of the communion table, but never find it either plainly, obscurely, directly, or indirectly called an altar. Jesus said, “The hand of him that betrays Me is with Me on the *table*.” He did not say, “The traitor is officiating with Me at this *altar*,” and yet surely that first celebration was quite as complete as any which have succeeded it!

Paul says, “You cannot be partakers of the Lord’s Table and of the table of the devil,” and that, too, in a connection in which he would surely have said the Lord’s *Altar* had the term been allowable. Neither, except by the most violent straining can there be found any passage of Scripture which represents this table, used to celebrate a feast, as an altar for the consumption of a sacrifice. Indeed, what *sacrifice* do the modern priests place upon their so-called altars? See, they bring forth bread and wine—fit furniture for a *table*—but where are the fire and the wood for a burnt-offering? If the table is an altar, then according to our Lord, it is better and holier than the bread and wine placed upon it, for the “altar sanctifies the gift.” And yet our modern ritualists will hardly venture to say that their altars of wood and stone are really more holy than the body and blood of Jesus Christ which they profess to offer on them!

I know not to what length folly may go, but one thing I marvel at—if these gentlemen need to have a material altar, why do they not follow the Scriptural form for one? Why do they make a kind of sideboard or dresser

of it, by setting it against a wall—a thing that was never heard of in all the world before, for everywhere altars are so placed as to be compassed about. David said, “So will I compass Your altar, O Lord.” Elijah dug a trench *about* the altar. The altar of the Old Testament could be *surrounded*—but from where came these new-fashioned erections which are not even according to the fashion of Judaism?

From what heathenism did they borrow their *steps* to the altar, such things being forbidden of the Lord? Where did they contrive their “high altar”? What means those ornaments on an altar? Strange intrusions, these, for an altar! Surely they must have taken their models from those altars of Baal, of which we read that there were images on high above them—for how commonly do we see either their pieces of plate with superstitious symbols, or their sumptuous common prayer books, adorned with silver crucifixes! And what is worse, pictures and images, and candles, and I know not what of trumpery besides? Let us never, therefore, use the term *altar* as synonymous with the communion table lest we countenance deadly error.

Of all delusions that have ever happened to the human race, surely that of *transubstantiation* has been at once the most absurd and the most profane! Both that doctrine and all growing out of it should be protested against by every sincere Christian, especially at this dreary time when superstition is daily increasing. If ever we shall have Popery back in this land it will owe much of its advance to the misuse of *terms*. Call not a table an altar lest you come to bow before it as the Popish heathens do! Use it as a table of fellowship and communion, but never dream of it as an altar! The one Altar which sanctifies the gift is the Person and merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, and nothing else!

Come we then to the consideration of this subject. I shall first refer you to the passage in the book of Exodus in which the great bronze altar of the tabernacle was described, and try to work out the type as it reveals our Lord. And then, secondly, I shall ask a few practical questions.

I. In the 27th chapter of the book of Exodus you have the Lord’s command: “And you shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad. The altar shall be four-square: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And you shall make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: its horns shall be of the same: and you shall overlay it with brass.”

Jesus Christ is the antitype of this bronze altar. All that it signified typically, we have in Him. And first the altar typifies our Lord, if we consider the *use* of it. The altar had at least two uses. First, to sanctify that which was put upon it, and then, secondly, to sustain it or bear it up while the fire was consuming it. Our Lord Jesus is Himself the Sacrifice as well as the Altar. Whatever is offered to God by Him or by us is accepted, because of the excellence of His Person. As God and perfect Man in one Person, all that He does and all that He presents becomes acceptable because of the excellence that dwells in Him. And so, also, He bears and sustains all the violent heat both of the fire of Divine wrath and the fire of Divine Presence which consumes the sacrifice put upon the altar.

How our Lord Jesus Christ lifts up our gifts towards Heaven! How of old did He lift up our sins! And when the holy flame descended and consumed Him, as the great Victim for human guilt, what strength and power there was in Him, fitting Him like an altar of brass to endure all those furious flames! And now, today, He does sweetly lift up before God all the offerings of His people and renders them acceptable in Himself! The old Puritans were apt to say that the altar represented the Deity of Christ because the Deity of Christ lent power as well as virtue to the Manhood of Christ—but may we not consider His entire Person to be the sustaining and sanctifying Altar of mediation?

As the One appointed Mediator for mankind, He puts a value into the gifts of His people and His own Sacrifice derives efficacy from His Person and Character. In Him we are able to bear the Presence of God when He accepts us, for our God is a consuming fire and we can only meet Him in Jesus! It is only on the bronze altar that the heavenly fire can consume our sacrifice. The wrath which consumes Jesus has endured once and for all that glory of consuming love we are able to learn through our union with the Incarnate God.

Let it never, then, be forgotten by us all that if our souls and bodies, which we offer to God, are to be presented before the Lord, it must be by Christ as an Altar! And if *we* are to be sanctified and rendered acceptable, it must still be by Christ as an Altar! There never could be but this one Altar for Israel—for all Israel, according to Divine appointment—this was the only Altar. Every victim must be slaughtered here! Every acceptable burnt-offering must be brought here, and so with us. We cannot offer a prayer, much less *ourselves*, except by Him. There is one Christ for all the saints. One Jesus for you who are grown in Divine Grace. One Jesus for those who are but beginners in spiritual things. One Lord Jesus for the black and filthy sinner when he first seeks for mercy. One Lord Jesus for the Christian made perfect when he enters into his rest!

There is but one Altar for all Israel, and that one Altar for all times—for Israel in the days of Moses, for Israel in the days of Solomon—for Israel until the end of the dispensation. You and I come to God by the same road which was traveled by David, and afterwards by the Lord's Apostles. Never a Believer accepted except in Jesus, *in any age*! Never a word done that was acceptable to God in any period except through Jesus Christ! One Altar, and only one for all ages, for the whole chosen seed! We hold this as a Truth of God—let us prize it and defend it!

The *place* of the altar next deserves your consideration. You will remember that the moment you entered into the door of the tabernacle you saw this altar of burnt-offering, and before you could reach the veil which separated the holy from the Most Holy Place, you must pass hard by the altar. So at the very beginning of the Christian life, the first thing we have to learn is that we approach God through Jesus Christ! You know nothing of Christianity unless the most prominent thought of your soul is Jesus as the Mediator between you and God. Talk not of Christian example or of Christian holy teaching—these things are but *secondary*—you must know Jesus Christ as suffering and pouring out His soul unto death as a Propi-

tiation for sin, or you do not know the inner sense of the Divine religion of the Cross.

Nobody could help seeing that bronze altar. Walking with his eyes open through that court, every observer must see it. There was its perpetual smoke and smell—and this everyone would perceive—while in itself it was so large and important that it could not be overlooked. Even so, my Hearer, you cannot abide in the religion of Jesus, even for an hour, without beholding Him and without resting in Him. You know nothing unless you know Him as the Altar of God! The way to the Most Holy Place was by this Altar. “No man comes to the Father but by Me.”

We cannot enter into fellowship with God, nor understand the deep things of God, nor penetrate into the Divine mysteries or the highest of the doctrines of the Truth of God except by first passing where the Atonement is offered and where Jesus stands—the only Mediator between God and man! How many have tried to learn the doctrines apart from Christ? And how many try to preach them! But they are unedifying and even lead to mischief. The best of all preaching of doctrines is such as that which we had in Dr. Hawker’s day, when he preached *election*, but it was always election in *Christ*. The doctrine of predestination was clearly enough stated, but its sweet relationship to the Lamb of God was always dwelt upon. Let it be our desire, when we enter into the deep things of God, to view them in relation to Jesus, and pass by the Altar to reach the veil.

The *form* of the altar deserves our attention, as it helps to bring out something more of Christ. The altar was four-square. Where shall we learn to measure the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the love of Christ that passes knowledge? If we may not so measure them just yet, it is satisfactory to know that everything about Christ is well ordered and arranged by Infinite Wisdom. The altar is not made haphazardly, it is four-square. There is no excess in Him, there is no lack in Him—all that we need to render our sacrifice acceptable to God we have in Him. Ainsworth says that the form of four-square represents stability and endurance—and truly our Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Other altars have been overturned, but this, never! The saints came to Him thousands of years ago, and there He stood between the porch and the veil. We come to Him today and He stands there still. And when the ages shall have passed by, and things that men have dreamed to be everlasting shall have melted like the morning’s hoar frost, there shall still be the same Savior fixed in His place to offer, still, the prayers and the praises of His people.

At each corner of the altar was a horn. The horn is always the emblem of power, and these horns indicated, doubtless, the power which lies in the Person of Jesus Christ—the power with God on our behalf. We never need be afraid of acceptance in the Beloved when we see what *might*, what *virtue*, what sacred *merit* dwells in Him. God reject His Son?! Impossible! The Adored of angels, the eternally beloved must be accepted of God! Having given His hands to the nails, and His heart to the spear. Having suffered even unto death, it cannot be that the Lord should deny Him and disrespect His sacrifice. He must be forever prevalent with the Most High.

Put yourself on the Altar, Christian—God must accept you, for He accepts the victim because of the Altar *which sanctifies the gift!* He must accept you, feeble as you are, for Jesus infuses merit into you as the Altar into the gift. Come with your tears, come with your sighs and your groans, poor trembling ones—there is no fear but what you shall be victorious—those four horns indicate how meritorious Jesus is, and He will render you as acceptable as He is Himself! The altar, too, as we are describing its form, we must remember was built originally so low that it was reached by the priests without the use of steps, and, indeed, steps were expressly forbidden—the reason being given that, in going up to the altar, it might not be possible that the nakedness of the priest should be seen.

God would have nothing indecorous in His service. The spiritual meaning being, I suppose, that Jesus Christ, when we go to Him, is most accessible. We are not to climb to Him by steps of creature effort, merit, and preparation. Those preparations for Christ, of which so much is made by certain preachers, are all blasphemous. Divines will tell you you must *feel* this and *feel* the other. They say you must pass through this *experience* and the other. But truly—

***“All the fitness He requires,
Is to feel your need of Him.”***

And this He *gives* you! There are no steps up to the Altar. There are no human preparations for Christ. You may come to Him just as you are, for He is waiting to be gracious. Solomon’s altar in the temple was on a large scale, to show the greatness of our Lord’s power and Divine Grace. And in order to maintain proportions, it was made much too high to be reached without some mode of ascent—and it is supposed, therefore, that the priests reached it by a gradual incline, since steps must not be made to it.

And here we should be taught how, in coming to Christ, we ascent towards God. When we draw near unto Him with true hearts, we are elevated. Man is never more truly exalted in spirit than when he bows lowest at the foot of the Cross. Calvary, though it was no mountain, nor scarcely a hill, outsoars the Hermons and Pisgahs—its top is nearer Heaven than Carmel or Bashan—

***“Here it is I find my Heaven,
While upon the Cross I gaze.”***

Let me but tarry there, and if I am not in Paradise, I should be, at least, in the suburbs of the New Jerusalem! No Truth of God is so dear as Jesus Crucified—the Altar of His Atonement is so low that a child may reach it—and yet it is so high that by it we ascend to Heaven!

It is notable, and you will kindly look, this afternoon, into your Bibles and investigate the matter, that this altar was increased in size in the temple. It was far smaller in the tabernacle than in the temple—so may our conceptions of Christ be ever growing! If we know Him well enough to find that He is sufficient for our present needs, may we yet understand His all-sufficiency. If we have discovered something of His excellence, and of the admirable way in which He secures our acceptance with God, may we know this more and more. May Jesus grow upon us, until unable to comprehend Him, we shall rejoice in His exceeding greatness and be filled with His fullness!

I must not forget, in speaking of the form of the altar, also, that as the observed passed round it, he would be constantly struck with its bespattered appearance. Entertain not the notion the tabernacle and the temple must have been very pleasant places—we can scarcely imagine anything that must have been more awe-inspiring and even revolting to the mind of the observer than the court of priests when sacrificing was being carried on. It must, on great occasions, have resembled a butcher's shambles with the addition of smoke and fire. And this bronze altar was so frequently besmeared with blood, and so constantly were there full bowls of warm gore thrown at its base, that it must have presented a very ghastly appearance.

This was all to teach the observer what a dreadful thing *sin* is, and how it can only be put away through suffering and death. The Lord did not study attractive aesthetics, He did not prepare a tabernacle that should delight men's tastes. It was rich, indeed, but so blood-stained as to be by no means beautiful. No staining of glass to charm the eye, but instead the guts of slaughtered bulls! Such sights would disgust the delicate tastes of the fops of this present age! Blood. Blood on every side! Death, fire, smoke and ashes mingled with the bellowing of dying beasts—and the active exertions of men whose white garments were all crimson with the blood of victims! How clearly did the worshipers see the sternness and severity of the Justice of God against human sin, and the intensity of the agony of the great Son of God who was, in the fullness of time, by His own death to put away all the sins and transgressions of His people!

By faith come, my Brothers and Sisters, and walk round that blood-stained altar. And as you mark its four-square form and its horns of strength and see the sacrifices smoking thereon, acceptable to God, look down and mark the blood with which its foundations are so completely saturated and understand how all salvation and all acceptance rests on the Atonement of the dying Son of God!

We will pass on to observe, next, the materials of which the altar was made, for these also were instructive. It was made of acacia wood, overlaid with brass. The acacia wood is always understood to represent the *incorruptible* Human Character of our Lord Jesus, for this was a wood which would not rot, even as Jesus, when tempted, even in all points like as we are, yet remained without sin. The brass, of course, was necessary as an outer covering, lest the altar should be consumed by the flames. It had to bear perpetually the blazing and the burning fire—and so we in the brass see the *endurance* of Christ—how His loins were girt about with power, and how the Divinity within sustained the perfect Man while He bore—

***“All that Incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough and none to spare.”***

Look on that brass, Christian, with admiring eyes. Think how oftentimes it was heated by the fire, and then look upon your Lord and think how in soul and body He was tortured and tormented for your sins, and reflect how strong He must have been to suffer so as to be able to bear the whole of Divine wrath and make a complete Atonement for the transgressions of His elect! The fire which burnt upon the altar also deserves to be noticed. It was doubtless no common fire of ordinary culinary use. It fell from Heaven and there may have been qualities about which rendered it

different than any other. For instance, it may have left none of that residue of ash, and smoke, and filth that would be found in the use of ordinary fire.

It may have been like lightning in its force and pureness. Complaints were always made of the old heathen temples, of the abundance of flies and filth found there. Hence the Jews were accustomed in derision to call the idol god Baal, Baalzebub, or the god of flies, because of the abundance of such noxious creatures found in his temples. Probably there were none such in God's temple, for the Lord's fire slew every unclean thing. This fire had noble and distinct qualities, consuming and blazing after a nobler and purer sort than ordinary flames—and certainly our Lord Jesus Christ has burning upon His altar no impure flames! Love burns there which sprang only from His own bosom! A holy zeal burns there without the slightest admixture of self-love! The Holy Spirit burns there, that purest and best of flames that can rest on mortal men! And there, too, burned the fire of Divine wrath, which was a holy jealousy against sin! And when God Himself comes upon that altar to accept His people, it is a Divine acceptance unutterably glorious!

But I must not detain you longer. If you will read the passage at home you will find abundance of matter suggestive of the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. To Him must we always come in heart and soul. We know of no holy place now, nor holy days, nor holy implements. Our soul serves God in *spirit*, for He is a Spirit and seeks those to worship Him who do so in spirit and in truth. Our soul gives to Jesus Christ preeminence in all her trusting—coming to God only through Him—and never thinking that she can either serve, or worship, or live aright except as she dwells in Christ, and the merit of Christ commends her to the Father.

That is the thought, the one thought I wish to bring forward—and though I cannot speak this morning as I would—yet if that abides with you, this hour shall not have been lost time.

II. Now a question or two. My first inquiry is, Have you and I always taken care to keep to the one *spiritual* Altar? The sin of this age is idolatry. The whole tendency of this generation is towards the setting up of other than spiritual altars. The only way to come to God is spiritually through Jesus Christ—but you will find yourself, dear Friend, frequently tempted to make something *else* the vehicle of access to God—and to render homage to Him through some other vehicle.

You may depend upon it, that the belief that this *building* or that any other building is a house of God, a place peculiarly suitable for worship, is idolatry! You are giving to bricks and mortar some little of the honor which is due only to Christ as an Altar! If you suppose that there is any more acceptableness to God in a Church or a Cathedral than in any public hall or in the open air, you have made a *material building* into an altar—you have gone back to the types and have missed the Antitype—and so far have robbed Christ of a portion of His glory. If you look upon any material substances as being holy, or, I will add, upon any *postures*—whether kneeling, standing, or sitting—as having in them any kind of holiness, or if, in fact, you get away from the *spiritual* in *any* manner—begin in any sort, or mode, or degree, to attach reverence to the *physical* and to

the *material*—you have so far wandered away from the simplicity of Christ, you have set up an Antichrist—and you have robbed the Lord Jesus.

God will never put away the sin of this land until the belief in material consecration is given up! Thus spoke Isaiah of old: “By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he makes all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up.” We must do away with idols and learn that there is no more holiness in our parish steeple-houses, called Churches, or in our Chapels or Cathedrals, than in barns and hovels! God abhors our idolatry, and will visit us for it unless we repent and turn from it! We cannot hope, in this England of ours, to see restored to us the purity of the Gospel until Protestants cleanse themselves of this antichristian, Popish belief and reverence for our postures, and places, and men, and days, and books, and I know not what beside!

Worship God, men! Demean not yourselves by paying reverence to anything else! Worship God in Jesus Christ! That is the one and only canon of worship—in the power of the eternal Spirit approach God through the merits of the Redeemer! And as for your so-called priests, and your churches, and your holy things—away with them! They are not to be borne by reason, much less by men of spiritual minds. Worship God in Jesus Christ and give the glory due unto His name wholly to Him—give none of it to things of human devising.

The next question is, Are there not some among you who have been offering to God without an altar at all? I mean this—you have been striving, you say, to do your duty—you are an honorable member of the State. You have sought to be religious, too, and you have come up with the assembly of God’s people. You never forget the Sabbath, nor the offering of your morning and evening prayer. You believe yourself, therefore, to be among the good and the righteous, and you hope to be accepted at the bar of God.

Yes, I see your sacrifice, but where is your Altar? For be assured, God will not receive your sacrifice without an Altar, and for altars there is but one! You have forgotten, my dear Friend, the one great essential thing! According to our text, the *altar* sanctifies the gift—*your* gift is not sanctified at all then—it is an unsanctified, unacceptable gift. The whole of your life, though commendable in itself, and to be imitated by others in its outward development, is not accepted of God because you have never placed that life upon the appointed Altar of Christ Jesus! You have not offered it to God, having first trusted in Christ and looked to His merit for its acceptance. You have been depending upon *yourself*, and therefore you are no more likely to be saved than Cain was when he went about to offer a sacrifice of his own and could not submit to bring the lamb according to Divine appointment.

Oh, I could weep over some of you who have so much that is good about you, because you forget the Lord Jesus! Why, you have forgotten the one, the main, the essential thing! Those morning and evening prayers of yours—what are they? If you have not seen Jesus on the Cross—if you have not looked to His wounds—you have not prayed at all! That helping

of the poor which is so kind of you—yes, but if you have not done it for *His* sake, trusting in *Him*, who, though He was rich, yet for your sake became poor—you have not done it unto God at all! And if you have been working and going about to establish your own righteousness—and have not submitted yourself to the righteousness of Christ—it will all be a failure.

You gentlemen who have brought up your families so well. You honest working men who fight the battle of life so valiantly. Oh, it is grievous to think that you should labor in vain and spend your strength for nothing! You bring your bullocks and your rams and sacrifice to God, and they are all an offense and an abomination because you do not bring them to the one appointed Altar! God help you to think of this and to *repent* of the folly and from now on live in consistency of character as you have done, but make not *that* your trust—come to Jesus first, and let the rest follow!

Next, my Brothers and Sisters, another inquiry for those of us who have brought our offerings and ourselves to God through Jesus Christ. Let me ask whether we have not often forgotten to attach the importance to the Altar which we should have done. I mean this—I pray, and when my prayer is done, I think within myself—will it prevail? And I remember that I did not plead the blood of Jesus as I ought to have done. I said, “for Jesus’ sake”—I should be ashamed to pray except in His name—but did I realize that I could not be acceptable with God in *myself*—that it must be because of the Redeemer’s perfections, sufferings, bloody sweat, passion, and resurrection that I must be heard?

Now my prayer has lost much power if I have not pleaded Christ’s *work*, and Christ’s *merit* with all my heart, and soul, and strength. To plead the *merit of Jesus* is the *marrow* of prayer—good words are but the bone. This is the soul of prayer! This it is that takes Heaven by storm! This moves the heart of God—the bringing before God the *sacrifice* of His dear Son, the making Gethsemane to ring, again, in the paternal ears—making the Cross to shine again before the Father’s face, pleading earnestly because Jesus deserves abundantly!

Have we not often missed this? And if we have in our prayers, I am sure we have much more in our other engagements. I am afraid we preach without putting the sermon on the bronze Altar, and that we distribute our tracts or teach in the Sunday school, or talk of Christ with the sick and do it without presenting the service through the meritorious Person of our Lord. Oh, it is blessed when one has preached, and felt, “Well, I have not succeeded as I could desire. I have felt heavy in my Master’s service, shut up so that I could not come forth. But still I meant to honor Him, and now, my God, accept my poor service for my Redeemer’s sake.” This is the way to put our service right on the Altar, and there it is sure to conquer!

Oh, then, it is so blessed to know that *Jesus* sanctifies the gift! The gift was nothing—a poor speech for His name, a scanty gift to His poor saints—but still, God receives it as He accepted the bullocks—not for the bullocks’ sake, but for the Altar’s sake! And so will He receive our faulty services for the sake of Jesus when we offer them through Him. Let your souls anchor themselves to the Atonement of Jesus! Cast more cords

about yourself and bind your spirits fast to Him! You are never healthy, you are never strong, you are never happy, you are never lifted up towards Heaven except when you abide close to the Person of the Son of God made flesh for you. Never journey away from the Cross. Seek other Truths of God and delight in other beauties if you will, but the *first* Truth and the *first* beauty in Heaven and earth is the Crucified Redeemer—keep to Him and rejoice in Him.

I shall not detain you longer except to say this. Have we, dear Friends, as Believers, ever fed at this Altar? For we have an Altar of which they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle. That is to say, those who trust in *ceremonies* have no right to Christ! Those who think themselves priests above their fellow Christians *cannot* taste Christ—they are shut out by their own act and deed—they have no right there. But we who do not serve the outward tabernacle—we have come to *spiritual* worship, by God's Grace, and we have a right to eat at the Altar of Christ. Here is a choice morsel for us—God has accepted us in Christ!

Feed on that, Christian! You have condemned yourself but God has accepted you! Men have criticized and censured you, but in Christ God has accepted those imperfect works of yours! Why, it is enough for a courtier if his king smiles—is it not enough for you? No, lie not down and groan, and cry because you have not acted perfectly—but having repented of every omission and transgression, rise up with courage to do better things—because even your *worst* things have been accepted! Feed on Christ who makes you accepted! Feed on the *acceptance* itself, and so like the priest, commune with God at His table. And if you have already laid yourself upon the Altar of Christ as a reasonable sacrifice, come and do it again!

It is very desirable to frequently renew our consecration to Jesus. “Yours we are, Son of David, and all that we have.” You who have been bought with His blood, drawn near to Him and yield yourselves anew to Him this morning. You admit the soft impeachment that you are His in blessed marriage bonds—come, then, and declare anew—“My Lord, take me wholly! Use me, use me to the last ounce! Use me up! Grant that there may not be a hair of my head, nor a drop of my blood, nor a beating of my pulse which is not Yours! Lord, I make no reserve. I give You my children, my house, my property, my time, my body, my soul—and I do not ask You to spare me and give me an easy life. Do as You will with me, only glorify Yourself in me!”

When the bullock was on the altar, the flesh-hook was used to aid in burning it completely—the priest desired that there should be nothing of the offering left. “So, Lord, if You use the flesh-hook of affliction to drag me into the fire, so let it be. I would that You should win as much glory out of me as You can extract from a mortal man by suffering, or by service. Appoint me what you will, only, Father, glorify Yourself, and enable me to glorify You!”

If we shall thus consecrate ourselves, there will be better days in store for us than we have as yet known, and the Church and the world will know that God has worked wonders for us! May God give you a blessing, for His name's sake. Amen.

“I WOULD, BUT YOU WOULD NOT” NO. 2381

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY,
OCTOBER 7, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 22, 1888.**

**“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them
which are sent to you, how often would I have gathered
your children together, even as a hen gathers her
chicks under her wings, and you were not willing!”
Matthew 23:37.**

THIS is not and could not be the language of a mere man. It would be utterly absurd for any man to say that he would have gathered the inhabitants of a city together, “even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.” Besides, the language implies that for many centuries, by the sending of the Prophets, and by many other warnings, God would often have gathered the children of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Now, *Christ* could not have said that throughout those ages He would have gathered those people, if He had been only a man. If His life began at Bethlehem, this would be an absurd statement, but, as the Son of God, always loving the sons of men, ever desirous the good of Israel, He could say that in sending the Prophets, even though they were stoned and killed, He had, again and again, shown His desire to bless His people till He could truly say, “How often would I have gathered your children together!” Some who have found difficulties in this lament have said that it was the language of Christ as Man. I beg to put in a very decided negative to that—it is, and it must be, the utterance of the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Christ in His complex Person as Human and Divine. I am not going into any of the difficulties just now, but you could not fully understand this passage, from any point of view, unless you believed it to be the language of One who was both God and Man.

This verse shows, also, that the ruin of men lies with themselves. Christ puts it very plainly, “*I would; but you were not willing.*” “How often would I have gathered your children together, and you were not willing!” That is a Truth of God, about which, I hope, we have never had any question. We hold tenaciously that salvation is all of Grace, but we also believe, with equal firmness, that the ruin of man is entirely the result of His own sin! It is the will of God that saves—it is the will of *man that damns*. Jerusalem stands and is preserved by the Grace and favor of the Most High. But Jerusalem is burnt and her stones are cast down through the transgression and iniquity of men who provoked the justice of God.

There are great deeps about these two points, but I have not been accustomed to lead you into any deeps and I am not going to do so at this time. The *practical* part of theology is that which it is most important for us to understand. Any man may get himself into a terrible labyrinth who continually thinks only of the Sovereignty of God. And He may equally get into deeps that are likely to drown him if he meditates only on the free will of man. The best thing is to take what God reveals to you and to believe that. If God's Word leads me to the right, I go there. If it leads me to the left, I go there. If it makes me stand still, I stand still. If you so act, you will be safe. But if you try to be wise above that which is written and to understand that which even angels do not comprehend, you will certainly befog yourself.

I desire to always bring before you practical rather than mysterious subjects—and our present theme is one that concerns us all. The great destroyer of man is the will of man. I do not believe that man's free will has ever saved a soul, but man's free will has been the ruin of multitudes. "You would not," is still the solemn accusation of Christ against guilty men. Did He not say, at another time, "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life"? The human will is desperately set against God and is the great devourer and destroyer of thousands of good intentions and emotions which never come to anything permanent because the will is acting in opposition to that which is right and true.

That, I think, is the very marrow of the text, and I am going to handle it in this fashion.

I. First, consider from the very condescending emblem used by our Lord, WHAT GOD IS TO THOSE WHO COME TO HIM. He gathers them, "as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings." Let us dwell upon that thought for a few minutes. It is a very marvelous thing that God should condescend to be compared to a *hen*, that the Christ, the Son of the Highest, the Savior of men, should stoop to so homely a piece of imagery as to liken Himself to a *hen*. There must be something very instructive in this metaphor, or our Lord would not have used it in such a connection.

Those of you who have been gathered unto Christ know, first, that *by this wonderful Gatherer, you have been gathered into happy association*. The chicks, beneath the wings of the hen, look very happy all crowded together. What a sweet little family party they are! How they hide themselves away in great contentment and chirp their little note of joy! You, dear Friends, who have never been converted, find very noisy fellowship, I am afraid, in this world. You do not get much companionship that helps you, blesses you, gives you rest of mind. But if you had been gathered to the Lord's Christ, you would have found that there are many sweetnesses in this life in being beneath the wings of the Most High! He who comes to Christ finds father, mother, sister and brother—he finds many dear and kind friends who are, themselves, connected with Christ and who, therefore, love those who are joined to Him.

Among the greatest happinesses of my life, certainly, I put down Christian fellowship, and I think that many who have come from the country to London have, for a long time, missed much of this fellowship till, at last, they have fallen in with Christian people and they have found

themselves happy again. O lonely Sinner, you who come in and out of this place and say, "Nobody seems to care about me," if you will come to Christ and join with the Church which is gathered beneath His wings, you will soon find happy fellowship! I remember that in the times of persecution, one of the saints said that he had lost his father and his mother by being driven away from his native country, but he said, "I have found a hundred fathers, and a hundred mothers, for into whatever Christian house I have gone, I have been looked upon with so much kindness by those who have received me as an exile from my native land, that everyone has seemed to be a father and a mother to me." If you come to Christ, I feel persuaded that He will introduce you to many people who will give you happy fellowship!

But that is merely the beginning. A hen is to her little chicks, next, a cover of safety. There is a hawk in the sky—the mother bird can see it, though the chicks cannot. She gives her peculiar cluck of warning and quickly they come and hide beneath her wings. The hawk will not hurt them now—beneath her wings they are secure. This is what God is to those who come to Him by Jesus Christ, *He is the Giver of safety*. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His Truth shall be your shield and buckler." Even the attraction of your old sins, or the danger of future temptations—you shall be preserved from all these perils when you come to Christ and thus hide away under Him.

The figure our Lord used is full of meaning, for, in the next place, the hen is to her chicks *the source of comfort*. It is a cold night and they would be frozen if they remained outside. But she calls them in and when they are under her wings, they derive warmth from their mother's breast. It is amazing, the care of a hen for her little ones! She will sit so carefully and keep her wings so widely spread, that they may all be housed. What a cabin, what a *palace* it is for the young chicks to get there under the mother's wings! The snow may fall, or the rain may come pelting down, but the wings of the hen protect the chicks. And you, dear Friend, if you come to Christ, shall not only have safety, but comfort. I speak what I have experienced! There is a deep, sweet comfort about hiding yourself away in God, for when troubles come, wave upon wave, blessed is the man who has a God to give him mercy upon mercy! When affliction comes, or bereavement comes, when loss of property comes, when sickness comes in your own body, there is nothing needed but your God! Ten thousand things, apart from Him, cannot satisfy you, or give you comfort. There, let them all go! But if God is yours and you hide away under His wings, you are as happy in Him as the chicks are beneath the hen.

Then, the hen is also to her chicks, *the fountain of love*. She loves them. Did you ever see a hen fight for her chicks? She is a timid enough creature at any other time, but there is no timidity when her chicks are in danger! What an affection she has for them—not for all chicks, for I have known her kill the chicks of another brood—but for her own, what love she has! Her heart is all devoted to them. But, oh, if you want to know the true Fountain of Love, you must come to Christ! You will never

have to say, "Nobody loves me. I am pining, with an aching heart, for a love that can fill and satisfy it." The love of Jesus fills the heart of man to overflowing and makes him well content under all circumstances. I would that God had gathered you all, my dear Hearers! I know that He has gathered many of you, blessed be His name, but still there are some here, chicks without a hen, sinners without a Savior, men, women and children who have never been reconciled to God.

The hen is also to her chicks, *the cherisher of growth*. They would not develop if they were not taken care of—in their weakness they need to be cherished that they may come to the fullness of their perfection. And when the child of God lives near to Christ and hides beneath His wings, how fast he grows! There is no advancing from Grace to Grace, from feeble faith to strong faith, and from little fervency to great fervency, except by getting near to God!

The emblem used by our Lord is a far more instructive figure than I have time to explain. When the Lord gathers sinners to Himself, then it is that they find in Him all that the chicks find in the hen, and infinitely more!

II. Now notice, secondly, WHAT GOD DOES TO GATHER MEN. They are straying and wandering about, but He gathers them. According to the text, Jesus says, "How often would I have gathered your children together!" How did God gather those of us who have come to Him?

He gathers us, first, *by making Himself known to us*. When we come to understand who He is and what He is, and know something of His love, tenderness and greatness, *then* we come to Him. Ignorance keeps us away from Him, but to know God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is eternal life! Therefore, I diligently urge you to study the Scriptures and to be, as often as you can, hearing a faithful preacher of the Gospel, that, knowing the Lord, you may, by that knowledge, be drawn towards Him. These are the cords of love with which the Spirit of God draws men to Christ. He makes Christ known to us. He shows us Christ in the grandeur of His Divine and Human Nature, Christ in the humiliation of His sufferings, Christ in the Glory of His Resurrection, Christ in the love of His heart, in the power of His arm, in the efficacy of His plea, in the virtue of His blood and, as we learn these sacred lessons, we say, "That is the Christ for me, that is the God for me"—and we are gathered unto Him.

But God gathers many to Himself *by the call of His servants*. You see that of old, He sent His Prophets. Now, He sends His ministers. If God does not send us to you, we shall never gather you. If we come to you in our own name, we shall come in vain, but if the Lord has sent us, then He will bless us and our message will be made to you a means of gathering you to Christ. I would much rather cease to preach than be allowed to go on preaching but never to gather souls to God! I can truly say that I have no wish to say a pretty thing, or turn a period, or utter a nice figure of speech—I want to win your souls, to slay your sin, to do practical work for God with each man, each woman, each child who shall come into this Tabernacle—and I ask the prayers of God's people that it may be so! It is thus that God gathers men to Himself—by the message which He gives to them through His servants.

The Lord has, also, *many other ways of calling men to Himself*. You saw, this morning, [Sermon #2034, Volume 34—*Peter's Restoration—Read/download entire sermon at <http://www.spurgeongems.org> .] that Peter was called to repentance by the crowing of a cock, and the Lord can use a great many means of bringing sinners to Himself! Omnipotence has servants everywhere! And God can use every kind of agent, even though it appears most unsuitable, to gather together His own chosen ones. He has called some of you—He has called some of you who have not yet come to Him. The text says, "How often!" It does not tell us *how often*, but it puts it as a matter of wonder, "How often!" with a note of exclamation.*

Let me ask you how often has God called some of you? Conscience has whispered its message to the most of you. When you come to see men dying, if you talk seriously with them, they will sometimes tell you that they are unprepared, but that they have often trembled and been suspicious. They have long suffered from unrest and, sometimes, they have been, "almost persuaded." I should not think that there is a person in this place who has not been made, sometimes, to shake and tremble at the thought of the world to come! How often has it been so with you? "How often," says God, "would I have gathered you!"

The Lord sometimes speaks to us, not so much by conscience, as by Providence. That death in the family, what a voice it was to us! When your mother died, when your poor father passed away, what a gathering time it seemed to be! You soon forgot all about it, but you did feel it *then*. Ah, my dear woman, when your babe was taken from your bosom, and the little coffin left the house, you remember how you felt? And you, father, when your prattling boy sang the Sunday school hymn to you on his dying bed and well-near broke your heart, then was the Lord going forth in His Providence to gather you! You were being gathered, but you were not willing to come. According to our text, you, "would not."

It has not always been by death that the Lord has spoken to you, for you have had other calls. When you have been brought low, or have been out of employment. When, sometimes, a Christian friend has spoken to you. When you have read something in a tract, or paper which has compelled you to pull up and made you stand aghast for a while—has not all that had a reference to this text, "How often, how often, how often would I have gathered you?" God knocks many times at some men's doors. I know that there is a call of His which is effectual—oh, that you might hear it! But there are many other calls which come to men, of whom Christ says, "Many are called, but few are chosen." How often has He called you? I wish you would try and reckon up how often the Almighty God has come to you and spread out His warm wide wings—and yet this has been true—"I would have gathered you, but you were not willing."

One more way in which God gathers men is *by continuing to have patience with them and sending the same message to them*. I am always afraid that you who hear me constantly will get to feel, "We have heard him so long and so often that he cannot say anything fresh." Why, did I not use to shake you, when first you heard me, and compel you to shed many tears in the early days of your coming to this house? And now—

well, you can hear it all without a tremor—you are like the blacksmith's dog that goes to sleep while the sparks are flying from the anvil! Down in Southwark, at the place where they make the big boilers, a man has to get inside to hold the hammer while they are riveting. There is an awful noise—the first time that a man goes in, he feels that he cannot stand it and that he will die! He loses his hearing, it is such a terrible din. But they tell me that after a while some have been known, even, to go to sleep while the men have been hammering!

So it is in hearing the Gospel—men grow hardened and that which was, at one time, a very powerful call—seems to be, at the last, no call at all. Yet, here you are and your hair is getting gray! Here you are, you have long passed the prime of life! Here you are, you were in a shipwreck, once, or you had an accident, or you caught the fever, but you did not die, and here you are! God still speaks to you, not saying, "Go," but, "Come, come!" Christ has not yet said to you, "Depart, you cursed," but He still cries, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is how God calls and how He gathers men by the pertinacity of His infinite compassion, in still inviting them to come unto Him that they may obtain eternal life!

III. Well, now, a third point, and a very important one is this—WHAT MEN NEED TO MAKE THEM COME TO GOD. According to the text, God gathers men—but what is needed on their part? Our Savior said of those that rejected him, "You would not."

What is needed is, first, *the real will to come to God*. You have heard a great deal, I dare say, about the wonderful faculty of free will. I have already told you my opinion of free will, but it also happens that that is the very thing that is needed—a will towards that which is good. There is where the sinner fails! What he needs is a *real will*. "Oh, yes!" men say, "we are willing, we are willing." But you are *not* willing! If we can get the real Truth of God, you are *not* willing. There is no true willingness in your hearts, for a true willingness is a *practical willingness*. The man who is willing to come to Christ says, "I must do away with my sins, I must do away with my self-righteousness and I must seek Him who, alone, can save me."

Men talk about being willing to be saved and dispute about free will, but when it comes to actual practice, they are *not willing*. They have no heart to repent. They will to keep on with their sin. They will to continue in their self-righteousness, but they do not will, with any practical resolve, to come to Christ! There is need of an *immediate will*. Every unconverted person here is willing to come to Christ before he dies—I have never met a person, yet, who was not! But are you willing to come to Christ *now*? That is the point. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." But you answer, "Our hearts are not hardened! We only ask for a little more time." A little more time for *what*? A little more time in which to go on rebelling against God? A little more time in which to run the awful risk of eternal destruction?

So, you see, it is a *real will* and an *immediate will* that is needed.

With some, it is a *settled will* that is needed. Oh, yes, they are ready! They feel as soon as the preacher begins to speak. They are impressed

during the singing of the first hymn. There is a revival service and after the meeting they begin telling you what they have felt. Look at those people on Wednesday. They have got over Monday and Tuesday with some little "rumblings of heart"—but what about Wednesday? They are as cold as a cucumber! Every feeling that they had on Sunday is gone from them! They have no memory of it, whatever! Their goodness is as the morning cloud and, as the early dew, it passes away. How some people deceive us with their good resolves, in which there is nothing at all, for there is no *settled will!*

With others, what is lacking is *a submissive will*. Yes, they are willing to be saved, but then they do not want to be saved by Grace. They are not willing to give themselves up, altogether, to the Savior. They will not renounce their own righteousness and submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ. Well, that practically means that there is not any willingness at all, for unless you accept *God's way of salvation*, it is no use for you to talk about your will! Here is the great evil that is destroying you and that *will* destroy you before long, and land you in Hell—"You would not, you were not willing." Oh, that God's Grace might come upon you, subduing and renewing your will, and making you willing in the day of His power!

IV. My last point is a very solemn one. I shall not weary you with it. **WHAT WILL BECOME OF MEN WHO ARE NOT GATHERED TO CHRIST?** What will become of men of whom it continues to be said, "You would not?"

The text suggests to us two ways of answering the question. *What becomes of chicks that do not come to the shelter of the hen's wings?* What becomes of chicks that are not gathered to the hen? Well, the hawk devours some and the cold nips others—they miss the warmth and comfort that they might have had. That is something. If there were no hereafter, I should like to be a Christian. If I had to die like a dog, the joy I find in Christ would make me wish to be His follower. You are losers in this world if you love not God! You are losers of peace, comfort, strength and hope, even now! But what will be your loss, hereafter, with no wings to cover you when the Destroying Angel is abroad, no feathers beneath which you may hide when the dread thunderbolts of Justice shall be launched, one after another, from God's right hand? You have no shelter and, consequently, no safety—

***"He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode,"***

but he who has not that refuge shall be among the great multitude who will call to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb! O Sirs, I pray you, run not the awful risk of attempting to live without the shelter of God in Christ Jesus!

But the text suggests a second question, *What became of Jerusalem in the end?* "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together, but you were not willing!" Well, what happened to Jerusalem, after all? I invite you who are without God, and without Christ, to read Josephus, with the hope that he may be of service to you. What

became of the inhabitants of that guilty city of Jerusalem? Well, they crucified the Lord of Glory and they hunted out His disciples, and yet they said to themselves, "We live in the City of God, no harm can come to us! We have the Temple within our walls and God will guard His own Holy Place." But very soon they tried to throw off the Roman yoke and there were different sets of zealots who determined to fight against the Romans. But they murmured and complained and began to fight among themselves.

Before the Romans attacked Jerusalem, the inhabitants had begun to kill one another! The city was divided by the various factions. Three parties took possession of different portions of the place and they fought against one another, night and day. This is what happens to ungodly men—manhood breaks loose against itself. And when there are inward contentions—one part of man's soul fighting against another part—there is an internal war of the most horrible kind! What is the poor wretch to do, who is at enmity with himself, one part of his nature saying, "Go," another part crying, "Go back," and yet a third part shouting, "Stop where you are"? Are there not many of you who are just like battle-fields trampled with the hoofs of horses, torn up with the ruts made by the cannon wheels and stained with blood? Many a man's heart is just like that. "Rest?" he says, "that has gone from me long ago."

Look at him in the morning after a drinking bout. Look at him after he has been quarrelling with everybody. Look at the man who has been unfaithful to his wife, or that other man who has been dishonest to his employer, or that other who is gambling away all that he has. Why, how does he sleep, poor wretch? He does not rest. He dreams, he starts, he is always in terror. I would not change places with him, no, not for five minutes! The depths of poverty and an honest conscience are immeasurably superior to the greatest luxury in the midst of sin! The man who is evidently without God begins to quarrel with himself.

By-and-by, one morning, they who looked over the battlements of Jerusalem cried, "The Romans are coming, in very deed they are marching up towards the city!" Vespasian came with an army of 60,000 men and, after a while, Titus had thrown up mounds round about the city so that no one could come in or go out of it! He had surrounded it so completely that they were all shut in. It was, as you remember, at the time of the Passover, when the people had come from every part of the land—a million and more of them—and he shut them all up in that little city. So, a time comes, with guilty men, when they are shut up. This sometimes happens before they die. They are shut up, they cannot have any pleasure in sin as they used to have—and they have no hope. They seem altogether cooped up. They have not been gathered by God's love, but now, at last, they are gathered by an avenging conscience—they are shut up in God's Justice.

I shall never forget being sent for, in my early days, to see a man who was dying. As I entered the room, he greeted me with an oath. I was only a youth, a pastor about seventeen and a half years of age, and he somewhat staggered me. He would not lie down on his bed. He defied God. He said he would not die. "Shall I pray for you?" I asked. I knelt down and I

had not uttered many sentences before he cursed me in such dreadful language that I jumped to my feet. And then, again, he cried and begged me to pray with him again, though it was not any good. He said, "It is no use. Your prayer will never be heard for me, I am already damned!" And the poor wretch spoke as though he really were so, and were realizing it in his own soul. I tried to persuade him to lie down upon his bed. It was of no use. He tramped up and down the room as fast as he could go. He knew that he would die, but he could not die while he could keep on walking, and so he kept on.

Then again I must pray with him and then would come another awful burst of blasphemy because it was not possible that the prayer would be heard. It does not often happen that one sees a person quite as bad as that, but there is a condition of heart that is not so visible, but which is quite as sad, and which comes to men dying without Christ. They are shut up. The Roman soldiers are, as it were, marching all round the city, and there is no escape—and they begin to feel it and so they die in despair.

But then, when the Roman soldiers did come, the woes of Jerusalem did not end. There was a famine in the city, a famine so dreadful that what Moses said was fulfilled, and the tender and delicate women ate the fruit of her own body. They came to search the houses because they thought there was food, there, and a woman brought out half of her own babe, and said, "Well, eat that, if you can," and throughout the city, they fed upon one another and oh, when there is no God in the heart, what a famine it makes in a man's soul! How he longs for a something which he cannot find and that all the world cannot give him—even a mouthful to stay the ravenousness of his spirit's hunger!

And this doom will be still worse in the next world! You know that Jerusalem was utterly destroyed—not one stone was left upon another—and this is what is to happen to you if you refuse your Savior! You will be destroyed. You will be an eternal ruin. No Temple of God, but an everlasting ruin. Destroyed—that is the punishment for you. Destroyed from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of His power and so, living forever with no indwelling God, no hope, no comfort! How terrible will be your doom unless you repent!—

***"You sinners, seek His Grace
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there!"***

I pray you do so, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 23:29-39; 24:1-21.**

Matthew 23:29-31. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the Prophets and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the Prophets. Therefore you are witnesses unto yourselves, that you are the children of them which killed the Prophets. They talk in the same conceited manner*

and they claim self-righteousness, as their fathers did! And if their ancestors killed the Prophets, these men garnish their sepulchers, and so are sharers in their forefathers' deeds. How often it happens that men say they would not have done such crimes as others have committed—but they do not know the vileness of their own hearts! If they were under the same conditions as others, they would act in the same way. It would have been a better sign if the scribes and Pharisees had lamented before God that they, themselves, were not treating His Prophets as they ought to be treated. How very faithful was our Master! He was very tender in spirit, but still, He spoke very severely. The old proverb says that, "a good surgeon often cuts deeply," and so it was with the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not film the evil matter over! He lanced the wound. He is not the most loving who speaks the smoothest words. True love often compels an honest man to say that which pains him far more than it affects his callous hearers.

32, 33. *Fill you up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of Hell? This is Christ's utterance, let me remind you. Our modern preachers would not talk like this, even to scribes and Pharisees who were crucifying Christ afresh and putting Him to an open flame! They would search the dictionary through to find very smooth and pretty words to say to Christ's enemies! We are not of their way of thinking and speaking, nor shall we be while we desire to follow in the footsteps of our Lord!*

34. *Therefore, behold, I send unto you Prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.* Which they did—the servants of Christ were thus worried and harried all over the land.

35, 36. *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom you slew between the Temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.* So they did. The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world had ever witnessed, either before or since. There must have been nearly a million and a quarter of people killed during that terrible siege and even Titus, when he saw the awful carnage, said, "What must be the folly of this people that they drive me to such work as this? Surely, the hand of an avenging God must be in it." Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood.

37, 38. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.* What a picture of pity and disappointed love the King's face must have presented when, with flowing tears, He spoke these words! It was the utterance of the righteous Judge, choked with emotion. Jerusalem was too far gone to be rescued from its self-sought doom and its guilt was about to culminate in the death of the Son of God!

39. *For I say unto you, You shall not see Me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.*

Matthew 24:1. *And Jesus went out and departed from the Temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the Temple. Ah, me, the rejected King took but slight interest in the Temple of which His disciples thought so much. To them the appearance was glorious, but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father's House, which ought to have been a House of Prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves and soon would be utterly destroyed.*

2. *And Jesus said unto them, See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* And it was so. Josephus tells us that Titus, at first, tried to save the Temple, even after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no use and, at last, he gave orders that the whole city and Temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. Yet the stones of the Temple were such as men very seldom see, so exceedingly great. They looked as if, once in their place, they would stand there throughout eternity—but all are gone, according to our Lord's prophecy.

2. *And as He sat upon the mount of Olives.* The little procession continued ascending the Mount of Olives until Jesus reached a resting place from which He could see the Temple.

3. *The disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?* There are, here, two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples enquired, first, about the time of the destruction of the Temple, and then about the sign of Christ's coming and of "the consummation of the age," as it is in the margin of the Revised Version. The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious and that could only be fully understood as that which He foretold actually occurred. He told His disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned His Second Advent and some which would immediately precede "the end of the world." When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Savior's predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

4. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.* Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for His disciples was not that they might know when, "these things," would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time.

5. *For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.* And they did. A large number of impostors came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, proclaiming that they were Messiahs.

6. *And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars.* And they did. The armies of Rome were soon, after this, on their way to the doomed city.

6-8. *See that you are not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquake, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.* One would think that there was sorrow enough in famines, pestilences and earthquakes in divers places—but our Lord said that all these were only,

“the beginning of sorrows”—the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede His coming, either to Jerusalem or to the whole world.

9-14. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false Prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.* But as for this destruction of Jerusalem, the Savior gave them clear warning.

15, 16. *When you, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the Holy Place, (whoso reads, let him understand), then let them which are in Judea flee into the mountains.* As soon as Christ’s disciples saw “the abomination of desolation,” that is, the Roman ensigns with their idolatrous emblems, stand in the Holy Place, they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived and they did “flee into the mountains.” You will say to me, perhaps, “but there were Romans there, before.” Yes, the Romans were in possession, but the eagles and other idolatrous symbols were never exhibited in Jerusalem. The Romans were often very lenient to the different people whom they subdued and these symbols were kept out of sight until the last war came. But, wherever the Jews and Christians looked and they could see those various images of Caesar and of the Roman state which were worshipped by the soldiers—then were the faithful to flee to the mountains. It is a remarkable fact that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem—the followers of Christ fled away to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the unbelieving Jews!

17, 18. *Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.* They were to flee in all haste, the moment they saw the Roman standards,

19-21. *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray you that your plight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath Day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* You and I would have believed that all this came true without any confirmation from outside history, but it was very remarkable that God should raise up the Jew, Josephus, and put it into his mind to write a record of the siege of Jerusalem—which curdles the blood of everyone who reads it—and bears out exactly the statement of the Master that there was to be “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—417, 265, 612.

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WHAT JESUS WOULD DO

NO. 2630

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 9, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 16, 1882.

*“How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!”
Matthew 23:37.*

THE theologians have met each other around this text as on a field of battle. They have contended, controverted and dragged the text about as if it were a wild beast which they would tear limb from limb. And yet, if you will look through the letter of it, and come to its inner spirit, you will see that it is not strange that Jesus should have uttered it. It would have been much more marvelous if he had *not* spoken thus, and it would have been a terrible crux in all theology if we had read here, “I never would have gathered your children together even if they had been willing to be gathered.” That would have been a thing hard to be understood, indeed! And it would have presented a greater difficulty than any which can be found in our text.

I have long been content to take God's Word just as I find it and when, at any time, I have been accused of contradicting myself through keeping to my text, I have always felt perfectly safe about that matter. The last thing I care about is being consistent with myself! Why should I be anxious about that? I would rather be consistent with Christ 50 times over, or be consistent with the Word of God! But as to being forever consistent with oneself, it might turn out that one was consistently wrong, consistently narrow-minded and consistently unwilling to believe what God would teach. So we will take the text just as we find it and it seems to say to me that if Jerusalem was not saved—if her children were not gathered together in safety as a brood of chickens is gathered beneath the hen—if Christ did not gather them and protect them, it was not because there was any unwillingness on *His* part. There was always a willingness in His heart to bless Jerusalem and, therefore, He could truly say, “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!” From this utterance of our Lord, I learn that if any man is not saved, the cause of his non-salvation does not lie in any lack of graciousness or want of willingness on the part of God! They who dare to say that it does, venture very far, and are very audacious in their assertions. This text says the very opposite—and so far as it is applicable to the sons of men in general, it declares that God

wills not the death of *any*, but desires that they should turn unto Him and live.

The next Truth of God that I learn from this passage is that if Jerusalem perished—as it *did* perish in a most awful manner—it was because it would not be saved. It was often invited, persuaded, exhorted, warned and threatened. Prophet succeeded Prophet. Tribulation followed tribulation. The rod of God came as well as the Word of God, but Jerusalem was exceedingly wicked and its people were stiff-necked—they would not have the blessing with which prophetic hands dripped! And even when Christ, Himself, came, the loveliest and the lowliest, the most tender and the truest, bringing to them love and mercy without stint—and when He spoke as never man spoke, in notes of warning, yet wooing love—they still would not listen to Him. But they took Him and, with wicked hands, they crucified Him! It was their own rebellious will that ruined them. They would not come to Him that they might have life. There is where the guilt lies and, when sinners go to Hell it is because they *will* to go there! When they are condemned by the Judge who must do right, it is because they *willed* to pursue the sin which entailed condemnation! If they have not obtained mercy, their ruin shall lie at the door of their own wicked will! This shall be the thunder which shall pursue them through all the caverns of Hell—“You would not! You would not! You would not! On your own head must the guilt of your condemnation fall! You would not have eternal life—you willfully put it from you and refused it!”

Now, there, or somewhere about there—I do not quite know where—there is a great doctrinal difficulty, but I do not think you or I need go fishing for it. If there is a bone in the meat, I do not ask to have it put on *my* plate. And if there is a bone in this text, let any dog that likes have it! As for us, there is the meat on which our soul may feed, the Truth that God lays at man’s own door the guilt of his destruction! And Christ puts it thus, “I would, but you would not.” I have, at this time, the pleasant task laid upon me of pointing out to you that what Christ would have done for the Jews, but which they would not accept, I am sure He would have done for us. No, I will go further and say that I am *sure* He is willing to do it for us right now! And so, remembering the past a little, I want you to dwell still more upon the present and to notice that, at this moment, *Jesus is willing to gather us*—to gather the children of this city together—as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! Oh, I trust I may not have to say, “And you would not,” but may the sweet Spirit of God be here to move the untoward and wicked wills of men till it shall be said, “Christ is willing to gather you, and you are willing to be gathered.” When those two things come together, great blessing must result! I have read what astronomers have said about what would happen if two planets were in conjunction. I know nothing about that matter, but this I *do* know—when *these two things* come into conjunction—when Christ would, and we would—there will be blessed times for us, peaceful days of which we have never dreamed! May the Spirit of God make it to be so even now!

Now coming to the text, let us consider, first, *what Jesus would do*. Secondly, *how He would do it*. And thirdly, *when He would do it*.

I. First, WHAT JESUS WOULD DO. “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!”

What does this mean? It is a very simple, homely, beautiful, touching simile—the hen gathering her chickens under her wings. And it means, first, that *Jesus would make you feel quite safe*. Look, there is the shadow of a hawk! The bird of prey is poised up yonder and the shadow is seen upon the ground. Or the mother hen, looking up, notices the destroyer and, in a moment, she gives a cluck of alarm and so calls together her little family. And in a few seconds they are all safe beneath her sheltering feathers—her wings become their efficient shield. Now, our Lord Jesus Christ would do just that with us. He would make us quite safe—take us out of the broad road of danger and then compass us about with the wings of His power so that we might not only *be* safe, but also feel quite safe.

I suppose nothing feels safer than a little chick beneath the hen. That tiny creature has no gauge and measure of strength beyond its own weakness, so it reckons its mother to be incalculably strong and feels perfectly safe when it can hide its head within her breast feathers. Ah, but there are some of you who do not feel safe. You have *never* felt secure. Death is truly the king of terrors to you. You do not like to hear people talk about it and if you are ill, how quickly you send for the doctor—not because you have the symptoms of any very serious illness, but because you are afraid to die! Why, there are some of you so afraid that you hardly like to be left in a room in the dark—and you would scarcely dare to go upstairs without a candle! You are not afraid from mere natural timidity, but because you know that there is something that follows death for which you are not prepared! Things are out of order between you and God, and you know it. So the fall of a leaf, or the scratching of a mouse would disturb your mind, for you know that you are not in a state of safety.

You could not bear to be at sea in a storm. The thought of shipwreck would have about it not only the natural terror which is inseparable from such an alarming event, but also the dread that the waves of fire might succeed the waves of the ocean! You are not safe even in your highest joys—a skeleton sits at the feast, for your pleasures are transient and you know it. When, easygoing man as you are, you have your greatest delight in earthly things, you are still conscious that there is a worm in the very center of the sweetest fruit and you are afraid of the consequences of eating it. Oh, but Jesus would have you spared from all this anxiety! He would have you covered so completely that you would not have known fear! He would have you brought into the enjoyment of that “perfect love” which “casts out fear: because fear has torment.” He would have you made to be among the blessed ones of whom it is written, “He shall cover you with His feathers and under His wings shall you trust.

His truth shall be your shield and buckler.” And He is willing that this should be the case—that you, poor trembler, should come to Him, now, and feel no longer in jeopardy, but be safe forever!

That hymn with which we commenced the service—

“Jesus, lover of my soul”—

is an exact reflex of what Christ is willing to bestow upon all who come to Him. He is willing to clasp to His bosom all who flee to Him for refuge. He is willing to take into the haven of perfect security the tempest-tossed vessel. He is willing to hide, as in the cleft of the rock, the sin and Satan-haunted spirit! It is so, dear Friends! I know it is so, for I have proved it! Look into the eyes, into the heart and into the wounds of Jesus, and you will know that there is no unwillingness in Him to give perfect safety to the souls that trust Him! He would make them to be in safety, “even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings.”

But now I will go a step further and say that *Jesus would also make them feel perfectly happy*. Chicks under a hen are not only the picture of safety, but they are the very emblem of happiness. Did you ever disturb them a little? If so, did you not notice the sweet little noises they made—the very sound of perfect contentment! If you have ever watched them as they stand, there, huddled together, you must have seen that it is their little paradise! They could not have been happier in the Garden of Eden than they are there, they are so blest. Beneath their mother’s wings they have all that they can desire and, during the whole night, let it be what it may—let it blow cold, or warm—there they are perfectly safe and happy. Her heart is beating above them and her breast is yielding the warmth of life to keep them glad.

I feel sure that I am addressing people who are not happy. The common idea of happiness that many persons have is a very strange one. When our London friends have a day’s holiday, their notion of enjoying a rest often amuses me. They pack themselves away, as tightly as they can, inside and outside a van, or an omnibus, or a carriage—and then they go as far as they can till the weary horse can scarcely move to bring them home! And, all the while, to give rest to their ears and to their hearts, somebody blows a trumpet in a fashion that evokes very little music, and they riot all the day as if they were mad and disport themselves as if London consisted of one huge Bethlehem Hospital—and that is what they call happiness!

My view of happiness would be to get as far as I could away from *them*, and to do the very reverse of what they are doing! These people talk about “the place to spend a happy day,” “the way to be happy” and so on, but was ever a poor word so trailed in the dust as that word, “happy,” is in such a connection as that? But, oh, a peaceful, contented mind that rests in God! A soul whose wishes are all fulfilled and whose very life-breath is jubilant praise or else submissive prayer—that is what I call happiness! The man who knows that all is right with him for eternity, one who drinks from the eternal fountain the joys which belong not to the brute beast, nor even to the man who is without a God—I call him

the happy man! And, oh, how happy some of you would be if you came to Christ as the chicks come to the hen! Oh, how happy Christ would make you! Wretched woman over yonder, this very night you may be happy! Giant Despair has marked you for his own, you say. Then I challenge Giant Despair and call him a liar! If you believe in Christ, you shall find that He has redeemed you with His blood. Trust Him and He will set you free at once—and in Him you shall be as happy as the days are long at the longest and you shall know what true joy means—emphatic joy—“the joy of the Lord,” “the peace of God which passes all understanding!”

I remind you of that other hymn we sang just now—

**“Take salvation,
Take it now, and happy be”—**

not only safe, but happy! And safe and happy forever! I remember how I was enticed to Christ when I heard the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of Saints preached. I had heard a great deal about that kind of salvation which consists of being saved today and lost, tomorrow, and I never cared a button for it—neither would I go across the street to listen to it now! But I heard a salvation preached which really saves a man—saves him eternally—and I felt that if I could get a grip of *that* salvation, I would be the happiest individual in the world! By God’s Grace I did grip it and I found it truthful and *fact*, for Christ does save—saves effectually and eternally—all them that put their trust in Him. And even now, for the unsafe and for the unhappy, Christ is waiting and willing that they may be both safe and happy in Him!

But there is more bliss, even, than that, for *Christ makes them part of a blessed company*. He says in our text, “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!” It is not a hen with one chick to which our Savior alludes! I suppose that the one chick might be happy, but the best happiness in the world is always enjoyed in holy company. Christ gives the idea of a Church as His notion of happiness—not one member only, but a body of members! Not one lone sheep, but a flock! So here he says, “How often would I have gathered *your children* together!” Am I addressing some lonely person? You have been in London a long time and you have found out that there is no place so lonely as this great London is. I suppose that in the desert of Sahara, you might find a friend, although in Cheapside you could not. Nobody seems to know anybody here—that is to say, unless he has something to give away—and then the number of cousins that a man has is something amazing! But if you *need* anything, nobody knows you and even your so-called friends forsake you! Perhaps somebody has come to the Tabernacle for a good while and yet has been quite lonely. I am very sorry that it should ever be and I know that there are some earnest souls here that try to speak to strangers. But, oh, dear Friends, my Master would not have you lonely! He would gather you with the rest of His children, “even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings.” He would bring you to know a few burdened spirits like yourself. He would bring you to know some others that have been set free, as He

will set you free! And He would lead you to have fellowship here with one, and there with another, till you would say with good Dr. Watts—

***“In such society as this
My weary soul would rest—
The man that dwells where Jesus is,
Must be forever blessed!”***

You would find that your joys would be multiplied by being shared with your kindred in Christ who, on the other hand, would make you partakers of their joy and would delight to do so! Oh, that you would come to Christ, for then you would have the happiness of Christian fellowship!

It seems to me that there is also another thought in the text, that is, *Jesus would make us know His love*. When the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, there is not only safety, happiness and congenial society, but there is also a consciousness of great love. The poor little chickens do not understand much about it—they do not know what relationship the hen bears to them, but *she* does. Yet they feel that she loves them by the way she picks up every little grain for them and by the way she calls them together so anxiously, and covers them so carefully. It is a truly blessed experience to know a great love—the love that is equal to our own—that blessed marriage love renders life supremely happy where it is purely enjoyed. But how much more blessed is it to have a love infinitely *superior* to your own and yet to know that it is all yours and that whatever there is in that loving One is all for you! Every chick may feel sure that whatever the great bird can do, it will all be done for the little bird that cowers beneath its wings. In fact, the chicks are lost in the hen—look how she covers them! That is what Jesus does to me and to you, if we are truly in Him—He covers us up and hides us from all our enemies. They cannot see us, for we are lost in our Lord and yet we are most sweetly found, and put beyond the possibility of being lost! All that Jesus is belongs to me, and to you, dear Sister, and to you, dear Brother. All Christ is mine, and all Christ is yours! And as the hen gives herself up to her chick and takes the chick, as it were, wholly to herself so that they become one, so does the blessed Christ give Himself wholly to His people—He takes His people wholly up into Himself, so that they are truly one! Oh, that you all had this great blessing! And if you are waiting and anxious and desirous to have it, He is willing to give it, for so He says in the text, “How often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings!”

That is what Jesus would do.

II. Now, very briefly, let us consider HOW HE WOULD DO IT.

He would do it, first, *by calling you to come to Him*. That is how the hen gathers her chicks around her, by calling them to her. Christ’s call is often given by the preaching of the Gospel and I am truly glad when I can be His call-boy and pass on the message from Him. How I wish these lips had language conformable to the blessed call which He allows me to deliver in His name! He bids me tell you, who labor and are heavy laden, to come to Him, to come to Him, *now*, and He will give you rest. He says,

“Ho, every one that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money; come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” He bids me expressly say that he that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out. And I am glad that before He closed the Book of the Revelation, He put in this gracious message, “Whoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely.” That is how He would gather you by His call—is it not a sweet and gracious one? If you are His child, you will know it and come to Him, even as the chick knows the mother’s call and runs to her. There is a pigeon not far from the hen, but it does not come at her call. There is a duck in the farmyard, but it does not come to her. Ah, but the chicks do! And this is how the Lord discerns His elect and redeemed people—that gracious call of His is understood by those who secretly belong to Him and who, therefore, respond to His call. He Himself said, “All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and he that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.”

How would Jesus gather you to Him? Well, He would gather you, next, *by your coming at His call*. The hen gives a call and then the chicks run to her. What do they bring with them when they come? Do they pick up gold and silver, or bring diamonds in their mouths to pay their way to their mother’s bosom? No, not they! All they do is to run to her, just as they are! Can you see them? The mother hen has called them and away they go! They bring her nothing and she asks nothing of them. It is for the hen to give to the chick—not for the chick to give to the hen! And so, poor Sinner, all you have to do is to come and trust Jesus. Run to Him! What shall you bring Him? Bring Him nothing but your need of everything that He can give you! Shall you bring Him a broken heart? Yes, if you have one, but if you have not, come to Him and ask Him to give you a broken heart. Remember that verse of Hart’s—

**“Come, you needy, come and welcome,
God’s free bounty glorify!
True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy!”**

So, then, this is Christ’s way of gathering sinners to Himself. First, He gives the call, and then they come to Him in obedience to it.

The next part of the gathering is the enclosure of His wing by which *He interposes between us and harm*. The hen gathers her chicks to her by brooding over them, making herself like a wall round about them, her feathers being their soft nestling-place. So Jesus gathers us to Him by brooding over us. He puts Himself between us and justice. You know when He did it and how He suffered in doing it. He puts Himself between us and God, for He is the Mediator, the Interposer, the Daysman acting on our behalf. Oh, how sweet it is when, conscious of guilt and sin, we, nevertheless, can realize the sweetness of that promise which I have already quoted to you, “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust.” He shall Himself be your pavilion! He shall hide you from the righteous wrath of God and put your sin away by tak-

ing it upon Himself! That is the way we are gathered under the interposing Mediator.

How does He gather us? You have it all before you now—He calls us, and we come to Him and we hide beneath Him and cry—

**“Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Your wings.”**

That is how we are gathered to Him—may the Lord thus graciously gather us all!

III. Our last remark, concerning our being gathered to Christ, is to be WHEN HE WOULD DO IT. The text says, “How often would I have gathered your children together!” I will not go into an account of the many times in which Jesus, in His infinite love, would have gathered the children of Jerusalem to Himself, but I should like to mention some times when, I think, He would have gathered some of you.

He would have gathered you, first, *when you were literally children*. I mean especially those of you who had early advantages. When you went to bed, after mother had spoken to you about—

“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,”

and given you the “good-night” kiss, you would often lie awake and turn the subject over in your mind till the tears coursed down your little cheeks and you sobbed yourself asleep. I think Jesus would have gathered you then. Do not some of us recall, when we were boys, when we spoke to an elder brother, or, maybe, to a younger brother, and we two reasoned with one another about these things— and prayed in our boyish fashion—and yet in a few days had forgotten it all? I think Jesus would have gathered us to Him then.

In looking back over my own life, there seems to me to have been times when the Lord came very near my childish spirit and touched me, if not with Divine Life, yet with something very near akin to it, for there were many earnest desires after holiness, bitter feelings of repentance and mighty yearnings after the Christ of whom I knew so little, but for whom I longed so much! Ah, my aged Friend, am I describing your case? It is a long while since you were a boy, but you might almost wish you could be a child again to feel as you once felt! Ah, good woman, it is many a day since mother ran her fingers through your curls and said that she hoped you would love her Savior! And you do not feel, now, as you felt then. Those were certainly times when Jesus would have gathered you to Himself.

Since then, I daresay many of you have had *times of serious impression and quiet thoughtfulness*. You do not know why it was, but you suddenly felt unusually thoughtful. It may be that you have been in the midst of gaiety and you have felt that it was all hollow. You could not bear it, so you got away and went upstairs, or into the garden, or you have even walked the street as if nobody else were there but yourself. And you have thought, and thought, and thought, again, and you have almost been persuaded—but you have said to the Heavenly message, “Go your way for this time. It is not yet convenient for me to receive you.” Do

you think it will ever be convenient? Or is God to wait your convenience and play the lackey at your door till your supreme will shall deign to listen to His merciful requests? Ah, how often—how often would Jesus, thus, by these solemn impressions, have gathered unto Himself some who are here present!

It may be that I am coming a little more closely home to some when I remind them that they have had *periods of severe illness*. At such times you have lain in bed and listened to the tick of the clock on the bed table and you have looked into eternity—and it has appeared very grim and dark to you. And you have then sought the prayers of good men and you have vowed that if you ever recovered, there should be no more wasted years, Ah, then Christ would have gathered you to Himself and the shadow of His sheltering wings darkened your sick-chamber! But you would not yield and you escaped from Him, again, and yet again.

I think I may truthfully add that in this Tabernacle, sometimes, *when God has helped the preacher*, there have been moments when you have been brought to the very brink of salvation—and you have almost gone in. You have had to put pressure upon your conscience to keep out of the Pool of Mercy! You have had to resist the Holy Spirit. Oh, but it is a dreadful thing when a man has done despite to the Spirit of God and made himself an antagonist of that blessed Spirit, whom to resist is perilous, for it is of Him that we read that there is a sin which is unto death—and there is a sin against the Holy Spirit which shall never be forgiven! I trust that none of you have yet committed that sin! But mind what you are doing—mind what you are doing, for you are in a most dangerous position! Somewhere in that region where you now are lies the sin which ensures damnation! I charge you, Sirs, whatever sin you commit, resist not the Holy Spirit, for, if you do, it may be that it shall be said, “My Spirit shall no longer strive with that man.” And then, ah, then—I drop the curtain and say no more, for it is too terrible to think of.

Oh, how I wish that this might be the time when Jesus would securely cover you as the hen covers her chicks! Do you really desire this blessing? I know you would not desire it if He did not desire it. If there is a spark of desire towards Christ in your heart, there is a whole flaming furnace of desire in Christ’s heart towards you! You never get the best of Him—long before you have gone half a boat’s length, you shall find Jesus Christ infinitely faster than you are! No sinner can ever say that he stopped for Christ, or waited for Jesus. I more willing than Christ? Never! A sinner more anxious for pardon than Christ is willing to pardon him? Never! There was never seen and there never shall be seen, beneath the cape of Heaven, a soul more hungry after Christ than Christ is hungry after that soul! Long before the woman of Samaria said to Christ, “Give me a drink,” Christ had said to her, “Give *Me* a drink.” He was the more thirsty of the two, even when He had made her thirsty! And He was thirsty after her soul long before she was thirsty after the Water of Life!

O poor, guilty Sinner, do not doubt your welcome to Jesus! The gate of salvation is flung wide open! The door is taken completely off the hinges.

“All things are ready, come!” Your Savior waits for you. The Father waits for you. No, He does more—He comes to meet you! I see Him running! Is it true that I see *you* coming? Then what a spectacle is now before me! I see you coming with feeble footsteps and I see Him running faster than the angels fly! I see the Father falling on the neck of the prodigal. I see Him kiss him and delight in him and cover him as if it were the hen that covered her chick! I see Him delighting in deeds and tokens of infinite love. “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him! And put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet, and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it and let us eat and be merry; for this, my son, was dead, and is alive again! He was lost, and is found!”

“Ring the bells of Heaven!” There is joy tonight, for a sinner has found his Savior and God has found His child! God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 13:18-34.**

Verse 18. *Then said He, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? And unto what shall I resemble it?* For men learn much by resemblances and the things which are seen are frequently helpful to us in seeking to set forth the things which are not seen. Knowing that God is One in all that He has done, we are often able to learn from one part of His works to understand another. What, then, is God’s Kingdom like? Is it like a mighty army marching with banners and trumpets? No. Is it like the raging sea, rolling onwards and sweeping everything before it? Not so—at least it is not so visibly.

19. *It is like a grain of mustard seed.* You can hardly see it. You can, however, taste it. Try it and you shall find it pungent enough, but it is so small that you may easily pass it by. “It is like a grain of mustard seed.”

19. *Which a man took and cast into his garden.* It must be sown in prepared soil, but there is “a man” who knows how to cast it so that it shall fall where it will live and where it will grow.

19. *And it grew, and grew into a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.* “The fowls of the air” that might once have eaten it, “lodged in the branches of it.” See, in this parable, an illustration of the growth of the Kingdom of God, the vitality of the Truth of God, the energy with which, from a small beginning, God’s Kingdom advances to a great ending! Have you this mustard seed in your heart? It may seem a very little thing even to yourself. Others may scarcely perceive it, yet, but leave it alone and it will grow. Yet it will not grow without watering. Seeds may lie long in the ground, but they will not sprout until the rain has fallen to moisten the earth. Pray God to send showers of blessing upon your soul, tonight, so that, even if you have no more than a grain of mustard seed in your heart, it may begin to grow!

Is the grain of mustard seed sending up its shoot above the ground? Then pray God that it may grow yet more till it shall not only be visible,

but shall be so prominent that it must be seen—that those who once hated it will be compelled to see it—and to wonder at it as they behold the birds of the air coming and lodging in its branches! I pray that in many hearts, here, the Grace of God may not long continue to be a small thing, but that it may advance to tree-like stature till you shall yield comfort to fifties and hundreds—and many of you shall be like some of the trees in this great city and its suburbs. Did you ever notice them, at nightfall, when all the sparrows of the street come and lodge in the branches and merrily twitter before they go to sleep? There are some Christians like those trees—they have hearts so big and they do for Christ's service so much, that they harbor hundreds of poor little birds of the air that otherwise would hardly know where to go for shelter. God make us such Christians that we shall be a blessing to multitudes all around us!

20, 21. *And again He said, Unto what shall I liken the Kingdom of God? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.* Some expositors think that this is a picture of the kingdom of the devil, but it does not say so. If our Lord had meant to represent the power of evil, He would have given us some intimation of that kind, but He has given us none. He means to describe exactly what He had described before, for He says, "Unto what shall I liken the Kingdom of God?" The leaven is buried, as it were—"hid in three measures of meal." It is lost, covered up. Leave it alone. By the force that is *within itself*, it begins to work its way in the meal and it leavens all around it until, at last, the whole three measures of meal are permeated by it and made to feel and acknowledge its power. So is it with the Grace of God where it is placed within a human heart—and so is it with the Kingdom of God wherever its influence is exerted among the sons of men!

22, 23. *And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that are saved?* Oh, that question! Have you ever asked it? Have you ever heard it asked? And there are some people who are very pleased when the answer is, "Yes, very few, indeed, will be saved—and they all go to Salem, or Zoar, or Rehoboth, or little Bethel." There are some who are not quite certain whether all who go even *there* will be saved—they seem to delight to cut and pare down to the very lowest the number of those who will be saved. With such a spirit as that, I trust we do not sympathize for a moment! Certainly, our Lord does not! Listen to His reply to the question, "Lord, are there few that are saved?"

23, 24. *And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* For your own part, take it for granted that there will be so few that will enter that you will have to push to get through the gate—"Strive to enter in at the narrow gate." If you are not narrow in your own mind—and it is a pity that you should be—yet remember that the gate into Heaven is narrow—and make up your mind that there is no getting through it except with many a push and many a squeeze.

25, 26. *When once the Master of the house is risen up, and has shut the door, and you begin to stand outside, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know not who you are: then shall you begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Your Presence, and You have taught in our streets. See, there are some men who will not think of going to Heaven till it is too late! And then, when they get to Heaven's gate and find it shut, they will begin to plead for admittance though they pleaded not for it before! When they might have had the blessing, they would not have it. And when they cannot have it, then they grow earnest in crying for it.*

27, 28. *But He shall say, I tell you, I know not who you are; depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. Ejected, violently driven away, as those who are abhorrent in God's sight because you despised His mercy!*

29-34. *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get out, and depart from here, for Herod will kill You. And He said unto them, Go and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a Prophet perish outside of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which kills the Prophets, and stones them that are sent unto you; how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen does gather her brood under her wings, and you would not! What a terrible contrast! "I would...and you would not." May the Lord Jesus never have to say that to any of us!*

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

A PROPHETIC WARNING NO. 3301

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 9, 1912.

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

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold.”
Matthew 24:12.

Christ had spoken to His disciples of earthquakes in divers places, famines and pestilences—but these were only the beginning of sorrows. Such things as these need not trouble Christians, for though the earth is removed and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, yet may the Believer be confident and his heart may abide at rest. Even when the Master told His disciples that they would be hated of all men for His name’s sake, that needed not afflict them. He had taught them before, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.” They were thus braced up to meet the fiery trial. Earthquake, pestilence, war and persecution fail to disturb the serenity of Believers in Christ! But the evil spoken of in our text—this is the wound, this is the sorrow! Here is something to tremble at! “Because iniquity shall abound”—that is worse than pestilence—“the love of many shall grow cold”—that is worse than persecution! As all the water outside a vessel can do it no harm until it enters the vessel, itself, so outward persecutions cannot really injure the Church of God. But when the mischief oozes into the Church and the love of God’s people grows cold—ah, then the boat is in sore distress! I fear that we are much in this condition at the present hour. May the Holy Spirit bless the alarming prophecy now before us to our awakening!

I. Notice, first, THE CAUSE OF THAT GRIEVOUS CHILL OF HEART which is here spoken of—“Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold.” When love grows cold, it is a serious sign. Then the heart is affected—affected with a chill! Is not this the forerunner of death? What is the cause of it? According to our text, it is the abounding of iniquity!

Sin does its best to destroy Divine Grace. So much sin, so much the less of holiness, so much the less of every Christian Grace! Sin is like a poisonous atmosphere—if a man has to live in it, he has good need to pray that he may not be overcome by it. You and I, seeing that we are in this world and cannot go altogether out of it, will come into contact with evil. In our daily avocations however careful we are, we must encounter this infection. We cannot but feel that the evil around us is a hindrance to our holiness and a detriment to our growth in Grace. When the society

around the Christian becomes flagrantly wicked, corrupt and offensive, it is difficult for him to maintain the purity of his life and the strength of his spiritual character. At this time, we live in an atmosphere which hinders our growth, yet in the early days of Christianity the Lord's people had, as a rule, to live in worse society than that which surrounds us today! I will not say this without an exception. There are quarters of London, I am told, as vicious as ever existed in Corinth, or in old Rome. And I am afraid that some of the grossest vices which we dare not even mention, abound in this city. We have a fringe of respectability which barely conceals the licentiousness and abomination which abound. I have been reading today some details as to the number of illegitimate births and I am perfectly astounded at the awful wickedness of this land! We call ourselves a Christian country. Do not *dare* to speak so falsely! This is growing to be a heathen land—part of it bowing before images, another part howling out, "There is no God," and a third secretly reveling in unutterable filthiness.

Still, the most of us do not come into contact with vice to the same degree as the first Christians did. Society in the Roman Empire was utterly rotten. It is a wonder that God permitted the world to exist in that loathsome age! It tended greatly to the depression of Christian principle for infamous crimes to be tolerated in the society which surrounded the faithful. Look at these first Churches which some think so much of! They were not half as good as the Churches of today, bad as these are. Take the Church at Corinth, for instance. Did you ever hear of a Church in our day which allowed drunkenness at the Lord's Supper? Have we personally met with a Church which would knowingly allow a person living in incest to remain in its membership? I hope not! But gross offenses had become so common in general society in Paul's day that it did not strike even Christian people that some of these things were wrong! Iniquity abounded and it was greatly detrimental to Grace.

Again, *iniquity is especially injurious to the growth of love*. Because iniquity abounded, therefore the love of many grew cold. Men inside the Christian Church found themselves betrayed by other members of the Church. Frequently, the heads of the Brothers and Sisters were sold to the executioner by hypocrites like Judas. That would greatly tend to injure Christian love. Men began to suspect one another. You did not know that the man who sat next to you at the Lord's Table would not tomorrow inform against you and get blood-money for you! Therefore suspicion entered with its wintry breath. It was natural that it should be so, albeit that there was sin in it, yet you and I would have probably fallen into the same. All around, men were so loathsome that Christian love, which teaches us to pity the most degraded and to do good to the most unworthy, found it a difficult struggle to live. Godly men endeavored to win the ungodly from their lusts, but they found themselves persecuted in consequence—the more they sought to do good, the more they were hated—and this put their love to a severe test.

I think that you can see why our Savior has given us a warning in this particular form.

Iniquity is naturally opposed to Grace, but it is most of all injurious to the Grace of love. If sin abounds in a Church, it is little wonder if the love of many should grow cold. Young members introduced into the Church after a short time find that those whom they looked upon as being examples are walking disorderly and using lightness of speech and of behavior. Those young people cannot be very warm in love—they are led to stumble and are scandalized. Older saints who have for years held onto their way in integrity, and by Grace have kept their garments unspotted from the world, see those around them who have come into the Church who seem to be of quite another race, who can drink of the cup of Belial and of the cup of the Lord, who seem to follow Christ and the devil, too! Seeing this evil, these godly men and women gather up their garments in holy indignation and find it difficult to feel the love of purer days.

Oh, Friends, if the frost of sin rules in a Church, every tender flower is injured and nothing flourishes! Love is a sensitive plant and if it is touched by the finger of sin, it will show it. The lilies of Love's Paradise cannot bloom amid the smoke and dust of unholiness!

Because iniquity abounds even in the professing Church, the love of many is growing cold today. What a sermon one might preach upon this!—but I shall not do anything of the kind. I am not so desirous to deplore the evils of others as to watch against evils within myself. I am not so anxious to make you discover transgression in the Church as to make you watch against it in your hearts—for rest sure of this—if you give sin any license in your heart, your love will grow cold! You cannot walk in love to Christ and yet live in the love of sin. If today you have indulged an unholy temper, if you have given way to covetousness, if you have in any way transgressed against the Lord, you will not feel that warmth of love towards Jesus Christ which you felt yesterday! Your life will have lost much of its beauty and its sweetness. Cry to God that He would give it back to you! Do not rest satisfied until it is perfectly restored.

II. Now let us consider THE SERIOUS CHARACTER OF THIS EVIL. “The love of many shall grow cold.” It is a very dreadful thing that love in any man's heart should grow cold. Observe the bearings of Christian love and you will see the sin of it under various aspects.

Our love is, first, *a love to the great Father*—our Father who chose us before ever the earth was, by whom we have been begotten again and received into His family. If our love to Him grows cold, what mischief that must bring! Coldness towards the father in a family—do you know any household afflicted in that way? I should be very sorry to be a member of it! Coldness of love to the father? Why, that household is scarcely a family! It has lost the bond which holds it together and constitutes it a family. May the good Lord save us from this ruin of all holy unity!

Next, our love is *love to Jesus Christ*, “who loved us and gave Himself for us.” If love to Jesus should grow cold, the result would be grievous! Is

there any spiritual Grace within you that can be in a healthy condition when your love to Christ is declining? Are you right anywhere if your heart is wrong towards your Lord? Can you do anything earnestly when love to Jesus is chilled? Can you sing aright? Can you pray aright? Can you live aright? Do not let us dream of bearing fruit if we are severed from the Vine! It is vitally important that we should love Jesus with all our heart, soul and strength!

Christian love also embraces *the Truths of God*. They that love God and His Divine Son, love the Truth which He has committed to them. The Church is the trustee of the Gospel—she is “the pillar and ground of the Truth.” And when men begin to play with the Truth of God and think that one set of Doctrines is as good as another, and that nothing is of any particular importance, evil must come! In former days our fathers counted it a small thing to go to prison for a Doctrine, or to be burnt to death for a testimony! Look at the multitudes in Holland who were drowned, or who were tied to ladders and roasted to death for nothing but their conviction that Believers should be baptized! Nowadays, people consider Scriptural views of Baptism to be a mere trifle. I question whether our present Broad Churchmen think that there is any Doctrine worth a person’s losing the first joint of his little finger for! As to burning to death for a Truth of God—that must seem a great absurdity to these liberal theologians! Now that things have reached this pass, need we wonder that heresies and all manner of errors rush in torrents down our streets? When she can afford to trifle with the Truths of God, what is the Church worth?

Our love is also *love to our fellow Christians*. This is a vital principle. “We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.” But when members of Churches have no love to one another. When a professor does not care at all what becomes of his Brothers and Sisters, has the Church any Christianity left? No, it has a name to live, and is dead! Christianity is gone when the heart is cold—its very life is mutual affection.

Then, again, we are to *love the ungodly and the unconverted*. It is by love that we are to win them to Christ. But if the Church has no love to the dying sons of men, what is she worth? Where will be her missionary operations? What will be the use of her ministry? Think of her Sunday schools without love to the children! Think of people pretending to win souls who have no love for them and do not care whether they are lost or saved. Can the Church sustain a worse loss than the losing of her fervent love to perishing men? And yet, if iniquity abounds, this is the great risk we run—compassionate love will cease to minister to man’s miseries!

Beloved, when we love best, how little is our love compared with what it ought to be for Him who left the royalties of Heaven for the shame and sorrow of our Nature! If we glowed with seraphic fire night and day through a life as long as that of Methuselah, our love could not repay the love of Christ! If that love, poor as it is, grows colder, what will it come to? Oh, eyes that are to look upon the Well-Beloved forever and ever, if

you cease to see beauty in Him, now, what has blinded you? Oh, hearts that are to glow forever with delight in the Presence of the Reigning One, who once was crucified, what ails you if you grow cold when you most need His love and are receiving most from Him? I cannot bear it that we should love Jesus so little! It seems to me horrible! Not to have your heart all on fire for Christ Jesus is immoral! Let us love Him to the utmost! Let us ask Him to give us larger hearts and to fire them with the same love that is in His own, that we may love Him to the utmost possibilities of affection!

Ah, then, Beloved, think again. Suppose our love grows cold—do you not see how it paralyzes the entire system? If the reservoir is empty, you cannot expect to get much water from the pipes. If the heart grows cold, everything will be coldly done. When love declines, what cold preaching we have! All moonlight—light without heat—polished like marble and as cold! What cold singing we get—pretty music made by pipes and wind, but oh, how little soul-song!—how little singing in the Holy Spirit, making melody in the heart unto God! And what poor praying! Do you call it praying? What little giving! When the hot is cold, the hands can find nothing in the purse and Christ's Church, and Christ's poor, and the heathen may perish, for we must hoard up for ourselves and live to grow rich! Is there anything that goes on as it ought to go when love grows cold? I should like to act throughout life as I have when my soul has been stirred to its inmost depths with affection for my Lord! I would continually act as if I had just seen *Him* and had put my fingers into the print of the nails! I would live as if I had been just sitting with Mary at His feet, yes, and were still sitting there! I would speak for Him, work for Him and give for Him as if I had freshly lifted my head from John's place upon His bosom!

III. Thirdly, THE SOLEMN DANGER of the spread of this mischief.

I will read you the text translated accurately. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of *the* many shall grow cold." That is a more saddening expression than "the love of many." It is, "the love of *the* many." That is, of the major part of the Church—the bulk of it. This supposes a dreadful state of things because when *the many* have become cold, *they keep one another in countenance*. One cold Brother says to the other, "What is your temperature?" "I think I am far below zero." "So am I," says the first one, "and we are about right." If the majority are warm, then the cold ones are thawed, but if they are all below zero, then they freeze into a wretched compactness! It is the most sober, respectable Church you ever knew—they have no quarrelling—everything is so comfortable and orderly. Alas, they are frozen together, and their peace is that of death! The love of the many has grown cold and they are full of mutual admiration for their quietness.

They have nobody to rebuke them. If the many have grown cold, then the few among them, instead of being able to rebuke with authority, are themselves snubbed. "He is a terribly fanatical young man! That zealous fellow never leaves anyone alone!" "He will grow out of that," says one,

“by the time he gets to my age he will be as prudent as I am.” Yonder good woman feels great anxiety for the conversion of souls and she is making a stir. A lady of repute declares that she is too forward, or has got a bee in her bonnet. Active people are looked upon as rather troublesome when the love of the many grows cold. The few have a hard time of it and if they do venture upon a rebuke, they are soon snuffed out—this confirms the evil.

And then *the tendency is to grow still colder*. They go on freezing. There is no telling how cold people can be. I have been burnt with cold and I suppose you have been too. I have preached in places whose spiritual temperature was that of an icehouse and, preach as hard as I could, nothing could possibly come of it, for my words fell to the ground like lumps of ice! Colder and colder Churches become till, at last, the great God who breaks up icebergs in due season, destroys a Church and its place knows it no more!

IV. In the presence of the danger which is seriously threatening many Churches, there is A CALL FOR SERIOUS ACTION ON OUR PART. What is that serious action?

Why, it is, first, that we should remember that if the love of the many may grow cold, then *our love may grow cold!* What are we that we should think ourselves secure where others are in danger? If other men as good as we are have gradually cooled down, may not we? Let us be watchful and careful—and let us go to God for more Grace.

Let us notice, next, that if the love of the many grows cold, it is not much use our complaining about it, but *the few must get together and pray*. The real vitality of a Church seldom lies in the many, but generally in the few. Inside the election there is another election. Do you remember that out of Christ’s disciples there were twelve? Out of the 12 there were three? Out of the three there was one? And so election has rings within rings. Inside the nominal Church—(we cannot say whether they are all God’s people or not)—the many may grow cold, but there ought to be a remnant who abide in life and love. God grant that we may belong to it! We must at once grow warmer. We must live nearer to Christ. We must be more enthusiastic. Oh for a band of choice spirits—men fit to walk with Christ in white, for they are worthy—men who will be prepared to follow the Lamb wherever He goes! The Spirit said, “You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” And so in every Church there are some that have not grown idle or heretical! Let them get together and help each other! I thank God for those whom the Lord keeps very near to Him—may their number be daily increased! May each one of us be filled with the Spirit! When I hear of one minister after another giving up the old-fashioned Gospel, do you know what I say to myself? I resolve that I will stick the closer to it! If the many cannot bear Calvinistic Doctrine, I will be more Calvinistic than ever! The more men do not like the Truths of God, the more they shall have it! Let this be our line of action. If men become more worldly, we will become more Puritanical. If professing Christians do not exhibit the Spirit of Christ, we will

ask our Lord to give us sevenfold of His Spirit, that we may maintain His Truths!

Suppose you expected a famine in London as there was in Paris during the siege? Everybody who could do so, would get in a hundred-fold supply of provisions. Every good housewife would lay out every penny that she could get and fill her cellars full of food. There is going to be a *spiritual* famine—therefore buy the Truth of God and sell it not. Go to your Lord and get larger supplies from Him. Do not go to one another for it. That will be like saying, “Give us of your oil”—and your companions will wisely reply, “Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.” Go to your Master and ask Him to fan the fire within you to a great heat, that if there should be cold everywhere else, there may be warmth in your bosoms! The Lord help you to do this, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 24:1-28.**

Verse 1, 2. *And Jesus went out, and departed from the Temple: and His disciple came to Him to show Him the buildings of the Temple. And Jesus said unto them, See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* The King, having finished His first discourse in the Temple, left it, never to return—“Jesus went out and departed from the Temple.” His ministry there was ended. As His disciples moved away with Him towards the Mount of Olives, they called His attention to the great stones of which the Temple was constructed and the costly adornments of the beautiful building. To them the appearance was glorious, but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father’s House, which ought to have been a House of Prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves and soon would be utterly destroyed! Jesus said unto them, “See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” Josephus tells us that Titus at first tried to save the Temple, even after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no avail—at last he gave orders that the whole city and Temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. This was so thoroughly done that the historian says that there was but nothing to make those that came there believe it had ever been inhabited!

We sometimes delight in the temporal prosperity of the Church as if it were something that must certainly endure—but all that is external will pass away or be destroyed. Let us only reckon that to be substantial which comes from God, and is God’s work. The things which are seen are temporal.

3. *And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?* The little procession continued ascending the Mount of Olives until Jesus reached a resting

place from which He could see the Temple (Mark 13:3). There He sat down and the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?" These are the questions that have been asked in every age since our Savior's day. There are here two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples enquired first about the time of the destruction of the Temple, and then about the sign of Christ's coming and of "the consummation of the age" (R.V. margin). The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious and that could only be fully understood as that which He foretold actually occurred. He told His disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned His Second Advent and some which would immediately precede "the end of the world." When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Savior's predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

4-6. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.* Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for His disciples was not that they might know when "these things" would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time. Therefore, Jesus answered and said unto them, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." They were to beware lest any of the pretended Messiahs should lead them astray—as they would pervert many others. A large number of impostors came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, giving out that they were the Anointed of God—almost every page of history is blotted with the names of such deceivers—and in our own day we have seen some come in Christ's name, saying that they are Christ's. Such men seduce many, but they who heed their Lord's warning will not be deluded by them.

Our Savior's words, "You shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars," might be applied to almost any period of the world's history. Earth has seldom had a long spell of quiet—there have almost always been both the realities of war and the rumors of war. There were many such before Jerusalem was overthrown. There have been many such ever since and there will be many such until that glorious period when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." "See that you be not troubled" is a timely message for the disciples of Christ in every age! "For all these things must come to pass." Therefore let us not be surprised or alarmed at them, "but the end is not yet." The destruction of Jerusalem was the beginning of the end—the great type and anticipation of all that will take place when Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. It was *an* end, but not *the* end—"the end is not yet."

7, 8. *For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famine, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All there are the beginning of sorrows.* One would think that there was sorrow enough in “famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places,” but our Lord said that “all these” were only “the beginning of sorrows”—the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede His coming, either to Jerusalem, or to the whole world. If famines, pestilences and earthquakes are only “the beginning of sorrows,” what may we not expect the end to be? This prophecy ought both to warn the disciples of Christ what they may expect and wean them from the world where all these and greater sorrows are to be experienced!

9. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name’s sake.* Our Lord not only foretold the general trial that would come upon the Jews and upon the world, but also the special persecution which would be the portion of His chosen followers. “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name’s sake.” The New Testament gives abundant proof of the fulfillment of these words. Even in Paul’s day, “this sect” was “everywhere spoken against.” Since then, has there been any land unstained by the blood of the martyrs? Wherever Christ’s Gospel has been preached, men have risen up in arms against the messengers of mercy and afflicted and killed them wherever they could.

10. *And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.* This would be a bitter trial for the followers of Christ, yet this they have always had to endure. Persecution would reveal the traitors within the Church as well as the enemies outside. In the midst of the chosen ones there would be found successors of Judas who would be willing to betray the disciples as he betrayed his Lord. Saddest of all is the betrayal of good men by their own relatives—but even this they have, many of them, had to bear for Christ’s sake.

11, 12. *And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall grow cold.* What could not be accomplished by persecutors outside the Church and traitors inside, would be attempted by teachers of heresy—“Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” They have risen in all ages! In these modern times they have risen in clouds till the air is thick with them, as with an army of devouring locusts! These are the men who invent new doctrines and who seem to think that the religion of Jesus Christ is something that a man may twist into any form and shape that he pleases. Alas that such teachers should have *any* disciples! It is doubly sad that they should be able to lead astray “many.” Yet, when it so happens, let us remember that the King said that it would be so.

Is it any wonder that where such “iniquity abounds” and such lawlessness is multiplied, “the love of many shall grow cold”? If the teachers deceive the people and give them “another gospel which is not another,” it is no marvel that there is a lack of love and zeal. The wonder is that

there is any love and zeal left after they have been subjected to such a chilling and killing process as that adopted by the advocates of the modern “destructive criticism.” Verily, it is rightly named “destructive,” for it destroys almost everything that is worth preserving!

13. *But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.* Again our Savior reminded His disciples of the personal responsibility of each one of them in such a time of trial and testing as they were about to pass through. He would have them remember that it is not the man who starts in the race, but the one who runs to the goal who wins the prize—“He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” If this Doctrine were not supplemented by another, there would be but little good tidings for poor, tempted, tried and struggling saints in such words as these! Who among us would persevere in running the heavenly race if God did not preserve us from falling and give us Persevering Grace? But, blessed be His name, “the righteous shall hold on his way.” “He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

14. *And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.* The world is to the Church like a scaffold to a building. When the Church is built, the scaffold will be taken down—the world will remain until the last elect one is saved—“Then shall the end come.” Before Jerusalem was destroyed, “this Gospel of the Kingdom” was probably “preached in all the world” as far as it was then known. But there is to be a fuller proclamation of it “for a witness unto all nations” before the great consummation of all things—“then shall the end come” and the King shall sit upon the Throne of His Glory, and decide the eternal destiny of the whole human race!

15-18. *When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoever reads, let him understand), then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes.* This portion of our Savior’s words appears to relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. As soon as Christ’s disciples saw “the abomination of desolation,” that is, the Roman ensigns with their idolatrous emblems, “stand in the holy place,” they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived—and they did “flee into the mountains.” The Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding towns and villages “in Judaea,” availed themselves of the first opportunity for eluding the Roman armies, and fled to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the Jews. There was no time to spare before the final investment of the guilty city. The man “on the housetop” could “not come down to take anything out of his house,” and the man “in the field” could not “return back to take his clothes.” They must flee to the mountains in the greatest haste, the moment that they saw “Jerusalem compassed with armies” (Luke 21:20).

19-21. *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray you that your flight is not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* It must have been a peculiarly trying time for the women who had to flee from their homes just when they needed quiet and rest. How thoughtful and tender was our compassionate Savior in thus sympathizing with suffering mothers in their hour of need! “Flight. . .in the winter” or “on the Sabbath” would have been attended with special difficulties, so the disciples were exhorted to “pray” that some other time might be available. The Lord knew exactly when they would be able to escape, yet He bade them pray that their flight might not be in the winter, nor on the Sabbath! The wise men of the present day would have said that prayer was useless under such conditions—not so the great Teacher and Example of His praying people—He taught that such a season was the very time for special supplication!

The reason for this injunction was thus stated by the Savior. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” Read the record written by Josephus of the destruction of Jerusalem and see how truly our Lord’s words were fulfilled. The Jews impiously said, concerning the death of Christ, “His blood be on us, and on our children.” Never did any other people invoke such an awful curse upon themselves and upon no other nation did such a judgment ever fall! We read of Jews crucified till there was no more wood for making crosses—of thousands of the people slaying one another in their fierce faction fights within the city. Of so many of them being sold for slaves that they became a drug in the market, and all but valueless! And of the fearful carnage when the Romans at length entered the doomed capital and the blood-curdling story exactly bears out the Savior’s statement uttered nearly 40 years before the terrible events occurred!

22. *And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.* These were the words of the King as well as of the Prophet and, as such, they were both authentic and authoritative. Jesus spoke of what “should be,” not only as the Seer who was able to gaze into the future, but as the Sovereign Disposer of all events. He knew what a fiery trial awaited the unbelieving nation and that “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.” If the horrors of the siege were to continue long, the whole race of the Jews would be destroyed! The King had the power to cut short the evil days and He explained His reason for using that power—“For the elect’s sake, those days shall be shortened.” Those who had been hated and persecuted by their own countrymen became the means of preserving them from absolute annihilation! Thus has it often been since those days—and for the sake of His elect the Lord has withheld many judgments and shortened others. The ungodly owe to the godly more than they know, or would care to admit.

23-26. *Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Therefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert; go not forth. Behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.* It is a grand thing to have such faith in Christ that you have none to spare for imposters. It is important not to distribute your faith too widely. Those who believe in a little of everything will, in the end, believe nothing of anything. If you exercise full faith in that which is sure and steadfast, “false Christs and false prophets” will not be able to make you their dupes! In one respect, the modern teachers of heresy are more successful than their Judean prototypes, for they do actually “deceive the very elect,” even though they cannot “show great signs and wonders.” One of the saddest signs of the times in which we live is the ease with which “the very elect” are deceived by the smooth-tongued “false Christs and false prophets” who abound in our midst. Yet our Savior expressly forewarned His followers against them—“Behold, I have told you before.” Forewarned is forearmed. Let it be so in our case. Our Savior’s expressive command may be fitly applied to the whole system of “modern thought” which is contrary to the inspired Word of God—“Believe it not.”

27. *For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.* When HE comes, we shall know who He is and why He has come. There will be no longer any mystery or secret about “the coming of the Son of Man.” There will be no need to ask any questions then! No one will make a mistake about His appearing when it actually takes place. “Every eye shall see Him.” Christ’s coming will be sudden, startling, universally visible—and terrifying to the ungodly! “As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west.” His first coming to judgment at the destruction of Jerusalem had terrors about it that till then had never been realized on the earth—His last coming will be still more dreadful.

28. *For wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* Judaism had become a “carcass,” dead and corrupt—fit prey for the vultures or carrion-kites of Rome. By-and-by there will arrive another day when there will be a dead church in a dead world—and “the eagles” of Divine Judgment “will be gathered together” to tear in pieces those whom there shall be none to deliver! The birds of prey gather wherever dead bodies are to be found—and the judgments of Christ will be poured out when the body, politic or religious, becomes unbearably corrupt!

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

EFFECTS OF SOUND DOCTRINE

NO. 324

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, APRIL 22, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

***“For there shall arise false Christ’s and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”
Matthew 24:24.***

I AM not about to enter upon any argument in proof of the doctrine of election tonight. That I have done at other times and am prepared to do so yet again. I purpose rather to speak of some of the practical effects which result from this article of the Believer’s faith. We cannot however pass over the text, without observing that it is very certain there is an elect and that these elect are a special people. For they are here defined as being “the very elect”—those who are such in deed and in truth.

It is equally clear that these elect ones cannot be deceived. The text informs us that if it were possible, those deceivers who had gone to the full stretch of great signs and wonders, doubtless adding thereto all kinds of eloquence and persuasion, were not able to deceive the elect. The simple reason being that it was not possible. They would have deceived them if there had been a possibility, but the elect were a people who could not possibly be turned from the steadfastness of their faith and be deceived.

Moreover, we may add that in the twenty-second verse, these same elect people are spoken of as being those for whose sake the rigor of God’s punishments is abated. “Then shall be a great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect’s sake, those days shall be shortened.” God did not temper the rigor of His dispensations for the sake of all flesh, but for the elect’s sake.

The piteous wail of manhood moves not the Almighty to spare His righteous dispensation of punishment upon the nations. It is the cry of the elect that moves His heart. For their sake He promises to shorten those days and sheath, as it were, His sword before its time.

We simply make these remarks to show, that in the dealings of God’s Providence and surely also in the dealings of His Grace, God has a special regard for His chosen and justified ones. For the elect’s sake, He does many things which otherwise would not enter into the plan of His government. If our Bibles were read by us in the original, we should be exceedingly struck with the prominence which is given to the doctrine of election.

And if, my Brethren, you were at all acquainted with the manners of the early Christian Church, or had read any of the letters which have

been preserved of the first age of Christianity, you would be astonished to find how conspicuously this great doctrine appears, so much so that Christians were accustomed to address each other as “Elect Ones.” The term far from being recondite was common in daily conversation. And the doctrine far from being kept back—I do not hesitate to say, that great doctrine of the crucifixion and the resurrection of our most blessed Lord—even *that* doctrine had not such prominence in the early Christian Church as the doctrine of the election of Grace of God.

The word “elect” recurred so frequently in conversation and was so mixed up with all their preaching, with all their assembling together and with all their Church acts—that it is impossible to conceive that its meaning could be obscured, or held in disesteem. Upon that matter, however, as I said before, it is not my present intention so enlarge. My simple endeavor will be to clear the doctrine of sundry aspersions which have been cast upon it, by showing its proper practical influence—an influence which I hope as a Church we do not merely show in words by the lips of our minister, but in our daily life and conversation as a people.

It has often been objected to those that hold the doctrine of election, that it restricts ministers from earnestly preaching to sinners. Now, we are compelled to confess with the greatest sorrow and I may add also with no little indignation, that there have been some men who have never been able to grasp the Gospel in its integrity in order to present the Grace of God to men’s minds at once in its sovereignty and in its freeness. Though their sermons sometimes ring with the clear melodious note of Grace of God, they are too often bent on qualifying the extent of its welcome and inventing explanations of their own, to wrest the simple meaning of Scriptures.

Calvinists, such men may call themselves, but, unlike the Reformer whose name they adopt, they bring a system of divinity to the Bible to interpret it, instead of making every system, by its merits what they may, yield and give place to the pure and unadulterated Word of God. They will not imitate their Master in inviting all men to Christ—they dare not preach a full Christ to empty sinners. They are ashamed to say, “Lo, everyone that thirsts, come you to the water.” They have been obliged to cover up such a passage as this, because they could not understand it—“Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but you would not.”

They will not preach upon such a text as this—“As I live says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.” They are ashamed to say to men, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” They dare not come out and preach as Peter did—“Repent you and be converted that your sins may be blotted out.” This, they say, would be to deny the doctrine of election at once. But, Beloved, we have not so learned Christ. I trust we have learned to prove practically, by our ministry, that it is possible to have all the heart of compassion which a man can feel for dying souls and yet grasp with a firm hand the standard of the doctrine of Grace.

It has been our aim and object—at least I can speak for myself—it has been *my* aim and object in my ministry, to show that while I believe the Lord knows them that are His, it is at the same time, written over the fountain of living waters, “Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.”

Sometimes, also, has it been said that the doctrine of election leads naturally to carelessness and to hard-heartedness in sin—that it acts as a bugbear to frighten penitents and as a drug which sinks the impenitent into deeper sleep. Here again, I must confess, for it is but the duty of candor to acknowledge it, that the preaching of some men has had this tendency. This doctrine has been used too frequently for the destruction of men’s souls. But what argument is this against the Truth of God? What Truth of God has not been Perverted?! Are there not, on the other hand, those who teach God’s universal mercy and has not that damned men’s souls?! You may teach and teach rightly, too, that God is long-suffering and that at the eleventh hour He still invites a sinner to Himself. But has not that very fact of God’s long-suffering helped to lull sinners to sleep and weaken the power of that tremendous word, “Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts”?

There is no passage of Scripture which may not be the means of a man’s destruction, if he wills to make it so. From the very pinnacle of the temple you may cast yourselves down, saying at the moment you commit suicide, “He has given His angels charge over me, to keep me in all my ways.” If you will be foolish enough to destroy yourselves at the foot of the Cross, you may do it. There are many ways to Hell and when a man would commit self-murder on his soul, he need be at no loss to distil from the most wholesome Truths in Scriptures poison to his spirit. I say, therefore, it proves nothing whatever against the doctrine that men have so perverted it.

This doctrine has likewise often been charged with a tendency to cut off the sympathies of Christian men from their fellows. “Surely,” says one, “if you believe yourself to be an elect one and if I cannot receive the doctrine, but, nevertheless, put my humble trust in Christ, there is a tendency in the doctrine to make you separate yourself from all the rest of men.” And I must confess too many hold the doctrines of grace in bitterness. And oh, Purity, at St. Paul’s cross complained of a set of ministers that were like bitterns—using the old English word—they were like a bittern, as he called it. They had no song, they could make but hootings. They had not a sweet note to sing.

Alas, there are such. Their style always seems to be—“If you hold what I preach you shall go to Heaven—if you do not, I warn you very solemnly as the part of a faithful man, it is all up with you.” It does not matter though there be but a shade of difference, though the unlearned cannot tell where there is any point of divergence, yet, according to these good Brethren, we are forever to be destroyed, because we cannot sit down at their feet and exclusively receive all the dogmas they teach.

But, my dear Friends, if any of you are laboring under the idea that the doctrine of election fosters such a spirit, allow me to disabuse you. On the

contrary, it has been the desire of the true Calvinist—not of the hyper-Calvinists, I cannot defend them—to feel that if he has received more light than another man, it is due to God's grace and not to his merits. Therefore charity is inculcated, while boasting is excluded. We give our hand to every man that loves the Lord Jesus Christ, be he what he may or who he may. The doctrine of election, like the great act of election itself is intended to divide not between Israel and Israel, but between Israel and the Egyptians—not between saint and saint, but between saints and the children of this world.

A man may be evidently of God's chosen family and yet though elected, may not believe in the doctrine of election. I hold that there are many savingly called who do not believe in effectual calling and that there are a great many who persevere to the end, who do not believe the doctrine of final perseverance. We do hope that the hearts of many are a great deal better than their heads. We set not their fallacies down to any willful opposition to the Truth as it is in Jesus, but simply to an error in their judgments, which we pray God to correct. We hope that if they think we are mistaken, too, they will reciprocate the same Christian courtesy. And when we meet around the Cross, we hope that we shall ever feel that we are one in Christ Jesus, even though as yet the ministering Spirit has not led all of us into all the lengths and breadths of the Truth.

Having thus cleared the way by cutting down a few of the trees that have been standing in my track, I proceed to notice the real effect of the doctrine of election upon the true Christian. I shall divide my subject thus—the influence it has upon our opinions, our emotions, our experiences, our devotions and our actions. I conceive that these five embrace the whole of the Christian life.

I. THE BELIEF IN THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION HAS A HIGHLY SALUTARY EFFECT UPON OUR OPINIONS.

Any observer who has looked through the history of the Church will not fail to have discovered that there has been a salting influence exercised by the doctrine of Grace upon the minds of those who have been rooted and grounded in its strong and fruitful soil. At the present time, Lutheranism on the continent is scarcely better than infidelity. I have been informed by those who are capable of judging that too many of the followers of Luther have become degenerate, have cast aside spirituality and have really returned to the beggarly elements of Romanism, even though they persist in their Protestant profession.

But, my Brethren, the like cannot be said of the followers of Calvin. The Dutch Reformed Church, albeit that there may be much in it over which we might mourn, has never departed from the Truth as it is in Jesus. Enter the place of worship where the Reformed occupy the pulpit and you need not be at any loss to discover the way to Heaven. There may be too much dryness in their prayers and too much dullness in their mode of preaching, but the Truths of God, the vital Truth is there and God still owns it in the salvation of sinners. They may not bear so high a fame or exert so wide an influence as their noble ancestors, but they have not turned aside to heresy, or perverted the Truths of the Gospel of Christ.

And with all the defections of the present age, albeit that Sectarians of all classes have seceded to the Church of Rome, I can scarcely remember a solitary instance where any man who has once embraced that “form of sound words” called the Doctrines of Grace, has ever forsaken them—at least to turn aside to the desperate heresy of that false Roman church. The truth is that the doctrine of election, with the sister truths linked with it, acts as a great anchor. It holds fast the soul and through the influence of the Holy Spirit, a man is brought to feel that he has something stable to rely upon, which he cannot and will not leave to be tossed about upon a sea, without chart or compass, at the mercy of every wind of doctrine.

There is something in the doctrine, which, as it were, digs up the earth and lets the soul strike its roots down deep—that girds us about as with a triple belt of steel and leaves no place in which arrow of infidelity or false doctrine can find a place to wound us. As a Church and as a people banded together in the fear of the Lord, I hope we shall prove to the world in our experience, that though other Churches may step aside gradually from their simplicity and steadfastness, we, forswearing everything which is not consistent with the naked simplicity and beauteousness of the unclothed Truth of God, will hold fast to the form of Truth which we have received and which has been taught us by the Spirit of God in His most Holy Book.

Nor is this all. Election, I take it—and I am here speaking of the whole set of Truths which group around this as their central sun—has not only a salting power, but exercises a flavoring and seasoning power over all our other doctrines. The purest Evangelism springs from this Truth of God. I will not say that the Arminian teaches that salvation is by works. This is so continually denied by the Arminian, that I will not charge a falsehood upon him, at which he professes to shudder. But at the same time I do say that the tendency of Arminianism is towards legality—it is nothing but legality which lays at the root of Arminianism. Any one doctrine of the Arminian which differs from the Orthodox—let it be carefully dissected—will prove that after all, his ground of difference is legality.

I received but the other day, a letter from an earnest Arminian anxious to correct my opinions. He says, “If God has chosen some men from before the foundation of the world, is it not more consistent with His justice to conceive that He chose those who through life have used their best endeavors to serve Him, rather than that He should choose the drunkard, or the harlot, to give them salvation?” Of course it is more consistent—Moses proves it—if salvation is by the Law or by works. But with the Gospel it is totally inconsistent, for Christ declares, “The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of Heaven before you”—that is, before you Pharisees—before the very men who in their own blind way had striven to will salvation by works.

My dear Friends, the kicking against the doctrine of election is a kicking against the Gospel. This doctrine is a first principle in the Divine plan of mercy and when rightly known, it prepares our minds to receive all the other doctrines. Or, on the contrary, misunderstand this and you are pretty sure to make mistakes about all the rest. Take for instance,

final perseverance. Some men say, "If we continue in faith and if we continue in holiness, we shall certainly be saved at last." Do you not see at once that this is *legality*—that this is hanging our salvation upon our *work*—that this is making our eternal life to depend on something *we* do?

No, the doctrine of justification itself, as preached by an Arminian, is nothing but the doctrine of salvation by works after all. For he always thinks faith is a work of the creature and a condition of his acceptance. It is as false to say that man is saved by faith as a *work*, as that he is saved by the deeds of the law. We are saved by faith as the *gift* of God and as the first token of His eternal favor to us. But it is not faith as our *work* that saves, otherwise we are saved by works and not by grace at all

If you need any argument upon this point, I refer you to our great Apostle Paul, who so constantly combats the idea that works and grace can ever be united together. He argues, "If it is of grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace were no more grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work."

You will, I think, perceive, if you look through the roll of mighty preachers, that all those who have been great in the simple preaching of the doctrine of salvation by faith, have been men who held the doctrine of election. You cannot find, that I am aware of, but one or two old Puritanical works written by any but those who held this Truth of God. You cannot discover a great Divine—look back through centuries—who has not held it. There have been some small ones in modern times and some earnest ones, too, but the ages past have been all utterly destitute of anything like a great preacher who has not held this doctrine.

I might make exception of Wesley and Fletcher, of Madely, among modern divines—but in the olden times there was nothing like any great and successful preacher, who has not held the doctrine of election. This doctrine has always had an evangelizing power on the souls of men so that those who have held it have preached more clearly than any others, the simple truth that we are saved by grace and not by works. And I would add, that I have also observed that the doctrine of election exercises another influence upon men's opinions—it renders them more clear and lucid.

Out of hundreds of young persons who continually come to join our Church, from all bodies of Christians, I have always discovered that those who have the best idea of Scripture—not simply looking at it from my own point of view, but allowing other people to be judges—are those who have held this doctrine. Without it there is a lack of thought and, generally speaking, they have no idea whatever of a system of divinity.

It is almost impossible to make a man a theologian unless you begin with this. You may, if you please, put a young Believer to college for years, but unless you show him this ground-plan of the Everlasting Covenant, he will make little progress, because his studies do not cohere—he does not see how one Truth of God fits with another—and how all the Truths of God must harmonize together. Once let him get a clear idea that salvation is by Grace—let him discover the difference between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace—let him clearly understand the

meaning of election, as the purpose of God and its bearing upon other doctrines which show the accomplishment of that purpose—and from that moment he is on the high road to become an instructive Believer.

He will always be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and with fear. The proof is palpable. Take any community throughout England—you will find poor men hedging and ditching that have a better knowledge of divinity than one half of those who come from our academies and colleges. The reason is simply and entirely that these men have first learned in their youth the system of which election is a center and have afterwards found their own experience exactly square with it. They have built upon that good foundation a temple of holy knowledge which has made them fathers in the Church of God.

Every other scheme is as nothing to build with—they are but wood, hay and stubble. Pile what you will upon them and they will fall. They have no system of architecture. They belong to no order of reason or revelation. A disjointed system makes its topstone bigger than its foundation. It makes one part of the covenant to disagree with another. It makes Christ's mystical body to be of no shape whatever. It gives Christ a bride whom he does not know and does not choose and it puts Him up in the world to be married to anyone who will have Him—but He is to have no choice Himself. It spoils every figure that is used with reference to Christ and His Church. The good old plan of the doctrine of grace is a system which once received is seldom given up. When rightly learned it molds the thoughts of the heart and it gives a sacred stamp to the characters of those who have once discovered its power.

II. In the second place, I come to notice THE INFLUENCES OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION UPON OUR EMOTIONS.

Here we speak not of matter of opinion, but of effect. The man who sighs for some Divine witness that He is chosen of God is, I should think, necessarily humble. But the man who knows by gracious evidences that this seal is set upon him, is one from whose eyes every selfish pretension is forever hid. If he could suppose that God had chosen him by the foresight and foreknowledge of some good qualities he possessed, he might be puffed up with unbearable conceit. But he knows God has chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, the things that are not, things too worthless for notice in this world. He must take his place, therefore, down there among the offscouring of earth, before he can be lifted up by grace to sit among the adopted heirs of glory.

There are some who profess to believe the doctrine of election who are as proud as Lucifer, but it is not the doctrine of election which makes them so. It is their own evil hearts that can turn everything good into evil. Such men, methinks, are rather fatalists in judgment, than believers in God the Father's love at heart. The doctrine itself, if it were rightly construed, would tend to humble such and keep them humble. Can you conceive a more contrite spirit than that expressed in these lines—

***“Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter where there's room?
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?”***

***‘Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced me in.
Else I’d still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin.’***

I ask whether such a hymn, which has in it the very gist of the doctrine, is not the meek utterance of a chastened soul? Can the haughty unsubdued heart entertain a sentiment like this?—

***“What was there in me to merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
It is even so, Father, we even must say,
For so it seemed good in Your sight.”***

The language of this hymn ought to be in harmony with our daily life. If we are elect and precious, we must bow humbly before the Throne and give God the glory of our salvation.

Take the doctrine again, with regard to another emotion of the soul, not amply of prostration—but the emotion of gratitude. There is a common bounty of God that appeals to common gratitude. Too often, alas, we pass by these ordinary mercies and slight the goodness that bestows them. “He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.” You may go abroad into the fields and see the liberal Providence of the Creator. And when you do so, it behooves you to lift up your hearts and adore. But tell me, is there not a sweeter sense of gratitude to the soul that experiences His particular favor? Has He brought you into the banqueting house? Has the banner of His love waved over your head? Does He place His left hand under your head and His right hand embrace you?

What gratitude will such choice attentions to His chosen ones stir up! This surely will put some stanzas into your Psalm of praise that never echoed through the gladsome mountains and fruitful valleys—a music too soft for the outer world and suited only to the inner chamber of affection. Boaz spoke with a goodly salutation to the reapers. He was bountiful to the maidens that were gathering the sheaves. But greater kindness he showed to Ruth. The gratitude she felt was more than theirs—“She fell on her face and bowed herself to the ground and said unto him, why have I found grace in yours eyes that you should take knowledge of me seeing I am a stranger?”

This electing favor, this choice comfort, this friendly speech, these words to the heart—these are the things that awaken devout gratitude in the Believer. Distinguishing and discriminating love wakes the echo of soul-stirring gratitude.

Then, again, it is sometimes said that this is a very gloomy doctrine. John Calvin is often described by those who hate the doctrines which he clarified and preached—for he is not the author of them any more than I am. He is described as being such a terrible ascetic, of a forbidding countenance, of preaching the destruction of infants and reveling in other hideous sentiments—which in his soul he loathed—and none of his writings ever inculcate. These are the inventions of falsehood.

John Calvin certainly was a sickly man and looked ill and well he might. If an Arminian had to go through half the difficulties and trials, he

would have been in his grave ten years before. He would have had no stamina in his soul to bear up against the bodily disease which poor John Calvin had to endure. Yet he was seen every morning going up to the divinity college and delivering his lectures in the halls before his students. And we have the result of his labors in about fifty-six large volumes of most extraordinary divinity, which those who rage against him had better read before they open their mouths again.

That man was preserved in the midst of troubles, perils and woes. He was still a joyous man in his heart, with gleams of sunshine in his soul—the dash of which I have seen in his Commentary and discovered in his Institutes continually. The tendency of the doctrine of election is not gloomy—it is joyous. I know there have been times with me when my spirit has been so low that nothing could elevate it but this precious Truth of God. I have even taken down old Elisha Coles' book on God's Sovereignty and read a chapter out of that as a tonic and I have felt all the happier and better. Next to the Bible, such books tend to cheer one's soul more than any books I know.

In my bright and happy days let me have other things trials, if you will, but I must come to solidities when I lie on my couch and especially when I come near to the grave's mouth and I am ready to look into eternity. I know not what you will discover to comfort *you*—there is nothing but the doctrine of grace that satisfies me—nothing but that will give me any comfort. This doctrine has filled our souls, sometimes, with joy that we knew scarcely how to contain. We have mounted as on the wings of eagles up to our God, who has made us to rejoice in Him by reason of His distinguishing favor.

What was it that made David dance before the ark? The doctrine of election, for what said he to the woman who mocked him for his dancing? He said, "God has chosen me before your father!" That truth moved him to mirth. And many an heir of Heaven has danced before God's ark when the Spirit has revealed to him that his name is enrolled among the chosen ones of Jehovah.

III. Having shown the effect of this doctrine upon our emotions, in humbling us and in stirring us up and carrying us away in holy joy and rapture, let us now ask WHAT EFFECT IT HAS ON OUR EXPERIENCE?

This is its effect upon the Christian's experience—it causes him to rejoice in the midst of deep despondence. And again, it sobers him in the midst of worldly joy. It seems to say to him—"Nevertheless rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." On this I will not dwell, but perhaps this thought, it is only fair to add—the doctrine of election has had in its raw misstated form a very painful influence upon the experience of many a young Believer.

There are many who have grace enough to convince them of sin, but not light enough to see the Savior, who for a long time are kept in darkness and the valley of the shadow of death through fear that they could not come to Christ rightly without they first *knew* their election. I had this matter brought before me this afternoon by one out of a numerous body of converts with whom I had the pleasure of conversing.

Some good woman said to me, "I had a period of something like hope after I was brought to seek the Lord. Then suddenly the doctrine of election crossed my path and I was for a long time in great distress about it."

I was not surprised at her anxiety, but I was gratified to find that she had obtained the true solution of her knotty point. It was not by shutting her eyes to the Truth of God as recorded in the Bible, but by having it commended to her conscience with the power of the Spirit that she found peace. And now the doctrine which once appeared to her dark bodings as an iron fence or a brazen wall to exclude sinners from coming to CHRIST is made clear to her faith as an open door to admit saints into the FATHER'S presence. Do you understand this, my Brethren? If I speak of doctrine in the Divine order, the purpose of God the Father went before the work of God the Son. That is to say, we were inscribed as saints in the Book of Life before we were accounted sinners and before the sentence of death passed upon us in Adam.

When, however, I come to speak of *experience*, the order is reversed. We are brought to knowledge of our sinfulness in the flesh before we learn our acceptance in the Beloved. If without seeming to forget the eternal Unity of the Three Persons in the Godhead I might venture to illustrate my meaning, I would put it to you in this way. God the Father first loved us and gave us to Christ—that is the doctrine of the Everlasting Covenant. But in showing you the doctrine of Redemption, Jesus Christ first finds us as lost sheep and then having sanctified us by His one offering, He presents us to the Father. Again, the decree of election is more ancient than the fact of our calling, as it stands in the councils of eternity. Not so in the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Here our calling is opened first and the knowledge of our election follows after. And why? I answer for this reason—because in the *call* of grace we are always viewed as *sinners* and invited and wooed as sinners—while in the *election* of grace we are always viewed as *saints*, as sanctified persons in the highest sense of the word.

Well, then, it is as lost sinners we are invited to Christ. But it is as elect and precious ones we are presented to the Father without blame in love. Election shouts as loudly as any other doctrine—"Whoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." And if election is called to account for this, it replies—"Those that will come, God *wills* shall come and those who hunger to come, God has *made* them hungry and *there* is the proof of their election." Those that seek must find Him, for election itself decrees that he that seeks *shall* find and to him that knocks it *shall* be opened.

IV. And now I must be very brief indeed upon the next point, which is THE EFFECT WHICH ELECTION HAS UPON OUR DEVOTIONS.

Strange to say, this effect is discovered in a Christian whatever his religious creed may be. My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you that have had yours eyes blinded for a long time with wrong-doing, come and let us hear you pray—"Our Father, who are in Heaven, we bless You for Your grace which sought us when we were estranged from You—for Your love which was forced upon us when we loved You not. We praise You, Lord,

that You did call us and did bring us into the fold.” There the man, you see, is acknowledging the free grace of God in his prayers.

He goes on, “O Lord, when we look on those round about us who are still dead in sin, we weep over them and we are compelled to say, ‘O Lord, it is of Your grace that we are what we are. You have made us to differ. Lord, take those others as brands from the burning and stretch out Your hand to save them.’” Why, my dear men, you are not leaving it to their free will at all, you are not leaving it to *them*, but asking God to choose them. You are talking Calvinism of the highest order. A man may preach Arminianism, but pray it, he cannot. It would be blasphemy in prayer if he did.

And so the doctrine of grace is the very inspiration of song. Kent’s hymns are, I think, about as destitute of any poetry as any hymns I ever read, yet they roll with the full tide of melody. They give a simple statement of good sound high doctrine and that is poetry. It is essential poetry, for poetry is, after all, the grandest form of truth. There will always be an effect produced in the loving child of God in his worship. By his beliefs. His instinctive thoughts, perhaps, deny belief in the doctrine of election—a belief which must exist in the faith of every child of God however strenuously he may deny it a place in his creed.

Then again, does this doctrine mar the Christian’s watchfulness? Surely not. Believing himself to be chosen of God he is always watching unto prayer that he may not stain his garments and bring dishonor upon the God who has honored him. Or will this prevent him from searching the Scriptures, do you fancy, when he knows that in every line of Scripture he has a special interest? The devotion of those men who have held this great Truth of God is beyond comparison. The ardor of the most enthusiastic Believer in good works has never rivaled the holy ardor of the man who has nothing to move him in his prayer instrumentally beyond the grateful recognition of his election by God in Christ Jesus.

V. Then to conclude—WHAT EFFECT DOES ELECTION HAVE ON OUR ACTIONS?

If this doctrine is fully received and known it breathes with all gratitude to God an earnest desire to show forth his praise. It leads to all kinds of holy activity and a hearty endeavor for the service of God. We are told continually by philosophic writers, that the idea of necessity—the idea that anything is fixed or decreed—tends at once to dampen activity. Never was there a grosser misrepresentation. Look abroad—everything that has been great in the spirit of the age has had a necessitarian at the bottom of it.

When Mahomet preached predestination, he took a necessitarian view. Did that doctrine of predestination make his followers idle? Did it not make them dash into the battle, declaring they must die when the appointed time came and while they lived they must fight and earnestly defend their faith? Or to take an instance from the history of our own country. Did the Calvinism of Oliver Cromwell make his Ironsides idle! Did they not keep their powder dry? They believed that they were chosen men

of God and were they not men of valor? Did this doctrine mar their energy?

So in every good enterprise our Churches are never behind. Are we backward in Missionary enterprise? Are we slow to send forth men of God to preach in foreign lands? Are we deficient in our efforts? Are we the people who would preach to a select few?—who would erect buildings for worship that the poor scarcely dare to enter? Are we the people who would keep our religious services for a privileged circle?

The fact is the most zealous, the most earnest, and the most successful of men have been those who have held this Truth of God. And therefore it cannot be true that this tends to dampen our energies or thwart our zeal. The best proof of this is especially in our lives. In the midst of God's holy congregation let us pledge ourselves tonight—that holding this Truth of God—it makes us neither unholy nor inactive. It is our anxious endeavor to be seen as men chosen to bear the vessels of the Lord. It is our hearty prayer that in season and out of season we may labor for the winning of men's souls—knowing that to God's Churches is committed the work of gathering in those sheep who are of His fold, but who must be brought in, that there may be one flock and one Shepherd.

I have gone a great way into controversy tonight. It is not often I do so. But every builder in these times must have his sword upon his thigh and I have shown you the Word tonight. May God lead everyone of us to this glorious Book, to lay hold upon the Truths of God taught us. And when we have seen a Truth of God let us not be backward to declare it. Be sure that those who honor Christ in His Word shall be honored by Christ in His glory. Oh that you here present, who have as yet never sought Christ and know nothing of Him, instead of being frightened by this doctrine, would now come to Christ and say, "Lord, take me as I am and save me, for You can do it and unto You shall be all the glory"!

It would be well if some of you could say what a convert now present said when driven almost to despair. He said in his prayer, "Jesus, if You will not have me, I will have You," so he laid hold upon Jesus. Presently he had a clear view of Christ and His grace and could personally discern that if he would have Christ, then certainly Christ had already got him. Such a desire and resolution as that would never otherwise have sprung up in his soul. May God add a blessing on these remarks, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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NOAH'S FLOOD

NO. 823

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 5, 1868,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“The flood came and took them all away.”
Matthew 24:39.***

WE commonly say that “there is no rule without an exception,” and certainly the rule that there is no rule without an exception has an exception to itself, for the rules of God are without exception. The rule that God will punish the ungodly is without an exception. The rule that all who are out of Christ shall perish is a rule without an exception. And the rule that all who are in Christ shall be saved is also without an exception.

I. I shall have to call your attention, tonight, to three rules that are without exception, and the first is the one before us—“THE FLOOD CAME AND TOOK THEM ALL AWAY.” The destruction caused by the deluge was universal. It did not merely sweep away some who were out of the ark, but it swept them *all* away. There were, doubtless, distinctions in those days, as there are now, for never has there been one dead level of equality among the sons of Adam since men multiplied on the face of the earth.

Many in that time were wealthy. They had accumulated stores of gold and silver. They were rich in merchandise, invention, or plunder. They were rich in the produce of the field. They owned broad acres of land. They had multiplied to themselves the conveniences and the luxuries of life, but the Flood came and swept them all away. Not one rich man could escape with all his hoards, neither could he purchase life if he had given all his wealth, for the Flood came and swept them all away. There were no rafts of costly cedar, or towers of expensive masonry which could stand above the devouring deluge—death laughed at miser and merchant, millionaire and monarch—all, all were swallowed up in the angry Flood.

There were some in those days who were extremely poor. They worked hard to gain enough to keep body and soul together, and they were scarcely able to do that. They had to suffer every day—

“The oppressor’s wrongs, the proud man’s contumely,”

but I do not find that as a reward for their sufferings they were spared. No, when the Flood came it swept them all away. The pauper out of the ark perished as well as the prince. The poor and miserable peasant died, washed away from the filth of his mud hovel, as monarchs were from their palaces. The beggar without shoes for his feet died—the Flood had no pity

on his rags. He who swept the street-crossing and stood waiting for a casual alms was taken away with the aristocrats who had pitied him.

The Flood came and swept them all away. The unrelenting billows meted out an equal fate to all who were outside the one ark of safety. And so will it be at the last. As the great man will not purchase an escape by all that which he has stored up, so neither will a man be delivered because of his poverty. There was a rich man in Hell, we read—poor men have been there, and are there now. As riches cannot save from Hell, so neither can poverty raise to Heaven. The Grace and Justice of God are independent of society, and rank, and state, and condition. What matters it to the Lord how much or how little of yellow metal you have about you? He measures no man by his purse, but by his *soul*—and he whose soul is unpardoned, is lost, be he rolling in plenty or pining in need. You must be born-again. You must believe in Jesus. You must, in one word, get into the Ark, or when the flood comes it will sweep you all away, be you rich as Dives, or poor as Lazarus.

There were, in those days, learned men in the world—men who searched the stars at night. There were men who had deciphered the constellations, who had pried into the secrets of matter. There were men who had ransacked science, and, so far as men had gone (and we do not know but what they went a very long way), had pierced into the innermost recesses of knowledge. But when the Flood came it swept them all away. There goes the philosopher—you can hear his dying gurgle. There, floating on the stream, is the head of an antediluvian Solomon. The Flood has swept away masters of arts, doctors of law, and rabbis in divinity. No man was able to escape the deluge by all that he had ever learned. Knowledge is no life-buoy. Logic is no swimming-belt. Rhetoric no life-boat. Down, down they go, and all their science with them, beneath the shoreless waves.

And as for the illiterate who were, no doubt, numerous then as now—who could only count as many as the number of their fingers, who knew none of the niceties of learning or of eloquence—when the Flood came it swept them all away. So that knowledge, except it be of one particular kind, namely, the heart-knowledge of Christ Jesus, will not deliver us from final destruction. And, on the other hand, although ignorance, if it is not willful, is some palliation for sin, yet it is never such an excuse as to suffer sin to go unpunished. There is a Hell for those who knew their Master's will and did it not—and there is also a Hell for those who would not know, but who lived and died willfully ignorant of the things of God.

The Flood came and swept them all away. You men who are orthodox in doctrine. You who can talk about theology and claim to be masters in Israel—if you do not belong to Christ, the Flood shall sweep you all away.

And you who say, "What does it matter? Creeds, what are they but handles of old rubbish? We do not study our Bibles, and do not want to know the doctrines taught therein." I tell you, Sirs, except you know Christ and are found in Him, your ignorance shall be no sufficient excuse for you—when the flood of fire shall come it shall sweep you all away.

I doubt not that among those who perished in Noah's Flood, there were many who were very zealous in the cause of religion—perhaps some who had officiated as priests in the midst of their families—and possibly even at God's altar. They were not a godless race in those days, so far as the form and profession went. They had a religion—even those sons of Cain had a religion. And indeed, generally when men are worst at heart, they prate most about outward religion. We may suppose it was so in Noah's day. But when the Flood came, these men being out of the ark, whether priests or not, did not escape—it swept them all away. And there were others, no doubt, who were profane, who lived in disregard of God, or who blustered out infidel expressions concerning Him. But the Flood made no distinction between the hypocritical priest and the direct blasphemer. When it came it swept them all away.

O you sons of Levi, you who wear the robes of priesthood and profess to be sent of God to teach others! With all your boasted magical powers, if you do not believe in Jesus as poor guilty sinners, and look up to the Cross alone for your salvation, when the flood of fire comes it will sweep you all away! You will drown, Sir Priest, despite your baptismal regeneration and your sacramental efficacy! You will sink with a lying absolution on your lips down to the nethermost Hell!

And, O you who rail against religion and boast that you are no hypocrites, you doubtless think yourselves honest, but do not imagine that your impudent "honesty," as you choose to call it, will exonerate you at the last tremendous day, for in that day of wrath the fiery deluge shall sweep you, also, all away! Short work will God make with doubters, then. They shall behold Him and wonder, and perish, for a short and sharp work will He make in the earth. Quick work will He make with the hypocrites in that day—for though they call, He will not answer them—and when they begin to cry to Him, He will mock at their calamity and laugh when their fear comes. The fiery flood shall sweep all at last—whether religious or profane—away, for they have not fled to the ark of Christ and so have rejected the one only shelter.

Let me solemnly remind you in this congregation tonight, that in that day of destruction some of the oldest men that have lived perished—older men than you, though your head is gray or bald. Older women than you, though you have nourished and brought up children and dandled your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren upon your knees—they went

down the stream with others, perishing as though they had never seen the light. And the young died, too. That one dreadful destruction took away the little child in his beauty and the young man in his strength, and the maiden in her bloom. The Flood took them all away!

And so with all of us who have attained to adult years, and have arrived at knowledge so as to judge between good and evil—if we are not found in Christ, the flood of fire shall take us all away. We know not at how young an age we may be responsible. Let the child never presume upon its youth. We have heard of fools of 20 pleading “infancy” in our courts of law, and of all pieces of roguery sanctioned by the law, I have thought that the plea of “infancy” from young men of 19 and 20 years of age, who have stolen jewelry—and I know not what, to spend upon their lusts—of all pieces of villainy, I say, that seems to me to be the most intolerable!

But there shall be no such plea of infancy for you boys and girls, and young people, at the Last Great Day. If you know right from wrong, and if you can understand the Gospel of Jesus Christ, at your peril do you reject it! At your peril do you neglect it! No, neither shall the young nor the old escape except by coming to Christ. “You must be born-again,” is of universal application to you who are young, and to you who are gray-headed. No youth can excuse, no experience can exempt, but alike will the flood of Divine wrath overwhelm every human soul unless we find refuge in the ark of the Covenant of Grace, even the work and Person of Jesus, the bleeding Lamb of God.

This universality I shall have to illustrate in yet another way. I can suppose that when Noah built the ark—a most absurd thing to do upon all the principles of common reason apart from his faith in God—there were a great many persons who heard of this and wondered. It was a very huge ship—the greatest that had ever been built—a conception in navigation which altogether staggered the minds of men in his day. When Noah built this vessel—and built it on the dry land far removed from any river or sea—it must have been a very great wonder and have caused abundance of talk through all the neighboring nations.

I should not wonder but what the tidings spread far and wide, and there were some who, as soon as they heard of it, said, “A madman! I wonder his friends do not confine him. What a lunatic he must be!” Having made that remark, they cracked a joke or two about it and fell into the habit of sneering at a thing so very absurd that it passed into a proverb—and when a man did a silly thing, they said—“Why, he is as foolish as old Noah!” Ribald jests were all that Noah could get from them. They despised, ridiculed and contemned him utterly. But the Flood came and took them all away, and there was an end to their jests, their sarcasms, their jeers. The Flood silenced them most effectively.

So will it be with any of you who have ridiculed the Gospel of Christ. You will find in the great and terrible day of the Lord that your laughter shall have no power over death. You will find it will win you no reprieve from the agonies of Hell. There will be no room for infidelity in that tremendous day! God will be all too real to you when He tears you in pieces and there is none to deliver you. And the judgment will be all too real when the thunder claps shall wake the dead and the books shall be opened and read by the blaze of lightning—and the sentence shall be pronounced, “Depart, you cursed!” Beware, you despisers, and wonder—and perish! Beware, now, while yet there is a day of Divine Grace to light you to Heaven! For remember it will not last forever. May eternal love save any of us from perishing in devouring fire as Noah’s despisers did in the devouring Flood.

There were other people, no doubt, who, when they heard about Noah, criticized his building. I can imagine some of the shipbuilders of the time looking on and telling him that the keel was not arranged quite right. And that ingenious plan of pitching the great ship within and without would be sure to be very closely criticized, for it seems to have been a great novelty, not an invention of man, but a revelation from God. Then there was the making of only one window—why, we who read about it now do not know what it means, and all the plans that have ever been drawn of Noah’s ark do not seem to fit the description given of it.

Why, said the wise shipwright, “that thing will never float on the top of the flood, if it should chance to come. And besides, it has been so long in building that it will be sure to get the dry rot.” What wise things were said about it! If they had been able to print them in those days, how many critical treatises would have been published against “that old wooden box of Noah’s,” as they very likely would have called it! All these critics could have built it a great deal better, I have no doubt, but they did not build at all. And though they found fault, and could do it so much better than Noah did, yet, somehow or other, they were drowned and he was saved.

So in this world, now, we constantly find men who eat up the sins of God’s people as they eat bread. “Oh yes,” they can say, “there is something in religion, no doubt—but then look at your imperfections and your faults!” And, Brothers and Sisters, they need not look far to find them. They can soon find 10,000 points in which we might be a little improved, and sometimes I have no doubt that our critics are in some respects better than we are. Many a worldly man has a better temper than a genuine Christian.

I am sorry to say it, but I have known unconverted people much more generous than some who are converted. They do excel in some qualities, but still, still, still, there is the solemn truth that the sharpest and most

philosophical critic of other people, if he is out of Christ, will be swept away, while the men whom he criticized and condemned, if they are found humbly believing in Jesus, shall be saved through faith in Him. It all hinges on this one matter, inside or outside the ark—inside the ark a thousand imperfections, but all saved—outside the ark a thousand excellencies, but all drowned without a single exception!

Now there may have been, on the other hand, among those who came to see father Noah and his big ship, some who took his side. I never knew a man so big a fool but what some sided with him. So, perhaps, there were some who said, "Well, after all, do not be too hard upon him, he is a respectable Patriarch. He is a man who follows his convictions—his convictions are very absurd, no doubt—but still it is a fine thing in these days to see a man really sincere. We do not like to see the man so infatuated, but though we cannot help wishing that he were a *sane* man, yet, still, it is almost better to see a man insane and carry out his convictions, than to see him trifling as so many are childishly trifling with their principles."

Many a gentleman who looked at the ark, after he said that, went home with a wonderful ease of conscience, and thought, "Now I have said a very good thing. I have put a spoke in the wheel of some of those cavilers. I have stood up for the good old man, for a *very* good old man, I have no doubt he is, though very much deceived." Ah, but when the Flood came it swept all these people away as well! They were very kind in their remarks and very patronizing in their air, but the Flood swept them all away.

And do you not know such people now? Why, there are some of them here tonight! Listen to their gentlemanly talk! How generously they speak! "Well, yes, I like to see these Christian people so earnest. I dare say they do a great deal of good. You know, I like to hear a preacher speaking out so plainly. I like to see these people very zealous—in these days it is very refreshing to see people zealous about *anything*, for there is so much latitudinarianism, and policy, and so on, that we like to find people decided, even though we should think them a little too dogmatic and bigoted."

O Sirs, we thank you for your good opinion of us—but unless you repent you shall likewise perish! Your excellent remarks will not save you and your very lenient, and gentlemanly and broad-Church views of religion will not assist you! You may hold all those views which are so tolerant and so excellent and we are *glad* you hold them, and yet you may have no share in Christ's salvation! You are a sensible man for holding such charitable views, but, sensible as you are, unless you come to Christ you will have to perish even as the most bigoted persecutors!

Besides these, there were some other people who liked Noah better, still. They not only excused and defended him, but they sometimes grew very warm about it. They said, "Father Noah is right. We see his life, we

mark his manners and conversation—and he is a better man than they are who ridicule and despise him. We are convinced by his preaching that his testimony is true, and we will help him and stand up for him. We do not like to hear the jeers and uncivil remarks that are made about him—they cut us to the quick.”

Then I suppose you are going into the ark, are you not? “Well, we do not know ourselves about *that*. Perhaps we may, by-and-by. We are thinking of it. We have taken the matter into very serious consideration, and we think it to be a very proper thing to do, a very right thing to do—but at the same time it is hardly convenient right now. We will wait a little longer.” “Why,” says one, “I am not married yet.” And another says, “There is a banquet to be held on such-and-such a day. I must go to that. You know men must eat and drink, and therefore I am not going into the ark just yet.”

Well, now, these good-meaning, procrastinating people who were postponing and putting off, what became of them? Did one of them escape? Alas, no—when the Flood came it took them all away. What, not save *one* of them, those who would be right if they had a little longer time? Not spare those who have good resolutions in their throats—who are almost persuaded to be Christians? No, not one of them! They all went down in the common wreck—and perished in the universal destruction—for good resolutions save no man unless they are put into practice.

Almost persuaded to be a Christian is like the man who was almost pardoned, but he was hanged anyway. Almost persuaded to be a Christian is like the man who was almost rescued, but he was burnt up in the house. As old Henry Smith says, “A door that is almost shut is open. A man that is almost honest is a thief. A man that is almost saved is damned.” O take heed of that, you halts between two opinions! You awakened but not decided! You aroused but not converted! Noah's friends perished—his very dearest friends who were not in the ark! When the flood came it swept them all away. And so must you, our sons and daughters, if you give not your hearts to the Lord.

So, to close this recapitulation, you have often been told that the very workmen who worked for Noah, and who were, no doubt, paid their wages, or they would not have worked, perished, also. They helped to saw the wood, to lay the keel, to drive the bolts, to put in the oakum, to use the pitch, to strengthen the timbers—but after all that they had done not one of them escaped. And so the Chapel-keeper, the pew-opener, the elder, the deacon, the minister, the bishop, the archbishop—all those who have had a function in the Church, who have had something to do with the good staunch vessel of Christ's Gospel—unless they, themselves, are

in Christ by a living faith, they must perish as much as the despisers and the outcasts.

Here, then, is the solemn Truth of God—all out of Christ lost—all in Christ saved! All unbelievers perishing—all Believers preserved in Him. Here is a rule without an exception. Very briefly we shall now have to speak upon a second subject.

II. It appears that when the flood came it found them all eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, and according to the text, THIS, ALSO, WAS A RULE WITHOUT EXCEPTION. Is it not a very solemn thing that it is so now, that without any exception the mass of mankind are still neglectful of their souls, still busy about their fleeting interests, and negligent of eternal realities? There are no exceptions to this rule among *natural* men. Gracious men care for these things, but all natural men are like these men in the days of Noah.

While I was musing, this afternoon, I felt surprised at it. I said to myself, What? Not one man in Noah's day that was anxious to be saved in the ark—not one? Why, the population of the globe is supposed, by some, to have been greater at that time than it is now! Owing to the extreme length of years to which men then lived, the deaths were fewer, and the population increased more rapidly—and yet out of them all was there not *one* that sought after God naturally—not one?

It was an extraordinary thing that there was not one who would believe in the reiterated prophecies of Noah and find shelter in the ark. But is it not more strange still, only it is strangely true, that out of all the unregenerate, until they are quickened by Divine Grace, there is not one who cares to flee to Christ? "You will not come unto Me that you might have life," is a rule of universal application. Men will not come to Christ, but had rather perish in their sins than come and put their trust in Him.

I suppose the reason lies in three things. First, there is men's universal indifference about their souls—a wanton carelessness about their noblest part, their truest selves. But that is a strange thing! A man is always earnest about his life—"Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." If a man thinks he is likely to perish by burning, what cries he will raise! What exertions he will make to get out of the room! If he is near to drowning, how he kicks and struggles! If he is sick, how quickly he sends for the doctor, and how anxious he is to get the best advice within his reach so that his life may be preserved!

And yet the preservation of his highest life seems to be to him a matter of no consequence at all! Every thinking man must feel that his true self is his spirit, his soul—that his body is not he, himself, but simply a sort of garment that he, himself, wears—a house in which he, himself, lives. And yet men spend their time from morning till night in finding clothes and

food for this outside house! But the tenant that dwells within is, poor creature, quite forgotten! That is odd, is it not? Does it not seem to prove that man is degraded into something less than a reasonable creature by his sin so that he acts like a beast?

When a man has to live but a little time in this world, he wishes to be happy in it. If a man only stops for an hour in an inn, what a noise he makes if the chimney smokes, if the tablecloth is not clean, if chops are not done to a turn—and while he knows that his better self must live forever in another world—he does not concern himself about *that* world, or whether he shall be happy in it or not! Strange! “ ‘Tis strange, ‘tis passing strange, ‘tis wonderful.” It is a miracle of *madness* that men should be so indifferent to the interest of their souls, their immortal souls, that they should go to sleep not knowing whether they will wake up with the never-dying worm, or arise to enjoy, with Jesus, the surpassing splendors of eternity! Yet this indifference is universal! O Brothers and Sisters, you and I have need to pray that God would stir this dead sea! That He would speak with His quickening voice and make men alive to these spiritual things, or else in the graves of their indifference they will rot forever!

The second reason for this indifference lay, no doubt, in universal *unbelief*. Is it not a strange thing that they did not, one of them, believe Noah? Noah was an honest man. Some of them had known him for many years, yes, for hundreds of years they had known him, for they lived so long then! He spoke like an honest man. He preached with vehemence and power, but not one believed him—not one soul believed him so as to escape from the wrath to come—not one! Now that is odd, for as I have said before, no lie that was ever told was so incredible but what *somebody* or other was found to believe it—much more should some be found to receive the *truth*.

Yet here was a truth that looked so probable, on account of the sin of man, and yet nobody was found to believe it—they universally rejected it! Even so it is with the Gospel of Christ. We come and tell our fellow men that the Son of God was made flesh to redeem men. That whoever trusts in Him shall be saved. But they will not believe it, though we have proved it, hundreds of us, thousands of us—and we tell them as solemnly and as earnestly as we can that we have tasted and handled of these things. We tell them that they are not cunningly devised fables, but are in very truth, most precious and proven realities!

And yet, without the Grace of God, there is not a single one, high or low, rich or poor—that will so believe as to try for himself! They shake their heads and go on their way and universally live and die in unbelief—unless Sovereign Grace steps in. A strange thing, a marvelous thing! “Jesus marveled because of their unbelief,” and well may we marvel because

of the universality of this sin. Then a third cause for this general indifference was that they were always and altogether given to worldliness. The text seems to hint that they did not think of preparing for the coming flood because they were so busy in the base enjoyment of mere *eating*.

Some of them were gluttons, and others who did not eat so much, yet ate right well when they did eat, and daintily. They were worshipping that god that Paul speaks of—the belly. Alas, good feeding ruins many, and men dig their way to Hell with their teeth. Like brutes they care only to be filled. Others were drunks. Ah, how merry were they in their cups! How they judged a glass of wine, and told its age to a year! They were bent upon swallowing hogsheads of dainty liquor. They were drowned, like Duke Clarence, in their vats of wine. No doubt they had, in their way, their Lord Mayors' feasts and their Aldermen and Companies' dinners, and I know not what besides!

And they were all so occupied with these things—these crying necessities of the life of swine—that they did not and could not think of anything superior to that. They were married and given in marriage. This was a serious business, and must be attended to—how could they forsake their wedding feasts and their newly-married brides? These things engrossed all their thoughts. And yet, Friends, and yet, what was the use of eating and drinking when they were to be drowned the next day? And what was the use of being married, when they were to be drowned in the morning? If they had looked at these things in the light of *faith*, they would have despised them! But they only used the bleary eyes of sense, and thus they set great store upon these present things of mirth.

Yes, and so it is with the wicked man nowadays. He gets rich, but what is the use of being wealthy if you must be damned? Fool that he is, if he buys a gold coffin, how would that help him? Suppose he is laid out with a bag of gold in each hand, and a pile of it between his legs—how will that help him? Others seek to get learning, but what is the good of learning if you sink to perdition with it? Take up the learned man's skull and what is the difference between that and the skull of the poorest pauper that scarcely knew his letters? Brown impalpable powder—they both crumble down into the same elements. To die in a respectable position, what is the use of it? What are a few more plumes on the hearse, or a longer line of mourning coaches? Will these ease the miseries of Hell?

Ah, Friends, you have to die! Why not make ready for the inevitable? Oh, if men were wise, they would see that all earth's joys are just like the bubbles which our children blow with soap—they glitter and they shine, and then they are gone—and there is not even a wreck left behind. O that they were wise to enter the Ark, to look to Christ so that when the floods rise they might be found safe in Him! Here, then, comes this general rule,

never to be too much lamented, and which ought to make every Christian's heart break with heaviness—that universally and everywhere, in the very presence of the coming judgment and between the very jaws of death and Hell, the whole human race remains indifferent, unbelieving, worldly, and still will so remain until the flood of fire comes and sweeps them all away! Thus will they all sport until they perish, unless eternal love prevents it.

III. The last consideration shall be but very briefly handled, but it is a very comforting one, namely, that ALL WHO WERE IN THE ARK WERE SAFE. Nobody fell out of that Divinely-appointed refuge. Nobody was dragged out. Nobody died in it. Nobody was left to perish in it. All who went in came out unharmed. They were all preserved in it. They were all safely brought through the dread catastrophe. The ark preserved them all, and so will Jesus Christ preserve all in Him. Whoever may come to Him shall be secure. None of them shall perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand.

Think what strange creatures they were that were preserved! Why, there went into that ark unclean animals two and two. May God bring some of you who have been like unclean animals unto Christ! Great swine of sin, you have wandered farthest in iniquity and defiled yourselves—yet when the swine were in the ark they were safe—and so shall you be. You ravens, you black ravens of sin, if you fly to Christ He will not cast you out, but you shall be secure! If electing love shall pick you out, and effectual Grace shall draw you to the door of that Ark, it shall be shut upon you and you shall be saved!

Within that ark there was the timid hare, but its timidity did not destroy it. There was the weak coney, but despite its weakness, in the ark it was all safe. There were to be found such slow-moving creatures as the snail. Some darkness-loving creatures like the bat—but they were all safe. The mouse was as safe as the ox, and the snail was as safe as the greyhound. The squirrel was as secure as the elephant, and the timid hare was as safe as the courageous lion—not safe because of what they were, but safe because of where they were, namely, in the Ark.

Oh, what a medley the Lord's people are! What strange beings! Some few of them fathers, but not many. The great mass of them little children, who, though they should have grown, are still very carnal, and only babes in Christ instead of full grown men. Yet all safe! All alike in security, however much they may differ—varying temperament, but unvarying security—differing in experience, but the same in oneness to Christ, and all in Him. “Why, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And so we have, whether we are great or small—

“To us the Covenant stands secure,

***Tho' earth's old columns bow.
The strong, the feeble, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now."***

When the storm beat upon the ark it might have destroyed the lion quite as soon as the mouse, but it destroyed neither, because the sides of the ark could bear the tempest. And when the floods came the vessel mounted higher, and higher and nearer towards Heaven, the deeper the waters were.

So with us—let storms and furious tempests come and our sins assail us, and our sorrows, too—yet we who are weakest are quite as secure as the strongest because we are in Christ—and Christ shall outlive the storm and bear us upwards, nearer and nearer to the Heaven of God. May God grant us Divine Grace to be found of Him in peace in the day of the Lord's appearing—when the elements shall melt and the skies are rolled up like a scroll. As I have already said, it all hangs upon that question, "Do you believe in Christ?" If your heart trusts Christ you are safe, come what may. But if you rest not in Him, you are lost, come what will. God save you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

***"Come to the Ark, come to the Ark;
To Jesus come today!
The pestilence walks forth by night,
The arrow flies by day.
Come to the Ark: the waters rise,
The seas their billows rear
While darkness gathers o'er the skies,
Behold a refuge near.
Come to the Ark, all, all that weep
Beneath the sense of sin!
Without, deep calls unto deep
But all is peace within.
Come to the Ark, before yet the flood
Your lingering steps oppose!
Come, for the door which open stood
Is now about to close."***

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*“And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage:
and the door was shut.”
Matthew 25:10.*

DURING the waiting period, the wise and foolish virgins seemed much alike, even as at this day one can hardly discern the false professor from the true. Everything turned upon the coming of the bridegroom. To the 10 virgins, that was the chief event of the night. If it had not been for his coming, they would not have gone forth with their lamps. It was because they knew he would surely come that they prepared themselves to join in the marriage procession and attend him with their songs to the place of his abode. Yet, for a while, he did not come. The sun had gone down and darkness had stolen over the whole landscape, but the bridegroom did not come. The dews of night were falling fast, yet still he did not come. The hours were long and slowly passed away, one after the other, yet he did not come. It was waxing toward the middle of the night—a few stars were visible, but there was no lingering light of the day remaining. It was the time of darkness and the eyes of the waiting virgins grew heavy with watching. Why was the bridegroom so long in coming? They had been told to look for him. They had fully expected him, yet he had not come. There were whispers that it was all a delusion and that he would *never* come. And there was that guilty sense of slumber which stole over them. In the case of some of the 10, their spirit was willing, but their flesh was weak. But in the case of the others, both flesh and spirit were perverse, so that their sleep became exceedingly deep, as when a man sleeps even unto death.

But the bridegroom did come, as, Brothers and Sisters, in our case the Heavenly Bridegroom will come! However long we may have waited for Him, let us rest assured that He will come. As surely as He came once, so, “unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” It seems to me that it needs less faith to believe in the Second Advent of Christ than in His First Advent. He has been here before, so He knows the way to come again. He has been here before and worked a wondrous work—surely He will come back to receive the reward of His service. The Good Shepherd came to earth once to lay down His life for the sheep—He will surely come again as the Chief Shepherd to recompense the under-shepherds who have faithfully kept

the night watches for Him. Jesus will come again, as surely as the bridegroom came at the midnight hour!

Yes, the bridegroom did come. Despite the waiting time, he did come, and then came the dreadful separation between those who had been waiting for his appearing. Scarcely by any act of his, the foolish and the wise were parted, the one from the other. They were awakened by the sound of his approach—the herald that preceded him cried, “Behold, the bridegroom comes,” and the sleepers were all aroused. Then the true adherents of the bridegroom, the wise virgins, penitent for their guilty sleep, poured the oil into their lamps, which were burning low, and soon they were blazing up clear and bright. As the bridegroom’s procession came near, “they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.” But the foolish virgins—those who had despised the secret stores of oil—those who had never gone to the Divine Spirit for His matchless Grace—were separated from their wiser companions. Not, indeed, by any special act of the bridegroom, but as the natural result of their own unprepared condition. They had to go away to buy oil from those who sold it. And when they came back, it was too late for them to go in to the marriage. They came up to the gate of the palace and found the door fast closed against them—shut forever—and learned that they must abide in the outer darkness, to weep and lament that they were not found worthy to behold the bridegroom’s face, or to enter into his joy.

I am going to talk to you, dear Friends, as simply as I can, but with deep soul-earnestness, about the two sets of persons mentioned in the text. First, I will speak of *the ready and their entrance*—“*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.*” And, secondly, I will say something about *the unready and their exclusion*—“*And the door was shut.*”

I. First, then, let us think of THE READY AND THEIR ENTRANCE—“*They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.*”

Let us meditate a little, first, about the entrance, itself, and then talk together about the persons who enjoyed it.

Concerning their entrance, note that it was *immediate upon the coming of the bridegroom*. As soon as he appeared there seems to have been no interval, but, at once, “*they that were ready went in with him to the marriage.*” Beloved Friends, the manifestation of Christ shall be the glorification of His people! We shall need nothing else but to behold His face and then our bliss shall be perfect and complete. So each Believer says with Job, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” Never entertain the slightest fear of any such purgatorial state as some have begun to dream of again! That lie, which the Reformers rightly called, “purgatory pick-purse,” which filled the pope’s treasury and was a curse to myriads of immortal souls, was exposed in all its naked ugliness by the Light which God gave to Luther and Calvin. Yet now, amid the abounding skepticism of these evil days, there is coming back this foul night-bird, or rather, this dragon of the Dark Ages—and sometimes even the children of God feel the influence of its pestilential presence.

Dear Christian friends, be not afraid of any purgatory! If you die, you shall be absent from the body and present with the Lord at once, for this shall be your blessed portion in Christ! If you are alive and remain till Jesus comes again, your body shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and you shall rise to meet your Lord in the air and so shall be forever with Him. But if you have fallen asleep in Jesus, those who are alive at His coming shall have no preference over you, but you shall be raised incorruptible—and in the moment of that rising, when your spirit, by the Divine fiat, shall have been reunited with your perfectly purified and glorified body—you shall go in with Him to the marriage and be forever with Him and like He is! Do not trouble yourself, therefore, about what is to happen, or what is not to happen. Be confident of this—if you sleep, you shall sleep in Jesus—and when you wake up, you shall wake up in His likeness and you shall never be parted from Him whose company, even now, is your highest source of joy, and whose society shall be your delight forever and ever!

Notice, next, that the entrance of the wise virgins into the marriage feast was not only immediate, it was also *intimate*. “They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage.” I like that expression, “with him.” I would go nowhere without Him and, if I may go anywhere with Him, wherever He shall lead me, it shall be a happy day to me! And so it shall be to all who love His appearing. You know, Beloved, that our Lord Jesus left it in His will that we are to be with Him in His Glory. Listen to this clause out of His last will and testament—“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” O Beloved, you who know what it is to be one with Jesus, crucified with Him, risen with Him, made to sit together with Him in the heavenlies, you, I am sure, will find something more heavenly about Heaven than otherwise had been there when that sweet sentence is true of you, “They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage.” Our Lord Jesus, Himself, shall escort us to our place in Glory! He shall conduct us to the sources of highest blessedness, for as the elder said to John in the Revelation, “*The Lamb* which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.”

This, it seems to me, is the very center of the bliss of Heaven. Heaven is like the Eshcol cluster of grapes, but the essence, the juice, the sweetness of the cluster, consists in this fact—that we shall be with Jesus—“forever with the Lord.” Ah, me! My Brothers and Sisters, how else could we ever hope to go in to the marriage if we did not go in with Him—hidden behind Him, covered with His righteousness, washed in His blood? John saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the Throne of God, and before the Lamb—and it was of them that the elder also said, “These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His Temple: and He that sits on the Throne shall dwell among them.”

No one will object to the entrance into Glory of those who go in with Him! Even the pure and holy God will not raise any question as to our entrance if we enter with His Son! All the demands of Divine Justice will be fully met by the fact that we go in with Him. Covered with His righteousness, adorned with His beauties, inseparably united to His Person, the beloved of His heart, we shall go in with Him to the marriage and none will think of needing to have us excluded.

I am tempted to linger over such a delightful theme as this, but I must not, and I need not, for you can meditate upon it to your heart's content when you are at home. To my mind there is indescribable sweetness in these words—“They that were ready went in *with him* to the marriage.”

Then, next, notice how *exceedingly joyous* was the entrance. “They that were ready went in with him *to the marriage*.” It was not their portion to stand outside the door, to listen to the music and enjoy the light that might come streaming through when it was opened for a few seconds—they “went in with him to the marriage.” It was not the intention of our Lord to tell us in this parable in what capacity the saints shall enter Heaven. The parable is meant to teach certain lessons and it explains them very clearly. If it tried to teach us everything, we might miss the most important lesson of all. But from other passages of Scripture we know that we shall go in with Christ to the marriage, not as mere spectators of His joy, as friends of the Bridegroom who rejoice exceedingly in His gladness, but we shall go in with Him to share His bliss. Be it always remembered that sinners though we are, and utterly unworthy of so distinguished an honor, the Lord Jesus says to every believing soul, “I have espoused you unto Myself, to be Mine forever and ever.” Oh, matchless words! You, Believer, shall go in with Him to that heavenly marriage feast, as part of that wondrous bride, the Lamb's wife, who is then to find her bliss forever consummated with her glorious Husband!

What a mercy it is to have Grace enough to be able to believe this, for it needs much faith to believe that such a distinction shall ever be the lot of those who were once heirs of wrath even as others and who, by their sins have deserved to be cast into the deepest Hell! Yet, Beloved, there are no heights in Heaven which we shall not climb. There are no joys before the Throne of God of which we shall not be partakers! We shall not be present at that wedding feast merely as Christ's servants, or as on-lookers, or as favored guests—we shall be there to partake to the fullest of all the bliss and Glory, ourselves—all the while the object of that innermost love, that most special, most dear and near and intimate communion with our Beloved! We shall forever be one with Christ by conjugal bands. No, more than that, for even conjugal bands are only used as a humble metaphor of the eternal union between our souls and Christ. “This,” said the Apostle Paul, when referring to marriage, “is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” “*They* that were ready went in with him to the marriage,” right up to the banqueting table, to partake of all the rare dainties gathered from all the ages, brought from all the dominions of the great King, to make high festival for that greatest of all days for which all other days were made, the Day of Judgment, itself, included!

Even on earth we always properly associate the highest degree of joy with a marriage when it is what it ought to be. If ever there is any joy on earth that belongs naturally to us as beings of flesh and blood, it is upon our marriage day. The wedding of a loving couple is looked forward to with great expectations and often looked back upon with fond memories. However much of blight and withering blast may, in later life, fall upon that relationship which is commenced upon the marriage day, yet the day, itself, is always the figure and emblem of joy. See, then, what Heaven is to be to the people of God—it is a marriage, a perpetual festival, a banishment of everything that is dolorous, a gathering together of all that is joyous. A marriage on earth—well, we know what that is, but a marriage in *Heaven*—who can describe that? The marriage of men and women—we are familiar enough with that, but this union of which I am trying to speak is the marriage of the Christ of God with His redeemed people! Earthly marriage is contracted between two sinners, but this heavenly wedding is the marriage of One who is all pure and holy, to another whom He has purified from every stain, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing—and so made ready for this everlasting union!

“*They* that were ready went in with him to the marriage.” These words sound to my ears and heart like the pealing of wedding bells. Listen! These people had been in the battle, fighting as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, but, by-and-by, they “went in with Him to the marriage.” They had been in their Lord’s vineyard, toiling amid the burden and heat of the day—the sun had looked upon them and they were bronzed and browned with the burning heat. But in due time they “went in with him to the marriage.” They had sometimes seen their Lord for a season and then they had missed Him for a while, but they “went in with Him to the marriage.” They had even wandered from Him, sometimes, and darkness had surrounded them. Yes, and they had wickedly fallen asleep when they ought to have watched—but they “went in with Him to the marriage.” Oh, the *blessedness* of being where all evil is forever ended and all joy is begun, never to end—all sin and imperfection blotted out by *Christ’s* precious blood—and all holiness and perfection put upon us forever and ever! All this and more I read in the words, “*They* that were ready went in with him to the marriage.”

Then comes this little sentence which is so terrible to the ungodly, but, oh, so sweet to the gracious—“And the door was shut.” These words show that the entrance of the righteous into Heaven is *eternal*. The door was shut for two purposes, but chiefly, as I understand it, to *shut in* the godly. And before that door can be opened to let in the wicked, it will have to be opened to let out the righteous. These two declarations of our Lord stand side by side—“These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” If you deny the eternity of the one, you must deny the eternity of the other, for it is the same word in each case! You must break down the door which is the security of the saints within, before there can be a change for the ungodly who are outside—and that can never be! The joy of this marriage feast is eternal joy! This is implied in our Savior’s utterance, “*They* that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.”

I want you, next, to notice who these people were who went in with the Bridegroom. According to the text they were a *prepared people*, a people that were ready—“They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.” There are none among the sons of men who are naturally ready to go in to that marriage feast. Before they can enter, they must undergo a wondrous change. They must, in fact, be born again! Think for a moment what creatures we are by nature, quite unfit to go in with Christ to the heavenly marriage. Then think of what Christ is, so bright, so pure, so holy—who is she who is fit to go into Heaven, to be forever with this glorious Bridegroom? O my Soul, you are but dust and ashes, and your Lord is the Sun of Righteousness! O my Soul, you are, through sin, comparable to a dunghill! And your Savior is Infinite Perfection. Can you ever be “ready” to go in with Him to the marriage? Not unless that same God who became Man that He might be a fit Husband for you, shall *make* you holy, that you may be meet to be wedded to Him forever!

A great change has to be worked in you, far beyond any power of yours to accomplish, before you can go in with Christ to the marriage! You must, first of all, be renewed in your nature, or you will not be ready. You must be washed from your sins, or you will not be ready. You must be justified in Christ’s righteousness and you must put on His wedding dress, or else you will not be ready. You must be reconciled to God. You must be made like God or you will not be ready. Or, to come to the parable before us, you must have a lamp—and that lamp must be fed with heavenly oil—and it must continue to burn brightly, or else you will not be ready. No child of darkness can go into that place of God’s Light! You must be brought out of nature’s darkness into God’s marvelous Light, or else you will never be ready to go in with Christ to the marriage and to be forever with Him.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, I pray you often look to your readiness for going in to the marriage. Are you all ready now? If, at this moment, the archangel’s trumpet voice should sound, or if now, as lately happened to certain dear friends of ours, you should be struck down with paralysis or apoplexy and, in a moment, pass away, are you ready for the great change? Are you quite ready to go in with Christ to the marriage? I would advise you not only to be ready in all the great things, but to also be ready in the little things, and in everything that concerns yourself in relation to your Lord. Perhaps you have not yet publicly put on Christ in Baptism. Then, in that respect, you are not ready. Do not delay obedience to Christ’s command, remembering His own Words. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” With your mouth confess the Lord Jesus, if with your heart you have believed on Him. Disregard no commands of Christ!

Perhaps you have never yet been to His table of communion. If that is the case, I do not think you can call yourself “ready” to go in with Him to the marriage. Perhaps you call these things little matters—and they are small compared with that greater matter of which I have already spoken. But I would not wish you to die with a single command of Christ’s neglected. You have not prayed with your boys and girls yet, have you? Well, then, you are not ready. You have not made your will, you have not set

your house in order—I would have you get all such things quite ready, for a little unreadiness may greatly trouble you in your departing moments. You have not yet fulfilled what has been very nearly a vow toward God—you have not yet done what you ought to do of your work for the present generation. You have not yet been to that ungodly friend and warned him, as your heart a little while ago prompted you to do. I would like to have you, my Brother, or Sister, in such a state that if you fell down dead on your way home, tonight, others might regret it, but you would be thankful that for your sudden death was sudden glory.

Mr. Whitefield used to say that he did not like to go to sleep at night if he had left his gloves out of his hat where he might find them in the morning. It is delightful to feel, “All is right between God and my soul, between myself and my wife and my children and all my surroundings. Now let death come when it will! Let the sweet chariot swing low—as the Jubilee Singers’ song quaintly puts it—and let it bear my soul away up to the heavenly country where I shall go in with Him to the marriage.”

Be ready, dear Friends, be ready! Especially be ready in the great matter of salvation, but see that you are ready in *everything*. You know that when you are going to see a very special friend, or some person of importance, you put on your best coat and everything that will make you ready to see him and, afterwards, when you get near the friend’s door, or the great man’s mansion, I notice that you brush off any little dust from the street that may have been blown upon your garments—and so you get quite ready to meet him when he appears. So, in spiritual affairs, even if you have on your best robe, yet there may still be a little brushing needed—and I would have you do it so that it may be said of you without anything to qualify it—“they that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut.”

I read, in an American tract, a little sketch written by a gentleman who, having often to cross the Great Lakes, was in the habit of providing himself with a life belt in case of need. One night, while he was asleep, an alarm was raised and he rushed on deck with his life belt round him, but found that there was no cause for fear. He went back downstairs and as he lay in bed, he had something like a dream, though it was really a waking reverie, and it took this shape. He thought he was on board the great vessel in which all of us are floating on the broad sea of time and that a great and terrible storm came on. There were some men on deck with life belts round them. They had been laughed at while the weather was calm and the sea was smooth, but, as they stood there, with the vessel rocking and the timbers straining, there were none to mock them, but many who greatly envied the quiet peacefulness which rested on their countenances. You know who those men are and what is their perfection. Faith in Jesus is the great life belt—let the tempest come when it may, faith in Christ will enable us to swim through every flood till we reach the happy shores of Heaven!

As this gentleman stood on the deck and looked about him, he heard one man say, “I was going to buy one of those belts. I lived just opposite the shop where they were sold and I was often told by friends that I had better get one at once, and I meant to—but I put it off and started just a

little too late to get it, so I was obliged to come without it, though I meant to have one.” The gentleman saw this man washed overboard, as the others were who had not a life belt, and his good intention could not save him. No doubt there are many here who have meant to get the *spiritual* life belt and they mean to do so now, so they say. Ah, Heaven is being filled with people who have believed in Jesus—and Hell is being filled with people who *meant* to believe in Jesus, but did not! That is the difference between the two classes, but what a difference it will make between them when they come to die! These are the people who crowd the corridors of Hell—men and women who *meant* to trust the Savior, but who never did. They lived just opposite the places where these life belts were to be had and they meant to have had them—but they had them not when the last great storm came on—and so they were lost, and lost forever!

There was another man who said, “I have been across this sea so often without a belt that I thought I would run the risk once more.” He, too, was washed away. And there are some of you, my Hearers, who say, “I have lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years and I am not dead yet! I will run the risk for another year.” Really, nowadays, nobody seems to grow old. You meet a man of 75 or 80, and he thinks that he will be old, some day, but he has known somebody who lived till he was 99—and he thinks he shall reach the same age. I have heard of an aged farmer who wanted to buy his neighbor’s field. He was 80 and his neighbor was five years younger, so, when his neighbor would not sell him the land, he said to him, “Ah, well, never mind. You are an old man and I can buy it when you are dead!” That is just the way people talk. “All men think all men mortal but themselves.” Here was a man who was five years older than the other, yet he was going to buy the field after the younger man was dead! It is such people who say, “I have been sailing over this sea so long without a life belt, I will risk it still longer.” Thus they, also, are lost!

There was another man who ran to his trunk to get his life belt—he pulled up the lid and took out the belt—but he found it was out of order and quite useless. The fact was, it was a bad one when he bought it—and after carrying it about with him for a little while, he became weary of such a useless appendage, so he threw it into his trunk—and now that he really needed preservation from the storm, it was of no use to him. You are here, Sir, I know you! You used to make a profession of religion. You had a life belt once, so you thought, but it was not a good one, or you would have it now. It was one that *looked* like the right thing and you wore it for a while. You used to be at the Prayer Meeting, you even became a member of the church! You carried your religion for a time, but what has become of it? Where were you last night? I repeat the question—*Where were you last night?* If the devil had laid hold upon you and taken you down to his own dominions, there would have been none who would have cried, “Stop, thief!” when he flew away with you, for they would have known that he was only taking his own property which he had found on his own premises. Yet you did once make a profession of religion—you used to sit at the Communion Table. Possibly you were

even baptized. But where is your life belt now? It is gone! God save you who have become backsliders, lest you also prove to be apostates! If you have turned back, then return, return, return, while yet there is time, while yet there is hope for you! And if you never were converted, may God begin the gracious work within you even now!

There was another one on board who had a life belt and he seemed very pleased when he put it on, but when the waves washed him off the vessel, he floated for a few moments and then down he sank. The fact was, his belt was a counterfeit! Somebody had told him that the other sort was so very expensive and here was one that looked even better. True, there was a whisper that it would not stand the necessary tests, but the man did not care much about that, for his belt looked as good as the genuine one and he had the credit of standing with those sensible people who had the true thing, so it answered very well *until he came into the surging sea*. So there may be some of you here who have counterfeit life belts. You are members of a church, you come to the Communion Table and everybody respects you. Ah, but with a sham religion, how will you do in the swelling of Jordan? What will you do when heart and flesh fail? Oh, before it is too late, may God take the sham away from you and give you genuine godliness—a new heart and a right spirit!

As the gentleman looked round him, he saw yet another of the passengers—a young man who was clinging to someone else who had on a life belt. He was crying to him, “Let me lay hold on you! Will not your belt be sufficient to sustain both of us?” But the other answered, “It will only suffice for one. It will only keep one afloat.” Then the gentleman thought of our Savior’s parable of the ten virgins and of what the foolish said unto the wise, “Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.” But the wise answered, “Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.” So let us remember that nothing but *personal* piety will avail—the religion of another can be of no service to you! Our Lord’s message to all is, “You must be born again,” and there is no such thing as being born again by proxy! You must fly to Jesus for refuge and there is no one who can do this for you. You must, by the Holy Spirit’s power, trust in Christ for yourselves! No one can believe for you.

I rejoice that there are so many here who have on the genuine Gospel life belt. Standing in Christ Jesus, they are not afraid—

***“No condemnation do they dread.
For Jesus is their All.”***

They can without a tremor face floods or flames, and the devouring deep! They can even be—

“Fearless of Hell and ghastly death,”

knowing that they shall be safely landed on Heaven’s peaceful shore, to go no more out forever!

II. I am almost thankful that I have only a few minutes to spend upon the second part of my subject—THE UNREADY AND THEIR EXCLUSION. I will try to say much in a few words—and I beg you to let every word abide with you.

What, then, was this exclusion? “The door was shut.” It was not ajar, it was shut. And it was so tightly closed that *there was a complete severance* between the guests inside and the too-late foolish virgins outside.

Yet, *this severance was perfectly just*. The foolish virgins ought to have been there on time. They ought to have gone in with the bridegroom. Was it not their very office to attend him and accompany him home? The time for entering in had fully come—it was the right and proper time. The bridegroom had given them all that night to get ready and they had even complained of the length of the delay before he came so, when the door was at last shut, it was very late. They had had all that time in which to get the oil and to trim their lamps. It was not as though the bridegroom had come in the first watch of the night and they had said, “We had not time to trim our lamps.” No, it was not so. So, dear Friends, you have had all this life, all these years of your Lord’s long-suffering and patient entreaty—and it will be just that the door should be shut when your last hour shall come. Oh, be wise before it is too late!

When “the door was shut,” *the exclusion was final*. In all my searching of the Word of God, I have never found any kind of hope that the door, once shut, will ever be opened again. There may be a “larger hope” indulged in by some, but I implore you never to risk your souls upon that rotten plank, for there is no Scripture warrant for it whatever! Even if there were, what larger hope do you need than that which the Gospel itself affords? Why do you not get ready to enter in with Christ to the marriage? Why be left to tarry outside? What is there in the cold midnight that should tempt you to delay with the risk of never being able to enter the door? If there were any such larger hope as deludes so many, it still must be a desperate risk to trust to it. They also who talk about annihilation, or restitution, at any rate offer you nothing that ought to charm you away from immediate faith in Christ and immediate and everlasting salvation by Him. So far as you, yourself, are concerned, it should cease to be an awful thing that, in the world to come, “There are no acts of pardon passed.” Why should you throw away the certainty of a present salvation and immediate deliverance from the curse, which you may have at this moment—which you shall have at once if you believe in Jesus—under some foolish dream that perhaps the door of mercy may open after ages of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? No, rather be ready to enter in with Christ to the marriage, for, as the Lord lives, I cannot clear my soul of all responsibility unless I tell you that, as I read the Bible more and more, I am more and more certain that when that door has once been shut, it will never again be opened to any living soul! Where death meets you, judgment will find you, and there you will remain to all eternity! I pray you, risk not your eternal destiny, but, “Seek you the Lord while He may be found. Call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

Who were these persons who were shut out when the door was closed? *They bore the name of virgins*, yet the door was shut against them. They were not rank outsiders, nor mere tramps of the street. They were not in-

fidels, not agnostics, but members of the Church! They were called virgins, yet against them the door was shut. They also had lamps—lamps that once burned as brightly as others. There was, for a while, no difference between the luster of their lamps and the luster of the wisest, yet they were shut out. They had at least some oil—they were, for a time, companions of the wise virgins. They went out with them to meet the bridegroom and the wise virgins, probably, never suspected that these others were foolish, until, in the middle of the night, they found, too late, that their lamps were going out. O Sirs! O Sirs, shall we drink out of the same Communion cup and eat of the same bread at the Lord’s Table, and be reminded of His broken body and His shed blood, and yet shall some of us be shut in with God forever, and shall some of you be shut out forever because you have not received the Holy Spirit, because you have not the secret inward store of the oil of Grace? May God prevent it by His Grace!

Notice that *these people acted in much the same way as those acted who went in with the bridegroom*. They went forth to meet the bridegroom, they went on the same road and at the same rate as the others went and they went to sleep, alas, as the others went to sleep. They awoke as the others awoke and they began to trim their lamps as the others were trimming theirs. Their spot seemed to be the spot of God’s children and they appeared to have many of the marks of the election of Grace—yet they were not of it, nor in it, for they had no oil in their vessels with their lamps, no Grace, no indwelling of the Holy Spirit, no supernatural operation of Him who works in the saints to will and to do of His own good pleasure. They were so like the real bride of Christ that only the Bridegroom could tell the difference until the midnight came—and then the difference was apparent to all observers!

It seems to me, also, that these persons who were shut out, *were people who knew something about prayer*. They did not, that night, for the first time pick up the agonized cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” They had probably been *habitué’s* of Prayer Meetings. They had been where people called Christ, “Lord,” and they used that formula themselves. Perhaps they might have said, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name? And in Your name have cast out devils? And in Your name done many wonderful works?” Yet the door was shut against them and they, outside, knew something of what was going on inside and, therefore, would gnash their teeth all the more because they could not enter! The door was shut against those who had seen the Light of God, but whose lamps had gone out! They had been carrying in their hands the very lamps which entitled them to claim a place in the procession, but those lamps had gone out—and, therefore, they were not entitled to any such place—and the door was shut against them! O you who are only *professors* of religion, will you shut yourselves outside the door of mercy? You will do so if you neglect to obtain that secret oil of Grace which can only be supplied by the Holy Spirit!

Before another Sunday comes around, your preacher may be suddenly struck down, as one of our Brothers has been. I may never have another opportunity of speaking to you who are professors, and warning you to

make sure that you are also *possessors* and that you really have the Grace of God in your souls. Or, possibly, some of you may be taken *away* without a moment’s warning, as one of our friends has been. Suppose that then you could turn round upon me, in another world, and say, “Preacher, we heard you again and again. We listened to all that came from your lips. We even came out on Thursday nights to listen to you, yet you prophesied smooth things to us and you said, ‘Peace, peace, when there was no peace.’” I pray God that I may have no man’s blood upon the skirts of my garments in that last tremendous day and, therefore, I bid you, now, to escape from the wrath to come! Flee to Christ, flee to His dear Cross and look up to His bleeding wounds, for—

“There is life for a look at the Crucified One.”

Flee from your sins, flee from yourselves! Flee from any worldly pursuits which entangle you and put your trust in Jesus Christ and Him crucified! And from your heart say—

***“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress,***

“I will go in with You to the marriage, and when the door is shut, I shall be on the right side of it—

***“Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in.”***

The Lord save us all, for His name’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—364, 365, 1043.

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

UNPROFITABLE SERVANTS

NO. 1541

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 6, 1880,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness:
there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
Matthew 25:30.***

***“So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things
which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable
servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”
Luke 17:10.***

***“His lord said unto him, Well done, you good and faithful servant.”
Matthew 25:21.***

THERE is a narrow path between indifference and morbid sensibility. Some men seem to feel no holy anxiety—they place their Master's talent in the earth, leave it there and take their pleasure and their ease without a moment's compunction. Others profess to be so anxious to be right that they come to the conclusion that they can *never* be so and fall under a horror of God, viewing His service as a drudgery and Himself as a hard master—though probably they never say so. Between these two lines there is a path, narrow as a razor's edge, which only the Grace of God can enable us to trace. It is free from carelessness and from bondage and consists in a sense of responsibility bravely borne by the help of the Holy Spirit.

The right way usually lies between two extremes—it is the narrow channel between the rock and the whirlpool. There is a sacred way which runs between self-congratulation and despondency which is a very difficult track to find and very hard to keep. There are great perils in the consciousness that you have done well and that you are serving God with all your might, for you may come to think that you are a deserving person, worthy to rank among the princes of Israel. The danger of being puffed up can hardly be overestimated—a dizzy head soon brings a fall. But perhaps equally to be dreaded, on the other side, is that sense of unworthiness which paralyzes all exertion making you feel that you are incapable of anything that is great or good.

Under this impulse have men fled from the service of God into a life of solitude. They felt that they could not behave valiantly in the battle of life and, therefore, they fled from the field before the fight began—to become hermits or monks—as if it were possible to do the Lord's perfect will by doing nothing at all and to discharge the duties to which they were born by an unnatural mode of existence! Blessed is that man who finds the straight and narrow way between high thoughts of self and hard thoughts of God, between self-esteem and a timid shrinking from all effort. My de-

sire is that the Spirit of God may guide our minds into the golden median where holy Graces blend and the contending vices, equally natural to our evil hearts, are all excluded.

May the Spirit of God bless our three texts and the three subjects suggested by them, so that we may be put right and then, by infinite mercy, may be *kept* right until the great day of account. Let us read Matthew 25:30. “And cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

I. In this, our first text, we have THE VERDICT OF JUSTICE upon the man who did not use his talent. The man is here styled an “unprofitable servant” because he was slothful, useless, worthless. He did not bring his master interest for his money nor render him any sincere service. He did not faithfully discharge the trust reposed in him as his fellow servants did. Notice, first, that this unprofitable person was a *servant*. He never denied that he was a servant. In fact, it was by his position as a servant that he became possessed of his one talent and to that possession he never objected.

If He had been capable of receiving more, there is no reason why he should not have had two talents, or five, for the Scripture tells us that the master gave to every man according to his ability. He acknowledged the rule of his master even in the act of burying the talent and in appearing before him to give an account. This makes the subject the more heart-searching for you and for me, for we, too, profess to be servants—servants of the Lord our God. Judgment must begin at the house of God, that is, with those who are in the house of the Lord as children and servants. Let us, therefore, look well to our actions.

If judgment first begins with us, “what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel of God?” “If the righteous are scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” If this in our text is judgment upon *servants*, what will be the judgment upon *enemies*? This man acknowledged that he was a servant even to the last. And though he was impertinent and impudent enough to express a most wicked and slanderous opinion about his master, yet he neither denied his own position as a servant, nor the fact that his talent was his lord’s, for he said, “Lo, there you have what is yours.”

In thus speaking he went rather further than some professing Christians do, for they live as if Christianity were all eating the fat and drinking the sweet and not *servicing* at all—as if religion had many privileges but no precepts and, as if, when men were saved, they became licensed loiterers to whom it is a matter of honor to magnify Free Grace by standing idle all day in the market place. Alas, I know some who never do a hand’s turn for Christ and yet call Him Master and Lord! Many of us acknowledge that we are servants—that everything we have belongs to our Master and that we are bound to live for Him. So far, so good. But we may get as far as that and yet, in the end, we may be found *unprofitable* servants and so be cast into outer darkness where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Let us take heed of this.

This man, though a servant, thought ill of his master and disliked his service. He said, “I knew that you are an hard man, reaping where you

have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.” Certain professors who have stolen into the Church are of the same mind—they dare not say that they regret their having joined the Church and yet they act that all may conclude that if it could be undone they would not do the same again. They do not find pleasure in the service of God, but continue to pursue its routine as a matter of habit or a hard obligation.

They get into the spirit of the elder brother and they say, “Lo, these many years have I served you; neither transgressed I at any time your commandments and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends.” They sit down on the shady side of godliness and never bask in the sun which shines full upon it. They forget that the father said to the elder son, “Son, you are always with me and all that I have is yours.” He might have had as many feasts, as many lambs and kids as he desired—he would have been denied no good thing. The presence of his father ought to have been his joy and his delight—and better than all merry-makings with his friends. And it would have been so if he had been in a proper state of heart.

The man who hid his talent had carried the evil and petulant spirit much further than that elder brother, but the germs are the same and we must be careful that we crush them at the beginning. This unprofitable servant looked upon his master as one that reaped where he never sowed and used the rake to gather together what he had never scattered—he meant that his master was a hard, exacting and unjust person whom it was difficult to please. He judged his lord to be one who expected more of his servants than he had any right to look for and he had such a hatred of his unjust conduct that he resolved to tell him to his face what he thought of him.

This spirit may readily creep over the minds of professors. I fear it is brooding over many even now, for they are not content with Christ. If they want pleasure, they go outside the Church to get it—their joys are not within the circle of which Christ is the center. Their religion is their *labor*, not their delight. Their God is their dread, not their joy. They do not delight themselves in the Lord and, therefore, He does not give them the desire of their hearts and so they grow more and more discontented. They could not call Him, “God, my exceeding joy,” and so He is a terror to them. Devotion is a dreary engagement to them—they wish that they could escape from it with an easy conscience. They do not say as much to their secret selves, but you can read between the lines these words—“What a weariness it is.”

It is no wonder when things come to this pass that a professor becomes an unprofitable servant, for who can do a work, well, which he hates to do? Forced service is not desirable. God needs not slaves to Grace His Throne. A servant who is not pleased with his situation had better leave—if he is not content with his master, he had better find another, for their mutual relationship will be unpleasant and unprofitable. When it comes to this, that you and I are discontented with our God and dissatisfied with His work, we had better look for another lord, if any such will have us, for we shall certainly be unprofitable to the Lord Jesus from our lack of love to Him.

Note next, that, albeit this man was doing nothing for his master, he did not think himself an unprofitable servant. He exhibited no self-depreciation, no humbling, no contrition. He was as bold as brass and said unblushingly, "Lo, there you have what is yours." He came before his master with no apologies or excuses. He did not join with those who have done all and then say, "We are unprofitable servants," for he felt that he had dealt with his lord as the justice of the case deserved. Indeed, instead of acknowledging any fault, he turned to accusing his lord!

It is even so with false professors. They have no idea that they are hypocrites. The thought does not cross their minds. They have no notion that they are unfaithful. Hint at it and see how they will defend themselves! If they are not living as they ought to do, they claim to be pitied rather than blamed—the blame lies with Providence! It is the fault of circumstances! It is the fault of anybody but themselves. They have done nothing and yet they feel more at ease than those who have done everything. They have taken the trouble to dig in the earth and hide their talent and they as good as ask—"What more do you want? Is God so exacting as to expect me to bring more to Him than He gave me? I am as grateful and prayerful as God makes me—what more will He require?"

There is, you see, no bowing in the dust with a sense of imperfection, but an arrogant casting upon God of all blame and this, too, under the pretense of honoring His Sovereign Grace! Ah me, that men should be able to torture the Truth of God into such presumptuous falsehood! Mark well that the verdict of justice, at last, may turn out to be the very opposite of that which we pronounce upon ourselves. He who proudly thinks himself profitable shall be found unprofitable and he who modestly judges himself to be unprofitable may, in the end, come to hear his Master say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

So little are we able, through the defects of our conscience, to form a right estimate of ourselves, that we frequently reckon ourselves to be rich and increased in goods and having need of nothing when, indeed, we are naked and poor and miserable. Such was the case with this unfaithful servant—he wrapped himself up in the conceit that he was even more just than his lord and had an argument to plead which he thought would exonerate him from all blame. It should give rise to much searching of heart when we notice what this unprofitable servant did, or, rather, what he did *not* do. He carefully deposited his capital where no one was able to find it and steal it—and that was the end of his service.

We ought to observe that he did not spend that talent upon himself, or use it in business for his own benefit. He was not a thief, nor in any way did he misappropriate moneys placed under his charge. In this he excels many who profess to be the servants of God and yet live only to themselves. What little talent they have is used in their own business and never upon their Lord's concerns. They have the power of getting money, but their money is not made for Christ—such an idea never occurs to them. Their efforts are all for themselves, or, to use other words to express the same thing—for their families.

Yonder is a man who has the gift of eloquent speech and he uses it, not for Christ, but for himself, that he may win popularity; that he might ar-

rive at a respectable position. The one end and objective of his most earnest speech is to bring grist to his own mill and gain to his own estate. Everywhere this is to be seen among professors, that they are living to themselves—they are not adulterers or drunks, far from it—neither are they thieves or spendthrifts. They are decent, orderly, quiet sort of people but, still, they begin and end with *self*. What is this but to be an unprofitable servant? What is a servant to me if he works hard for himself and does nothing for me?

A professing Christian may toil till he becomes a rich man, an alderman in the city, a Lord Mayor, a member of Parliament, a millionaire—but what does that prove? Why, that he could work and did work well for himself and if all this while he has done little or nothing for Christ, he is all the more condemned by his own success! If he had worked for his Lord as he worked for himself, what might he not have accomplished? The unprofitable servant in the parable was not so bad as that and yet he was cast into outer darkness. What, then, will become of some of you? Furthermore, the wicked servant did not go and misspend his talent. He did not waste it in self-indulgence and wickedness as the prodigal son did, who spent his substance in riotous living.

Oh no, he was a much better man than that! He would not waste a halfpenny! He was all for saving and running no risks. The talent was as he received it, only wrapped up in a napkin and hidden in the earth—put into a bank, in fact—but a bank which gave no interest! He never touched a penny of it for a feast or a revel and, therefore, could not be accused of being a spendthrift with his lord's money. In fact, he was superior to those who yield their strength to sin and use their abilities to gratify the guilty passions of themselves and others. I grieve to add that some who call themselves servants of Christ lay out their strength to undermine the Gospel they profess to teach! They speak against the holy name by which they are named and thus they use their talent against their Master.

This man did not do that. He was bad enough in heart for anything, but he had never openly become so base a traitor. He never employed learning in order to raise needless doubts, or to resist the plain doctrines of the Word of God. This has been reserved for Divines of these latter days—days which produce monsters unknown to less educated times. This man's talent had not been wasted under his hand—it was as he had received it and he, therefore, reckoned he had been faithful. Ah, but this is not what Christ calls faithfulness—just to stay where we are! If you think you have gifts and only keep what you have, without obtaining *more*, it will be hiding your talent in the earth and keeping it a barren thing. It is not enough to retain—you must advance. The capital may be there, but where is the interest? To be living without aim or purpose beyond that of keeping up your position is to be a wicked and slothful servant, condemned already.

While meditating upon this subject, may we, each one, say to himself, "Lord, is it I?" His lord called this servant "wicked." Is it, then, a wicked thing to be unprofitable? Surely wickedness must mean some positive action! No. Not to do right is to be wicked! Not to live for Christ is to be wicked! Not to be of use in the world is to be wicked! Not to bring glory to the name of the Lord is to be wicked! To be slothful is to be wicked! It is

clear that there are many wicked people in the world who would not like to be called so. “Wicked and slothful”—these are the two words which are riveted together by the Lord Jesus, whose speech is always wise.

A schoolboy was asked by his master “What are you doing, John?” He was called up and thought to be quite clear by saying, “I was doing nothing, Sir.” But his master answered, “That is the very thing for which I called you out, for you ought to have been doing the lesson which I set before you.” It will be no excuse, at the last, for you to cry, “I was doing nothing, Sir.” Were not those on the left hand made to depart with a curse upon them because they did nothing? Is it not written—“Curse you Meroz, said the Angel of the Lord, curse you bitterly the inhabitants thereof because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” He who does nothing is a “wicked and slothful servant.”

This man was condemned to outer darkness. Notice this! He was condemned to be as he was, for Hell, in one light, may be described as the great Captain’s saying, “As you were.” “He that is unjust, let him be unjust, still. And he that is filthy, let him be filthy, still.” In another world there is permanence of character—enduring holiness is Heaven but continual evil is Hell. This man was outside of the family of his lord. He thought his lord a hard master and so proved that he had no love to him and that he was not really one of his household. He was outside in heart and so his lord said to him, “Remain outside.” Besides that, he was in the dark—he had wrong notions of his master, for his lord was not an austere and hard man. He did not gather where he had not scattered, nor reap where he had not sown. Therefore his lord said, “You are willfully in the dark: abide there in the darkness which is outside.”

This man was envious. He could not endure his master’s prosperity. He gnashed his teeth at the thought of it. He was sentenced to continue in that mind and so to gnash his teeth forever. This is a dreadful idea of eternal punishment, this permanence of character in an immortal spirit—“He that is unjust, let him be unjust, still.” While the character of the ungodly will be permanent, it will also be more and more developed along its own lines—the bad points will become worse and, with nothing to restrain them—evil will become still viler. In the next world, where there are no hindrances from the existence of a Church and a Gospel, the man will ripen to a more hideous maturity of enmity against God and a more horrible degree of consequent misery.

Sorrow is bound up with sin—abiding in sinfulness, a man must necessarily abide in wretchedness—for the wicked is like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. What must it be to be forever outside the family of God? Never to be God’s child? Forever in the dark? Never to see the light of holy knowledge and purity and hope? Forever to gnash one’s teeth with painful contempt and abhorrence of God, whom to hate is Hell? O for Grace to be *made* to love Him, whom to love is Heaven! The unprofitable servant had a dreadful wage to take when his master reckoned with him, but who can say that he had not well earned it? He had the due reward of his deeds. O our God, grant that such may not be the lot of any one of us!

II. I must now call your attention to the second text—"So likewise you, when you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). This is THE VERDICT OF SELF-ABASEMENT given forth from the heart of servants who had laboriously discharged the full work of the day. This is a part of a parable intended to rebuke all notions of self-importance and human merit.

When a servant has been plowing or feeding cattle, his master does not say to him, "Sit down and I will wait upon you, for I am deeply in your debt." No, his master bids him prepare the evening meal and wait upon him. His services are due and, therefore, his master does not praise him as if he were a wonder and a hero. He is only doing his duty if he perseveres from morning light to set of sun and he by no means expects to have his work held up to admiration or rewarded with extra pay and humble thanks. Neither are we to boast of our services, but think little of them, confessing that we are unprofitable servants.

Whatever of pain may have been caused by the first part of the discourse, I trust it will only prepare us the more deeply to enter into the spirit of our second text. Both these texts are engraved on my heart as with an iron pen by a merciless wound inflicted when I was too feeble to bear it. When I was exceedingly ill in the South of France and deeply depressed in spirit—so deeply depressed and so sick and ill that I scarcely knew how to live—one of those malicious persons who commonly haunt all public men and especially ministers, sent me anonymously a letter, openly directed to "That unprofitable servant, C. H. Spurgeon."

This letter contained tracts directed to the enemies of the Lord Jesus, with passages marked and underlined—with notes applying them to myself. How many Rabshekahs have, in their day, written to me! Ordinarily I read them with the patience which comes of use and they go to light the fire. I do not look for exemption from this annoyance, nor do I usually feel it hard to bear, but in the hour when my spirits were depressed and I was in terrible pain, this reviling letter cut me to the quick. I turned upon my bed and asked—Am I, then, an unprofitable servant? I grieved exceedingly and could not lift up my head or find rest.

I reviewed my life and saw its infirmities and imperfections, but knew not how to put my case till this second text came to my relief and answered as the verdict of my bruised heart. I said to myself, "I hope I am not an unprofitable servant in the sense in which this person intends to call me so, but I am assuredly so in the other sense." I cast myself upon my Lord and Master once again with a deeper sense of the meaning of the text than I had felt before—His atoning Sacrifice revived me and in humble faith I found rest. By the way, I wonder that any human being should find pleasure in trying to inflict pain upon those who are sick and depressed, yet are there persons who delight to do so. Surely, if there are no evil spirits down below, there are some up above and the servants of the Lord Jesus receive painful proofs of their activity!

Let me, then, if you have felt any pain from the first text, lead you to the point at which I personally arrived when, at last, I could thank God for that letter and feel that it was salutary medicine to my spirit. This which

is put into our mouths as a confession—that we *are* unprofitable servants—is meant to rebuke us when we think we are somebody and have done something worthy of praise. Our text is meant to rebuke us if we think that we have done enough, that we have borne the burden and heat of the day a long time and have been kept at our post beyond our own watch. If we conclude that we have achieved a fine day's work of harvesting and ought to be invited home to rest, the text upbraids us. If we feel an inordinate covetousness after comfort and wish the Lord would give us some present and striking reward for what we have done, the text shames us. This is a proud, unchildlike, unservantlike spirit and it must be put down with a firm hand.

In the first place, in what way can we have profited God? Eliphaz has well said, "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that you are righteous? Or is it gain to Him that you make your ways perfect?" If we have given to God of our substance, is He our debtor? In what way have we enriched Him to whom all the silver and gold belongs? If we have laid our lives out with the devotion of martyrs and missionaries for His sake, what is that to Him, whose Glory fills the heavens and the earth? How can we dream of putting the Eternal in debt to us? The right spirit is to say with David, "O my Soul, you have said unto the Lord, You are my Lord: my goodness extends not to You; but to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." How can a man place his Maker under an obligation to him? Let us not dote so blasphemously!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we ought to remember that whatever service we have been able to render has been a matter of *debt*. I hope our morality is not fallen so low that we take credit to ourselves for paying our debts! I do not find men in business priding themselves and saying, "I paid a thousand pounds this morning to such an one." "Well, did you give it to him?" "Oh no, it was all owing to him." Is that any great thing? Have we come to such a low state of spiritual morals that we think we have done a great deal when we give to God His due? "It is He that made us and not we ourselves." Jesus Christ has bought us, "we are not our own," for we are "bought with a price."

We have also entered into covenant with Him and given ourselves over to Him voluntarily. Were we not baptized into His name and into His death? Whatever we may do is only what He has a right to claim at our hands from our creation, redemption and professed surrender to Him. When we have persevered in the hard work of plowing till no field is left untilled; when we have done the pleasant work of feeding the sheep and when we have finished by spreading the table of communion for our Lord—when we have done all—we have done no more than was our duty to have done! Why do we boast, then, or cry for a discharge, or look for thanks?

Over and above this there is the sad reflection that, alas, in all we have done we have been unprofitable through being imperfect. In the plowing there have been baulks; in the feeding of the cattle there have been harshness and forgetfulness; in the spreading of the table the viands have been unworthy of such a Lord as we serve. How must our service appear

to Him of whom we read, "Behold, He put no trust in His servants and His angels He charged with folly." Can any of you look back upon your service to your Lord with satisfaction? If you can, I cannot say I envy you, for I do not sympathize with you in the least degree, but tremble for your safety!

As for myself, I am compelled to say with solemn truthfulness that I am not content with anything I have ever done. I have half wished to live my life over again, but now I regret that my proud heart allowed me to so wish, since the probabilities are that I should do worse the second time. Whatever Grace has done for me I acknowledge with deep gratitude, but so far as I have done anything *myself*, I beg pardon for it. I pray God to forgive my prayers, for they have been full of fault. I beseech Him to forgive even this confession, for it is not as humble as it ought to be. I beseech Him to wash my tears and purge my devotions and to baptize me into a true burial with my Savior that I may be quite forgotten in myself and only remembered in Him. Ah, Lord, You know how far we fall short of the humility we ought to feel. Pardon us in this thing. We are, all of us, unprofitable servants, and if You should judge us by the Law we must be cast away.

Once more, we cannot congratulate ourselves at all, even if we have had success in our Lord's work, since for all that we have done we are indebted to our Lord's abundant Grace. If we had done all our duty, we should not have done anything if His Grace had not enabled us to do it! If our zeal knows no respite, it is He that keeps the fire burning! If our tears of repentance flow, it is He that strikes the rock and fetches the waters from it! If there is any virtue, if there is any praise, if there is any faith, if there is any ardor, if there is any likeness to Christ, we are His workmanship, created by Him and, therefore, to ourselves we dare not take a particle of the praise!

Of Your own have we given unto You, great God! So far as anything has been worth Your accepting, it was Your own beforehand. Therefore the best are still unprofitable servants! If we have special cause of regret because of some evident error, we shall be wise to go in a lowly spirit and confess the fault and then go on doing the work of each day in a plodding, hopeful spirit. Whenever you get distressed because you cannot do what you would. Whenever you see the faultiness of your own service and condemn yourself for it, the best thing is to go and do something more in the strength of the Lord. If you have not served Jesus well up to now, go and do better!

If you make a blunder, do not tell everybody and say that you will never try again, but do *two* good things to make up for the failure. Say, "My blessed Lord and Master shall not be more a loser by me than I can help. I will not so much fret over the past as amend the present and wake up for the future." Brothers and Sisters, try to be more profitable and ask for more Grace. The servant's business is not to hide himself in a corner of the field and cry, but to go on plowing. You are not to bleat with the sheep, but feed them and so prove your love to Jesus. You are not to stand at the head of the table and say, "I have not spread the table for my Master as well as I could have desired." No? Go and spread it better!

Have courage, you are not serving a hard Master and, though you very properly call yourself an unprofitable servant, be of good cheer, for a gentler verdict shall be pronounced upon you before long. You are not your own judge—either for good or bad—another Judge is at the door and when He comes He will think better of you than your self-abasement permits you to think of yourself. He will judge you by the rule of Grace and not by Law and He will end all that dread which comes of a legal spirit and hovers over you with vampire wings.

III. Thus we have arrived at the third text—“His lord said unto him, Well done, you good and faithful servant” (Mat. 25:21). I shall not try to preach upon that cheering word, but shall only say a word or two upon it. It is much too grand a text to be treated upon at the end of a sermon. We find the Lord saying to those who had used their talents industriously, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” This is THE VERDICT OF GRACE. Blessed is the man who shall acknowledge himself to be an unfaithful servant—and blessed is the man to whom His Lord shall say, “You good and faithful servant.”

Observe here that the, “Well done,” of the Master is given to *faithfulness*. It is not, “Well done, you good and brilliant servant” for, perhaps, the man never shone at all in the eyes of those who appreciate glare and glitter. It is not, “Well done, you great and distinguished servant” for, it is possible that he was never known beyond his native village. He conscientiously did his best with his “few things” and never wasted an opportunity for faithfully doing good and, thus, he proved himself. The same praise was given to the man with two talents as to his fellow servant with five. Their stations were very different, but their reward was the same. “Well done, good and faithful servant,” was won and enjoyed by each of them.

Is it not very sweet to think that though I may have only one talent, I shall not, thereby, be debarred from my Lord’s praise? It is my *faithfulness* on which He will fix His eyes and not upon the number of my talents! I may have made many mistakes and have confessed my faults with great grief, but He will commend me as He did the woman of whom He said, “She has done what she could.” It is better to be faithful in the infant school than to be unfaithful in a noble class of young men. It is better to be faithful in a hamlet over two or three score of people than to be unfaithful in a great city parish, with thousands perishing in consequence! It is better to be faithful in a cottage meeting, speaking of Christ Crucified to 50 villagers than to be unfaithful in a great building where thousands congregate.

I pray you are faithful in laying out all that you are and have for God. As long as you live, whatever faults you have, be not half-hearted or double-minded, but be faithful in intent and desire. This is the point of the Judge’s praise—the servant’s faithfulness. This verdict was given of Sovereign Grace. The reward was not according to the *work*, for the servant had been “faithful in a few things,” but he was made “ruler over many things.” The verdict itself is not after the rule of works, but according to the law of Grace! Our good works are evidences of Grace within us! Our faithfulness, therefore, as servants—will be the evidence of our having a loving spirit

towards our Master—evidence, therefore, that our heart is changed and that we have been made to love Him for whom once we had no affection.

Our works are the *proof* of our love and, therefore, they stand as evidence of the Grace of God. God first gives us Grace and then rewards us for it! He works in us and then counts the fruit as *our* work. We work out our own salvation, because “He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure.” If He shall ever say, “Well done” to you and to me it will be because of *His own rich Grace* and not because of *our* merits! And, indeed, this is where we must all come and where we must all stay, for the idea that we have any personal merit will soon make us find fault with our Master and His service as being austere and hard.

I have sometimes admired how men who have denied the doctrine of Salvation by Grace, as a matter of theology, have, nevertheless, admitted it in their devotions. They have entered into controversy against it and yet unconsciously they have believed it! An extreme case is that of Cardinal Bellarmine, who was one of the most inveterate enemies of the Reformation and a renowned antagonist of the teaching of Martin Luther. I will quote from one of his works (Inst. Do Justification, Lib. v., c. 1). He says, in summing up, “On account of the uncertain nature of our own works and the danger of vain-glory, it is the safest course to place our whole trust in the mercy and loving kindness of God.”

You have said well, O Cardinal! And since the safest course is that which we would choose, we will place our whole trust in the mercy and loving kindness of God! It is reported and, I believe on excellent authority, that this great man who had, all his life, been crying up salvation by works, when dying, breathed a prayer in Latin, the translation of which would be something like this—“I beseech God, who weighs not our merits, but graciously pardons our offenses, that He would receive me among His saints and His elect.” Is Saul, also, among the Prophets? Does Bellarmine, at the last, pray like a Calvinist? Such a case makes one hope that many others may be saved in an apostate church! Thank God many are a great deal better than their creed and in their hearts believe what, as polemical theologians, they deny. However this may be, I know that if I am saved or rewarded it must be of Grace alone, for I can have no other hope. As for those who have done much for the Church, we know that they will disclaim all praise, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and give You meat; or thirsty and give You drink?” All the Lord’s faithful servants will sing, “Non nobis domine.” Not unto us. Not unto us!

Lastly, Brothers, with what infinite delight will Jesus fill our hearts if, through Divine Grace, we are happy enough to hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Oh, if we shall hold on to the end despite the temptations of Satan and the weakness of our nature and all the entanglements of the world! Oh, if we can keep our garments unspotted from the world, preaching Christ according to our measure of ability and winning souls for Him, what an honor it will be! What bliss to hear Him say, “Well done!” The music of these two words will have Heaven in them to us. How different it will be from the verdict of our fellow men who are often finding fault with this and that, though we do our best. We never could please them, but we have pleased our Lord!

Men were always misinterpreting our words and misjudging our motives, but He sets all right by saying, "Well done!" Little will it matter, then, what all the rest have said—neither the flattering words of friends nor the harsh condemnations of enemies will have any weight with us when He says, "Well done!" Not with pride shall we receive that eulogium, for we shall reckon ourselves, even then, to have been unprofitable servants. But oh how we shall love Him for setting such an estimate upon the cups of cold water we gave to His disciples and the poor broken service we tried to render Him! What condescension to call that well done, which we feel was so ill done!

I pray God's servants here, who, this morning first began with searching themselves and then went on to confess their imperfections, will now close by rejoicing in the fact that if we are believing in Christ Jesus and are really consecrated to Him, we shall conclude this life and begin the next with that blessed verdict of, "Well done!" Mind, however, that you are those who are doing all and are faithful. I hear some people speak against self-righteousness, to whom I would say, "You need not say much about that matter, for it does not concern you, since you have no righteousness to be proud of."

I hear persons speak against salvation by good works who are in no danger of falling into that error, since good works and their lives have long parted company. What I do admire is to see a man like Paul who lived for Jesus and was ready to die for Him, yet saying, at the close of his life, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Go on, Brothers and Sisters, and think not of resting till your day's work is done. Serve God with all your might! Do more than the Pharisees who hope to be saved by their zeal. Do more than your brethren expect of you and then, when you have done all, lay it at your Redeemer's feet with this confession, "I am an unprofitable servant." It is to those who blend faithfulness with humility and ardor with self-abasement that Jesus will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter you into the joy of your Lord."

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THE TWO TALENTS

NO. 175

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 31, 1858
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, You delivered unto me two talents: behold I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter you into the joy of your Lord.”
Matthew 25:22, 23.***

“EVERY good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights.” All that men have they must trace to the Great Fountain, the giver of all good. Have you talents? They were given you by the God of talents. Have you time? Have you wealth, influence, power? Have you powers of tongue? Have you powers of thought? Are you poet, statesman, or philosopher? Whatever is your position and whatever are your gifts, remember that they are not yours, but they are lent you from on high. No man has anything of his own except his sins. We are but tenants at will. God has put us into His estates and He has said, “Occupy till I come.”

Though our vineyards bear ever so much fruit yet the vineyard belongs to the King and though we are to take the hundred for our hire, yet King Solomon must have his thousand. All the honor of our ability and the use of it must be unto God, because He is the Giver. The parable tells us this very pointedly. It makes every person acknowledge that his talents come from the Lord. Even the man who dug in the earth and hid his Lord’s money did not deny that his talent belonged to his Master. For though his reply, “Lo, there you have that is yours,” was exceedingly impertinent, yet it was not a denial of this fact.

So that even this man was ahead of those who deny their obligations to God, who superciliously toss their heads at the very mention of obedience to their Creator and spend their time and their powers rather in rebellion against Him than in His service. Oh, that we were all wise to believe and to act upon this most evident of all truths—that everything we have we have received from the Most High.

Now, there are some men in the world who have but few talents. Our parable says, “One had five and another two.” To them I shall address myself this morning. And I pray that the few pointed things I may say may be blessed of God to their edification or rebuke. First, I shall notice *the fact that there are many persons who have but few talents* and I will try to account for God’s dispensing but few to them. Secondly, I shall remind them

that *even for these few talents they must be brought to account*. And thirdly, I shall conclude, by making the comforting observation that *if our few talents are rightly used, neither our own conscience nor our Master's judgment shall condemn us for not having more*.

I. First, then, GOD HAS MADE SOME MEN WITH FEW TALENTS. You very often hear men speak of one another as if God had made no mental differences at all. One man finds himself successful and he supposes that if everyone else could have been as industrious and as persevering as himself, everyone must necessarily have been as successful. You will often hear remarks against ministers who are godly and earnest men but who do not happen to have much attracting power. They are called drones and lazy persons because they cannot make much of a stir in the world, whereas the reason may be that they have but little talent and are making the best use of what they have. And therefore they ought not to be rebuked for the littleness of what they are able to accomplish.

It is a fact which every man must see, that even in our birth there is a difference. All children are not alike precocious and all men certainly are not alike capable of learning or of teaching. God has made eminent and marvelous differences. We are not to suppose that all the difference between a Milton and a man who lives and dies without being able to read has been caused by education. There was doubtless a difference originally and though education will do much, it cannot do everything. Fertile ground, when well tilled, will necessarily bring forth more than the best tilled estate, the soil of which is hard and sterile. God has made great and decided differences. And we ought, in dealing with our fellow men, to remember this lest we should say harsh things of those very men to whom God will afterwards say, "well done, good and faithful servant."

But why is it that God has not given to all men like talents? My first answer shall be because God is a Sovereign and of all attributes, next to His love, God is the most fond of displaying His sovereignty. The Lord God will have men know that He has a right to do what He wills with His own. Hence it is that in salvation He gives it to some and not to others. And His only reply to any accusation of injustice is, "No, but O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus?" The worm is not to murmur because God did not make it an angel. And the fish that swims the sea must not complain because it has not wings to fly into the highest heavens. God had a right to make His creatures just what He pleased and though men may dispute His right, He will hold and keep it inviolate against all comers.

That He may hedge His right and make vain man acknowledge it, in all his gifts He continually reminds us of His sovereignty. "I will give to this man," He says, "a mind so acute that he shall pry into all secrets. I will make another so obtuse that none but the plainest elements of knowledge shall ever be attainable by him. I will give to one man such a wealth of imagination that he shall pile mountain upon mountain of imagery, till his

language seems to reach to celestial majesty. I will give to another man a soul so dull that he shall never be able to originate a poetic thought.”

Why this, O God? The answer comes back, “Shall I not do what I will with My own?” “So, then, the children being not yet born neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was written, the elder shall serve the younger.” And so it is written concerning men, that one of them shall be greater than another. One shall bow his neck and the other put his foot upon it, for the Lord has a right to dispose of places and of gifts, of talents and wealth, just as seems good in His sight.

Now, most men quarrel with this. But mark, the thing that you complain of in God is the very thing that you love in yourselves. Every man likes to feel that he has a right to do with his own as he pleases. We all like to be little sovereigns. You will give your money freely and liberally to the poor. But if any man should impertinently urge that he had a claim upon your charity, would you give to him? Certainly not, and who shall impeach the greatness of your generosity in so doing? It is even as that parable, that we have in one of the Evangelists, where, after the men had toiled, some of them twelve hours, some of them six and some of them but one, the Lord gave every man a penny.

Oh, I wish that I could meekly bow my head and say, “My Lord, have You given me one talent? Then I bless You for it and I pray You bestow upon me grace to use it rightly. Have You given to my brother ten talents? I thank You for the greatness of Your kindness towards him. But I neither envy him, nor complain of You.” Oh, for a spirit that bows always before the sovereignty of God!

Again—God gives to one five and to another two talents because the Creator is a lover of variety. It was said that order is Heaven’s first Law—surely variety is the second. For in all God’s works there is the most beautiful diversity. Look towards the heavens at night—all the stars shine not with the same brilliance, nor are they placed in straight lines, like the lamps of our streets. Then turn your eyes below—see in the vegetable world how many great distinctions there are, ranging from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, or the moss on the tree is smaller still.

See how from the huge mammoth tree that seems as if beneath its branches it might shade an army, down to the tiny lichen God has made everything beautiful, but everything full of variety. Look on any one tree, if you please—see how every leaf differs from its fellow—how even the little tiny buds that are at this hour bursting at the scent of the approaching perfume of spring differ from each other—no two of them alike. Look again, upon the animated world—God has not made every creature like unto another. How wide the range—from the colossal elephant, to the Coney that burrows in the rock—from the whale that makes the deep hoary with its lashings, to the tiny minnow that skims the brook. God has made all things different and we see variety everywhere.

I doubt not it is the same, even in Heaven, for there are “thrones and dominions and principalities and powers”—different ranks of angels, perhaps, rising tier upon tier. “One star different from another star in glory.” And why should not the same rule stand good in manhood? Does God cast us all in the same mold? It seems not so. For He has not made our faces alike. No two countenances can be said to be exactly the same, for if there is some likeness, yet is there a manifest diversity. Should minds, then, be alike? Should souls all be cast in the same fashion? Should God’s creation dwindle down into a great manufactory, in which everything is melted in the same fire and poured into the same mold?

No, for variety’s sake, He will have one man a renowned David and another David’s unknown armor bearer. He will have one man a Jeremy, who shall prophesy and another a Baruch, who shall only read the prophecy. One shall be rich as Dives, another poor as Lazarus. One shall speak with a voice loud as thunder, another shall be dumb. One shall be mighty in word and doctrine, another shall be feeble in speech and slow in words. God will have variety and the day will come when, looking down upon the world we shall see the beauty of its history to be mightily indebted to the variety of the characters that entered into it.

But a little further. God has a deeper reason than this. God gives to some men but few talents because He has many small spheres and He would have these filled. There is a great ocean and it needs inhabitants. O Lord, you have made Leviathan to swim therein. There is a secret grotto, a hidden cavern, far away in the depths of the sea. Its entrance is but small. If there were nothing but a Leviathan, it must remain untenanted forever. A little fish is made and that small place becomes an ocean unto it. There are

a thousand sprays and twigs upon the trees of the forest. Were all eagles, how would the forests be made glad with song and how could each twig bear its songster? But because God would have each twig have its own music, He has made the little songster to sit upon it.

Each sphere must have the creature to occupy it adapted to the size of the sphere. God always acts economically. Does He intend a man to be the pastor of some small parish with four or five hundred inhabitants? Of what use is it giving to that man the abilities of an Apostle? Does He intend a woman to be a humble teacher of her own children at home, a quiet trainer of her own family? Would it not even disturb her and injure her if God should make her a poetess and give her gifts that might electrify a nation? The littleness of her talents will to a degree fit her for the littleness of her sphere.

There is some youth who is quite capable of assisting in a Ragged School—perhaps if he had a higher genius he might disdain the work and so the Ragged School would be without its excellent teacher. There are little spheres and God will have little men to occupy them. There are posts of important duty and men shall be found with nerve and muscle fitted for

the labor. He has made a statue for every niche and a picture for every portion of the gallery. None shall be left vacant. But since some niches are small, so shall be the statuettes that occupy them. To some He gives two talents, because two are enough and five would be too many.

Once more—God gives to men two talents because in them very often He displays the greatness of His grace in saving souls. You have heard of a minister who was deeply read in sacred lore. His wisdom was profound and his speech graceful. Under his preaching many were converted. Have you ever heard it not quite said, but almost hinted, that much of his success was traceable to his learning and to his graceful oratory? But, on the other hand, you have met with a man rough in his dialect, uncouth in his manners, evidently without any great literary attainments.

Nevertheless, God has given that man the one talent of an earnest heart. He speaks like a son of thunder. With rough, stern language he denounces sin and proclaims the Gospel. Under him hundreds are converted. The world sneers at him. "I can see no reason for all this," says the scholar. "It is all rubbish—cant. The man knows nothing." The critic takes up his pen. Nibs it afresh, dips it in the bitterest ink he can find and writes a most delightful history of the man in which he goes so far as to say not that he sees horns on his head, but almost everything but that.

He is everything that is bad and nothing that is good. He utterly denounces him. He is foolish, he is vain, he is base, he is proud, he is illiterate, he is vulgar. There was no word in the English language that was bad enough for him, but one must be coined. And now what says the Church? What says the man himself? "Even so, O Lord. Now, must the glory be unto You forever, inasmuch as You have chosen the base things of this world and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are."

So it seems that out of the little, God sometimes wins more glory than He does out of the great. And I doubt not that He has made some of you with little power to do good, with little influence and with a narrow sphere, that He may, in the Last Great Day, manifest to angels how much He can do in a little space. You know, dear Friends, there are two things that always will attract our attention. One is skill embodied in a stupendous mass. We see the huge ship, the Leviathan and we wonder that man could have made it. At another time we see an elegant piece of workmanship that will stand upon less than a square inch and we say, "Well, I can understand how men can make a great ship, but I cannot comprehend how an artist could have the patience and the skill to make so minute a thing as this."

And ah, my Friends, it seems to me that God is not a greater God to our apprehension, when we see the boundless fields of ether and the unnumbered orbs swimming therein, than when we see a humble cottager and behold God's perfect word carried out in her soul and God's highest glory wrought from her little talent. Surely if in the little, man can honor

himself as well as in the great, the Infinite and the Eternal can most of all glorify Himself when He stoops to the littleness of mankind.

II. Our second proposition was that even A FEW TALENTS MUST BE ACCOUNTED FOR. We are very apt when we think of the Day of Judgment to imagine that certain characters will undergo a more trying process than others. I know I have often involuntarily said, when reading the history of Napoleon, “Here is a man of tremendous ability, the world’s master. A dozen centuries might be required to produce such another man. But here is a man who prostitutes all his ability to ambition, carries his armies like a destroying deluge across every country. He widows wives and renders children fatherless, not by hundreds but by thousands, if not by millions. What must be his solemn account when he stands before the Throne of God? Shall not the witnesses rise up from the fields of Spain, of Russia, of Italy, of Egypt, of Palestine and accuse the man who, to gratify his own bold ambition, led them to death?”

But will you please remember that though Napoleon must be a prisoner at the bar, each of us must stand there also? And though our position is not very high and we have not stood upon the pinnacle of fame, yet we have stood quite high enough to be borne under the observation of the Most High. And we have had just ability enough and power enough to have done mischief in the world and to be accountable for it. “Oh,” said one, “I thought that surely in the Day of Judgment He would pass me by. I have been no Tom Paine. I have not been a leader among low and vulgar infidels. I have been no murderer. I have not been a prince among sinners. I have not been a disturber of the public peace. What few sins I have committed have taken place quietly.

“Nobody has heard of them. I don’t think my bad example has gone far. Perhaps my children have not been much blessed by my behavior, but, nevertheless, mine has been a very small quantum of mischief—too small to have poisoned anyone beside myself. I have been, on the whole, so tolerably moral, that though I cannot say I have served God, yet my straying from the path of duty have been light indeed!” Ah, truly, Friends—you may think yourselves never so little, but your making yourselves insignificant will not excuse you.

You have had but little entrusted to you! Then the less trouble for you to make use of your talents. The man who has many talents requires much hard labor to use them all. He might make the excuse that he found five talents too many to put out in the market at once. You have only one. Anybody can lend out his one talent to interest—it will cost you but little trouble to apply that—and inasmuch as you live and inasmuch as you die without having improved the one talent—your guilt will be exceedingly increased by the very fact that your talent was but little and, consequently, the trouble of using it would have been but little, too. If you had but little, God required but little of you. Why, then, did you not render that?

If any man holds a house at a rental of a pound a year, let it be never so small a house for the money, if he brings not his rent, there is not one half the excuse for him that there would be if his rent had been a hundred pounds and he had failed to bring it. You shall be the more inexcusable on account of the little that was required of you. Let me, then, address you and remind you that you must be brought to account.

Remember, my Hearer, that in the Day of Judgment your account must be *personal*. God will not ask you what your *Church* did—He will ask you what *you* did yourself. Now there is a Sunday-School. If God should try all members of the Church in a body, they would each of them say, O Lord, as a body we had an excellent Sunday-School and had many teachers—and so they would excuse themselves. But no—one by one—all professors must come before Him. “What did you do for the Sunday-School? I gave you a gift for teaching children—what did you do?”

“O Lord, there was a Sunday-School.” That has nothing to do with it? What did you do? You are not to account now for the company with which you were united, but for yourself as an individual. “Oh” says one, “there were a number of poor ministers. I was at the Surrey Hall and so much was done for them.” No—what did you do? You must be held personally responsible for your own wealth, for your own ability. “Well,” says one, “I am happy to say there is a great deal more preaching now than there used to be—the churches seem to be roused.” Yes, Sir, and you seem to take part of the credit to yourself. Do you preach more than you used to? You are a minister—do you make any greater efforts?

Remember, it is not what your Brethren are doing, but it is what *you* do that you will be called to account at the bar of God. And each one of you will be asked this question, “What have you done with your talent?” All your connection with Churches will avail you nothing. It is your *personal* doings—your personal service towards God that is demanded of you as an evidence of saving grace. And if others are idle—if others pay not God His due—so much the more reason why you should have been more exceedingly diligent in doing so yourself.

Remember, again, that your account will have to be *particular*. God will go into all the items of it. At the Day of Judgment you will not have to cast up a hurried recount in the gross, but every item shall be read. Can you prove that? Yes. “For every idle word that man shall speak, he shall be brought unto account at the Day of Judgment.” Now, it is in the items that men go astray. “Well,” says one, “If I look at my life in the bulk, I am not very much ashamed, but it is those items, those little items—they are the troublesome part of the account—that one does not care to meddle with.”

Do you know that all yesterday was made up of little things? And the things of today are all little and what you do tomorrow will all be little things? Just as the tiny shells make up the chalk hills and the chalk hills together make up the range, so the trifling actions make up the whole ac-

count and each of these must be pulled asunder separately. You had an hour to spare the other day—what did you do? You had a voice—how did you use it? You had a pen—you could use that—how did you employ it? Each particular shall be brought out and there shall be demanded an account for each one.

Oh, that you were wise, that you did not slur this matter but would take every note in the music of your behavior and seek to make each note in harmony with its fellow, lest, after all, the psalm of your life may prove to be a hideous discord. Oh, that you who are without God would remember that your life is assuredly such—that the trial of the Last Great Day must end in your condemnation.

Again—that account will be very exact and there will be no getting off without those little things. “Oh, there were a few peccadilloes and very small matters, indeed. I never took stock of them at all.” But they will all be taken stock of then. When God comes to look into our hearts at last, He will not only look at the great but at the little. Everything will be seen into, the penny sins as well as the pound iniquities—all must be brought against us and an exact account given.

Again remember—in the last place upon this point—that the account will be very impartial at the Day of Judgment, when all will be tried without any reference to their station. The prince will be summoned to give an account of his talents and side by side must stand his courtier and his slave. The mightiest emperor must stand at God’s bar, as well as the mean cottager. All must appear and be tried according to the deeds they have done in the body. As to our professions—they will avail us nothing. We may have been the proudest hypocrites that ever made the world sick with our pride, but we must be searched and examined, as much as if we had been the vilest sinners.

We must take our own trial before God’s eternal tribunal and nothing can bias our Judge, or make Him give an opinion for or against us, apart from the evidence. Oh, how solemn this will make the trial, especially if we have no blood of Christ to plead! The great Advocate will get His people an acquittal, through His imputed merits, even though their sin in itself would condemn them. But remember, that without Him we shall never be able to stand the fiery ordeal of that last dread assize.

“Well,” said an old preacher, “when the Law was given, Sinai was on a smoke and it melted like wax. But when the punishment of the Law is given, the whole earth will quake and quail. For who shall be able to endure the day of the Lord, the day of God’s fierce anger?”

III. The last point is, IF BY DIVINE GRACE—(and it is only by Divine Grace that this can ever be accomplished)—OUR TWO TALENTS ARE RIGHTLY USED, THE FACT THAT WE HAD NOT FIVE, WILL BE NO INJURY TO US.

You say, when such a man dies who stood in the midst of the Church a triumphant warrior for the Truth, the angels will crowd to Heaven’s gates

to see him, for he has been a mighty hero and done much for his Master. A Calvin or a Luther, with what plaudits shall they be received!—men with talents, who have been faithful to their trust. Yes, but know you not that there is many a humble village pastor whose flock scarcely numbers fifty, who toils for them as for his life—who spends hours in praying for their welfare—who uses all the little ability he has in his endeavor to win them to Christ? And do you imagine that his entry into Heaven shall be less triumphant than the entry of such a man as Luther?

If so, you know not how God deals with His people. He gives them rewards, not according to the greatness of the goods with which they were entrusted, but according to their fidelity. “Hereunto and he that has been faithful to the least, shall be as much rewarded as he that has been faithful in much.” I want you briefly to turn to the chapter to see this. You will note, first, that the man with two talents came to his Lord with as great a confidence as the man that had five.

“And he said, Lord, You delivered unto me two talents. Behold, I have gained two talents beside them.” I will be bound to say, that while that poor man with the two talents was trading with them, he frequently looked upon his neighbor with the five talents and said, “Oh, I wish I could do as much as he is doing! See now, he has five talents to put out and how much interest he has coming every year. Oh, that I could do as much!” And as he went on he often prayed, “O my Lord, give me greater ability and greater grace to serve You, for I long to do more.”

And when he sat down to read his diary, he thought, “Ah, this diary does not tell much. There is no account of my journey through fifty counties. I cannot tell how I have traveled from land to land as Paul did to preach the Truth of God. No—I have just had to keep in this parish and been pretty well starved to death, toiling for this people and if I have added some ten or a dozen to the Church, that has been a very great deal to me. Why, I hear that Mr. So-and-So was privileged to add two or three hundred in a year. Oh, that I could do that! Surely when I go to Heaven I shall creep in at the door somehow, while he by grace will be enabled to go boldly in, bringing his sheaves with him.”

Now stop, poor Little-Faith, stop. Your Master will not deal with you thus. When you shall come to die you will, through His grace, feel as much confidence in dying with your two well-used talents as your Brother with his ten. You will, when you come there, have your Lord’s sweet presence and you will say, “I am complete in Christ. Christ’s righteousness covers me from head to foot and now in looking back upon my past life, I can say, Blessed be His holy name. It is little that I could do, but I have done as much as I could for Him. I know that He will pardon my defects and forgive my miscarriages and I shall never look back upon my humble village charge without much joy because the Lord allowed me to labor there.”

And, oh methinks that man will have even a richer commendation in his own conscience than the man who has been more publicly applauded, for he can say to himself after putting all his trust in Christ, “Well, I am sure I did not do this for fame for I blushed unseen—I have lost my sweetness on the desert air. No one has ever read my deeds. What I did was between myself and my God and I can render up my account to Him and say, ‘Lord, I did it for You and not to honor myself.’”

Yes Friends, I might tell you now of many a score of earnest evangelists in this our land who are working harder than any one of us and yet win far less honor. Yes, and I could bring you up many a score of city missionaries whose toil for Christ is beyond all measure of praise who never get much reward here. No, they rather meet with slights and disrespect. You see the poor man start as soon as he goes from his place of worship today. He has got three hours this afternoon to go and spend among the sick and then you will see him on Monday morning. He has to go from house to house, often with the door slammed in his face—often exposed to mobs and drunken men. He is sometimes jeered and scoffed at, meeting with persons of all religious persuasions and of no persuasion. He toils on. He has his little evening meeting and there he gets a little flock together and tries to pray with them and he gets now and then a man or a woman converted. But he has no honor.

He just takes his convert off to the minister and he says, “Sir, here is a good man. I think He is impressed—will you baptize him and receive him into your Church?” The minister gets all the credit of that, but as for the poor city missionary, there is little or nothing said of him. There is, perhaps, just his name, Mr. Brown, or Mr. Smith, mentioned sometimes in the report. But people do not think much of him, except, perhaps, as an object of charity they have to keep, whereas *he* is the man that gives them the charity, giving all the sap and blood and marrow of his life for some poor sixty pounds a year, hardly enough to keep his family above want. But he, when he dies, my Friend, shall have no less the approval of the conscience than the man who was permitted to stand before the multitudes and raised the nation into excitement on account of religion. He shall come before the Master clothed in the righteousness of Christ and with unblushing face shall say, “I have received two talents. I have gained beside them two talents more.”

Furthermore and to conclude, you will notice there was no difference in his Master’s commendation—none in the reward. In both cases, it was, “Well done good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter you into the joy of your Lord.” Here comes Whitfield, the man that stood before twenty thousand at a time to preach the Gospel—he in England, Scotland, Ireland and America has testified the Truth of God and could count his converts by thousands, even under one sermon! Here he comes, the man that endured persecution and scorn and yet was not moved—the man of whom

the world was not worthy, who lived for his fellow men and died at last for their cause. Stand by angels and admire, while the Master takes him by the hand and says, "Well done, well done, good and faithful servant. Enter you into the joy of your Lord!"

See how free grace honors the man whom it enabled to do valiantly. Hark! Who is this that comes there? A poor thin looking creature that on earth was a consumptive. There was a hectic flush now and then upon her cheek and she lay three long years upon her bed of sickness. Was she a prince's daughter, for it seems Heaven is making much stir about her? No, she was a poor girl that earned her living by her needle and she worked herself to death!—Stitch, stitch, stitch—from morning to night! And here she comes. She went prematurely to her grave, but she is coming like a shock of corn fully ripe, into Heaven. And her Master says, "Well done you good and faithful servant, you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter you into the joy of your Lord."

She takes her place by the side of Whitfield. Ask what she ever did and you find out that she used to live in some back garret down some dark alley in London. And there used to be another poor girl come to work with her. And that poor girl, when she first came to work with her, was a happy and volatile creature. And this consumptive child told her about Christ. And they used, when she was well enough, to creep out of an evening to go to Chapel or to Church together. It was hard at first to get the other one to go, but she used to press her lovingly. And when the girl went wild a little, she never gave her up. She used to say, "O Jane, I wish you loved the Savior." And when Jane was not there she used to pray for her and when she *was* there she prayed *with* her. And now and then when she was stitching away, she read a page out of the Bible to her, for poor Jane could not read.

And with many tears she tried to tell her about the Savior who loved her and gave Himself for her. At last, after many a day of hard persuasion and many an hour of sad disappointment and many a night of sleepless tearful prayer—at last she lived to see the girl profess her love to Christ! And she left her and took sick and there she lay till she was taken to the hospital where she died. When she was in the hospital she used to have a few tracts and she used to give them to those who came to see her. She would try, if she could, to get the women to come round and she would give them a tract.

When she first went into the hospital, if she could creep out of bed, she used to get by the side of one who was dying and the nurse used to let her do it, till at last she got too ill. And then she used to ask a poor woman on the other side of the ward who was getting better and was going out, if she would come and read a chapter to her. Not that she wanted her to read to her on her own account, but for her sake, for she thought it might strike her heart while she was reading it. At last this poor girl died and fell

asleep in Jesus' arms. And the poor consumptive needle-woman had said to her by her Master, "Well done"—and what more could an archangel have said to her?—"she has done what she could."

See, then, the Master's commendation and the last reward will be equal to all men who have used their talents well. Ah, if there are degrees in glory, they will not be distributed according to our talents but according to our faithfulness in using them. As to whether there are degrees or not, I know not—but this I know—he that does His Lord's will shall have said to Him, "Well done good and faithful servant."

And now, Friends, this one word only. I have told you that there are many in our denomination who are preaching the Gospel continually. I should bring some few of the letters, written by the poor ministers to us to read. But sometimes I think this a violation of delicacy and I do not like to do it. But when I did that one year the collection was almost twice as good. So I think I might almost commit a breach of etiquette in order to help them. However I can solemnly assure you that if there is poverty anywhere, it is to be found among the ministers in the Baptist Churches and I am sorry to say that one cause of it is the fault of the people themselves. They are so little in the habit of giving that their ministers are starved.

Now, if Christ will say, "Well done," hereafter, to many a humble preacher, do you think He intends the Church to starve them while they are here on £30 or £40 a year? Now, Brethren, if Christ will say, "Well done," at last, we may anticipate His verdict and say, "Well done today." And can we better say, "well done" than by unmuzzling the ox that treads out the corn and give these poor ministers something out of our own wealth, as God may help us, that their necessities may be supplied? There will be pretty well a score of persons who will be dependent during the next year upon what you give this year. Perhaps you will remember that and assist them. One kind gentleman, who usually comes here, says "I could not come today, so I forward my pound to be put into the box by the minister." And I trust, if there are any not here today who will be here next Sabbath that they will not forget this collection. It is always very dear to the heart of my Church. Amen.

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THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS

NO. 671

DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 21, 1866,
 BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit upon the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave Me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you took Me in; I was naked, and you clothed Me; was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.”
Matthew 25:31-36.

IT is exceedingly beneficial to our souls to mount above this present evil world to something nobler and better. The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are apt to choke everything good within us and we grow fretful, desponding, perhaps proud, carnal. It is well for us to cut down these thorns and briars, for heavenly seed sown among them is not likely to yield a harvest. I do not know a better sickle with which to cut them down than thoughts of the kingdom to come.

In the valleys in Switzerland many of the inhabitants are deformed and dwarfish, and the whole of them wear a sickly appearance for the atmosphere is noxious, and is close and stagnant. You traverse those valleys as rapidly as you can and are glad to escape from them. Up yonder on the mountain you will find a hardy race who breathe the clear fresh air as it blows from the virgin snows of the Alpine summits. It would be well for their frames if the dwellers in the valley could frequently leave their abodes among the marshes and the fever mists and get themselves up into the clear atmosphere above.

It is to such an exploit of climbing that I invite you this morning! May the Spirit of God bear us as upon eagles' wings that we may leave the mists of fear and the fevers of anxiety and all the ills which gather in this valley of earth, and get ourselves up to the mountains of future joy and blessedness where it is to be our delight to dwell world without end! Oh may God disentangle us now for a little while, cut the cords that keep us here below, and permit us to mount! We sit, some of us, like chained eagles fastened to the rock, only that, unlike the eagle, we begin to *love* our chain, and would, perhaps, if it came really to the test, loath to have it snapped.

May God now grant us Divine Grace if we cannot at once escape from the chain of mortal life as to our bodies, yet to do so as to our spirits—and leaving the body like a servant at the foot of the hill, may our soul, like

Abraham, go to the top of the mountain—and there may we have communion with the Most High! While expounding my text, I shall ask your attention this morning, first, to the circumstances which surround the rewarding of the righteous. Secondly, to their portion. And thirdly, to the persons themselves.

I. There is MUCH OF TEACHING IN THE SURROUNDING CIRCUMSTANCES. We read, “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory.” It appears, then, that we must not expect to receive our reward till by-and-by. Like the hireling we must fulfill our day, and then at evening we shall have our penny. Too many Christians look for a *present* reward for their labors. And if they meet with success, they begin doting upon it as though they had received their recompense.

Like the disciples who returned saying, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us,” they rejoice too exclusively in present prosperity—whereas the Master bade them not to look upon miraculous success as being their reward, since that might not always be the case. “Nevertheless,” said He, “rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.” Success in the ministry is not the Christian minister’s true reward—it is an earnest—but the wages still are in the future. You must not look upon the praise from your fellow men as being the reward of excellence, for often you will meet with the reverse—you will find your best actions misconstrued, and your motives ill interpreted.

If you are looking for your reward here I may warn you of the Apostle’s words, “If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” Because other men get their reward—even the Pharisee gets his—“Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward”—but we have none here. To be despised and rejected of men is the Christian’s lot! Among his fellow Christians he will not always stand in good repute. It is not unmitigated kindness nor unmingled love that we receive even from the saints.

I tell you, if you look for your reward from Christ’s bride, herself, you will miss it! If you expect to receive your crown from the hand, even of your Brethren in the ministry who know your labors, and who ought to sympathize with your trials, you will be mistaken! “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory,” *then* is your time of recompense—not today, nor tomorrow, nor at any time in this world! Reckon nothing which you acquire, no honor which you gain to be the reward of your service to your Master! That is reserved for the time “when the Son of Man shall come in His glory.”

Observe with delight the august person by whose hand the reward is given. It is written, “When the Son of Man shall come.” Brethren, we love the King’s courtiers—we delight to be numbered with them ourselves. It is no mean thing to do service to Him whose head—“Though once was crowned with thorns, is crowned with glory now.” But it is a delightful thought that the service of rewarding us will not be left to the *courtiers*. The angels will be there and the Brethren of the King will be there—but Heaven was not prepared by them—nor can it be given by them!

Their hands shall not yield us a coronation—we shall join their songs, but their songs would be no reward for us! We shall bow with them and they with us—but it will not be possible for them to give us the recompense of the reward—that starry crown is all too weighty for an angel’s

hand to bring, and the benediction all too sweet to be pronounced, even by seraphic lips!

The King Himself must say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." What do you say to this, my dear Brothers and Sisters? You have felt a temptation to look to God's servants, to the approval of the *minister*, to the kindly look of parents, to the word of commendation from your fellow worker. All these you value, and I do not blame you—but these may fail you—and therefore never consider them as being the reward. You must wait till the time when the King comes, and then it will neither be your Brethren, your pastors, your parents, nor your helpers, but the King Himself who shall say to you, "Come, you blessed."

How this sweetens Heaven! It will be Christ's own gift! How this makes the benediction doubly blessed! It shall come from His lips which drop like myrrh and flow with honey! Beloved, it is Christ, who became a curse for us, who shall give the blessing to us! Roll this as a sweet morsel under your tongues. The Character in which our Lord Jesus shall appear is significant. Jesus will then be revealed as truly "the King." "When the Son of Man shall come." It was *to Him* as King that the service was rendered, and it is *from Him* as King that the reward must therefore come.

And so, upon the very threshold a question of self-examination arises—"The King will not reward the servants of another prince—am I, therefore, *His* servant? Is it my joy to wait at the threshold of His gates and sit like Mordecai at the courts of Ahasuerus—at the entrance of His door? Say, Soul, do you serve the King?" I mean not the kings and queens of earth—let them have loyal servants for their subjects—but *saints* are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings—are you so? If you are not so, when the King comes in His glory there can be no reward for you.

I long in my own heart to recognize Christ's kingly office more than I have ever done. It has been my delight to preach to you Christ dying on the Cross, and, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross." But I want, for my own self, to realize Him on His Throne, reigning in my heart, having a right to do as He wills with me! I want to get to the condition of Abraham, who, when God spoke, though it was to tell him to offer up his own Isaac, never asked a question, but simply said, "Here am I."

Beloved, seek to know and feel the controlling power of the King, or else when He comes, since you have not known Him as King, He cannot know *you* as servant! And it is only to the *servant* that the King can give the reward which is spoken of in the text—"When the Son of Man shall come."

Now pass on. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory." The fullness of that is impossible to conceive—

***"Imagination's utmost stretch,
In wonder dies away."***

But this we know—and it is the sweetest thing we *can* know—that if we have been partakers with Jesus in His *shame*, we also shall be sharers with Him in the luster which shall surround Him. Are you, Beloved, one with Christ Jesus? Are you of His flesh and of His bones? Does a vital union knit you to Him? Then you are today with Him in His shame—you have taken up His Cross and gone with Him outside the camp bearing His reproach.

You shall doubtless be with Him when the Cross is exchanged for the crown! But judge yourself this morning! If you are not with Him in the regeneration, neither shall you be with Him when He shall come in His glory! If you start back from the black side of communion, you shall not understand its bright, its happy period when the King shall come in His glory and all His holy angels with Him. What? Are angels with Him? And yet He took not up angels—He took up the seed of Abraham.

Are the holy angels with Him? Come, my Soul, then you can not be far from Him! If His friends and His neighbors are called together to see His glory, what do you think if you are married to Him—shall you be distant? Though it is a day of judgment, yet you cannot be far from that heart which, having admitted angels into intimacy, has admitted *you* into *union*. Has He not said to you, O my Soul, “I have betrothed you unto Me in faithfulness, and in judgment, and in righteousness”? Have not His own lips said it, “I am married to you, and My delight is in you”? Then if the angels, who are but the friends and the neighbors, shall be with Him, it is abundantly certain that His own beloved Hephzibah, in whom is all His delight, shall be near to Him and shall be a partaker of His splendor!

It is when He comes in His glory, and when His communion with angels shall be distinctly recognized—it is *then* that His unity with His Church shall become apparent! “Then will He sit upon the throne of His glory.” Here is a repetition of the same reason why it should be your time and my time to receive the reward from Christ if we are found among His faithful servants! When He sits upon His throne it were not fit that His own beloved ones should be in the mire! When He was in the place of shame they were with Him—and now that He is on the throne of gold, they must be with Him, too.

There were no oneness—union with Christ were a mere matter of talk—if it were not certain that when He is on the throne they shall be upon the throne, too. But I want you to notice one particular circumstance with regard to the *time* of the reward. It is when He shall have divided the sheep from the goats. My reward, if I am a child of God, cannot come to me while I am in union with the wicked. Even on earth you will have the most enjoyment of Christ when you are most separated from this world! Rest assured, although the separated path does not seem an easy one—and it will certainly entail upon you persecution and the loss of many friends—yet it is the happiest walking in the world!

You conforming Christians who can enter into the world’s mirth to a certain degree—you cannot—you never can know as you now are, the inward joys of those who live in lonely but lovely fellowship with Jesus. The nearer you get to the world the further you must be from Christ. I believe the more thoroughly a bill of divorce is given by your spirit to every earthly object upon which your soul can set itself, the more close will be your communion with your Lord. “Forget also your own country and your Father’s house; so shall the King greatly desire your beauty, for He is your Lord, and worship you Him.”

It is significant that not until the King has separated the sheep from the goats does He say, “Come, you blessed.” And though the righteous will have enjoyed a happiness as disembodied spirits, yet as risen from the grave in their bodies, their happiness is not fully accomplished till the

great Shepherd shall have appeared to separate them from all association with the nations that forget God, once and for all, by a great gulf which cannot be passed.

Now then, Beloved, these circumstances all put together come to this—the reward of following Christ is not today, is not among the sons of men, is not from men, is not even from the excellent of the earth, is not even bestowed by Jesus while we are here—the glorious crown of life which the Lord’s Divine Grace shall give to His people is reserved for the second advent, “when the Son of Man *shall* come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him.” Wait with patience! Wait with joyful expectation, for He shall come, and blessed be the day of His appearing!

II. We have now to turn to the second point—THE PORTION ITSELF. Every word is suggestive. I shall not attempt to exhaust, but merely to glance at all of them. The reward of the righteous is set forth by the loving benediction pronounced to them by the Master, but their very position gives some foreshadowing of it. He put the sheep on His right hand. Heaven is a position of the most elevated dignity authoritatively conferred and of Divine complacency manifestly enjoyed.

God’s saints are always at His right hand according to the judgment of faith, but hereafter it shall be more clearly manifested. God is pleased to be close to His people, and to place them near to Himself in a place of protection. Sometimes it seems as if they were at the left hand—they certainly have, some of them, less comfort than the worldlings. “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Their eyes stand out with fatness, they have more than heart could wish.”

Whereas His people are often made to drink waters of less than a full cup, and their meat and their drink are bitter with wormwood and gall. The world is upside down now. The Gospel has begun to turn it the right way uppermost, but when the day of Grace is over, and the day of glory comes, then shall it be righted, indeed! Then those that wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins shall be clothed in glittering apparel, being transfigured like the Savior upon Tabor! Then those of whom the world was not worthy shall come to a world that shall be worthy of them!

Then those who were hurried to the stake and to the flames shall triumph with chariots of fire and horses of fire, and swell the splendor of the Master’s pompous appearing. Yes, Beloved, you shall eternally be the object of Divine complacency, not in secret and unknown communion, but your state and glory shall be revealed before the sons of men! Your persecutors shall gnash their teeth when they see you occupying places of honor at His right hand, and themselves, though greater far than you on *earth*, condemned to take the lowest room!

How shall Dives bite his fire-tormented tongue in vain as he sees Lazarus, the beggar on the dunghill, made to sit at the right hand of the King eternal and immortal! Heaven is a place of dignity. “There we shall be as the angels,” said one, but I know we shall be even superior than they! Is it not written of Him who in all things is our representative, “You have put all things under His feet”? Even the very seraphs, themselves, so richly blessed—what are they but “ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation”?

But now, turning to the welcome uttered by the Judge, the first word is "Come." It is the Gospel symbol. The Law said "Go." The Gospel says, "Come." The Spirit said it in invitation. The Bride said it in intercession. "Let him that hears" say it by constantly, laboriously endeavoring to spread abroad the good news! Since Jesus said, "Come," we learn that the very essence of Heaven is *communion*. "Come!" You came near enough to say, "Lord, we believe, help You our unbelief!"

You looked to Him on the Cross and were lightened. You had fellowship with Him in bearing His Cross. You filled up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church. Still come! Ever, come! Forever come! Come up from your graves, you risen ones! Come up from among the ungodly, you consecrated ones! Come up from where you cast yourselves down in your humiliation before the Great White Throne! Come up to wear My crown and sit with Me upon My Throne! Oh, that word has Heaven lurking within it! It shall be to you your joy forever to hear the Savior say to you, "Come."

I declare before you that my soul has sometimes been so full of joy that I could hold no more when my beloved Lord has said, "Come," to my soul! For He has taken me into His banqueting house and His banner of love has waved over my head. And He has taken me away from the world and its cares and its fears, and its trials and its joys, up to "the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon," where He manifested Himself to me! When this, "Come," shall come into your ear from the Master's lips there shall not be the flesh to drag you back! There shall be no sluggishness of spirit, no heaviness of heart—you shall come eternally, then—you shall not mount to descend again, but mount on and on in blessed joy forever and forever!

The first word indicates that Heaven is a state of communion—"Come." Then it is, "Come, you blessed," which is a clear declaration that this is a state of *happiness*. They cannot be more blessed than they are! They have their hearts' desire and their hearts have been enlarged and their desires have been expanded by entering into the Infinite. And though they are rid of the cramping influences of corruption and of time, yet even when their desire shall know no bounds they shall have all the happiness that the utmost stretch of their souls can by any possibility conceive. This much, and this is all we know—they are supremely blessed!

Their blessedness, you perceive, does not come from any secondary joy but from the great primary Source of all good. "Come, you blessed of My Father." They drink the unadulterated wine at the winepress itself, where it joyously leaps from the bursting clusters! They pluck celestial fruits from the unwithering boughs of the immortal tree! They shall sit at the well-head and drink the waters as they spring forth with unrivalled freshness from the depths of the heart! (If Deity, they shall not be basking in the beams of the sun, but they shall be, like Uriel, the angel *in* the sun. They shall dwell in God, and so their souls shall be satisfied with favor, and full and more than full with His Presence and benediction.)

Notice, once again, that according to the words used it is a state where they shall recognize their *right* to be there—a state, therefore, of perfect freedom and ease and fearlessness. It is—"inherit the kingdom." A man does not fear to lose that which he wins by descent from his parents. If

Heaven had been the subject of *earning*, we might have feared that our merits had not really deserved it and therefore suspect that one day a Writ of Error would be issued and that we should be ejected. But we do know whose sons we are! We know whose love it is that makes glad our spirits, and when we “inherit” the kingdom we shall enter it not as strangers or as foreigners, but as *sons* coming to their birthright.

Looking over all its streets of gold and surveying all its walls of pearl we shall feel that we are at home in our own house, and have an actual right—not through merit but through Divine Grace—to everything that is there! It will be a state of heavenly bliss! The Christian shall feel that law and justice are on his side and that those stern attributes have brought him there as well as mercy and loving kindness.

But the word “inherit” here imports full possession and enjoyment. They have inherited in a certain sense before, but now as an *heir*, when he has arrived at full maturity begins to spend his own money, and to farm his own acres, so do they enter into their heritage. We are not full grown as yet and therefore are not admitted to full possession. But wait awhile! Those grey hairs betoken, my Brethren, that you are getting ripe. These, these, these my still youthful locks show me, alas, that I may have to tarry for a little longer! And yet I know not—the Lord may soon permit me to sleep with my fathers. But later or earlier, be it as He wills, we shall one day come into possession of the goodly land.

Now if it is sweet to be an heir while you are in youth, what is it to be an heir when arrived at perfect manhood? Was it not delightful to sing that hymn just now, and to behold the land of pure delight whose everlasting spring and never-withering flowers are just across the narrow stream of death? Oh you sweet fields! You saints immortal who lie down there! When shall we be with you and be satisfied? If the mere thinking of Heaven ravishes the soul, what must it be to be there? To plunge deep into the stream of blessedness? To dive and find no bottom? To swim and find no shore? To sip of the wine of Heaven, as we sometimes do, makes our hearts so glad that we know not how to express our joy!

But what will it be to drink deep and drink *again*, and sit forever at the table and know that the feast will never be over and the cups will never be empty and that there will be no worse wine to be brought out at the last, but if possible better, still, and better still in infinite progression?

The word “kingdom,” which stands next, indicates the richness of the heritage of saints. It is no petty estate, no alms rooms, no happy corner in obscurity. I heard a good man say he should be content to win a corner behind the door. I shall not be! The Lord says we shall inherit a *kingdom*. We would not be satisfied to inherit less, because less than that would not suit our character. “He has made us kings and priests unto God,” and we must reign forever and ever, or be as wretched as deposed monarchs!

A king without a kingdom were an unhappy man! If I were a poor servant, an alms room would be a joy, for it would consort with my condition and degree. But if I am made, by Grace, a *king*—I must have a kingdom, or I shall not have attained to a position equal to my nature! He who makes us kings will give us a kingdom to fit the nature which He has bestowed upon us. Beloved, strive after, more and more, that which the Spirit of God will give you—a kingly heart! Do not be among those who are

satisfied and content with the miserable nature of ordinary humanity. A child's glass bead is all the world is to a truly royal spirit! These glittering diadems are only nursery toys to God's kings!

The true jewels are up there! The true treasury of wealth looks down upon the stars. Do not stint your soul! Be not straitened! Get a kingly heart—ask the King of kings to give it to you—and beg of Him a royal spirit. Act royally on earth towards your Lord, and for His sake towards all men. Go about the world not as mean men in spirit and act, but as kings and princes of a race superior to the dirt scrapers who are on their knees, crawling in the mud after yellow earth. Then, when your soul is royal, remember with joy that your future inheritance shall be all that your kingly soul pants after in its most royal moments. It will be a state of unutterable richness and wealth of soul.

According to the word "prepared," we may conceive it to be a condition of surpassing excellence. It is a kingdom *prepared*—and it has been so long a time prepared, and He who prepares it is so wondrously rich in resources—that we cannot possibly conceive how excellent it must be! If I might so speak, God's *common* gifts which He throws away as though they were nothing, are priceless. But what will be *these* gifts upon which the infinite mind of God has been set for ages of ages in order that they may reach the highest degree of excellence?

Long before Christmas chimes were ringing mother was so glad to think her boy was coming home, after the first quarter he had been out at school, and straightway she began preparing and planning all sorts of joys for him! Well might the holidays be happy when mother had been contriving to make them so. Now in an infinitely nobler manner the great God has prepared a kingdom for His people! He has thought, "that will please them, and that will bless them, and this other will make them superlatively happy."

He prepared the kingdom to perfection! And then, as if that were not enough, the glorious Man, Christ Jesus, went up from earth to Heaven—and you know what He said when He departed—"I go to prepare a place for you." We know that the infinite God can prepare a place fitting for a finite creature, but the words smile so sweetly at us as we read that Jesus Himself, who is a Man and therefore knows our hearts' desires, has had a finger in it! He has prepared it, too. It is a kingdom prepared for you upon which the thoughts of God have been set to make it excellent, "from before the foundation of the world."

But we must not pause. It is a "kingdom prepared for you." Mark that! I must confess I do not like certain expressions which I hear, sometimes, which imply that Heaven is prepared for some who will never reach it—prepared for those who will be driven as accursed ones into the place of torment. I know there is a sacred expression which says, "let no man take your crown." But that refers to the crown of ministerial success, rather than of eternal Glory. An expression which grated on my ear the other evening from the lips of a certain good man ran something in this fashion: "There is a Heaven prepared for all of you, but if you are not faithful you will not win it. There is a crown in Heaven laid up for you, but if you are not faithful it will be without a wearer."

I do not believe it! I cannot believe it! That the crown of Eternal Life, which is laid up for the blessed of the Father will ever be given to anybody else or left without a possessor, I do not believe! I dare not conceive of crowns in Heaven and nobody to wear them! Do you think that in Heaven, when the whole number of saints is complete, you will find a number of unused crowns?

“Ah, what are these for? Where are the heads for these?” “They are in Hell!” Then, Brother, I have no particular desire to be in Heaven. If all the family of Christ are not there, my soul will be wretched and forlorn because of their sad loss, because I am in union with them all. If one son that believed in Jesus does not get there I shall lose respect for the promise and respect for the Master, too. He must keep His word to every soul that rests on Him. If your God has gone the length of actually preparing a place for His people and has made provision for them and been disappointed, He is no God to me, for I could not adore a disappointed God!

I do not believe in such a God! Such a being would not be God at all. The notion of disappointment in His eternal preparations is not consistent with Deity. Talk thus of Jupiter and Venus if you please, but the Infinite Jehovah is, as far as human speech can dishonor Him, dishonored by being mentioned in such a connection! He has prepared a place for you! Here is personal election. He has made a distinct ordinance for every one of His people that where He is, there shall they be. “Prepared from before the foundation of the world.” Here is eternal election appearing before men were created, preparing a crown before heads were made to wear it!

And so God had, before the starry skies began to gleam, carried out the decree of election in a measure which when Christ shall come shall be perfected to the praise of the glory of His Divine Grace. “Who works all things after the counsel of His will.” Our portion, then, is one prepared from all eternity for us according to the election of God’s Grace—one suitable to the loftiest character to which we can ever attain! One which will consist in nearness to Christ, communion with God, and standing forever in a place of dignity and happiness!

III. And now I have very little time to speak, as I hoped to have spoken this morning, about THE PERSONS WHO SHALL COME THERE. They are recognizable by a secret and by a public character. Their name is—“blessed of My Father”—the Father chose them, gave His Son for them, justified them through Christ, preserved them in Christ Jesus, adopted them into the family—and now accepts them into His own house.

Their nature you have described in the word “inherit.” None can inherit but sons. They have been born again and have received the Nature of God. Having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust, they have become partakers of the Divine Nature—they are sons. Their appointment is mentioned—“inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.”

Their name is “blessed.” Their nature is that of a child. Their appointment is that of God’s decree. Their doings, their outward doings—these we want to speak upon a minute. They appear to have been distinguished among men for deeds of charity, and these were not in any way associated with ceremonies or outward observances. It is *not* said that they

preached—they did, some of them. It is *not* said that they prayed—they must have done so or they would not have been spiritually alive.

The actions which are selected as their type are actions of charity to the indigent and forlorn. Why these? I think because the general audience assembled around the Throne would know how to appreciate this evidence of their new-born nature. The King might think more of their prayers than of their alms, but the multitude would not. He speaks so as to gain the verdict of all assembled. Even their enemies could not object to His calling those blessed who had performed these actions. If there is an action which wins for men the universal consent, it is an action by which men would be *served*. Against this there is no law.

I have never heard of a state in which there was a law against clothing the naked and feeding the hungry. Humanity at once, when its conscience is so seared that it cannot see its own sinfulness, yet detects the virtuousness of feeding the poor. Doubtless this is one reason why these actions were selected. And again, they may have been chosen as evidences of Divine Grace, because, as actions, they are a wonderful means of separating between the hypocrite and the true Christian.

Dr. Gill has an idea, and perhaps he is right, that this is not a picture of the *general* judgment, but of the judgment of the professing Church. If so, it is all the more reasonable to conclude that these works of mercy are selected as the appropriate discerners between the hypocrite and the sincere. I fear that there are some of you high professors who could not stand the test. “Good praying people” they call you, but what do you give to the Lord? Your religion has not touched your pockets! This does not apply to some of you, for there are many here of whom I would venture to speak before the bar of God that I know their substance to be consecrated to the Lord and His poor, and I have sometimes thought that beyond their means they have given both to the poor and to God’s cause.

But there are others of a very different disposition. Now here I shall give you a little plain English talk which none can fail to understand. You may talk about your religion till you have worn your tongue out, and you may get others to believe you! You may remain in the Church twenty years and nobody ever detect in you anything like an inconsistency. But if it is in your power and you do nothing to relieve the necessities of the poor members of Christ’s body, you will be damned as surely as if you were drunkards or whoremongers! If you have no care for God’s Church, what I am about to say applies to you—and you will as surely sink to the lowest Hell as if you had been common blasphemers!

That is very plain English, but it is the plain meaning of my text, and it is at my peril that I flinch from telling you of it. “I was hungry, and you gave me”—what? Good advice? Yes, but no meat. “I was thirsty, and you gave me”—what? A tract? And no drink. “I was naked, and you gave me”—what? Your good wishes? But no clothes. I was a stranger and—you pitied me, but you did not take me in. I was sick—you said you could recommend me a doctor, but you did not visit me. I was in prison, I, God’s servant, a persecuted one, put in prison for Christ’s sake and you said I should be more cautious! But you did not stand by my side and take a share of the blame and bear with me reproach for the Truth for God’s sake!

You see, this is a very terrible winnowing fan to some of you cowardly ones whose main object is to get all you can and hold it fast! But it is a fan which frequently must be used. Some may deceive you and spare you—but by the Grace of God I will not—but will labor to be more bold than ever in denouncing sin. “Well,” says one, “what are those to do who are so poor that they have nothing to give away?” My dear Brothers and Sisters, do you notice how beautifully the text takes care of you? It hints that there are some who cannot give bread to the hungry, and clothes to the naked, but what about them? Why, you see, they are the persons spoken of as, “My Brethren,” who *receive* the kindness, so that this passage comforts the poor and by no means condemns them!

Certain of us honestly give to the poor all we can spare, and then, of course, everybody comes to us! And when we say, “Really, I cannot give any more,” somebody snarls and says, “Call yourself a Christian?” “Yes, I do. I should not call myself a Christian if I gave away other people’s money. I should not call myself a Christian if I gave away what I have not got—I should call myself a thief—pretending to be charitable when I could not pay my debts.” I have a very great pity, indeed, for those people who get into the Bankruptcy Court. I do not mean the debtors. I have seldom much sympathy with them—I have a good deal for the creditors who lose by having trusted dishonest people!

If any man should say, “I will live beyond my means in order to get a good character,” my dear Brothers and Sisters, you are wrong. That action is in itself wrong. What you have to give must be that which is your own. “But I shall have to pinch myself,” says one, “if I do it.” Well, pinch yourself! I do not think there is half the pleasure in doing good till you get to the pinching point. This remark, of course, applies only to those of us of moderate means who can soon distribute our alms and get down to the pinch point.

When you begin to feel, “Now, I must go without that. Now I must curtail these in order to do more good,” oh, you cannot tell—it is THEN when you can really feel—“Now I have not given God merely the cheese parings and candle ends that I could not use, but I have really cut out for my Master a good piece of the loaf! I have not given Him the old crusts that were getting moldy, but I have given Him a piece of my own daily bread, and I am glad to do it if I can show my love to Jesus Christ by denying myself!”

If you are doing this. If you are thus, out of love to Jesus, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, I believe that these are put down as tests—because they are such blessed detectives between the hypocrites and the really godly people. When you read “for” here, you must not understand it to be that their reward is *because* of this, but that they are proven to be God’s servants *by* this. And so, while they do not merit it *because* of these actions, yet these actions show that they were saved by Grace, which is *evidenced* by the fact that Jesus Christ worked such works in them. If Christ does not work such things in you, you have no part in Him! If you have not produced such works as these you have not believed in Jesus.

Now somebody says, “Then I intend to give to the poor in the future in order that I may have this reward.” Ah, but you are very much mistaken if

you do that. The Duke of Burgundy was waited upon by a poor man, a very loyal subject, who brought him a very large root which he had grown. He was a very poor man, indeed, and every root he grew in his garden was of consequence to him. But merely as a loyal offering he brought to his prince the largest his little garden produced. The prince was so pleased with the man's evident loyalty and affection that he gave him a very large sum.

The steward thought, "Well, I see this pays! This man has got fifty pounds for his large root. I think I shall make the duke a present." So he bought a horse and he reckoned that he should have in return ten times as much for it as it was worth, and he presented it with that view. The duke, like a wise man, quietly accepted the horse and gave the greedy steward nothing. That was all. So you say, "Well, here is a Christian man, and he gets rewarded. He has been giving to the poor, helping the Lord's Church, and see he is saved! The thing pays, I shall make a little investment."

Yes, but you see the steward did not give the horse out of any idea of loyalty, or kindness, or love to the duke, but out of very great love to *himself*—and therefore had no return. And if you perform deeds of charity out of the idea of getting to Heaven by them, why it is *yourself* that you are feeding! It is *yourself* that you are clothing! All your virtue is not virtue, it is rank *selfishness*! It smells strong of selfhood, and Christ will never accept it! You will never hear Him say, "Thank you" for it. You served *yourself*, and no reward is due.

You must first come to the Lord Jesus Christ and look to Him to save you! You must forever renounce all idea of doing anything to save yourself! But being saved, you will be able to give to the poor and so on without selfishness mixing with your motive—and you will get a reward of Divine Grace for the love token which you have given. It is necessary to believe in Christ in order to be capable of true virtue of the highest order. It is necessary to trust Jesus and to be, yourself, fully saved, before there is any value in your feeding the hungry or clothing the naked.

God give you Grace to go to my Master wounded yonder and to rest in the precious Atonement which He has made for human sin. And when you have done that, being loved at such a rate, may you show that you love in return! Being purchased so dearly, may you live for Him that bought you! And among the actions by which you prove it, let these gleam and glisten like God-given jewels—the visiting of the sick, the comforting of the needy, the relieving of the distressed, and the helping of the weak. God accept these offerings as they come from gracious souls, and to Him be praise evermore. Amen.

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THE FINAL SEPARATION

NO. 1234

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

***“And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.”
Matthew 25:32.***

JESUS Christ, the man of Nazareth, who is also the Son of God, was crucified, dead and buried, and the third day He rose again from the dead. After He had showed Himself to His disciples for 40 days—sometimes to one alone, at other times to two or three together, and on one occasion to above 500 Brethren at once—He ascended into Heaven. From the Mount Olivet, from the midst of His disciples, He rose into mid air and, by-and-by, a cloud received Him out of their sight. That same Jesus who is gone into Heaven shall so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into Heaven. That is to say, in Person, in His own risen body. The same Christ who rose into the skies will, in the latter day, surely descend again. The time of His coming is not revealed to us—“Of that day and that hour knows no man, no, not the angels of God,” but the time is certainly growing nearer every day, and we cannot tell when the hour shall be.

We are told that He will come quickly. It seems a long time since that was said, even 1,800 years, but we remember that things which are slow with us, may be very quick with the Lord, for one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons. They remain hidden in the purpose of God. For excellent reasons these times and seasons are unrevealed, that we may be always on the watchtower, not knowing at what hour the Lord Jesus may be revealed.

To the ungodly world He will come as a thief in the night and take them unaware. But we, Brothers and Sisters, are not in darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief. Being children of the day, we are taught to be wakeful, and standing in the clear light, with our loins girt, we ought to be always looking for our Master's appearing. Always are we to be watching, never sleeping. Our text tells us that as one result of His coming there will be a general judgement. I am not going, tonight, to try and arrange the other events which will happen at the Lord's coming.

It is probably true that at His coming there will be, first of all, a resurrection and rewarding of His saints, a dividing of the 10 cities and the five cities, according to the faithfulness of those who were entrusted with talents. And at the close of that period will come that last tremendous day of which Prophets and Apostles have spoken—

***“The day that many thought should never come;
That all the wicked wished should never come;
That all the righteous had expected long;
Day greatly feared, and yet too little feared***

By him who feared it most.”

A day of fear and wrath! A day of destruction of the ungodly! A testing day to all mankind! A day which shall burn as an oven! We may tremblingly say of it, “Who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap.”

At that day when Christ shall come He shall judge all nations. There will be gathered before Him not only the Jews, to whom the Law was given, but the Gentiles, also. Not merely those nations who for many an age have heard the Gospel, but those to whom it shall then have been but lately published, for the kingdom of God must be published throughout all nations as a testimony against them. Everywhere Christ will have been preached and, then, from all regions, men shall be summoned to stand before Him. Remember, not merely all the living nations, but all the nationalities that have passed away.

There shall rise from the dead the hosts that perished before the flood and those, also, who were drowned amid its awful surges. There, too, shall appear the myriads that followed at the call of Nimrod, the swarms of the sons of Japheth who divided the isles of the Gentiles, and the hordes that marched to battle at the command of the kings of Assyria and Babylon. The dead of Egypt shall rise from their beds of spices, or from the earth with which their dust has mingled. The tens of thousands shall be there over whom Xerxes wept when he remembered how soon they would all pass away. The Greek and the Persian, these, shall rise, and the Roman, too, and all the hordes of Huns and Goths that swarmed like bees from the northern hives. They all passed into the unknown land, but they are not lost—they shall each answer to the muster roll in the Great Day of the Lord.

The earth, which is now becoming more and more a graveyard, shall yield up her dead and the sea, itself, transformed into a solid pavement, shall bear upon its bosom the lonely ones who today lie asleep in her gloomy caverns. All of woman born shall come forth from the prolific womb of the sepulcher—myriads, myriads countless as the drops of the morning, or as the sands of the sea shore. Multitudes, multitudes shall be gathered together in the valley of decision! Their bones shall come together and breath shall enter their bodies anew, and they shall live once more. Long as they have slept in the tomb, they shall all rise with one impulse and start up with one thought—to *appear before their Judge*.

The Great White Throne shall be set on high, all pure and lustrous, bright and clear like a sapphire, as one vast mirror in which man shall see himself and his sins reflected—and on that Throne shall sit the Son of Man. That same Jesus who was nailed to the tree and rose to Heaven shall sit upon the Judgement Seat, appointed to determine the cases of all mankind of every age. What an assemblage! No imagination can compass it. Far as the eyes can see—yes, far as the eagle’s pinion can soar—the earth shall be covered with men like a field with grass in the springtide! And there will they all stand with the Judge upon the Great White Throne as the common center of observation, for every eye shall see Him, and

they, also, that crucified Him. And all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.

It will be a motley throng, as you may well imagine, but the Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the Judge, Himself, shall divide them. That division will be the one work of the Judgement Day. He will divide them as readily and unerringly as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. Your business, tonight, shall be to draw the attention of each one to that division, that each of you may enquire what will be the result of it upon *himself*. I have thought it over on my own account, and desire to think of it, still. I would bid my mind fly into the future and see, for a moment, “the pomp of that tremendous day when Christ, with clouds, shall come.”

I would anticipate the verdict of that hour and I would think of the dread alternative of Heaven or Hell. I pray we may *all* think of it and, especially you who are unprepared for it, that you may at once fly to Him whose blood and righteousness, alone, can make you hold up your head in that tremendous hour. Three things we shall speak about—the first is *the division*. The second is *the Divider*. And the third is *the rule of the division*.

I. The first, then, is THE DIVISION. “Before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” That is to say, first, *they shall be divided into two parts*—His sheep and the goats. There shall be two positions—He shall put His sheep on the right hand, but the goats on the left. Is there no place for a *third* party? No, for the simple reason that there will, then, be no third class. And there will, then, be none for this reason—that there never *was* a third class!

I know there are some here, tonight, who dare not say they believe in Jesus, but they would not like to be put down among the ungodly. Yet I pray you remember that there are but two books—and in one or the other of those two your name must stand recorded by the hand of God—for there is no third book. There is the Lamb’s Book of Life and if your name is there, happy are you! If it is not there, your sins still stand recorded in the book which contains the condemning evidence which will seal the death warrants of unbelievers.

Listen to me! There are in this world, nowhere, any other sort of people beside those who are dead in sin and those who are alive unto God. There is no state between! A man either lives or is dead! You cannot find a neutral condition. A man may be in a swoon, or he may be asleep, but he is alive—there is no state that is not within the boundary of either life or death! Is not this clear enough? There is no state between being converted and unconverted—between being quickened and being dead in sin. There is no condition between being pardoned and having our sins upon us. There is no state between dwelling in darkness and being brought into marvelous light.

One or the other must always be our condition—and this is the great folly of mankind in all times—that they will dream of a middle state and try to loiter in it. It was for this cause that the old Prophet, standing on Carmel’s brow, said, “How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord

is God, follow Him: but if Baal, follow him.” And it is for this reason that we have constantly to call the attention of mankind to the great declaration of the Gospel—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned.” God has given to the preacher two hands, that he may set the people on each side and deal out the Truth of God to two characters and no more. Be not deceived about it, you are either on the way to Heaven or on the road to Hell.

There is no “purgatory” or middle condition in the next world. “Purgatory” is an invention of the Pope for the filling of his cellar and his pantry—and no more profitable speculation has ever been set than the saying of masses and the robbing of dupes under the pretence of altering that state which is fixed forever! Purgatory Pick-Purse was the name the first Reformers gave it. But you will go to Heaven or to Hell—and you will remain in one place or the other—for you have either a character that is fit for Heaven or a character that is fit for Hell. There is no character which can be supposed, if we understand the Scriptures correctly, which would be fit for a middle place. And neither is there any middle place prepared for it. “He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.” The human flock will be divided into two companies.

Observe, next, that *they will be divided readily*. It is not everybody that could divide sheep from goats. I suppose, according to your ordinary judgement of goats, you could very readily tell them from sheep. But one who has traveled in the East and even in Italy, knows that it takes somewhat tutored eyes to know a certain kind of goat from a certain kind of sheep. They are extremely like each other—the wool of some sheep in a warm climate becomes so like hair and the hair of a kind of goat is so much like wool, that a traveler scarcely knows which is which—but a shepherd who has lived among them knows the difference well.

So in this world, it is easy enough to tell the sinner from the saint in some cases—you need no great wit to discern the characters of the grossly dishonest, the drunk, the debauched, the Sabbath-breaker, the profane. You know that they have no part among the people of God, for they bear upon themselves the ensigns of the children of the Evil One—the immoral are easily separated from the pure in heart. But inside the Church there are a number of persons who have so much about them that looks good and yet so much that is terribly inconsistent, that we are quite unable to discover which is their true nature!

Thank God we are not called upon to judge them, nor even allowed to do so. The most experienced pastor must scarcely attempt to do so. Certainly, if he feels so much trouble about the matter that he takes it to his Lord and asks for directions as to how to deal with these tares, he will be told to let them grow on till harvest time, lest in rooting up the tares he should root up, also, the wheat with them. I talked, today, to a certain good man who labors hard among the poor in the East end. He said, “We have a great number who profess to be converted, but,” he said, “I do not think that much more than one in five actually stay and turn out to be really so.

“But,” he said, “we have no trouble about them in the Church—no such trouble as you would be likely to have with your people, because,” he said, “among the class of people who go to the Tabernacle there is a feeling that it is right to go to the House of God at least once on the Sabbath, if not twice. And if persons join the Church, there, they will, from habit, continue to attend. But,” he said, “the moment a man of the poorest class ceases to be a Christian in heart, he ceases, at the same time, to attend the public services, because there is no fashion to keep him up to it. And so he follows his own tastes, stops at home and loaf about, and in all probability gets drunk, or falls into some other of the common vices of his class, and he is sifted off at once.”

In such cases the classes are easily separated. But among a more respectable class of people, who do not drink and who observe the Sabbath, you will have a number of people who remain in the Church, though they have no secret piety, no real love to Christ, no private prayer and, therefore, there is all the more danger. Now, dear Friends, what we cannot do, and must not *try* to do, Jesus Christ will do easily enough. The Shepherd, when He comes, will soon separate His sheep from the goats. His eyes of fire will read each heart. The hypocrites in the Church will tremble in a moment—instinctively reading the meaning of that glance, as Christ, will, by that glance say to them, “What are *you* doing, here, among My people?”

Remember, that as the division will be made readily *it will be made Infallibly*, that is to say, there will not be found among the goats one poor trembling sheep left to be driven off with the unclean herd. When Christ says, “Depart, you cursed,” He will not say that to one sincere but feeble soul. Ah no, you may condemn yourself, but if you really have a living faith, the Lord will not condemn you. You may often be afraid that He will bid you depart, but He will not. No lamb of His flock shall be among the goats! The whole company of His redeemed shall be safely gathered into their eternal mansions—

**“Lord, those shall bear that day, so dread, so splendid,
Whose sins are, by Your merits covered over,
Who when Your hand of mercy was extended,
Believed, obeyed, and owned Your gracious power;
These, mighty God, shall see without dismay
The earth and Heaven before them pass away!”**

The sword cuts the other way, too, and therefore be sure of this, that there will be no goat allowed to enter the pastures of the blessed among the sheep! No unconverted graceless person will follow the Great Shepherd to those living fountains, above, which afford eternal draughts of bliss to the purchased flock. Though the sinner may have led a sort of outwardly consistent life for 40 or 50 years. Though he may have *preached* the Gospel and done many wonderful works, yet Christ will say to him, “I never knew you.” He will not be able to keep on his sheep’s clothing, then, or bleat any longer in sheep fashion—Christ will know him under whatever disguise he may wear! He will find him out and drive him to his own place, so that not a single one of the accursed shall enter into the city with the blessed. It will be an Infallible judgment! There is, therefore, good reason that we are prepared for it. There is no bribing or deceiv-

ing the Judge and no avoiding His tribunal. Oh, be ready to face that eye which will read you through and through!

That division, when it shall take place, let me further beg you to remember, *will be very keen and sharp*. Think it over, think it over, for some of you may have to smart through it. Two men shall be in the field, one shall be taken and the other left. There were two laborers who worked together, they had guided the same plow and driven the same oxen, but the one shall be upon the right hand and the other on the left. Two carpenters at the same bench had handled the same hammer and the same plane, but one shall be taken and the other left. Two had served in one shop at the same counter with the same goods—and one shall be taken and the other left—they were familiar acquaintances and old shop mates, but one shall rejoice to hear the welcome “Come,” and the other shall tremble as he receives the dread sentence, “Depart.”

Alas, the division will come closer home, still. Two women shall be in one house—the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, that is, engaged about the household duties, grinding the morning’s breakfast corn—one shall be taken and the other left. So you may be two servants in the same house, cook and housemaid, one saved and the other lost. Two sisters living together under the same roof, one brought into Glory and the other cast into shame. Two of you may be dwellers under the same roof, eating bread at the same table, drinking from the same cup and yet one of you shall feast at the eternal banquets and the other shall cry for a drop of water to cool their burning tongue! You would not like to be separated, but separated you must be.

Alas, there will be a separation still more painful! Two shall be in one bed, the one shall be taken and the other left—the husband torn away from the wife—and the wife taken from her husband. Oh, there will be partings, there will be partings and, consequently there will be weeping, there will be weeping at the Judgement Seat of Christ! Not for the godly, for in them the glory of their Lord will swallow up all other thought, but for the Christless, the prayerless, the graceless. Oh, the wailing of the children, and the wailing of the women, and the wailing of the husbands, and the wailing of the fathers when their children are saved, or their parents are saved, or their husbands and wives are saved—and they themselves are cast out forever!—

***“O there will be mourning
Before the Judgement Seat,
When this world is burning
Beneath Jehovah’s feet.
Friends and kindred then shall part,
Shall part to meet no more;
Wrath consume the rebel’s heart,
While saints on high adore!”***

The separation will be agony, indeed, to the lost! I could scarcely have the heart to bid a man, “good-bye,” if I knew that I should never see him again. The worst wish I could entertain concerning the worst enemy I ever had—though I do not know that I have one in the world—would not go so far as to say I wished I might never see him again. Since I hope I shall be

where Jesus is, I should like to see him, be he who he may, and see him there among the blessed. But it must not be. It must not be if sinners will not repent of sin if they persist in rejecting Jesus Christ. Unless you believe in Jesus, the parting will be keen and cutting, dividing between joints and marrow, tearing asunder marriage ties and bonds of filial or parental affection—slaying all vain hopes forever. O impenitent souls, I could weep for you! If you are linked in blood relationship with the saints, it will not help you if you die unregenerate! Though you were bone of each other's bone, and flesh of each other's flesh, yet must you be separated unless you are one with Christ! I entreat you unregenerate ones to lay this to heart at once and trifle no longer!

That division, dear Friends, remember, *will be very wide* as well as very keen, for the division will be such as will be represented in its distance by Heaven and by Hell—and what a distance is that! The distance between God and Satan! Between happiness and misery! Between Glory and everlasting contempt! Between infinite joy and boundless sorrow! Between songs and weeping! Between triumphs and wailing, feasting and gnashing of teeth! If the only division would be such as might arise from difference in degrees of Glory, (if such there is), one might still pine to have the companionship of our dear ones—but the difference is between Heaven and Hell—and Christ says of it that there is “a great gulf fixed” so that they that would pass from us to you cannot and neither can they come to us that would come from there. The distance will be wide as eternity, the separating gulf will be deep as the abyss and impassable as Hell.

And, remember, *the separation will be final*. There is no flinging a bridge across that vast abyss. Damned spirits may look down into that dread gulf, into the unutterable blackness of its darkness, but they will never see a hope of crossing to the land of the blessed. The key is lost—they can never come out of the dungeon of despair. “Forever, forever, forever,” is written upon the chain which binds the lost spirit! No hope of restoration was ever indulged by a man in Hell and it is idle to dream about it now. Of all figments of the imagination, it has the least support in Scripture. The lost sinner is forever separated from Jesus and from the disciples of Jesus, however near akin in the flesh those disciples may have been to him. Unalterable and *eternal* is the separation!

Beloved, these are such weighty things that while I dwell upon them I feel far more inclined to sit down and weep than to stand up and speak to you. The theme causes me to feel the weakness of mere words and in a measure makes me lose the power of expression, for what if any of *you* should be lost forever? It was a touching thing to me, yesterday, when I saw a Sister in Christ who has been my hearer for many years. She told me that she was decided for Christ by my saying, when I went away last time, that perhaps I might never address you again and might find a grave in a foreign land. I felt that it might be so at the time I uttered the words, though I am glad that they have not been fulfilled.

She thought, “Well, he has been preaching to me these many years, and if I die unconverted, I shall never see him again.” And then it flashed across her mind, “How much worse to feel that I shall never see the King

in His beauty! I shall never see the Savior!" And she was thus led by the Holy Spirit to give her heart to Jesus. Perhaps the Lord may use the thought of this separation to move some of you to say, "I will come to Jesus and I will rest in Him." O Lord, my God, grant it may be so, for Jesus' sake!

II. We have spoken about *the division*. We will now have a few words about THE DIVIDER. "*He shall separate them, one from another.*" Christ Jesus will be the Divider of the race of men into two parts and this I am glad to know, because, first of all, this will be *the occasion of lasting, yes, of eternal joy to all the saints*. No child of God will ever have a doubt in Heaven, but it is necessary that they begin their bliss with a very strong assurance of Divine Love, or else, I think, they might.

Unless God had ordained the method at which the text hints, I could well imagine myself in Heaven saying to myself, after I had been there a little while, "Oh, can it be, can it be that I am here? I do remember the sin of such a day and the shortcomings of such an hour, and my murmurings, and my unbelief, and all my departures from my God, and am I here, after all?" I could imagine, if there had not been the means used to put an end to such a possibility, my saying, "Surely I am to taste this only for a moment that I may be driven to my due deserts, after all, that my Hell may be made the more terrible because I have seen what Heaven is, and that my hunger may grow the more intolerable because I have eaten of the bread of angels."

If such a fear were possible, behold the answer to it. "He, the Judge, the Judge, the Judge, Himself, has said, 'Come, you blessed of My Father.'" That Judge cannot be mistaken, for He is Jesus the Infallible Son of God! God Himself has blessed His chosen and Jesus tells them so in the most plain terms—"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." Since Jesus has decreed this everlasting happiness, the child of God cannot doubt throughout eternity! That voice will sound forever in his ears, sweeter than music of flute or harp or dulcimer! "Come, you blessed of My Father." Why, it will be the very basis of the bliss of Heaven to think, "Jesus bade me come. Who shall ask me the question, 'How came you in here?' Did not *He* admit me? Who shall question my right to be here? Did not *He* say, 'Come, you blessed of My Father?'"

Do you not see that it is a choice and comforting fact that we shall not divide ourselves at the last, nor shall an angel do it who might err, but the Divider will be Jesus, Himself, the Son of God! And, therefore, the Glory which He metes out to us will be most surely ours and we may enjoy it without fear. But then, note on the other hand, that *this will increase the terror of the lost*, that Christ will divide them. Christ, full of infinite Love, would He destroy a sinner unless it must be! He that would have saved Jerusalem and wept because it must be destroyed! The guilty city was resolved to perish, but as her Lord pronounced the sentence, He wept! When I hear of a judge putting on the black cap to condemn a man, I like to read in the papers, "The judge's voice faltered and he was evidently unable to suppress his emotion as he uttered the sentence of death."

What right-minded man could be otherwise than moved when compelled to deliver his fellow creature to the gallows? But no judge on earth has such compassion for his fellow man as Jesus has for sinners! And when it comes to this, that He says, "I must do it, I must condemn you," then, Sinner, it must be so, indeed! When Incarnate Love says, "Depart, you cursed," you must be cursed with an emphasis. You must be infamous beings, indeed, when He, whose lips drop blessings as lilies drop sweet-smelling myrrh—when He calls you so! There must be something very horrible about you that He should bid you, "depart." And, indeed, there is an abominable thing in you, for *unbelief in God* is the most horrible thing, even in Hell!

Not to believe that God is Love is worthy of the utmost condemnation. You will have to say, if you are lost, "I was condemned by the most loving Judge that ever sat upon a judgement seat. The Christ that died lifted His pierced hands at the very moment when He said, 'Depart, you cursed!'" Yet there is something more, though this might be enough. If you should be lost, as God forbid you should, it will infinitely add to your terror to know that you were condemned by One who is infinitely Just. You will feel that the Christ who condemned you was the holiest of Men, in whom was no sin and, besides that, He is pure and perfect God, so that you will not be able to quibble at the sentence. Neither will there be any question about a new trial—your own conscience will make you feel that the decision is final, for it is just—and you will be too well assured of its reality and certainty, for He who will pronounce that sentence is the God of Truth. He said, "I am the way and the truth." You would not have Him for the way, but you will find Him to be "the truth." And when He pronounces you cursed, cursed you will be beyond all question!

Once more, if He that condemns you is the Christ of God, you will know that He has power to carry out the sentence, for all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth, and the government shall be upon His shoulders. And if He says, "Depart into everlasting fire," into that fire you must go. If He declares that the fire shall never be quenched, depend upon it, it will burn on forever. And if He decrees that the worm shall never die, that worm will live and gnaw to all eternity, for He who gives forth the sentence is able to make it good. Remember how He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall never pass away"? Firmer than the rocks shall stand the irrevocable decree—"these shall go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal." My soul trembles while I thus proclaim Jesus as the Judge whose awful voice divides the sinners from the saints.

III. Lend me your ears but for a minute or two longer, while I notice, in the third place, THE RULE OF THE DIVISION. Did you notice where the division is made? It is very wonderful to notice—very wonderful, indeed! *The great division between the sons of men is Christ.* Here are the sheep—there are the goats. What separates them? Christ! He is the center! There is no great barrier set up, as it were, on that last tremendous day, but He, Himself is the division. He shall set the sheep on *His* right hand and the goats on *His* left.

Now, that which parts us tonight into two portions is our relationship to Jesus Christ. On which side of Christ are you, tonight? I want you to question yourselves about that. If you are on His right hand, you are among His people. If you are not with Him, you are against Him, and so are on His left hand. That which parts the saint and the sinner is Christ. The moment a sinner comes to Christ he passes over to the other side and is numbered with the saints. This is the real point of separation. Christ stands between the Believers and the unbelievers, and marks the boundary of each class. When Aaron stood between the living and the dead swinging the censer full of incense, what separated the dead from the living? Remember the scene before you answer the question.

There they lie! There they lie, I say, stricken with pestilence! The unseen avenger has slain them in heaps. But here are the living, rejoicing and safe. What separates them? The priest standing there with the censer! Even thus, our great High Priest stands, at this moment, between the living and the dead, while the incense of His merits ascends before God and makes the most real dividing wall between dead sinners and those who are alive unto God by Jesus Christ. Christ is the Divider! Christ is, Himself, the Division. But what is the rule by which He separates the people? *The rule of the division is, first, actions.* Actions! Did you notice that? He says nothing about *words*. He dwells upon deeds of mercy, "I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was naked and you clothed Me." These are all actions.

Now, perhaps you would have liked the Judge to have said, "You were in the habit of singing hymns out of 'Our Own Hymn Book.' You were known to talk very sweetly about Me and call Me, Master and Lord. You were accustomed to sit at the Communion Table." Not a word is said about these things! No, nor is anything said about ceremonial actions. He does not say, "You used to bow before the crucifix. You reverently stood up at one part of the service and knelt at another. You walked round the Church singing the processional hymn." Nothing is said about these performances, only common actions are noticed—"I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink." These are all commonplace matters. *Actions* will be the great rule at the Last Judgment.

I am not preaching, now, contrary to the Gospel, but only repeating in other words what our Lord, Himself, has said. "We shall give an account for the deeds done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are evil," is the statement, not of the Law, but of the New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Those that have *done* evil shall go away into eternal punishment. Are we, then, saved by our works? By no means! Yet our works are the *evidences* of our being saved—and Grace will bring out these evidences in our lives if we possess them. A Magistrate judges by the actions as proved upon evidence. It is true he may and will have respect to the motive which urged the action, but first of all the actions, themselves, must be before him in evidence. And so here the King mentions the actions that were done.

Let us notice that the actions which were the rule of judgement *were, all of them, actions about Christ.* I want you to carefully note this. The Lord

says, “I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was sick and you visited Me.” This summary is made up of actions about *Christ*. I will, therefore, earnestly put this question to each of you—What actions have you ever done in reference to Jesus? “I am a Church member,” says one. I will not hear about that just now, because the Judge will not say anything about it. I am glad you are an avowed disciple, if you are honestly so, but do your actions prove that you are really so? That is the question. Have you ever done anything for Christ? Have you ever given anything to Christ?

Could Christ say to you, “I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink”? Now, I know some professors of whom I fear that Jesus Christ could not speak thus, for He cannot speak that which is not true. Their pockets are hermetically sealed, like tins of Australian meat—even the *smell* of their money never reaches Christ’s poor. Give meat to a hungry man? Not they! Let him go to the parish. Give clothes to a naked man? Not they! What do we pay taxes for? The idea of *giving* anything to another, or *doing* anything for another, without getting paid for it or praised for it, seems to them to be out of all character!

Now, selfishness is as much opposed to the spirit of the Gospel as the cold of the northern region is to the warmth of the sun. If the sun of Christ’s love has shone into your heart, you will love others and you will show your love to others by desiring to do them good in all sorts of ways. And you will do it for Christ’s sake—for *Christ’s sake*—so that when He comes, He will be able to say, “I was hungry and you gave Me meat. I was thirsty and you gave Me drink. I was sick and you visited Me. I was in prison under reproach and you came unto Me.” What have your actions been with regard to Christ? I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, who are one with me in the profession of allegiance to Christ, judge yourselves by your actions with regard to Him, as I, also, will judge myself.

Now, notice that Christ, as it were, inferentially, tells us that *the actions which will be mentioned at the Judgement Day, as the proof of our being the blessed of the Lord, spring from the Grace of God*, for He says, “You blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world.” They fed the hungry, but Sovereign Grace had first fed *them*. They clothed the naked, but Infinite Love first clothed *them*. They went to the prison, but Free Grace had first set *them* free from a worse prison. They visited the sick, but the Good Physician, in His Infinite Mercy, first came and visited them!

They evidently had no idea that there was anything meritorious in what they did. They had never dreamed of being rewarded for it. When they stand before the Judgement Seat, the bare idea of there being any excellence in what they have done will be new to the saints, for they have formed a very low estimate of their own performances—and what they have done seems to them too faulty to be commended. The saints fed the hungry and clothed the naked because it gave them much pleasure to do so. They did it because they could not help doing it—their new nature impelled them to it. They did it because it was their delight to do good and was as much their element as water for a fish or the air for a bird! They

did good for Christ's sake, because it is the sweetest thing in the world to do *anything* for Jesus.

Why is it that a wife is so kind to her husband? Because it is her duty, you say. All very well, but the *real* reason is because she loves him so intensely. Why is a mother so careful over her baby? Is there any rule or act of Parliament commanding mothers to be fond of their little ones? No, there is no act of Parliament. There is an act of God in the bosom, somewhere, passed in the chamber of the heart, and the mother cannot but be kind. Now, when the Lord puts a new nature into us and makes us one with Jesus Christ, we cannot help loving His people! And, seeking the good of our fellow men and the Lord Jesus Christ will be, at the Last Day, an evidence that there was love in the heart, because love was shown by your actions. May God grant that when the Judge of all shall come, we may be found renewed in heart and full of love through the power of His Holy Spirit.

"Oh," says one, "I wish I had that renewed heart which would produce such actions." Jesus can give it to you! You will always live for self in some sense or other until you are saved—even the most philanthropic who have loved their fellow creatures best, without religion—have generally sought their own esteem. And the verse is true concerning the praise of our fellow creatures—

***"The proud, to gain it, toils on toils endure;
The modest shun it but to make it sure."***

But when you receive a new heart you will not live for the approbation of your fellow men. Then your alms will be done in secret and you will not let your left hand know what your right hand does. Then, when you do your kindnesses, it will not be that others may publish abroad the announcement that you have visited the sick and clothed the naked, but your deeds will be done behind the door and in the corner, where none shall know of them but your God and the grateful recipients of your bounty.

You will quietly put into the treasury the two mites that make a farthing and think yourself unobserved, but One who sits over against the treasury, who knows your heart, will take good note of it. Your Lord will accept what you do because you do it out of love to Him—and at the Last Great Day, while you blush to hear it, He will tell it to the angels and to the listening hosts of earth and Heaven—and swing wide the gates of immortal bliss and let you in, according to the promise of His Grace. God bless you, Beloved, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 25.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—846, 362, 360.**

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“AFTER TWO DAYS IS THE PASSOVER”

NO. 2522

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 20, 1897.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 1, 1885.**

***“You know that after two days is the Passover, and the
Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”
Matthew 26:2.***

One likes to know how a great commander feels before a battle. What is his state of mind and how does he look forward to tomorrow’s struggle? While yet the balances are trembling, how does he act? How does he bear himself? One likes to know the condition of heart of one’s fellow in the prospect of a great trial. There is a serious operation to be performed—how is the sufferer supported in the prospect of the surgeon’s knife and of the danger that will attend it? Or, perhaps, death itself is rapidly approaching—in what condition of heart is our departing friend? How does he anticipate the great change? I take it that it is sometimes much harder to look upon a battle than to fight one—more difficult to foresee an ill than it is to bear it and, perhaps, the foresight, even, of death is much more trying than death itself ever proves to be to a Christian. Can we be confident before the battle begins? Can we be calm before the clouds burst in the time of storm? Can we rest in God before the iron gate is opened and we pass through it into the unknown world? These are questions well worth asking.

I thought that it would be very profitable to us if we tried to look at our Master in this condition—the great Captain of our salvation before the battle—the great Sacrifice led to the altar where His blood is about to be shed. How does He behave Himself? May there not be something especially instructive in these last Words of His, when He seems, as it were, to take off the robes of the Teacher and Prophet and to put on His priestly garments? May there not be something for us to learn from the state of His mind and spirit—and from His language just before His Passion? It is a small window, but a great deal of the Light of God may come through it. The Master said to His disciples, “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

I. The first thing I would say upon these words to you, Beloved in Christ Jesus, is, ADMIRE YOUR SAVIOR. Hear Him speak and regard Him in holy contemplation, that admiration of Him may be greatly excited.

Admire *His calmness*. There is no token of any disturbance of mind. There are no evidences of dismay. There is not even a quiver of fear, nor the least degree of anxiety about Him. He speaks not boastfully, otherwise we would suspect that He was not brave. He speaks very solemnly,

for it was a terrible ordeal that lay before Him. Look at it as He might, but still, with what true peace of mind, in what tones of quiet serenity, does He say to His little band of followers, “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

This calmness is very wonderful, because there was so much that was bitter and cruel about His approaching death. “The Son of Man is betrayed.” The Savior felt that betrayal most keenly. It was a very bitter part of the deadly potion which He had to drink. “He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me,” was a venomous drop that went right into His soul! David, in his great sorrow, had to say, “For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him; but it was you, a man my equal, my guide, and my acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company.” And it was a very, very, very bitter thing to Christ to be betrayed by Judas, yet He talks of it calmly and speaks of it when it was not absolutely necessary, one would think, to mention that incidental circumstance. He might have said, “In two days I shall be crucified,” but He said, “In two days the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

Do not forget, also, the extraordinary bitterness that is concentrated in that word, “crucified.” Somehow, we have become used to the Cross—and the Glory which surrounds our Lord has taken away from our minds much of the shame which is and should always be associated with the gallows. The cross was the hangman’s gallows of those days—it implied all the shame that the gallows could imply with us, today, and more, for a freeman may be hanged, but crucifixion was a death reserved for slaves! Nor was it merely the *shame* of crucifixion, but it was the great *pain* of it. It was an exquisitely cruel death in which the body was tormented for a considerable length of time to the very highest degree. The nails passing through the flesh just where the nerves are most plentiful and tearing and rending through those parts of the body by the weight which had to be sustained on hands and feet caused torture of a kind which I will not attempt to describe. Beside that, remember, veiled beneath the words, “to be crucified,” lay our Savior’s *inward and spiritual crucifixion*, for His Father’s forsaking of Him was the essence—the extreme gall of the bitterness that He endured. He meant that He had to die upon the accursed tree, deserted even by His Father! Yet He talked of it, truly and with all solemnity, but yet without the slightest trace of trembling. “You know,” He said to His disciples, “that in two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

Admire, then, the calm, brave heart of your Divine Lord, conscious—far more conscious than you and I can be—of what was meant by being betrayed and being crucified! Cognizant of every pang that should ever come upon Him—the bloody sweat, the scourge, the crown of thorns, the fevered thirst, the tongue cleaving to the roof of His mouth and all the dust of death that would surround and choke Him—yet He speaks of it as though it were no more an unusual event than the Passover itself. “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

I want you to admire, next, your Savior's *strong resolve*—His resolute purpose to go through all this suffering that He might effect our redemption. If He had willed it, He might have paused, He might have gone back, He might have given up the enterprise. You know how the Flesh, in sight of all that pain and grief, cried, “If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me,” but here we see, before the Passion came, that strong and firm and brave resolve which, when the Passion did come, would not, could not and *did not* flinch or hesitate, much less turn back! He could sweat great drops of blood, but He could not give up the work He came to do. He could bow His head to death, but He could not and would not cease to love His people whom He loved so much as to end His life for their sakes upon the accursed tree! Here are no regrets and no faltering. Our Lord speaks as you and I would speak of something about which our mind is quite made up, concerning which there is no room for argument or debate. “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” If He had said, “After two years,” I could understand something of His purpose concerning an event that was so distant—but within two days to be betrayed, within 48 hours to be betrayed for crucifixion—and yet to talk of it so! O my Lord, truly Your love for us is strong as death, Your jealousy overcomes even the grave itself!

Admire Him, then, dear Friends! Let your inmost heart adore and love Him! But I want you to also notice *how absorbed He was in His approaching betrayal and death*. That Truth of God comes out in the words of our text—“You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” Ah, dear Lord, You did speak the truth! They did know it and yet You did speak to them with loving partiality, for they did not really know it. They did not as yet understand that their Master must die and that He would rise again from the dead. He had often repeated to them the assurance that it would be so, but, somehow, they had not truly believed it, realized it, grasped it. Ah, but *He* had! He had and, you know, it is the way of men who have realized a great truth to talk to others as if it were as real to them as to themselves. You remember how the spouse asks the watchmen of the city, “Saw you Him whom my soul loves?” She does not tell them any name, but she talks of her Beloved as if there were no other, “Him,” in all the world! And the Lord here so well knew and was so wholly absorbed in the great work before Him that He said to these forgetful, these ignorant disciples, “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

Why, they had only a little while before walked with Him through the streets of Jerusalem! The people had strewn the road with their garments and with branches of palm trees! Scarcely had the sound of their hosannas died away out of the disciples' ears, yet Jesus says to them, “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified; you have not forgotten that, have you?” Ah, but they had! They were still dreaming of an earthly sovereignty and He was dreaming of nothing, but sternly, solemnly setting His face like a flint to go to prison and to death for their redemption—and for yours, and for mine—sacredly resolved to go through with it! He was even “straitened”

till His baptism of blood should be accomplished and He should be immersed in unknown deeps of grist and suffering! Having all His thought taken up with that subject, our Lord, therefore, talked to His disciples as if they were taken up with it, too. This is the language of One who is altogether absorbed with this gigantic enterprise which He has made to be the very summit of His ambition, though He knows that it will involve Him in shame and death. Admire Him, Brothers and Sisters, that He should be so taken up with the passion of winning souls as to forget everything else—and have this only upon His mind, and upon His lips—“After two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

I cannot help adding one other thing in which I admire the Savior and that is, *how wise He was to tell His disciples this!* You see, all He cared for was their good. He was not mentioning His suffering that He might ask for their sympathy. There is no trace of His crying, like Job, “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my Friends, for the hand of God has touched me.” No, our Lord told His disciples this for their sakes! First, that they might not be surprised when it came to pass, as though some strange thing had happened to them—that when He was betrayed and crucified, it might not be quite so dire a blighting of all their hopes since He had prepared them for it beforehand. And, moreover, it was intended to strengthen them when they should come into the trial, so that they could say, “It is all just as He told us it would be. How true He is! He told us about this sorrow beforehand and, therefore, if He spoke the truth, then, we will believe all the rest that He said is also true. And did He not say that He would rise again from the dead? Then, depend upon it, He will do so! He died when He said He would die and He will rise again when He said He would rise again.” This saying of our Lord was well and wisely uttered, that the crucifixion should not come upon them as a thing unknown to Him, but that when they were in the midst of the trial, they should remember that He told them all about it and so they would be comforted.

I ask you, then, dear Friends, to think with reverent affection of this calm speech of your Divine Master, this resolved and determined utterance, this all-absorbing thought of His concerning the purchase of His people by His blood—and this generous wisdom of His in making it all known beforehand to those who were around about Him and who truly loved Him. I do not want to turn from that thought until you have felt in your own heart this intense admiration of your Lord.

II. But, secondly, I want to take your thoughts a little way—not from the text—but from that particular line of meditation and to ask you, now, to **CONSIDER YOUR SACRIFICE.**

The Master says, “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” I cannot help reading it like this—“You know that after two days is **THE PASSOVER.** All the other Passovers have been Passovers only in name, Passovers in type, Passovers in emblem, Passovers foreshadowing **THE** Passover. But after two days is the real Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” At any rate, I want you to notice how true it is that our Lord Jesus Christ is our Passover—“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for

us.” What the paschal lamb was to Israel in Egypt, that the Lord Jesus Christ is to us! Let us think of that for a few minutes. Put the Passover and the Cross together, for, indeed, they are one.

And, first, *here is a lamb*. Was there another man who ever lived who was so worthy to be called a lamb, as was Jesus Christ? I have never heard or read of any character that so fully realizes what must be meant by “the Lamb of God.” Other men have been like lambs, but there is a touch of the tiger about us all at times. There was none about Him. He was the Lamb of all lambs—the Lamb of God, the most lamb-like of all men who ever lived or died, for there was no trace of anything about Him that was contrary to tenderness, love and gentleness. There were other qualities, of course, but none that were contrary to these. There were some that were as necessary to a complete character as even gentleness was, and He failed in nothing. But still, if you only view Him from that one side of His gentleness, there was none so worthy to be called a Lamb as He.

The lamb of the Passover, however, *had to be perfect*. It must be without spot or blemish. And where can you find the likes of Jesus for spotlessness and perfection in every respect? There is nothing redundant in Him. There is nothing deficient in Him. The Character of the Christ is absolutely perfect, insomuch that His very enemies, who have denied His Deity, have been charmed with His humanity—and those who have even tried to undermine His teaching, have, nevertheless, reverently bowed before His example! He is the Lamb of God “without blemish and without spot.”

The paschal lamb also *had to be slain*. You know how Christ was slain. There is no need to dwell upon the sufferings and death of our Well-Beloved. The lamb *had to be roasted with fire*. That was the method by which it was prepared and, truly, Christ our Passover was roasted with fire. Through what fiery sufferings, through what consuming grief did He pass! There was nothing about Him that was soaked at all with water, but every bit of Him was roasted with the fire of human hatred—and also with the Divine and righteous ire of the thrice-holy God!

You remember, too, that in the paschal lamb *not a bone was to be broken*. Our Lord stood in imminent jeopardy of having His bones broken, for with iron bars the Roman soldiers went to break the legs of the three crucified persons, that they might die the more quickly. But John tells us, “When they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bares record, and his record is true. And he knows what he says is true, that you might believe. For those things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, a bone of Him shall not be broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They shall look on Him whom they pierced.” In all this is Christ our true Paschal Lamb.

But you know, dear Friends, that the chief point about the paschal lamb lay in *the sprinkling of the blood*. The blood of the lamb was caught in a basin and then the father of the family took a bunch of hyssop, dipped it in the blood, and struck the lintel and the two side posts of the house outside the door. Then, when the destroying angel flew through

the land of Egypt to smite the first-born of men and of cattle, from the first-born of Pharaoh that was on the throne to the first-born of one that was in the dungeon, he passed by every house that was sprinkled with the blood. And these are the Lord's memorable Words concerning that ordinance, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” God's sight of the blood was the reason for His passing over His people and not killing them! And you know, Beloved, that the reason why God does not smite you on account of sin is that He sees the sprinkled blood of Jesus under which you are sheltering. That blood is sprinkled upon you and, as God sees it, He knows that expiation has been made, the substitutionary Sacrifice has been slain and He passes you by! Thus is Christ the true Passover, accepted in your place, and you are saved through Him.

Remember, too, that the paschal lamb *furnished food for a supper*. It was both a security and a feast for the people. The whole family stood round the table that night and ate of the roasted lamb. With bitter herbs did they eat it, as if to remind them of the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt. With their loins girt and with their walking staves in their hands, as men who were about to leave their homes and go on a long journey, never to return—thus they stood and ate the paschal lamb. They all ate it and they ate it all, for not a relic of it must be left until the morning. If there was too much for one family, then others must come in to share it. And if any was left, it must be destroyed by fire. Is not this, dear Friends, just what Christ is to us—our spiritual meat, the food of our souls? We receive a whole Christ and feed upon a whole Christ—often with bitter herbs of repentance and humiliation—but still we feed on Him and we all eat of the same spiritual meat, even as we are all sprinkled with the one precious blood, if, indeed, we are the true Israel of God!

O Beloved, let us bless our Lord for the true Passover! It was a night to be remembered when Israel came out of Egypt, but it is a night to be remembered even more when you and I, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, are once and for all passed over by the angel of avenging justice and we live when others die—a night to be remembered when our eager lips begin to feed on Him whose flesh is meat, indeed, and we eat and live forever! Is not that the teaching of this text? Did not the Savior mean this when He said, “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified”? These two things are bracketed together, as in mathematics there is a sort of mark of “equals” put between them to signify that the one is equal to the other—the feast of THE Passover, and the fact that the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.

III. Now I turn to a third point and I think I shall have your earnest attention upon it because there is something in it which very deeply interests all of us who belong to Christ. I have already asked you to admire your Savior and to consider your sacrifice. Now, dear Friends, **ADORE YOUR LORD.**

I ask you to adore your Lord, first, for *His foresight*. “After two days the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” We cannot prophesy concerning the future. The man who can tell me what will happen in two days must be something more than man. As to many events, it is as difficult to foresee two minutes as to foresee two centuries, unless there are

some causes operating which must produce certain effects. In our Lord's case, the influences seemed all to point away from betrayal and crucifixion. He was extremely popular. To all appearances He was beloved by the mass of the people and even the scribes and Pharisees, who sought His death, were thoroughly afraid of Him! Yet, with that clear foresight of the eyes which shine in no head but that which is Divine, Jesus says, “After two days the Son of Man will be betrayed.” He sees it all as if it had already happened. He does not say, “shall be,” but He so fully sees it, He is such a true Seer, that He says, “The Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

Now, Beloved, if He thus foresaw His own betrayal and death, let us adore Him, for *He can foresee our trials and death*. He knows all that is going to happen to us. He knows what will happen to me within two days. I bless Him that I do not! I would far rather that the eyes which see into the future should be in His head than in mine—they are safer there. But, Brothers and Sisters, if within two days, or two months, or two years you are to pass through some bitter agony, some scourging and buffering which looks very improbable, now, you may not see that it may be so, but there is One who sees it. The sheep's best eyes are in the shepherd's head. The sheep will do well enough if he can see what is just before him, especially if he can see his shepherd—that is all he needs to see. The shepherd can see into the cold winter. He can see into the wild woods where lurks the wolf. The shepherd can see everything. And I want you, dear Friends, to adore your Lord because if in His *humiliation* He foresaw His betrayal and death—from the vantage ground of His Glory He can now see *your* grief and *your* woes that are yet in reserve. And it ought to be enough for you that He knows all about you! He knows what your difficulty will be and He will pray for you that your faith fail not. Adore your Lord, then, for His foresight.

I want you, next, to adore Him for *His wonderful Providence*. There was a Providence which surrounded the Christ of God at that time. It was according to the Divine Purpose and will that He should die at the Passover—at that particular Passover—and that He should die by being betrayed and by being crucified. Without entering into the question of the responsibility and free will of men, I am sure that the Providence of their Lord and Master worked this all out. I wonder that they did not take up stones to stone Him, but they could not, for He *must be crucified*. I wonder that they did not hire an assassin, for there were plenty in those days who would have stabbed Him for a shilling. But no—He must be crucified! I marvel that they had not slain Him long ago, for they did take up stones again and again to stone Him—but His hour was not then come. There was a Providence working all the while and shaping His end as it shapes ours. He was immortal till His work was done. But when the two days of which He spoke were over, He must die. With cruel and wicked hands and of their own voluntary and evil will, they crucified and slew the Christ—yet it was all according to “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” I never yet pretended to explain how free agency and absolute predestination can both be true, but I am sure that they are both true, both written in Scripture, and both *facts*. To reconcile them is

no business of mine or yours, but to admire how they are reconciled in fact is a business of yours and mine and, therefore, let us do so now.

I want you, next, to admire your Lord by recognizing His *extraordinary correctness as a Prophet*. Let me read on beyond our text—“You know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, into the palace of the High Priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. But they said, not on the feast day”—mark that—“not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.” Now note this—it *must be on the feast day and it shall be on the feast day*. Yet they said, “not on the feast day.” But what does it matter what *they* say? Do you not observe how they were checkmated all round, how their purpose was like the whistling wind and the Eternal Purpose stood firm in every particular? They said, “We will take Him by trickery and kill Him.” But they did not—they took Him by force. They said, “We will kill Him.” But they did not, for He died by the hands of the Romans. They meant to slay Him privately, but they could not, for He must be hung up before high noon in the midst of the people!

And, above all, they said, “not on the feast day. Not on the feast day.” I think I hear old Caiaphas there, with all his wisdom and all his cunning, saying, “not on the feast day,” and Annas and all the priests join in the chorus, “not on the feast day. Postpone it a little till the millions have departed, the vulgar throng who, perhaps, would make a riot in His favor.” There they stood with their broad-bordered garments and their phylacteries. And they were of the opinion that what Caiaphas had proposed, and Annas had seconded, should be carried unanimously—“not on the feast day.” But Christ had said, “After two days is the feast day, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.” We do not know how it all came to be hurried on against their deliberate will, but Judas ran to them in hot haste and said, “What will you give me?” And they were so eager for Christ’s death that they overleaped themselves! “We will give you thirty pieces of silver,” they said, and they weighed it out to him, little thinking how quick he would be about his accursed business! Soon he comes back and says, “He is in the garden. You can easily take Him there while He is in prayer with a few of His disciples. I will conduct you there.” And before long the deed of darkness is done. These crafty, cruel men had said, “not on the feast day,” but it *was* on the feast day, as Jesus had foretold that it would be!

Now, Beloved, when our Lord tells us anything, let us always believe it. Whatever may appear to be against His statements, let us make nothing of it. A man in Jerusalem at that time might have said, “The Christ cannot be put to death unless these scribes and elders of the people agree to it! And you can see that they have resolved not to have it on the feast day. He will not be crucified on the Passover! The whole type will break down and it will be shown that He is not what He professed to be.” Ah, but they may say, “not on the feast day,” till they are hoarse—*He has said*, “After two days is the feast day, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified”—and so it came to pass!

Our Lord has said that He will come again, yet men ask, “Where is the promise of His coming?” Brothers and Sisters, you can be sure that He will come! He has always kept His Word and He will come as He said. Ah, but they say that He will not come to punish the ungodly who have defied Him—but He will! The Son of Man shall sit upon the Throne of His Glory and before Him shall be gathered all nations! He shall separate them, the one from the other, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats, and He will say to those on His left hand, “Depart, you cursed,” as surely as He will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed.” Every jot and tittle that has ever fallen from the lips of Christ is sure to come to pass, for you know that He said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.” You may rest upon the eternal purpose of God and the faithful promise of Christ which shall never fail, for not one of Christ’s Words shall fall to the ground unfulfilled!

Let us adore Him, then, as our true Prophet. “Very God of very God,” “the faithful and true Witness,” “the Prince of the kings of the earth,” we do adore You this very hour!

IV. Now, fourthly, and lastly, dear Friends, I want you to IMITATE YOUR EXEMPLAR.

I will not detain you more than a minute or two upon this point, but I want you, as far as your Lord is imitable, to imitate Him in the spirit of this verse. I have told you that there was no boasting in Him, but that there was a deep calm and a firm resolve even in the immediate prospect of a cruel and shameful death. And I think that you should imitate your Lord in this respect. Suppose that, in two days, there shall come a “post” from the New Jerusalem to tell you that the silver cord is about to be loosed, the golden bowl to be broken and that your spirit must return to God who gave it? In such a case, it behooves you, dear follower of Christ, to receive that message with as much calmness as Christ delivered His own death warrant, though it had to be spoken in such language as this—“You know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

It will not run like that with you, but it may be that in two days consumption will end in hemorrhage, or that old age will bring down the frail tent of your mortality, or that disease which is now upon you will drag you to the grave. Well, if it is so in two days—ah, if it were so in two hours, or two minutes!—it is for the child of God to say, “Your will be done,” just as the Master did. Happy was that woman who said, “Every morning, before I come downstairs, I dip my foot in the river of death, and I shall not be afraid to *plunge* into it for the last time.” They who die daily, as we all should, are always ready to die! I like Bengel’s notion concerning death. He says, “I do not think that a Christian should make any fuss about dying. When I am in company and somebody comes to the door and says, ‘Mr. Bengel is needed,’ I let the company go on with their talk and I just slip out and I am gone. Perhaps, after a little while, they say, ‘Mr. Bengel is gone.’ Yes, that is all—and that is how I would like to die—for God to knock at my door and for me to be gone without making any fuss about it.”—

***“Strangers into life we come,
And dying is but going Home.”***

I do not think that there ought to be any jerk on the metals when we arrive at the heavenly terminus. We just run straight on into the shed where the engine stops—no, into Glory where we shall rest forever and ever! I think I have heard of a captain who was so skilled that when he had arranged all the steering gear, he had not to alter a point for thousands of miles. And when he came to the harbor, he had so guided the vessel that he sailed straight in. If you get the Lord Jesus Christ on board the vessel of your life, you will find that He is such a skillful steersman that you will never have to alter your course! He will so set your ship's head that between here and Heaven, there will be nothing to do but to go right on. And then, all of a sudden, you will hear a voice saying, “Furl sail! Let go the anchor!” You will hear a little rattle of the chain and the vessel will be still forever in that port which is truly called the Fair Havens.

That is how it should be and I am going to finish by saying that I believe that is how it will be. If I say to you that it ought to be so, you will perhaps say to me, “Ah, Sir, but I am often subject to bondage through fear of death!” Yes, but you will not be when you come to die! O poor Little-Faith, you want to have strength *now* to die? But God knows that you are not going to die for some time, yet, so what would you do with dying Grace if He were to give it to you *now*? Where would you pack it up and store it? It will be quite time to get dying Grace when you come to die. Have I not seen some fidgety old folk who have been really a trouble to other people through their getting so worried and anxious? But all of a sudden there has come upon them such a beautiful quiet! It has been said, “Oh, grandma is so different! Something is going to happen, we feel sure.”

One day she had not anything to trouble her. Everybody could see that she was seriously ill, but her dear old eyes sparkled with unusual brightness and there was an almost unearthly smile upon her face. And she said at night, “I don't feel quite as well as usual. I think tomorrow morning, I shall sleep a little later.” And she did. So they went up to her. She said that she had had a blessed night—she did not know whether she had slept, but she had seen in the night such a wondrous sight, though she could not describe what it was like! They all gathered round the bed, for they perceived that something very mysterious had happened to her. And she blessed them all and said, “Good-bye. Meet me in Heaven.” And she was gone. And they said to me afterwards, “Our dear old grandma used always to be afraid of dying, but it did not come to much when she really came to die, did it?” I have often seen it so! It is no strange story that I am telling you.

A Christian man has been so unwise as to be always fearing that he would play the fool when he came to die and yet, when it has come to the time of night, the dear child of God, who had long been in the dark, has received his candle! His Lord has given him his bedroom candle and he has gone upstairs—and by its light he has passed away into the land where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, but the Lord God gives them light! I believe that many of us will die just like that! I believe that you will, my dear Sister. I believe that you will, my dear Brother. As your days, your strength shall be, and as your last day is, so shall your

strength be. And I should not wonder if, one of these days, you or I will be heard saying, “Now, dear Friends, the doctor has told me that I cannot live long. I asked him how long, and he said, ‘Perhaps, a week,’ and I was a little disappointed that I had to wait so long.”

I should not wonder if those around us should hear us say, “Well, it is only two days according to their reckoning, and perhaps it will not be two days. I think that I shall go next Sunday morning, just when the bells are ringing the people into the House of Prayer on earth. Just then I shall hear Heaven’s bells ringing and I shall say, ‘Good-bye,’ and be where I have often longed to be, where my treasure is, where my Best-Beloved is!”

So may it be with you all, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 4:16-30; JOHN 8:37-59. (R.V.)**

We will read, from the Revised Version, two passages which record attempts made to kill our Lord before His time had come. You will see, from the sermon, why we read them. [Sermon came *after* the exposition.—EOD.]

Luke 4:16-21. *And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and He entered, as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor: He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, Today has this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears. Alas, not in their hearts! They had heard Christ read the prophecy that related to Himself, but they had not accepted its message.*

22-27. *And all bore Him witness, and wondered at the Words of Grace which proceeded out of His mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph’s son? And He said unto them, Doubtless you will say unto Me this parable, Physician, heal Yourself: whatever we have heard done at Capernaum, do also here in Your own country. And He said, Verily I say unto you, No Prophet is acceptable in his own country. But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the Heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian. Thus the Savior taught God’s absolute right to deal out His mercies as He pleases. To that great doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, Christ’s Hearers would not submit, even as many in the present day will not yield.*

28. *And they were all filled with wrath in the synagogue. They admired Christ's style of speech, but when He came to that man-humbling and God-glorifying doctrine, they were filled with wrath!*

28-30. *As they heard these things; and they rose up, and cast Him forth out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might throw Him down headlong. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.*

John 8:37-59. *I know that you are Abraham's seed; yet you seek to kill Me, because My Word has not free course in you. I speak the things which I have seen with My Father: and you also do the things which you heard from your father. They answered and said unto Him, Our father is Abraham. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man that has told you the truth, which I heard from God: this did not Abraham. You do the works of your father. They said unto Him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My Word. You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stood not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof. But because I say the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin? If I say truth, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God hears the Words of God: for this cause you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews answered and said unto Him, Say we not well that You are a Samaritan, and have a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. But I seek not My own glory: there is One that seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keeps My Word, he shall never see death. The Jews said unto Him, Now we know that You have a devil. Abraham is dead, and the Prophets; and You say, If a man keeps My Word, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? And the Prophets are dead: whom make You Yourself? Jesus answered, If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing: it is My Father that glorifies Me of whom you say, that He is your God; and you have not known Him: but I know Him; and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be like unto you, a liar: but I know Him, and keep His Word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and He saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said unto Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am. They took up stones therefore to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple.*

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

SOMETHING DONE FOR JESUS

NO. 2126

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 26, 1890.

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

***“She has worked a good work upon Me.”
Matthew 26:10.***

STUDY carefully the story of the enthusiastic Christian woman who poured the alabaster box of very precious ointment upon the head of our ever-blessed Lord and Savior. Honored as that action is by the universal Church of God, it did not escape criticism among the religious people of her own day. The disciples censured her but Christ defended her—and in the course of His vindication of her He said, “Why trouble you the women? For she has worked a good work upon Me.” There is no reason for troubling gracious men and women—and specially no cause for so doing when their work is good and is done for their Lord. Yet are there plenty of critics around us this day and we could spare a few of them from our own immediate neighborhood. They are only able to worry us so far as we think of them and therefore we will let the wasps alone and feed upon the honey which flows from the lips of our Lord Jesus.

Observe that this woman had worked a good work—good in intent and good in itself. Her Lord said so and His verdict ends all debate. Observe especially that *her good work was a good work upon the Lord Jesus*. It was of no immediate benefit to anybody else nor was it meant to be. “This ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor.” So Judas and the other disciples said. The 500 pence which it would have produced might have been spent on bread and so have fed many poor people. But she expended it on Jesus and meant that it should *all* be used in His honor and that only.

Poor or not poor, she thought only of Him. The ointment might have been used for certain purposes at festivals, or otherwise, and so have been more or less beneficial to a number of persons—but on this occasion the benefit was to the Lord alone—and she meant it to be so. On this account the practical philanthropist called it, “waste.” Is anything wasted which is all for Jesus? It might rather seem as if all would be wasted which was *not* given to Him!

This box of precious ointment was all for Him. Other persons in the room might smell the sweet perfume but that was not what the grateful woman aimed at—she intended all the sweetness for Jesus—it was a good work worked *upon Him*. The woman's thought was that she would honor the Lord. Her only intention was to show her reverence for Him—and provided He should be pleased with her deed, she would be perfectly con-

tent—though no one else might be gratified. Her first and last thoughts were for the Lord Jesus Himself.

We know from another Evangelist that she *broke* the alabaster box. Was there need for that? Not in order that the ointment might be poured forth. She might, we should suppose, have *opened* the box in a less hasty manner. But the *manner* of a gift has frequently as much in it as the *matter* of a gift. She broke the box to display her eagerness and to show that the choicest thing she had was not good enough for Jesus. She banished every notion of economy when she thought of her Lord. If she had possessed 10,000 times as much, she would have given it all to Him and have poured it out without a thought!

She did not count her offering a lavish expenditure—she would have made it lavish if it had been in her power. She would have no saving of pots and calculating of pennyworths when He was in the case—there should be no trace of stinginess in her homage to her Lord. It was, therefore, as necessary that she should break the box as that she should pour out the ointment, for she wanted to show that she loved her Savior immeasurably—and she wished to express to Him, as best she could—her intense veneration of Him and her ardent affection for Him. Had some of us been there, we might have called it eccentricity, or fanaticism, or precipitancy, or waste. But she did not care what onlookers might have to say—her only consideration was what Jesus might think. To please *Him* was the height and range of her ambition. Happy woman, to have reached this gracious absorption!

The good work which she performed was, far beyond her own thought, a most appropriate one. Love is ever wise. Jesus was a King. He had ridden through the streets of Jerusalem in triumph. The multitude had strewn branches in His path. They had saluted Him with hosannas. They had done much by way of coronation, but they had not anointed Him. Why this omission? She will anoint Him if no one else will. Her hands shall bring out the perfumed nerd and pour the precious ointment upon the King of Israel! He was a Priest, too, and especially a *pardoning* Priest to her. She recognized His sacred priesthood—but the oil that fell on Aaron's head had never, literally, fallen upon the head of Jesus and therefore she must anoint Him plenteously till the oil not only ran to the skirts of His garment, but filled all the house where they were sitting.

As King and as Priest she will take care that He is not without a costly anointing. Moreover, it was customary to anoint pilgrims for their refreshment at the end of a long journey when they came into the house. The host on this occasion had neglected this act of courtesy. It was most suitable, then, that when this great Lord of Pilgrims, whose path had been weary and woeful and had, at length, nearly ended His years of travel in this thorny wilderness—it was, I say, most suitable that He should receive refreshment from the woman's hospitable hand. Weary and worn was He and she would gladly anoint Him with the oil of gladness. Though others had rejected Him, she anointed His head and acknowledged the way-worn Traveler as the noblest Guest earth ever entertained!

In all this her good deed was fit and seasonable. Do you disagree? Our Lord said—and here I am free from all charge of following my own fancy, and am sure to be correct—that there was another meaning more remarkable by far. Whether this woman, with some prophetic spirit resting upon her, saw further into our Lord's words than His disciples did, we do not know—but Jesus declared that she did it for His *burial*—as it were, *em-balming* Him a little before the time for His closely-approaching sojourn in the tomb. There was a great appropriateness, then, in the act! And we think more appropriateness than she, herself, knew of at the time she did it! But it is ever so with loving hearts—reason does not guide them—by a kind of holy instinct they hit upon the right thing.

Where reason laboriously finds out wisdom, love discovers it at once. There are instincts of pure hearts that are more to be trusted than the conclusions of argumentative minds. The safest logic is often that of the *heart* when at once it devises liberal things for Jesus. Mind you never set that logic aside. Here love devised the very deed that was required—the fittest action that could have been imagined under the sad circumstances so near at hand. To come back to the point, however, which the woman was aiming at, she did all this, appropriate or not, *to Jesus*. It was a good work—but the point of it was that *it was a good work worked on Him*.

On this occasion I wish to speak of good works worked on Jesus and therefore I shall not be speaking to you all. Many of you are incapable of working a good work for Christ for you are not saved yet. How can an evil tree bring forth good fruit? How can those who do not believe in Jesus do anything for Him? It is not yet time for you to do anything for Him. Your first business is that He should do everything for *you*. You must go to Him as guilty sinners and find mercy in Him. I speak at this time only to those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus and so have been set apart by Him and sanctified forever by His one Sacrifice.

These, owing as they do, so much to their Lord, are those to whom I would speak now, and say, Render unto Him good works that shall terminate in Him and shall be made to express your love to Him. Good works worked upon Jesus or solely in reference to Him are to be our subject. Very briefly *we shall notice the feelings prompting this kind of service*. Secondly, *we shall mention modes of such service*. Thirdly, *we shall give counsel or careful notes to be observed in such service*. And then *we shall conclude with a word by way of defense of service of this sort*.

I. And first, THERE ARE FEELINGS WHICH PROMPT TRUE BELIEVERS TO DO WORKS AS UNTO CHRIST. To bring forth these peculiar services, certain feelings move within the Believer's bosom. The first and the most powerful, probably, is *gratitude*. "We love Him because He first loved us." He lived for us. He died for us. He rose for us. He pleads for us. We owe all to Him.

The natural impulse of the renewed heart is to say, "What can I do *for Him*? I love His people, but I love Him best. I love His ministers, but He is beyond them all. I love His cause on the earth, but I love Him better. While I owe much to His Church and to His ministers, I owe most to Him.

I want to tell Him how I love Him. I want to show Him, by some direct act done for Him, that my heart adores Him for all that He has done for me.”

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, have you ever felt that way? I have often felt, even towards a kind earthly friend, that while I have been thankful for his gift and for his help rendered, I have longed, also, to do something for the person helping me. When I have not known the person who helped me in my good work, I have wanted to know him—not from curiosity, but that I might say how grateful I felt to the giver of such kindness. How often I have had my hand grasped by loving persons who have said, “I wanted to tell you that you led me to the Savior!” They wanted to say it *to me* and often have they written to me and cheered my heart because they felt a personal gratitude which needed a personal expression.

A poor woman once forced me with tears to receive a small sum of money for myself. I declined it till I saw that it would hurt her feelings, for she had evidently longed for this opportunity for expressing her thankfulness for the sermons she had read. If we feel thus towards an earthly friend, how much more shall we feel it towards Him who has saved us by His blood! Do you not want to behold Him, that you may tell Him how you love Him? Do you not feel prompted to devise some new method by which your love can manifest itself before the Beloved’s eyes, not in word only, but in deed and in truth?

Another feeling that will prompt us to the same course is that of *deep veneration*. One has admired the personal Character of Jesus with a sacred admiration, thinking of Him as the Son of Man in perfection and then as God over all, blessed forever. We have first fallen at His feet in humble worship and then, when we have risen, we have said to our altogether-lovely Lord, “Oh, that I could serve such a One as You are! Show me what You would have me do. Only do me the honor to allot me a service which I may render unto You, for he is more than a king who is honored to be the lowest menial in Your court. He who reigns over nations is not so happy as the man who is subject to Your rule. It is a delight to pay You homage.” It is our Heaven to think that we may be permitted to serve such a Christ and to work a good work upon Him.

Then, oftentimes, the feeling of *sympathy* will come in and blend itself with veneration. Such sympathy is by no means to be condemned, but to be commended. I mean by sympathy, this—have you not felt, when you have heard of our Redeemer’s sufferings and death, that He deserved a great reward for them? Have you not wished that you could put a crown upon His head for having so disinterestedly laid down His life for His enemies? We have sometimes sung in this house with all our hearts those words—

**“Let Him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed His head to death;
And be His honor sounded high
By all things that have breath.”**

We have said in our hearts, “How can we fitly honor this paragon of perfection, this mirror of unbounded love? Such a One as He is, having suf-

ferred so deeply, ought to be rewarded plenteously with the honor of all who can appreciate a great and noble deed.”

That feeling of sympathy has been intensified when we have seen that, instead of honor, our Lord Jesus Christ receives coldness from the sons of men. No, worse than that, He is persecuted by their blasphemy and hounded by their hatred! Have you not felt, when you have heard His holy name blasphemed, as if you would blot that blasphemy out with your blood if you could? When you have seen His sacred Day dishonored and the truths of the Gospel denied, has not your soul burned within you? Have you not said, “What shall I do for this despised Savior—maltreated by those whom He has blessed—and crucified afresh and put to an open shame, even by these who profess to be His disciples—maligned by those who call themselves His ministers? O Master, might I but do *something* to wipe out these blots—to remove these slurs upon Your sacred name?”

That feeling of sympathy with Jesus, working with veneration and backed with gratitude will lead us to attempt brave deeds of love for Him—for Him *personally*, I mean. In the midst of all this, as a central flame burning like the sun in the center of the lesser lights, *our affection for Jesus* will make us long to serve Him. We love our dear ones upon earth, but we love Jesus better than all of them put together. We love our Brethren for Jesus’ sake, but He is the chief among 10,000 and the altogether lovely. We could not live without Him! To enjoy His company is bliss to us—for Him to hide His face from us is our midnight of sorrow. In comparison with that, all other sorrows are but the shades of grief, but His departure would be the substance of distress.

And, Master, when we have looked at You and seen the nail prints and beheld the scar on Your side. When we have beheld You standing before Your Father’s Throne still pleading for us and revealing Your undying affection towards us, Your chosen—in Your intercession for us—we have said, “We must serve Him. We must find out some way by which we may give Him more honor.” Oh, that I had a crown to cast at His feet! Oh, that I could make new songs to be sung before Him! Oh, that I could write fresh music for angelic harps! Oh, for the power to live, to die, to labor, to suffer as unto Him and unto Him alone!

You know better than I can tell you, many of you, what these aspirations are. I am merely traversing a road with which you are continually familiar. Let us keep company in thought and may I beg that, on some sunny day, when my Lord gives me special work to do for Him, you will be at my side with your gifts and efforts of love for His dear name!

II. I shall pass on, in the next place, to notice THE MODES IN WHICH THIS SUGGESTED SERVICE OF GOOD WORKS DONE UNTO HIM MAY SHOW ITSELF. Holy Spirit, help me! We will begin, as it were, at the base of the pyramid and go upward. And we may commence by saying that *the entire life of the Christian* ought to be, in many respects, a good work done unto Christ. Albeit that there must be in our life an eye to the good of our fellow men, yet may we do it all unto the Lord.

The same Law which says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength," adds, "and your neighbor as yourself," which proves that it does not necessarily take away any part of our love from God when we act in love to our fellow men. The duties of life, though they are to be done with a view to our neighbor as God's will requires, still ought, in the highest sense, to be performed mainly with an eye to the glory of Christ and out of love to Him. The servant is bid to work, "as unto the Lord and not unto men." The master, also, ought to discharge his duties knowing that he has a Master in Heaven—and the thought of that Master above should guide him in all he does.

O Christian Brothers and Sisters, whatever your calling, discharge the duties of it with a view to glorifying Him whose name, as Christians, you bear! So let it be in every relation of life. Should not the child seek to honor Christ by being like the holy Child Jesus? Should not the parent devote his child to Christ, earnestly praying that he may grow up in the fear of the Lord and may serve the Lord? Every lawful relationship can be consecrated! In every condition of life we can glorify Jesus! In all the moral obligations of life, Jesus should be before us. We should be honest not only for our reputation's sake—for that would be an unworthy motive—but for Christ's sake!

Would we have Christ's disciples called "thieves"? We should be sternly upright, never by any means under suspicion of untruth or double-dealing—because we serve the Lord Christ who is faithful and true. Of us more is expected than of others since we serve a better Master than all others. God has done more for us! We have a clearer interest in the precious blood of Jesus and therefore the common virtues of life ought to be exhibited in us to their fullest extent by the help of the Holy Spirit—so shall we do everything as unto the Lord Jesus.

The Christian must look to certain matters ordinarily overlooked in common life, for Christ's sake. For instance, that of forgiveness of injuries. Some will not forgive at all—this is fatal to all hope of salvation. Others will forgive but not till after some considerable time of wrath—good delayed is evil indulged. But you, Christian, you are to do a good work upon Christ by forgiving for His sake. He has forgiven you and therefore you will forgive others freely and continually. Your revenge is the noble vengeance of heaping coals of the fire of kindness upon your enemy's head! You might have struck him, but for Christ's sake you bless him! No words of wrath shall defile your lips for love commands silence within those gates of coral. You see Christ, as it were, covering your foe with His own merit, and you say, "For His sake I forgive you." May your whole life, then, ordinarily be lived as unto Jesus and may special gems of forgiveness glisten in it!

Now go a step higher. *That which is purely Christian work ought to be done also upon Him and for Him.* I mean by Christian work, evangelical service which grows out of the plan of salvation. I refer to those things peculiar to Christians—such as spreading the Gospel, teaching, instructing,

consoling, almsgiving and the like. All this should be done for Jesus more really than it often is. And that other part of Christian service, namely, endurance—the bearing of shame for Christ’s sake, the patient suffering of the will of God in Providence—all this should be done for Christ most distinctly.

I know there will be a second motive here, as in the former, and properly so. When I preach, I have an earnest desire to do good to my hearers—I ought to have such a desire. But yet, I desire to be moved by a higher motive than love to your souls. I desire that, by the stirring up of your minds, Christ may get glory—that you may be led to do something for Him which will bring *Him* honor and please *Him*. May you as saints be prospered that the Lord of saints may be honored! I look through you to Jesus.

We ought to go to our Sunday school class with the view of doing good to the children. Yet, above that object must rise the higher object, namely, the honoring of Christ through those children. We seek the good of the children for Christ’s sake. Visit the sick, or preach in the street, or distribute your tracts—dear Brothers and Sisters, in doing these things you do well—but do not forget to perform these acts as unto the Lord or else you will miss the flower and crown of your service. I am sure it will be sweeter to do your work and easier to do it and at the same time it will be better for your own souls and you may more surely expect the Divine blessing if you do all for Jesus’ sake.

And the same with the other branch of Christian service, namely, endurance—let us take up our cross because it is *His* Cross and we bear it after Him. Oh, to lie still and suffer without a murmur! Oh, to be silent under the shears because our own blessed Lord was like a sheep before her shearers and opened not His mouth! Oh, to be able to bear sarcasm, ridicule, misrepresentation and even actual loss of this world’s goods for the sake of Jesus—and to bear them meekly and even joyfully—because it comes for His sake!

To bear suffering for Jesus would be a novelty to some Christians, but to the true Believer it is an exquisite delicacy. To suffer distinctly for Jesus is to work a work on His most blessed Self. I place this on a higher range than the last set of duties which I mentioned, but still, we have not yet come to the purest form of good works worked upon the Person of our Lord Jesus. We will go a step higher.

There are works of the consecration of our substance. In these all Christians ought to abound. It is ours to give often, give largely, give even till we feel the pinch of giving! But we must take care that we truly give as to the Lord. When you give your money to the Church of God to maintain the preaching of the Gospel, or to assist missionary enterprise, or whatever else the Church has in hand, you are doing a good work to others. You are helping on the Gospel which has been a blessing to you and will be a blessing to them. But, over and above that, your desire should be to do it as unto the Lord. In giving what we can of our substance it is sweet to lay

it at His feet—not regarding it so much as going into the treasury of the Church—as going into the hands of the crucified Savior.

We give for His sake who gave Himself for us. We long that His kingdom may come and that He may see of the travail of His soul. The same should be true of what is bestowed upon the poor. When you noiselessly and quietly give to the poor, who need your help, you are doing it for Christ—if such, indeed, is your motive—and it ought always to be so. We are getting still nearer to the point when we give to the Lord's poor because the poor saints are in living union with Jesus—they are a part of Christ's body—and in giving to them we are giving to Christ Jesus Himself. When we feed and clothe and cherish poor aged Believers because they belong to Christ, we are getting very near to that state of mind in which this good woman was when she worked the good work upon Christ.

I suppose the day will come in this age of novel reforms when we must not *dare* to help the poor and needy. We can hardly do so now without coming under the censure of the school of hard economists. I see notices in the windows requesting us by no means to give alms. I should like to put at the bottom of such placards the text of Scripture which commands us to give to him that asks of us! Law or no law, I trust when a Christian sees a case of necessity, he will not be held back by any motives of political economy, or any of the hard and fast teachings of the social scientists. In your almsgivings see to it that while you do good unto all men, you do it specially unto the household of faith.

“Oh,” cries one, “you may very soon be found helping a person that does not deserve it.” No doubt about it! But you have a great deal better to do than neglect those who should have your aid. If we give as unto the Lord because He bids us do it, and for His sake, if any put our charity to an evil use the sin will lie with them, and not with us. If in any cases applicants have deceived us, yet our act of charity is acceptable to God. Never give for the sake of being thought generous—that spoils it all—that is not giving, but buying a certain amount of respect at so much a pound. Never contribute to Church work, nor to the help of the poor merely to gratify the instinct within you which finds it hard to say, “No”—but do it because, if Christ asked you, you would give Him anything and you feel that when His poor have need you are bound to help them for His sake.

We will go a step higher, dear Brethren. There are two great duties which the Lord has appointed for His people, only—and these we should observe because they are appointed by Him. I refer to *the two commands regarding Baptism and the Supper of the Lord*. In keeping these commandments there is a great reward to our own souls but we ought to come as Believers to be baptized out of love to Jesus. We ought not to ask, “What is the good of this?” We may not say, “Shall I get anything by it?” But we are to simply say this, “He bade me and I will do it for the love I bear His name.” I feel shocked when I hear people say, “But it is not *essential* to salvation.”

You mean and beggarly spirit! Will you do nothing but what is essential to your own salvation? A Pharisee or a harlot might talk so! Is this your

love to Christ—that you will not obey Him unless He shall pay you for it? Unless He shall make your soul’s salvation depend upon it? Oh, if you love the Master, the least of His commandments will seem very precious in your sight and you will feel that because you love Him you obey Him! If obedience to an ordinance should bring you no good whatever—if Jesus bade you, it is enough for you—whatever it may be. Indeed, it is all the sweeter to do the Lord’s bidding when no trace of personal gain can be found mingling with the motive.

So, too, when we approach the table of communion we shall get a blessing there if we come aright—but I think we too often fail to remember that we should sit at the holy table with the sole view of honoring the Lord who in that festival is remembered. He says that we are to show His death until He comes. It is to Him that the feast is dedicated. To keep up the memory of His death and to testify the fact to others we eat of the bread and drink of the cup. We celebrate the sacred supper for our Lord’s sake—not because of Church rules, nor because it is the custom of the brotherhood so to do—nor even because it is a hallowed refreshment to our own hearts. We commune at the sacred feast out of love to the Well-Beloved.

But I will come to the point by saying, dear Brothers and Sisters, seek to do something for Jesus which shall even be above all this a secret sacrifice of pure love to Jesus. *Do special and private work towards your Lord.* Between you and your Lord let there be secret love tokens. You will say to me, “What shall I do?” I decline to answer. I am not to be a judge for you—especially as to a private deed of love. The good woman in our text did not say to Peter, “What shall I give?” nor to John, “What shall I do?” Her heart was inventive. I will only say *that we might offer more private prayer for the Lord Jesus.* “Prayer also shall be made for Him continually.” Intercede for your neighbors. Pray for yourselves. But could you not set apart a little time each day in which prayer should be *all for Jesus?*

Could you not at such seasons cry with secret pleadings, “Hallowed be Your name! Your kingdom come! Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven”? Would it not be a sweet thing to feel at such a time—“I shall now go up to my chamber and give my Lord a few minutes of my heart’s warmest prayer that He may see of the travail of His soul”? That is one thing which all saints can attend to. Another holy offering is adoration—*the adoring of Jesus.* Do we not too often forget this adoration in our assemblies, or thrust it into a corner? The best part of all our public engagements is the worship—the direct worship.

And in this the first place should be given to the worship of the Lord Jesus. We sing at times to edify one another with Psalms and hymns, but we should also sing simply and only to glorify Jesus. We are to do this in company, but should we not do it alone, also? Ought we not all, if we can, to find a season in which we shall spend the time—not in seeking the good of our fellow men, not in seeking our own good—but in adoring Jesus, blessing Him, magnifying Him, praising Him, pouring forth our heart’s love towards Him and presenting our soul’s reverence and penitence?

I suggest this to you—I cannot teach you how to do it. God’s Holy Spirit must show your hearts the way. But let me entreat you to believe that it will be no wasted thing if on Him the good work of prayer and adoration shall begin and end on Him. It will be a right thing and well done of you if the Lord Jesus has for Himself the choicest of your thoughts, emotions, words and deeds. Oh, that all that we have could be laid at His feet! It would be no waste, but the proper use of all our good things.

III. But time fails me and therefore I must, thirdly, and with extreme brevity, OFFER YOU A WORD OR TWO OF ADVICE ABOUT DOING GOOD WORKS FOR JESUS. *Take care that self never creeps in.* It is to be all for Jesus—let not the foul fingers of self-seeking stain your work. Never do anything for Jesus out of love for popularity. Be always glad if your right hand does not know what your left hand does. Hide your works as much as possible from the praise of the most judicious friend.

At the same time let me also add, never have any fear of censure from those who know not your love to Jesus. This good woman did her work publicly because it was the best way to honor her Lord. And if you can honor Him by doing a good work in the marketplace before all men, do not be afraid. To some the temptation may be to court the public eye—to others the temptation may be to dread it. Serve your Lord as if no eyes beheld you—and do not blush though all the eyes in the universe should gaze upon you. Let not self, in either case, come in to defile the service.

Never congratulate yourself after you have worked a work for Jesus. If you say unto yourself, “Well done!” you have sacrificed unto *yourself*. Always feel that if you had done all as it should be done it would still be but your reasonable service. Remember that *deeds of self-sacrifice* are most acceptable to Jesus. He loves His people’s gifts when they give and feel that they have given. Oftentimes we are to measure what we do for Him not by what we have given, but by what we have left *after* giving—and if we have much left we have not given as much as that widow who gave two mites—no, for certain we have not—for she gave “all her living.”

Let us, above all, keep out of our heart the thought which is so common in this general life—that nothing is worth doing unless something practical comes out of it—meaning by “practical” some manifest result upon the morals or temporals of others. It is almost universal to ask the question, *Cui bono?*—“What is the good of it? What good will it do to me? What good will it do to my neighbor? To what purpose is this waste?” No, but if it will glorify Christ, do it! And accept *that* motive as the highest and most conclusive of reasons. If a deed done for Christ should bring you into disesteem and threaten to deprive you of usefulness, do it none the less! I count my own character, popularity and usefulness to be as the small dust of the balance compared with fidelity to the Lord Jesus.

It is the devil’s logic which says, “You see I cannot come out and avow the Truth of God because I have a sphere of usefulness which I hold by temporizing with what I fear may be false.” O Sirs, what have we to do with consequences? Let the heavens fall but let the good man be obedient to his Master and loyal to His Truth. O man of God, be just and fear not!

The consequences are with *God*— not with you! If you have done a good work unto Christ, though it should seem to your poor bleared eyes as if great evil has come of it, yet you have done it, Christ has accepted it and He will note it down and in your conscience He will smile you His approval.

IV. I will not detain you longer, but just close by saying that THERE IS A GOOD DEFENSE FOR ANY KIND OF WORK WHICH YOU MAY DO UNTO JESUS AND UNTO JESUS ONLY. However large the cost, nothing is wasted which is expended upon the Lord, for Jesus deserves it. What if it did no service to any other—did it please *Him*? He has a right to it! Is nothing to be done for the Master of the feast? Are we to be so looking after the sheep as never to do honor to the Shepherd? Are the servants to be cared for and may we do nothing for the Well-Beloved Lord Himself?

I have sometimes felt in my soul the wish that I had none to serve but my Lord. When I have tried to do my best to serve God and a cool-blooded critic has pulled my work to pieces, I have thought, “I did not do it for you! I would not have done it for you! I did it for my Lord! Your judgment is a small matter. You condemn my zeal for the Truth of God. You condemn what He commends.” Thus may you go about your service, my Brothers and Sisters, and feel, “I do it for Christ, and I believe that Christ accepts my service and I am well content.” Jesus deserves that there should be much done altogether for Him. Do you doubt it?

There is brought into the house, on his birthday, a present for Father. That present is of no use to Mother, or to the children. It cannot be eaten. It cannot be worn, but Father would not give it away to anybody—it is of no value to anybody but himself. Does anybody say, “What a pity it was to select such a gift, even though Father is pleased”? No, everybody says, “That is just the thing we like to give to Father, since he must keep it for himself. We meant it to be for *him*! We had no thought of anything else—and we are glad that he must use our gift for his own pleasure.”

So with regard to Jesus. Find out what will please Him and do it for Him! Think of no one else in the matter. He deserves all you can do and infinitely more. Besides, you may depend upon it that any action which appears to you useless, if you do it prompted by love, it has a place in Christ’s plan and will be turned to high account. This anointing of our Lord’s head was said to be useless. “No,” said Jesus, “it falls in just in its proper place—she has done it for My burial.”

There have been men who have done an heroic deed for Christ and at the time they did it they might have asked, “How will this serve my Lord’s purpose?” But somehow it was the very thing that was needed. When Whitefield and Wesley turned out into the fields to preach, it was thought to be a fanatical innovation and perhaps they, themselves, would not have ventured upon it if there had not been an absolute necessity. But by what seemed to that age a daring deed they set the example to all England and open-air preaching has become an accepted agency of large value! If you, for Christ’s sake, become Quixotic, never mind—your folly may be the wisdom of ages to come!

Once again, the woman's loving act was not wasted for it has helped us all down to this very moment. There it has stood in the Bible—and all who have read it and are right in heart—have been fired by it to sacred consecration out of love to Jesus. That woman has been a preacher to 19 centuries—the influence of that alabaster box is not exhausted today and never will be! Whenever you meet a friend in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America who has done anything unto our Lord Jesus, you still smell the perfume of the sacred spikenard! Her consecrated act is doing all of us good at this hour—it is filling this house with fragrance!

If you are serving Christ in your own secret way in which you do not so much seek to benefit others as to honor Him, it may be you will be an instructive example to saints in ages to come. Oh, that I could stir some hearts here to a personal consecration to Jesus, my Lord! Young men, we need missionaries to go abroad—are none of you ready to go? Young women, we need those who will look after the sick in the lowest haunts of London—will none of you consecrate yourselves to Jesus, the Savior?

I shook hands, after the sermon this morning, with a good missionary of Christ from Western Africa. He had been there 16 years. I believe that they reckon four years to be the average of a missionary's life in that malaria region. He had buried 12 of his companions in the time. For 12 years he has scarcely seen the face of a white man. He was going to Africa to live a little while longer, perhaps, but he expected to die soon. And then he added, (I thought sweetly), as I shook his hand, "Well, many of us may die—perhaps hundreds of us will do so—but Christ will win at the last! Africa will know and will fear our Lord Jesus! And what does it matter what becomes of us—our name, our reputation, our health, our life—if Jesus wins at the last?"

What heroic words! What a missionary spirit! Live in that spirit, dear Brothers and Sisters, and in that spirit come now to the communion table! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 26:1-16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—803, 660, 663.**

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WOMAN'S MEMORIAL NO. 286

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 27, 1859
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.**

***“Verily I say to you, Where ever this Gospel is preached
in the whole world, what this woman has done,
will also be told as a memorial to her.”
Matthew 26:13.***

THE Evangelists are, of course, the historians of the time of Christ. But what strange historians they are! They leave out just that which worldly ones would write and they record just that which the worldly would have passed over. What historian would have thought of recording the story of the widow and her two mites? Would a Hume or a Smollet have spared half a page for such an incident? Or do you think that even a Macaulay could have found it in his pen to write down a story of an eccentric woman who broke an alabaster box of precious ointment upon the head of Jesus? But so it is. Jesus values things, not by their glare and glitter, but by their intrinsic value. He bids His historians store up not the things which shall dazzle men but those which shall instruct and teach them in His Spirit.

Christ values a matter not by its exterior, but by the motive which dictated it, by the love which shines from it. O singular Historians! You have passed by much that Herod did. You tell us little of the glories of his temple. You tell us little of Pilate and that little not to his credit. You treat with neglect the battles that are passing over the face of the earth. The grandeur of Caesar does not entice you from your simple story. But you continue to tell these little things and wise are you in so doing for verily these little things, when put into the scales of wisdom, weigh more than those monstrous bubbles of which the world delights to read.

And now my prayer is that we may be endued this morning with the same Spirit as that which prompted the woman when she broke her alabaster box upon the head of Christ. There must be something wonderful about this story, or else Christ would not have linked it with His Gospel, for so has He done. So long as this Gospel lives shall this story of the woman be told. And when this story of the woman ceases to exist, then the Gospel must cease to exist also, for they are co-eternal. As long as this Gospel is preached and wherever it is proclaimed, the story of this woman is to go with it. Our Lord's prediction goes on to be verified while the memorial of this woman fills the Church with its fragrance. There must be something, therefore, remarkable in it—let us pause and look and learn and God give us grace to imitate.

I shall want you first to observe attentively the woman. Secondly, I shall invite you to look into the face of her loving Lord and to listen to what He says about her. And then I shall close with an earnest suggestion that

each one of us look to himself, for surely this is meant for our profit and is not of any private interpretation.

I. First, then, my Friends, LET US OBSERVE THE WOMAN HERSELF. There is much dispute among commentators as to who she was. Some there are who confound this woman with that other woman who was a sinner, who came behind Christ and washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. There are some, too, who think that the woman in Matthew is the same as the one of whom I read just now in the Gospel of John. There are others who say, "Not so, for that incident occurred in the house of Lazarus, where Lazarus sat at the table and Martha served. While this, on the other hand, is stated to have taken place in the house of Simon the leper that was at Bethany." You will recollect, also, that this narrative in Matthew happened two days before the Passover—(see the second verse of this twenty-sixth chapter)—while the transaction recorded by the Evangelist John is said to have taken place six days before the Passover.

It will be an interesting study for you some Lord's-Day afternoon, if you are at home, to sit down and find out these different women and see how far they are all alike, or wherein there is a difference. I have no time to spare on the subject this morning and if I had I should not use it, for it will do you good to search the Scriptures and find it out for yourselves. Whether this, however, was Mary, the sister of Martha, or not, I will leave undetermined. We shall not err in speaking of her as a certain woman. Christ was sitting, or reclining, at the table of Simon the leper. A sudden thought strikes this woman. She goes to her home, she gets her money and expends it in on alabaster box of ointment, or perhaps she had it in store, already laid up. She brings it. She hastens into the house.

Without asking anyone's leave or communicating her intention, she breaks the alabaster vase, which was itself of great value and forth flows a stream of the most precious ointment, with a very refreshing fragrance. This she poured on His head. So plenteous was the effusion that it streamed right down to His feet and the whole house was filled with the odor of the ointment. The disciples murmured but the Savior commended.

Now, what was there in the action of this woman worthy of commendation and of such high commendation, too, that her memory must be preserved and transmitted with the Gospel itself throughout all ages? I think, in the first place, this act was done from the impulse of a loving heart and this it was that made it so remarkable. Ah, my Brethren, the heart is better than the head, after all, and the renewed heart is infinitely superior to the head. For, somehow or other, though doubtless grace will renew the understanding, yet it takes longer to sanctify the understanding, than it does the affections—or, at least, the heart is the first affected. It is that which is first touched and being swifter in its goings forth than the head.

It is generally more uncontaminated by the atmosphere around and more clearly perceives that which is right. We in our day fall into the habit of calculating whether a thing is our duty or not. But have we never an impulse of the heart more impressive and more expressive than the mere arithmetic of moral obligations? Our heart says to us, "Arise, go and visit such-and-such an one who is sick." We stop and say, "Is it my duty? If I

do not go, will not somebody else go? Is the service absolutely requisite?" Or your heart has said perhaps, once upon a time, "Devote of your substance largely to the cause of Christ." If we obeyed the heart we should do it at once. But instead of that, we stop and shake the head and we begin to calculate the question whether it is precisely our duty.

This woman did no such thing. It was not her duty—I speak broadly—it was not her positive duty to take the alabaster box and pour the contents on the head of Christ. She did not do it from a sense of obedience. She did it from a loftier motive. There was an impulse in her heart which gushed forth like a pure stream overflowing every quibble and question—"Duty or no duty, go and do it"—and she takes the most precious things she can find, and out of simple love, guided by her renewed heart, she goes at once and breaks the alabaster box and pours the ointment on His head. If she had stayed a minute to consider, she might not have done it at all. If she had pondered and reckoned and reasoned she never would have accomplished it.

But this was the heart acting, the invincible heart, the force of a spontaneous impulse—if not of a very inspiration—while the head with its various organs has not been allowed time to hold a council. It was the heart's dictate fully and entirely carried out. Now, in these times we lace ourselves so tight that we do not give our hearts room to act. We just calculate whether we should do it—whether it is precisely our duty. Oh, would to God our hearts could grow bigger! Let our heads be as they are, or let them be improved. But let the heart have full play and how much more would be done for Christ than ever has been done as yet?

But I would have you remark that this woman, acting from her heart, did not act as a matter of form.

You and I generally look to see whether the thing our new heart tells us to do has ever been done before. And then, if, like Martha, we love Christ, we still think it will be the proper mode of showing our love to prepare Him a supper and go and stand and wait at the table. We look for a precedent. We recollect that the Pharisee gave Christ a supper. We remember how many others of the disciples have given Him a dinner. And then we think that is the proper orthodox way and we will go and do the same.

"Mr. So-and-So gives ten guineas. I shall give ten guineas. Mrs. So-and-So teaches in the Sunday-School. I shall teach in the Sunday-School. Mr. This-or-That is in the habit of having prayer with his servants. I shall do likewise." You see, we look to find out whether anybody else has set us an example and then we get into the habit of doing all these things as a matter of form. But this woman never thought of that. She never asked whether there was anybody else that had ever broken an alabaster box of ointment on that sacred Head. No, she goes her way. Her heart says, "Do it," and she does it. She breaks the box and out flows the precious ointment. I would that we also obeyed the dictates of the heart. But no, we take second thoughts.

Depend on it, in the things of Christ first thoughts are the best. It is that heavenly inspiration of the Spirit which comes into the soul and says, "Do some great things for your Master—go out and show your love to Him in some hazardous expedition." Oh, if we did but obey that, what results

should we not see? We sit down and say, "Is it reasonable? Is it expected of me? Is it my duty?" No, my Friend, it is not expected of you. It is not your duty. But are you going to stop short in bare duty? Will you give to Christ no more than His due as you give to Caesar when you pay your tax? What? If the custom is but a shekel, is the shekel all He is to have? Is such a Master as this to be served by calculations? Is He to have His everyday penny, just as the common laborer?

God forbid we should indulge such a spirit! Alas, for the mass of Christians they do not even rise so high as that. And if they once get there they fold their arms and they are quite content. "I do as much as anybody else, in fact a little more. I am sure I do my duty. Nobody can find any fault. If people were to expect me to do more they would be really unreasonable." Ah, then you have not yet learned this woman's love in all its heights and depths! You know not how to do an unreasonable thing—a thing that is not expected of you—out of the Divine impulse of a heart fully consecrated to Jesus. The first era of the Christian Church was an era of wonders because then Christian men obeyed the prompting of their hearts.

What wonders they used to do! A voice within the heart said to an Apostle, "Go to a heathen country and preach." He never counted the cost—whether his life would be safe or whether he would be successful. He went and did whatever his heart told him. To another it spoke, "Go and distribute all that you have." And the Christian went and did it and cast his all into the common store. He never asked whether it was his duty—his heart bid him do it and he obeyed at once. Now, we have become stereotyped, we run in the ancient cart rut. We all do what other people do. We are just content with performing the routine and accomplishing the formalism of religions duties. How unlike this woman, who went out of all order because her heart told her to do so and she obeyed from her heart. This, I think, is the first part of the woman's act that won a deserved commendation.

The second commendation is—what this woman did was done purely to Christ and for Christ. Why did she not take this spikenard and sell it and give the money to the poor? "No," she might have thought, "I love the poor, I can relieve them at any time. To the utmost of my ability would I clothe the naked and feed the hungry. But I want to do something for *Him*." Well, why did she not get up and take the place that Martha did and begin to wait at the table? Ah, she thought, Martha was at the table dividing her services. Simon the leper and Lazarus and all the rest of the guests have a share in her attention. I want to do something directly for Him, something that He will have all to Himself, something that He cannot give away, but which He must have and which must belong to Him.

Now, I do not think that any other disciple, in all Christ's experience, ever had that thought. I do not find, in all the Evangelists, another instance like this. He had disciples, whom He sent out by two and two to preach and right valiantly did they do it, for they desired to benefit their fellow men in the service of their Lord. He had disciples, too, I doubt not, who were very, very happy when they distributed the bread and the fishes to the hungry multitudes because they felt they were doing an act of humanity in supplying the needs of the hungry. But I do not think He had

one disciple that thought about doing something exactly and directly for Him—something of which no one else could partake, something that should be Christ's and Christ's alone.

This is something, my Brothers and Sisters, which I wish you to remember. How much of what we do in the cause of religion fails to have any excellence in it because we do not perform it for Christ's sake! We go up to preach, perhaps, and we do not feel that we are preaching for Christ. Perhaps we are preaching with a sincere desire to do good to our fellow men—so far so good. But even that is not so grand a motive as the desire to do it for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Do you not often catch yourself, when you put a coin into the hand of the poor, thinking there is a virtue in it? And so there is, in one sense. But do you not find yourself forgetting that you should do that for Him and give that as unto Christ—giving unto the poor and lending unto the Lord? Sunday-School teachers! I ask you, also—do you not find, in teaching your class, that you often forget that you should be teaching for Him? Your act is done for the Church, for the school, for your fellow men, for the poor, for the children's sake—rather than for Christ's sake.

But the very beauty of this woman's act lay in this—that she did it all for the Lord Jesus Christ. You could not say she did it for Lazarus, or did it for the disciples. No, it was exclusively for Him. She felt she owed Him all. It was He who had forgiven her sins. It was He who had opened her eyes and given her to see the light of heavenly day. It was He who was her hope, her joy, her all. Her love went out in its common acting to her fellow men—it went out towards the poor, the sick and the needy. But oh, it went in all its vehemence to Him! That Man, that blessed Man, the God-Man, she must give something to Him. She could not be content to put it in that bag there. She must go and put it right on His head.

She could not be content that Peter, or James, or John should have a part of it. The whole pound must go on His head. And though others might say it was waste, yet she felt it was not—that whatever she could give unto Him was well bestowed—because it went to Him to whom she owed her all. Ah, my dear Hearers, learn this lesson, I pray you. The scene is a very simple one, but it is extremely captivating. You will do your acts in religion far better if you can cultivate always the desire to do them all for Christ. Oh, to preach for Christ! What precious work that is! When the mind is fatigued and the body weary, this will make a man strong to labor and to suffer, too, if he hears the whisper, "Go and do it for your Master's sake."

Oh, to visit the sick for Christ and distribute to the poor for His sake! This will make toil light—self-denial will become a pleasure—it will cease to be self-denial altogether if we remember that we are doing it for Him! But we do not now do as this woman did. I fear our love is but faint and cold. If the spark were kindled to a flame we should never be content with attending to religion from a selfish motive. We should not assay to do holy works with the idea of getting good ourselves but our one aim and desire would be to glorify Him—to spend and be spent for Him who suffered on the Cross for us. These two commendations were surely enough to immor-

talize this woman—she obeyed the dictates of her heart and she did it all for Him.

There is yet a third thing. I fear, however, I have anticipated myself. This woman did an extraordinary thing for Christ. Not content with doing what other people had done nor wishful to find a precedent, she ventured to expose her ardent attachment though she might have known that some would call her mad and all would think her foolish and wasteful. Yet she did it—an extraordinary thing—for the love she had for her Lord. Our Church acts at this day—as far as I know the Church of Christ from extensive traveling and considerable experience—exhibit a dull, uniform, dead level. There are some few men who strike out every now and then a new endorsement who are not content to ask what the fathers did. They don't care what is canonical, what will be permitted and allowed by ecclesiastical polity or by public opinion—they will only ask, "Does my heart bid me do it for Christ, then I will go and do it?" And it is done.

But the mass of Christians have not got a new thought, simply because new thoughts generally come from the heart and they will not let their hearts work and consequently they never get a new emotion. I believe that the origin of Sunday-Schools is to be found in the heart of some one man. His heart prompted him, saying—"Take these little ragged urchins and teach them the Word of God." If that thought had come into some of you, you would have said, "Well, there is not any Sunday-School connected with the Church of Christ all over England. I am sure the minister will throw many obstacles in the way. Nobody else has done it, but it would have been a good thing if it had been done many years ago."

Robert Raikes never talked like that. He went and did it and we, poor little creatures, can imitate him afterwards. If we would let our heart work we should do new things. Within fifty years from this date, unless the Lord comes before that era, there will be new operations for the cause of Christ, of which, if we heard them now, we should jump for joy. Perhaps they will never come to pass for years simply because this is the age for intellectual reasoning and not the age for heart impulse. If we did but hear our hearts and heed the promptings of the Spirit within, there might be fifty schemes for the promotion of the cause of Christ started in as many days and all those fifty, through the Holy Spirit's blessing, might be useful to the souls of men.

"But," says one, "you would make us all fanatics." Yes, no doubt that is just the name you would very soon earn and a very respectable name, too, for it is a name that has been borne by all men who have been singularly good. All those who have done wonders for Christ have always been called eccentric and fanatical. Why, when Whitfield first went on Bennington Common to preach because he could not find a building large enough, it was quite an unheard of thing to preach in the open air. How could you expect God to hear prayer, if there was not a roof over the top of the people's heads? How could souls be blessed if the people had not seats and regular high-backed pews to sit in?

Whitfield was thought to be doing something outrageous, but he went and did it. He went and broke the alabaster box on the head of his Master and in the midst of scoffs and jeers he preached in the open air. And what

came of it? A revival of godliness and a mighty spread of religion! I wish we were all of us ready to do some extraordinary thing for Christ—willing to be laughed at, to be called fanatics, to be hooted and scandalized—because we went out of the common way and were not content with doing what everybody else could do or approve to be done.

And here let me remark that Jesus Christ certainly deserves to be served after an extraordinary manner. Was there ever a people that had such a leader or such a lover as we have in the Person of Christ? And yet, my dear Friends, there have been many impostors in the world who have had disciples more ardently attached to them than some of you are to Christ Jesus. When I read the life of Mohamed, I see men who loved him so, that they would expose their persons to death at any moment for the false prophet. They would dash into battle almost naked, cut their way through hosts of enemies and do exploits out of a passionate zeal for him whom they verily believed to be sent of God.

And even that modern delusion of Joe Smith lacks not its martyrs. I read the history of the Mormon emigrants and of all the miseries they endured when driven out of the city of Nauvoo. How they had to pass over trackless snows and pathless mountains. How they were ready to die under the guns of the United States marauders and how they suffered for that false prophet. I do stand ashamed of the followers of Christ that they should permit the followers of an impostor to suffer hardships and loss of limb and life and everything else that men count dear—for an impostor—while they themselves show that they do not love their Master, their true and loving Lord, half so well, else would they serve Him in an extraordinary manner, as He deserves.

When the soldiers of Napoleon performed such unexampled deeds of daring in his day, people ceased to wonder. They said, “No wonder that they do that, see what their leader does.” When Napoleon, sword in hand, crossed over the bridge of Lodi and bid them follow, no one wondered that every common soldier was a hero. But is it wonderful when we consider what the Captain of our salvation has done for us and we are content to be such everyday nothings as the most of us are? Ah, if we did but think of His glory and of what He deserves—if we did but think of His sufferings and of what He merits at our hands—surely we should do something out of the ordinary. We should break our alabaster box and pour the pound of ointment on His head again.

But not only does an extraordinary thing cease to appear extraordinary when you think of the person to whom it is done, but surely when you think of the person who is bound to do it, an extraordinary thing becomes very ordinary indeed. My Friends, if I should leave this place and go into the midst of the abode of some wild Red Indians and there be exposed to cold and hunger and famine and nakedness. If through long years I should preach the Gospel to a people who rejected me and if afterwards I should be roasted alive at the stake by them, I do acknowledge and confess that I feel it were but a slight thing I should have done for Him to whom I owe so much.

When I think of what my Master has done for me, surely the stripes and imprisonments, the perils, the shipwrecks, the journeys which even a

Paul suffered, seem to be less than nothing and vanity compared with the debt of love I owe. Now, I do not expect all of you to love Christ as I think I ought, for perhaps you do not owe Him so much as I do. Perhaps you have never been such great sinners as I was. Perhaps you have never had so much forgiven and have never tasted so much of His love and have never had so much fellowship with Him. But this I know—if every atom of my body could become a man and every man so made could suffer and be cut piecemeal, all that suffering would not be a worthy recompense for what He has done for me.

Methinks there are some of you that might stand up and tell the same tale. I can look round on some of you that were drunkards, that swore—but you have obtained mercy. And, my dear Friends, if you do something extraordinary for Christ, while other people wonder with a vacant stare of astonishment, you may say, “Do you wonder at me?”—

***“Love I much? I’ve more forgiven!
I’m a miracle of Grace.”***

You for whom Jesus has done little, if any such there are, love Him little. But I do beseech you—those of you whom He has loved with an extraordinary affection and who feel that you owe much to His grace—that He has done “things for you whereof you are glad”—do not be content with doing what other people do. Think of others thus, “I have no doubt that what they do is their best, but I must do more than they, for I owe Him more than they do.” And oh, if every one of us could feel this, we should account labor light and pain easy and be disgusted with ourselves that we spend so much of our lives doing nothing for Him who has bought us with His most precious blood.

I have but one more reason to add. It seems to me that Jesus praised this woman and handed down this memorial because her act was so beautifully expressive. There was more virtue in it than you could see. The manner, as well as the matter of her votive sacrifice might well excite the rebuke of men, whose practical religion is mercenary and economical. It is not enough that she pours out the ointment with such reckless profusion but she is so rash and extravagant she must needs break the box. Marvel not, Beloved, but admire the rapt enthusiasm of her godly soul. Why, Love is a passion! If you did but know and feel its vehemence, you would never marvel at an act so expressive. Her love could no more tarry to conform to the rubrics of service than it could count the cost of her offering.

A mighty impulse of devotion carries her soul far above all ordinary routine. Her conduct did but symbol the inspiration of a grateful homage. A sanctified heart, more beautiful than the transparent vase of alabaster, was that hour broken. Only from a broken heart can the sweet spices of grace give forth their rich perfume. “Love and grief, our heart dividing,” we sometimes sing—but oh, let me say it—love, grief and gratitude, the spikenard, myrrh and frankincense of the Gospel blend together here. The heart must expand and break or the odors would never fill the house. Every muscle of her face, every involuntary motion of her frame, frenzied as it might appear to the indifferent onlooker, was in harmony with her heart’s emotion.

Her every feature gives evidence of her sincerity. What they could coldly criticize, Jesus delivers to them for a study. Here is one on whom a Sav-

ior's love has produced its appropriate effects. Here is a heart that has brought forth the most precious fruits. Not only admiration for her but kindness to us moved our Lord when He resolved henceforth to illustrate the Gospel, wherever it is published, with this portrait of saintly love—in one instant breaking the delicate vase and bursting the tender heart. Why, that woman meant to say to Christ, "Dear Lord, I give myself away." She went home. She brought out the most precious thing she had. If she had had anything worth ten thousand times as much she would have brought that—in fact, she did really bring Him all.

II. Having described this woman as so well worthy to be remembered forever, I NOW INVITE YOU TO LOOK INTO THE FACE OF THE LOVING LORD. Hark! What is all that muttering about? What are they saying to one another over yonder? Why, there is Judas. He has been taking out a little scrap of paper and casting up a sum and he makes out that that box of ointment is worth just three hundred pence. And what are Peter and Thomas and the other disciples talking about? "Oh dear," they say, "see what a waste. I am very sorry. If I had known what she was going to do I would have taken that box away from her. Indeed I would, I would not have allowed that, what a waste! And all for this little smell—it is soon gone and a little of it would have done.

"What multitudes of hungry mouths might have been filled if it had been sold and given to the poor." "Oh!" says one of them, "I never saw such an insane thing in my life. I wonder the Lord Jesus was not angry with her." Do you hear that talk? Do you hear it? I have heard it many times before and I hear it now. It is a kind of talk that is sometimes very rife in the Church of Christ. If there is a man that does a little more than anyone else, people say, "There is no occasion for it at all, there is no need for it." If someone gives more than anyone else to the cause of Christ, they say, "Ah, I cannot understand such a motive as would lead him to do that. There is a medium in all things. There is a limit to which people should go and they ought not to exceed it."

And so they begin chatting and talking one with another and if there is anything done that seems extraordinary they will begin to pick a hole in it. Instead of emulating superior devotion themselves, they begin to murmur and to consider how much might have been done with the same effort, if it had been conducted in an orthodox manner. That young man, instead of preaching at the corner of the street, if he taught in a Sunday-School, how much good might he do? If—instead of rambling all over the country, some would have said, "If Whitfield had kept to his own congregation, or to his own parish, he might have done a great deal of good." Yes, I dare say. But you and Judas talk that matter over together. We have no time to trouble ourselves with it this morning. Let us look at what Jesus Christ Himself says. He says, "Trouble her not, trouble her not. I have three very good excuses for her—only listen to them." And the three interpretations our Lord gave of the woman were these.

"She has wrought a good work upon Me." Note these two last words "Upon Me"! "Why," they say, "it is not a good work to go and spill all that ointment and perpetrate so much waste." "No," says Jesus, "it is not a good work in relation to you, but it is a good work upon Me." And, after

all, that is the best sort of good work—a good work that is wrought upon Christ—an act of homage such as faith in His name and love to His Person would dictate. A good work upon the poor is commendable, a good work upon the Church is excellent. But a good work upon Christ—surely this is one of the very highest and noblest kinds of good works. But I will be bound to say that neither Judas nor the disciples could comprehend this.

And there is a mystic virtue in the acts of some Christian men that common Christians do not and cannot comprehend. That mystic virtue consists in this—that they do it “as unto the Lord and not unto men,” and in their service they serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, our Lord protects the woman with another apology. “Do not trouble her. Do not reflect upon what might have been done for the poor, for you have the poor always with you, but Me you have not always. You can always do good to them, whenever you please.” Why, He seems here to retort upon her accusers, “If there are any poor about, give to them yourselves. Empty that bag of mine out, Judas. Don't be hiding that away in your girdle. When you will, you may do them good. Don't begin talking about the poor and about what might have been done—go and do what might have been done yourselves. This poor woman has done a good thing for Me. I shall not be here long. Don't trouble her.”

And so, Beloved, if you murmur at men because they do not go in your ordinary ways, because they venture a little out of the regular line, remember, there is plenty for you to do. Your errand, perhaps, is not there exactly, but there is plenty for you to do—go and do it and do not blame those who do extraordinary things. There are multitudes of ordinary people to attend to ordinary things. If you want subscribers to the guinea list, you can have them. It is those who give all they have that are the varieties. Do not trouble those men. There are not many of them. They will not trouble you. You will have to travel from here to John O'Groat's house before you knock against many dozen. They are rare creatures not often discovered. Do not trouble them. They may be fanatical, they may be excessive. But if you should build an asylum to put them all in, it would require but a very small sort of a house. Let them alone—there are not many who do much for their Master—not many who are irrational enough to think that there is nothing worth living for but to glorify Christ and magnify His holy name.

But the third excuse is the most extraordinary that could be given. Says Christ, “in that she poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial.” What? Did this woman foresee the Messiah's death? And had she the fond idea that since no loving hand might embalm Him, she would anoint His sacred body by anticipation? Did her faith just then penetrate those deep shades of mystery about to be gradually unraveled? I think not. I think her love was more conspicuous than her faith. It strikes me that in these Words we have rather the construction that Christ put upon her act. If so, the virtue of her action was derived from Him on whom it was wrought.

“Your righteousness is of Me,” says the Lord. Sometimes when your heart prompts you to go and do such-and-such a thing for Christ, you

cannot tell what you are doing. You may be doing a very simple thing in appearance but there may be some wonderful, some matchless meaning in it. Christ may be but sending you, as it were, to take hold of one golden link—maybe there are ten thousand links that are hanging to it and when you draw out that one, all the ten thousand will come after it. This woman thought she was just anointing Christ. “No,” says Christ, “she is anointing Me for My burial.” There was more in her act than she knew of.

And there is more in the spiritual promptings of our heart than we shall ever discover to the day of judgment. When first of all the Lord said to Whitfield, “Go and preach out on Kennington Common,” did Whitfield know what was to be the result? No, he thought, doubtless, that he should just stand for once on the top of a table and address some five thousand people. But there was a greater intent in the womb of Providence. The Lord meant that to set the whole country in a blaze and to bring forth a glorious renewal of Pentecostal times the like of which had not been seen before. Only seek to have your heart filled with love and then obey its first spiritual dictate. Stop not, however extraordinary may be the mandate—go and do it. Have your wings outstretched like the angels before the Throne and the very moment that the echo vibrates in your heart, fly, fly and you shall be flying you know not where—you shall be upon an errand higher and nobler than your imagination has ever dreamed.

III. Now I come to the conclusion, which is this—TO APPEAL, PERSONALLY TO YOU and ask you whether you know anything about the lesson which this woman's history is designed to teach? Imagine your Savior, who has bought you with His blood, standing in this pulpit for a moment. He lifts up His hands, once rent with the nails—He exposes to you His side, pierced with a spear. Now picture Him. Lose sight of me for a moment and see Him! And He puts to each one of you the question—“I suffered all this for you, what have you ever done for Me?” Answer Him now! Like honest followers of the Lamb of God look back and see what you have ever done.

You have gone up, you say, to His House. Was not that for your own profit? Did you do it for Him? You have contributed to His cause. Ah, you have and some of you have done well in this thing. But think, how much have you given in proportion to what God has given to you? What have you done for Christ? Well, you have perhaps, some years ago taught children for Him in the Sunday-School, but it is all over. You have not been a Sunday-School teacher these last many years. Jesus asks you, “What have you done for Me? In three years,” He says, “I wrought out your redemption. In three years of agony, of toil, of suffering, I bought you with My blood. What have you done for Me in these ten, twenty, thirty years, since you knew My love and tasted of My power to save?”

Cover your faces, my Friends, cover your faces. Let each man among us do so. Let us blush and weep. Lord Jesus! There was never such a Friend as You are. But never were there such unfriendly ones as we are. Christ has some of the most ungrateful followers that man ever had. We have done little. If we have done much, we have done little. But some of you have done nothing at all for Christ.

That question answered, there comes another. I beseech you, let the vision of that crucified One stand before you. He asks you this morning, "What *will* you do for Me?" Putting aside the past—you have wept over that and blushed—what will you do now? Will you not now think of something that you can give Him, something that you can do for Him, something you can consecrate to Him? Come, you Marys, bring out your alabaster boxes! Come, you loving Johns, lift your heads for a moment from His bosom and think of something that you can do for Him who lets you lean your head upon His heart. Come, come, you followers of Christ! Need I press you? Surely if you needed it, my pressing would be in vain. But no—instinctively inspired by the Holy Spirit, you will each of you say, "Lord Jesus, from this day forth I desire to serve You better. But, Lord, tell me what You would have me to do." He does tell you now. I do not know what it is. The Spirit shall tell that to each one among you. But I do entreat you think not about it—do it.

To the whole Church of Christ I have one word to speak. I feel—and I speak here of myself and of all Christians as in one mass—I feel that the Church of Christ in these days too much forgets her obligations to her Master. Oh, in the early Church how did religion spread! It was because no man thought his life his own, or counted anything dear to him so that he might win Christ and be found in Him at last. Look how the ancient Church, which was but a handful, within a century had stormed every known nation and had carried the Gospel throughout the length and breadth of the entire known world.

But now we stay at home, penned up in England, or cooped up in America. We go not abroad where heathens dwell. Though we send here and there a man—one drafted as it were out of thousands—we do little or nothing for the evangelization of the world and the sending forth of the ministers of the Truth. Why, the early Church, if it were here now and we were gone, would within another fifty years sound the trumpet of the heavenly jubilee throughout the entire earth! With our means of traveling, with our appliances, with our books and helps, give such a Church as the first Pentecostal one but fifty years and the whole earth would be covered with the knowledge of the Lord, God the Holy Spirit going forth with them.

But no, we cannot spend our lives for Christ—we are not like the soldiers who marched to victory over the dead bodies of their Brethren. We shall never sow the world with the Truth of God till it is sown with our blood again. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." I would that the Church would burst forth from all her bonds and send out her chosen warriors to do battle against the infidel hosts. And what if they should fall? What if they should die? With the Spirit of Christ inflaming our hearts we would go forward—our courage not dampened nor our ardor abated for all that—each one counting it an honor to die for Christ, each one throwing himself into the breach determined to win for Christ and spread His name through the whole earth, or else to perish in the attempt.

God give to His Church this zeal and ardor. And then the time to favor Zion, yes, her set time, shall have come.

“TAKE, EAT”

NO. 2350

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, MARCH 4, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 8, 1888.**

***“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it,
and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body.”
Matthew 26:26.***

WE are all agreed upon this one point, that the Lord’s Supper is an emblem of the death of Jesus Christ and of the way by which we receive benefit from Him. The bread sets forth His broken body and the cup His shed blood. These, separated from each other, show forth His death. The way by which we receive this bread and this wine is by eating and drinking—and this sets forth the way by which we receive the merit and the virtue of the Lord Jesus Christ—by a *faith* which is like eating, by a *trust* which is like drinking, by the reception of Christ *spiritually* into our hearts, even as we naturally receive the bread and the fruit of the vine into our bodies.

These two words, then, “Take, eat,” are the practical directions concerning the Lord’s Supper and, *spiritually* understood, they are the Gospel of the Grace of God. Every disciple of the Lord Jesus may hear a spiritual voice saying to him, concerning Christ, “Take, eat.” And you who fear that you are not His disciples, if you wish to be, if there is a craving in your heart to possess Him, if you are beginning to feel after Him, I venture to say to you, also, “Take, eat.” This is the way to have Christ—take Him—partake of Him and He is yours.

You probably remember the extraordinary story of the conversion of Augustine, who, after a life of sin, was stricken with compunction of conscience. His sorrow of heart was very great and he could not find peace till he heard a voice, which may possibly have been that of a child on the other side of the wall—I cannot tell—but such a voice he heard, saying over and over again, “Tolle, lege; tolle, lege; tolle, lege,” that is, “Take and read; take and read.” And he took the Book and read it, studied it believingly, and found peace with God. I have prayed that there may be some young Augustine here tonight. If present, his name may be, “disgusting,” for he is living in sin and iniquity. I pray that he may be troubled in his conscience and that he may be led to Christ by these words of the text, “Take, eat.” May this command come home to you and may you catch at it, and put it in practice, and may my Master make a great saint out of some great sinner, even an Augustine, who shall valiantly defend the

Gospel of God’s Grace though now he sins desperately against Almighty Love! Oh, that it may be so!

With that end in view, I come to my text. We cannot have many divisions to it, can we? There are but two words on which I wish, especially, to speak, so they shall be the divisions of my subject. First, “*take*,” and secondly, “*eat*.”

I. The first word I want you to notice is, “TAKE.”

Just as a doctor might write at the beginning of a prescription, “Take such and such things,” so the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Take.” The word is often translated in our New Testament, “Receive.” Jesus holds out the bread in His hand and says, “Receive it; let it come into your hand.” “Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it,” and then, holding it out to His disciples, He said, “Take, take, take,” and they took it, and the bread became theirs. This is the way that saints get blessings—they *take* them. This is the way that sinners also get blessings, by the Grace of God—they *take* them. They do not *make* them, nor *earn* them, nor *deserve* them, but they *take* them. Jesus Christ says to them, “Take,” and they obey His voice and take.

Nobody at the table said, “Lord, I dare not take.” But when Jesus said, “Take,” they took. Nobody said, though perhaps everybody felt, “I am not worthy to take,” but as Jesus said, “Take,” they took. It is always the best plan to accept any good thing that is offered to you. If you are a very poor man and someone offers you a shilling, I venture to give you this piece of advice—take it! Do not stand and say to him, “My dear Sir, I think that indiscriminate charity is wrong. You have never enquired into my character. You do not know whether I really am one of the unemployed.” If there is a shilling held out to you, my Friend, you had better take it. If you are very hungry and there is bread about, you had better eat it if it is given to you. If it is freely presented to you, freely take it! If that were my case, I would ask no questions, not only for conscience’s sake, but for my necessity’s sake, and especially would I do so when, by the Grace of God, the gift is presented to me by the Lord Jesus Christ! If He says, “Take,” I will take! There is nothing freer than a gift, surely, except that perhaps I should be freer to take than I might be to give, for our poor natures are contracted and we may not always be free in giving, but, surely, even selfishness might make us free in taking. A holy desire for your own good and your own salvation might prompt you to say, “Yes, Lord, if You freely give, I without question will freely take!”

And I do not suppose that the Master stood holding that piece of bread to Peter for half-an-hour. He said, “Take” and Peter took it. “Take,” He said to John, and John took it. “Take,” He said to Philip, and Philip took it at once. Blessed are they who accept Christ the first time they hear about Him! Blessed are all they who accept Him at all, but thrice blessed are they who, when He says, “Take,” through His Grace, promptly answer, “Yes, Lord, that I will, and thank You, too, most heartily!” Remember those words that we have so often sung—

**“Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there ‘tis offered you—
Offered without price or money,
‘Tis the gift of God sent free—
Take salvation,
Take it now, and happy be.”**

I anticipate that someone will say, “Am I, then, to have Jesus Christ by only *taking* Him?” Just so! Do you need a Savior? There He is—take Him! Do you desire to be delivered from the power of sin? He can deliver you—take Him to do it! Do you desire to lead a holy, godly life? Here is One who can wash you and enable you to live thus. Take Him, He is as free as the air—you have no more to pay for Christ than you have to pay for the next breath that goes into your lungs! Take Him in! Take Him in! That is all that you have to do. If I hear you say, “I can hardly think that I, a poor unworthy sinner, such as I am, and just as I am, may take Christ,” I answer—That is the Gospel which I have to give you, for Jesus said, “Take, eat.”

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Well, then, first of all, see how free Christ must be to sinners, because *He had a body*. Once He had no body—the blessed Son of God was pure spirit—but He condescended to be born of Mary. I think I see Him as an infant cradled in the manger. The Lord of All stooped so low that He hung upon a woman’s breast and allowed Himself to be swaddled like any other babe! The Lord of Life and Glory has taken human nature! He lives at Nazareth as a Child. He grows up as a laboring Man, the reputed Son of a carpenter. Working man, your God became a Carpenter for you! Take Him! Surely, the very fact that He came among men and took a body like our own should encourage us to feel that we may freely take Him! His name is Emmanuel, God With Us—and if He is God with us, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh—if He has come so far to bless us, let us not doubt that we may freely take what He has come to bring!

Having taken a body, moreover, remember, next, that *in that body He suffered*. If I had to tell you that Jesus Christ *would* die to redeem you, I would, perhaps, try your faith. But when I have to tell you that He *has* died, that the work of your redemption is *accomplished*, that Jesus cried, “It is finished,” before He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. When I tell you that to the utmost farthing He has paid your debt and borne your sins in His own body on the tree, this is good news, indeed, for it leads me to further say that if He has done all this and died, “the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” we may freely take Him, depend upon that! God has set forth His Son to be the Propitiation for sin, therefore let us hear Him say, “Take, take, take,” and let us take what is so freely presented to us!

My dear Friends, remember, also, that, as Jesus Christ had a body, and in that body died, *the objective of that death must be outside of Himself*. He could not have become a Man to gain anything by it. He could not have died for any purpose that had to do with only His own Glory! He was

under no necessity to veil the splendors of His Godhead in a mortal body and, in that body, to die. So He must have died for other people and, therefore, take Him, take Him! Do you not see that these fruits are not on the tree for the tree, itself, but for the passerby who, being hungry, may lift his hand and take and eat? Oh, that you might have the sense to see that Christ, for sins not His own, has died to atone and that, therefore, you may take Him and take Him most freely!

Besides, *Jesus Himself gives what we are told to take*. Note how this verse runs—“Jesus took bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat.” What Jesus gives, you may truly take. I may not go and take another man’s goods, but I may take what He gives me. If I were arrested for stealing something and I could truly say, “This man gave it to me,” I would be no thief, would I? And if Jesus Christ gives you Grace and you take it, you are no thief—in fact, no man ever lays hold on Christ without a lawful right to do so. If a dog runs into a butcher shop and steals a joint of meat, the butcher may, perhaps, take it from him and not let him eat what he has stolen, but there was never a dog of a sinner who came and laid hold on Christ’s mercy and then Christ took it away from him! Take it, Sinner, and you have secured it! If you dare to seize it, God makes the seizing by faith to be a proper thing, for He bids you do it. You can never have any right to Christ except this right—that He does freely give to those who need, according to the riches of His Grace. Therefore, hear this Word of God which says, “Take, take, take.” Receive, accept, grasp, appropriate, take!

Jesus Christ, when He said to His disciples, “Take,” was their Master, and *Christ’s Word was Law to the disciples*. There was not one of them who could have said, “I will not take,” without being guilty of disobedience! Oh, that some poor soul here, tonight, would say, “Is there a Savior? Then I will have Him! I will take Him.” May the Spirit of infinite Love move upon your mind to make you say, as by a kind of holy desperation, “I will even *now* take Him. Whether I may or may not, I will take Him! Though my sense of sin says, ‘You must not,’ and though the devil says, ‘You dare not,’ yet I will take Him! I do believe, I will believe, I *must* believe that Jesus died for me—and I will take Him to be my Savior. I will rest myself wholly and alone on Him!” If you do this, you shall never perish, for to you and to everyone who is Christ’s disciple, or who will *become* His disciple, there comes this word of command, “Take, take, take, take, take.” Oh, blessed news and sweet command! May the Divine Spirit lead you to obey it, now, and to take Christ as your Savior!

II. The second head of the sermon is, EAT. “Take, eat.” Eating is such a very simple thing that I do not think I shall try to explain it. Go home to your supper and you will understand it. Every hungry man, no, every *living* man, knows what it is to eat. Well, what is eating?

To eat is *the innermost kind of reception*. It is taking into your very self the food set before you. Well, now, take Christ, you who are His disciples—take Christ, Himself, His work, His blood, His righteousness—take

them right into you! Say, “This is for me. I take it for myself.” I have no partner in anything I eat. What I have eaten, I have eaten for myself. You cannot eat for your wife or your child. You have to do that for yourself. Now, dear Heart, be brave enough to take Christ all to yourself! Say, “This dying Savior is mine, this risen Savior is mine. I hope that multitudes of others will have Him, but, as for myself, I am going to have Him.” When I eat, I am doing an action for myself—it must be so. And now, by faith, I take this blessed Son of God who became Man, living, dying, risen, I take Him for myself unto myself. I beseech you to do that tonight. “It is a selfish action,” you say. Ah, but it is a *necessary* action! You have personally sinned and you must *personally* take Christ. You are personally hungry and you must *personally* eat. Who is to condemn you for that? You cannot act unselfishly towards others if you do not, yourself, eat, because you will not long be alive to be either selfish or unselfish! See to this, then. “Take, eat.” Receive Christ by the innermost kind of reception.

Eating is also *a very familiar kind of reception*. It is a thing that can be as well performed by a workingman as by a nobleman. Indeed, I think it is often better done by the workingman than by the nobleman. How they can eat, some of them! And how simple-hearted people, when they come to Christ, can eat! If you want to see eating, do not bring “My Lord and My Lady” to the choice dainties of a feast, but invite a lot of poor, hardworking men! I mean men who have not had enough to eat for a month—and there are plenty of that sort about. Set them down to a good joint of meat and see how they will eat! Eating is a very familiar kind of action and, therefore, we say, concerning the great salvation of Jesus Christ, “Take, eat.” Take Him right into you! You can do this as you take your meals, as you hungry, famished ones devour your food—so take in the Lord Jesus Christ—trusting Him, receiving Him into yourself and saying, “He is, He shall be altogether mine.”

Now, when food is to be eaten, it is not only taken in, but *it has to be masticated*. It is in the mouth and it is turned over and over so that the flavor of it is discerned. Now, in this way, think much of the Lord Jesus Christ and His redeeming work. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Truth of God. If you feel that you cannot believe, think much of what is to be believed and of Him in whom you are to believe. That mastication will be an admirable way of feeding upon the heavenly food! Jesus died for sinners. Jesus died for sinners! Jesus died in the place of sinners! Masticate that great Truth of God and turn it over and over—chew that great doctrine with the teeth of your thought until you get the very marrow and essence of it into your soul!

Then there is *an inward assimilation* that goes on with food. Passing into our innermost parts, it begins to build up our body till the food that was bread a little while ago becomes flesh and blood. Retain Christ in your thought, in your faith, in your heart till, at last, Christ gets to be one with you and nourishes your soul, even as your food builds up your body. “Take, eat.” You know, the whole business of eating is, after all, to get the

food into yourself. That is the main point—to get it so into you that it becomes your own and becomes part of yourself. Now, do that with the blessed Lord, Christ, and all His wonderful work for sinners! Take it till it gets right into yourself and becomes part and parcel of yourself—and you live through it. “Take, eat.”

I imagine that I hear someone saying, “Oh, but it seems too extraordinary that I, a poor, unworthy one, am to take Christ to be mine, as much as I take a piece of bread to be my food!” Well, listen—*He bids you do it*—that is warrant enough! If I am the most unworthy one yet out of Hell, if Jesus bids me trust Him, I may trust Him! His bidding is sufficient warrant for my doing it! O child of God, O you who desire to be His child—He bids you eat! I beseech you, hesitate not, but let His bidding be your warrant!

Jesus Christ condescends to compare Himself to bread, but *what is the good of bread except for it to be eaten?* Why is it made into bread except that it should be eaten? Why does it stand in rows in the bakers’ shops? To be *looked* at? What? Hungry men in the streets and bread, there, as an ornament to be looked at? No, the very making of bread means food for men—and when the Lord Jesus Christ compares Himself to bread, He means that He has put Himself into such a shape and form, in the Covenant of Grace—that He intends us to receive Him. Bread that does not get eaten, what can become of it? The manna in the wilderness that was not eaten, but laid up, bred worms and stank. Our Lord Jesus Christ is of no use unless sinners are saved by Him! A Savior who saves nobody? Why, He is like a man who opens a shop and never sells any goods. Or a doctor who comes to a town and never has any patients! Christ must save sinners! He needs sinners! He longs to save sinners! Come and take Him, then. Come and eat of that bread which misses its purpose, design and end if it is not eaten! Christ as bread, yet not eaten, becomes Christ dishonored.

“Take, eat.” Well, what does this mean—this *eating*? I will tell you. When two men, in the East, took a piece of bread and broke it, and one ate one piece, and the other another piece, *it meant friendship*. I go into an Arab’s tent and I cannot tell what kind of a fellow he may be. He may kill me in the night and rob me—but if he hands me a piece of bread and I eat with him—he will not hurt me. The rights of hospitality have secured my safety. There is friendship between him and me. Now, look—God takes a great delight in Jesus Christ—will you not, also, take delight in Him? Then, you see, you have broken bread, together, for you delight in the same Person! God trusts His honor with Christ—will you trust your soul with Christ? Then you have broken bread with God! “Take, eat,” says Jesus, and the moment that you have done it, there is the friendship, no, there is the *Covenant* established between you and the great Father! I know that God loves Jesus Christ better than I do, but I think that I can almost say that He does not more truly love Him than I do. Oh, what a Christ He is to my Soul! And God loves Him, too—He and I are agreed

about one thing—we are agreed about a precious Savior and *there* is a place where we strike hands and are friends forever! Our Covenant is made over the Sacrifice of Christ! The moment that you have eaten Christ by faith, there is an eternal friendship established between you and your God!

Again, when Jesus says, “Take, eat,” His words set forth to us that *He is to become the true Nourishment of our soul*. Souls have to be nourished by the Truth of God, that is their spiritual meat, and the Lord Jesus Christ—when we think of Him, meditate upon Him, believe in Him and receive Him—becomes the food of our heart, the sustenance of our spirit. Think much of Him, then! Trust Him much! Meditate upon Him much, for thus shall you grow strong in the Lord and be built up so as to attain unto the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. This is what is meant by the text, “Take, eat.”

This also pictures *the wonderful union that there is between Christ and His people*. That which a man has fed upon becomes indissolubly joined to himself. You cannot get away from him that which he ate yesterday—it has become a part of himself. I have heard of a priest who took away the New Testament from a little Irish boy. The boy said, “There are 10 of the chapters you cannot take away.” “Why?” asked the priest. “Because I have learned them by heart.” And so, when you receive Christ into your heart, He cannot be taken away from you! Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? There is such a union between Christ and the Believer that there cannot be a separation between them without the destruction of Christ and the man, too. They are so interwoven, intertwined and intermingled, that there is no possibility of separating them! So, the Savior says to you, who are His disciples, and to you who wish to be, “Take, eat.” As you will see us, presently, at the Communion Table, take the bread and eat it, so do you take Christ and feed upon Him, for He commands you so to do! “Take, eat.” Dear Hearts, there is nothing said about *earning* it, nothing said about *buying* it, nothing said about *being prepared* for it! Come, then, take the Lord Jesus Christ and He is yours!

“Oh!” says one, “I will trust Christ, I will take Him now!” You young men and young women here, tonight, the first Sabbath of my return after my rest, it would be a very happy night for me if you would dare to take Christ. When I was in distress of soul, it seemed to me as if I must not take Christ. Years ago, when I was a boy of fifteen, that used to be my trouble. I dared not think that Christ died for me and I was afraid to trust Him with my soul. It gradually dawned upon me that if I dared to do it, I might do it—and that if I *did* do it, it would be done and never would be undone! It dawned on me that if I seized the opportunity of Jesus Christ passing by and touched the hem of His garment, though it would be an awful piece of presumption, as it seemed, yet it would be a holy and hallowed presumption and Christ would not be angry with me for it! And I know that, when first I believed, I seemed as if I were a thief and had stolen a cure, but then the Lord Jesus never took it away from me! I ven-

tured, I risked, I dared to say, "I believe that He can save me and that He *has* saved me." I rested myself on Him and then I found peace!

Do so tonight! Jesus said, "He that believes in Me has everlasting life." He has it now and it is everlasting. He shall never lose it. He that believes in Jesus Christ is not condemned, notwithstanding all his past guilt and sin. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Now I have given you the whole Gospel. That is how the Master put it and I have left out no clause of it. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "If you shall confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

"Take, eat! Take, eat! Take, eat!" I should like to say those words so that you people up there in the top gallery would hear them in 20 years' time, if you are alive, so that, as you recollect these lamps and these tiers of people, you might still seem to hear a voice crying, *perhaps, from my grave*, "Take, eat!" But do not wait 20 years! "Take, eat!" Do it tonight! God help you all to do it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
*Psalm 107; Matthew 26:6-30.***

Psalm 107:1. *Praise you the LORD.* This Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah. So may this service, and so may our lives commence and conclude with Hallelujah,

1, 2. *For it is good to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. The LORD does build up Jerusalem.* Oh, that the Lord would do so here tonight!

2. *He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.* We need that blessing, too. Oh, that some outcasts might be gathered together! It shall make our hearts cry, "Hallelujah," indeed, if there is a building up of the Church and an ingathering of the outcasts.

3. *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.* As we read that, we may well say again, "Hallelujah,"

4. *He counts the number of the stars: He calls them all by their names.* And the Hallelujah is not louder because of that fact than it is for the other Truth! What a condescending God—"He heals the broken in heart." How infinite is His mind—"He counts the number of the stars."

5, 6. *Great is our Lord and of great power: His understanding is infinite. The LORD lifts up the meek.* How wonderful it is that the Lord should use the greatness of His power and the infinity of His understanding for the lifting up of those whom men often despise—"the meek"!

6-11. *He casts the wicked down to the ground. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covers the Heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. He gives to the beast his food, and to the young*

ravens which cry. He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy. Other kings tell of their cavalry and infantry, they boast of their regiments of horses and foot soldiers, but our great God finds His delight in them that fear Him and even in the feeble sort of these—“those that hope in His mercy.” These are the courtiers of Jehovah. These are the forces of our God, through whom He will win great victories!

12-15. *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly.* Our King’s warrant runs everywhere, all over the world. He has universal power in Nature, in Providence and in Grace—“His Word runs very swiftly.”

16. *He gives snow like wool: He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.* The Hebrews saw God in all the phenomena of Nature—let us do the same. Let us attribute every snowflake to the Divine hand and every breath of frost to the Divine mouth.

17, 18. *He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold? He sends out His Word, and melts them.* It is just as easy for Him to send warm weather as to give us the chill of winter.

18. *He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.* His own soft south wind comes and the fetters of frost dissolve, and the waters flow. It is the Lord that does it all! He is not far from any of us. Therefore let us not forget Him.

19. *He shows His Word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.* The rest of the world can only see Him in Nature, but His own people see Him in Revelation, in the movements of His Holy Spirit.

20. *He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise you the Lord.* Therefore, you who are favored with His special manifestations of love, take up the joyous song even if others do not. Hallelujah, “Praise you the Lord.” Now let us read in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter twenty-six, beginning at the sixth verse.

Matthew 26:6, 7. *Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat.* This is not the woman who anointed Christ’s feet with ointment, but another of the holy women who ministered to Him. I believe this was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who came to Jesus, “having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat.”

8, 9. *But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.* When you do the best you can from the purest motives, and your Lord accepts your service, do not expect that your

Brothers will approve all your actions. If you do, you will be greatly disappointed. There was never a more beautiful proof of love to Christ than this anointing at Bethany, yet the disciples found fault with it. As they could not object to the action, itself, they objected that there might have been another thing done that would have been better. There is a great deal of that kind of wisdom in the world which can always teach you how you might have done something better! but if you wait until you learn *that* wisdom, you will never do anything for your Lord! If this devoted and enthusiastic woman had waited for the advice of these prudent people, she would neither have sold the ointment, nor poured it out. She did well to take council with her own loving heart and then to pour the precious oil upon that dear head which was so soon to be crowned with thorns! She thus showed that there was at least *one* heart in the world that thought nothing was too good for her Lord, and that the best of the best ought to be given to Him! May she have many imitators in every age until Jesus comes again!

10. *When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble you the woman?* She had been very happy in the act. Probably it was the happiest hour in all her life when she gave this costly gift to the Lord she loved so well! But a cloud passed over her bright face as the whispered complaints reached her ears. She was evidently a tender-hearted soul, so the Savior said to the disciples, “Why trouble you the woman?”

10. *For she has worked a good work upon Me.* We cannot do what this woman did, but we can perform good works upon others for Christ’s sake—and He will accept them as though they were done unto Himself.

11-13. *For you have the poor always with you; but Me you have not always. For in that she has poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Wherever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her.* She probably did not know all that her action meant when she anointed her Lord for His burial. We often do much more than we think we do. The consequences of the simplest action done for Christ may be much greater than we suppose. This woman is preparing Christ’s body for His approaching burial. Little did she dream that it was so, but so it was. Go, my Sister, and do what God bids you, and it shall be seen that you have done far more than you knew! Obey the holy impulse within your spirit, my Brother, and you may do ten thousand times more than you have ever imagined to be possible! This woman’s outburst of affection, this simple-hearted act of love to Christ, Himself, is one of those things which are to live as long as the Gospel lives. The aroma of this loving deed is to abide as long as the world, itself, endures!

14, 15. *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?* Out of 12 Apostles, one was a Judas Iscariot. Marvel not, therefore, if, among your friends and kinsfolk, you have one who turns against you and betrays you to your enemies!

15. *And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.* The price of a slave, thus they were fulfilling the ancient prophecy—“So they weighed for My price, thirty pieces of silver.”

16. *And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.* The traitor sold his Master for 30 pieces of dirty silver—yet many have sold Jesus for a less price than Judas received—a smile or a sneer has been sufficient to induce them to betray their Lord!

17, 18. *Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.* How truly royal was Jesus of Nazareth even in His humility! He had only to send two of His disciples “into the city to such a man,” and the guest chamber, furnished and prepared, was at once placed at His disposal! He did not take the room by arbitrary force, as an earthly monarch might have done, but He obtained it by the more Divine compulsion of Almighty Love! Jesus knew something about this man that you and I do not know, so He said to His disciples, Just go and say to him, “The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.”

Was he not, himself, a disciple? I cannot say, but this I do know, that the Lord Jesus has a certain number who are willing to help His cause even though, as yet, they hardly call themselves His disciples. I should think, however, that after this man had once had the Master and His disciples in his house, there must have been a blessing left behind, and he would want to become one of that goodly company! It is well, dear Friend, that you are willing to have the Prayer Meeting in your house. It is well that you will stand up on the side of the Truth of God, even if you have no share in it as yet, for maybe—and I hope the, “maybe,” will become a *certainty*—you will yet be one of Christ’s disciples.

19. *And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.* They went to this man, delivered Christ’s message, and he showed them a large upper room, furnished and prepared. If Christ’s disciples always loyally did as Jesus appointed them, they would always speed well on His errands. There are many more people in the world ready to yield to Christ than some of us think. The person sitting or standing by your side is quite unknown to you, but, if you will speak to him about the Savior, he will probably respond to your words. At any rate, try him, and see if it is not so. Whether standing or sitting, there must be someone here not yet a disciple who only needs for you to speak a kind word, and the deciding work will be done!

20, 21. *Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.* “One of you”—and His eyes would glance round the table as He said it—“one of you shall betray Me.”

22. *And they were exceedingly sorrowful and began, every one of them, to say unto Him. Lord, is it I?* No one said, “Lord, is it Judas?” Perhaps no one of the 11 thought that Judas was base enough to betray the Lord who had given Him an honorable place among His Apostles. It is certainly a mark of Grace that “every one” of the Apostles put to their Lord the question, “Is it I?”

23, 24. *And He answered and said, he that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.* We learn from our Lord’s words that Divine decrees do not deprive a sinful action of its guilt—“The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! “The criminality of Judas was just as great as though there had been no “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” even as it was with those to whom Peter spoke so boldly on the day of Pentecost, when he charged them with the murder of Jesus!

25. *Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.* What a chill that answer must have cast over the little band around the table, especially when Judas rose and started off, to carry out his dreadful purpose of staining his soul with the blood of his Lord!

26-29. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom.* Thus Jesus took the great Nazarite vow never to drink of the fruit of the vine till He should drink it new with His disciples in His Father’s Kingdom. O Lord, You have pledged us in this cup, and You will return before long, and then what festivals we will hold with You! What joy we shall have in You forever and ever!

30. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives.* Was it not truly brave of our dear Lord to sing under such circumstances? He was going forth to His last dread conflict, to Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha—yet He went with a song on His lips! The door opens, they go downstairs, they are in the open air—that night of the full moon—and they wend their way to the Mount of Olives. Then came that desperate struggle in which the great Captain of our salvation wrestled even to a bloody sweat and prevailed!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—548, 942, 944.

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THE BLOOD SHED FOR MANY NO. 1971

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed
for many for the remission of sins.”
Matthew 26:28.***

THE Lord Jesus Christ was then alive, sitting at the table and yet, pointing to the cup filled with red wine, He said, “This is My blood, which is shed for many.” This proves that He could not have intended that the wine was *literally* His blood. Surely it is no longer necessary to refute the gross and carnal dogma of transubstantiation which is obviously absurd! There sat the living Lord at the supper, with His blood in His veins and, therefore, the wine could not literally be His blood! Value the symbol, but to confound it with the thing *symbolized* would draw into the idolatrous worship of a piece of bread!

Our Lord spoke of His blood as shed when as yet the nails had not pierced His hands and feet. And the spear had not broached His side. Is not this to be accounted for by the fact that our Lord was so taken up with the thought of our redemption by His death that He speaks of that as *done* which He was so resolved to do? Enjoying loving communion with His chosen disciples, He spoke freely. His heart did not study accuracy so much as feeling and so, in speech as in feeling, He antedated His great work of Atonement and spoke of it as done. To set forth the future intent of the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper He must, of necessity, treat His death as an accomplished fact. And His complete absorption in His work made it easy and natural for Him to do so. He ignores moods and tenses. “His work is before Him.”

By the use of such language, our Lord also shows us the abiding presence of the great Sacrifice as a power and an influence. He is the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” and, therefore, He speaks of His blood as shed. In a few hours it would be literally poured forth, but long ages before, the Lord God had regarded it as done. In full confidence in the great Surety, that He would never draw back from the perfect fulfillment of His engagements, the Father saved multitudes in virtue of the future Sin-Offering! He communed with myriads of saints on the strength of the purification which would, in the fullness of time, be presented by the great High Priest. Could not the Father trust His Son? He did and by this act set us a great example of faith. God is, in very deed, the Father of the faithful, seeing that He, Himself, reposed the utmost confidence in Jesus! And because of what He would yet do in the pouring out of His soul unto

death, He “opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers.” What, My soul? Can you not trust the Sacrifice, now that it has been presented? If the foresight of it was enough for God, is not the consummation of it enough for you? “Behold the Lamb of God,” who even before He died was described as taking away the sin of the world! If this was so before He went to Calvary, how surely is it so now that He has said in verity and truth, “It is finished”!

Dear Friends, I am going to preach to you again upon the cornerstone of the Gospel. How many times will this make, I wonder? The doctrine of Christ Crucified is always with me. As the Roman sentinel in Pompeii stood to his post even when the city was destroyed, so do I stand to the truth of the Atonement though the Church is being buried beneath the boiling mud showers of modern heresy. Everything else can wait, but this one Truth of God must be proclaimed with a voice of thunder! Others may preach as they will, but as for this pulpit, it shall always resound with the Substitution of Christ. “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Some may continually preach Christ as an *example* and others may perpetually discourse upon His coming to Glory—we also preach both of these, but mainly we preach Christ *Crucified*, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness—but to them that are saved Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God!

You have before you a cup, filled with wine, which Jesus has just blessed and presented to His disciples. As you look into its rosy depths, hear Him speak of the cup as His blood, for thus He would teach us a solemn lesson!

I. Note, first, THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST. The vital importance of the great Truth of God of the death of Christ as a vicarious Sacrifice is set before us in this cup, which is the memorial of His blood shed for many.

Blood represents suffering, but it goes further and suggests suffering unto death. “The blood is the life thereof” and when blood is too copiously shed, death is suggested. Remember that in the sacred Supper you have the bread as a separate emblem of the *body* and then the wine as a separate symbol of the *blood*—thus you have a clear picture of death, since the blood is separated from the flesh. “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death.” *Both* acts are essential.

Upon the *death* of Christ you are invited to fix your attention and upon *that* only. In the suffering of our Lord unto death we see the boundless stretch of His love. “Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Jesus could not be more loving to us than to yield Himself unto death, even the death of the Cross. O My Lord, in Your bloody sweat and in the piercing of Your hands and feet and side, I see the highest proof of Your love! Here I see that Jesus “loved me and gave Himself for me.” Beloved, I beg you to consider often and lovingly the sufferings of your Redeemer unto the pouring out of His heart’s blood. Go with Him to Gethsemane and then to the house of Caiaphas and Annas. And then to Pilate’s hall and Herod’s place of mockery! Behold your Lord beneath the cruel scourges and in the hands of the executioners upon the

hill of shame. Forget not one of the sorrows which were mingled in the bitter cup of His crucifixion—its pain, its mockery, its shame. It was a death reserved for slaves and felons. To make its deep abysses absolutely bottomless, He was forsaken, even, of His God! Let the darkness of, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani,” bear down upon your spirit till, as you sink in awe, you also rise in love! He loved you better than He loved Himself! The cup means love, even to the shedding of His blood for you.

It means something more. We have called our Lord, in our hymn, “Giver of life for life,” and that is what this cup means. He gave up His life that we might live! He stood in our place and stead in the day of Jehovah’s wrath, receiving into His bosom the fiery sword which was unsheathed for *our* destruction! The pouring out of His blood has made our peace with God. Jehovah made the soul of His Only-Begotten an offering for sin, that the guilty might be cleared. “He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” That is what the wine in the cup means—it means the death of Jesus in our place. It means the blood poured out from the heart of the Incarnate God that we might have fellowship with God—the sin which divided us being expiated by His death.

Our blessed Savior would have us hold His death in great reverence—it is to be *our chief memory*. Both the emblems of the Lord’s Supper set forth the Savior’s death. This peculiarly Christian ordinance teaches nothing if it does not teach this. Christ’s death for men is the great doctrine of the Church. We profess ourselves partakers of the merit of His death when we come to this table. Our Lord’s death is then remembered, shown, declared, testified and trusted in. Evidently the Lord Jesus means us to treat the fact of His death as a Truth of God to be made pre-eminently prominent—He would not have instituted an ordinance especially to remind us of the shedding of His blood if He had not regarded it as the forefront of His whole earthly career.

The other ordinance of our holy faith also sets forth our Lord’s death. Are we not, “Buried with Him by baptism into death?” Is not Baptism an emblem of His being immersed beneath the waves of sorrow and death? Baptism shows us that participation in Christ’s suffering by which we begin to live—the Lord’s Supper shows us that participation in Christ’s suffering by which that life is sustained. Both institutions point to His death.

Besides, Beloved, we know from Holy Scripture that this doctrine of the death of Christ is the very core of Christianity. Leave out the Cross and you have killed the religion of Jesus. Atonement by the blood of Jesus is not an arm of Christian truth—it is the heart of it! Even as the Lord said of the animal, “The blood is the life thereof,” so is it true of the Gospel—the sacrificial death of Jesus is the vital point of our profession. I know nothing of Christianity without the blood of Christ. No teaching is healthy which throws the Cross into the background.

The other day, when I was enquiring about the welfare of a certain congregation, my informant told me that there had been few additions to the church, although the minister was a man of ability and industry. Furthermore, he let me see the reason for failure, for he added, “I have at-

tended there for several years and during all that time I do not remember hearing a sermon upon the Sacrifice of Christ. The Atonement is not denied, but it is left out.” If this is so, what is to become of our churches? If the light of the Atonement is put under a bushel, the darkness will be dense. In omitting the Cross you have cut the Achilles tendon of the Church—it cannot move, nor even stand when this is gone. Holy work falls to the ground! It faints and dies when the blood of Jesus is taken away. The Cross must be put in the front more than ever by the faithful, because so many are unfaithful. Let us endeavor to make amends for the dishonor done to our Divine Master by those who deny or dishonor His vicarious Sacrifice. Let us abide steadfast in this faith while others waver! Let us preach Christ Crucified if all others forbear. Grace, mercy and peace be to all who exalt Christ Crucified!

This remembrance of the death of Christ must be *a constant remembrance*. The Lord’s Supper was meant to be a frequent feast of fellowship. It is a grievous mistake of the Church when the communion is held but once in the year, or once in a quarter of a year—and I cannot remember any Scripture which justifies once in the month. I should not feel satisfied without breaking bread on *every* Lord’s Day. It has come to me even more often than once a week, for it has been my delight to break bread with many a little company of Christian friends. Whenever this Supper is celebrated, we declare that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” We cannot think of that death too often! Never was man blamed in Heaven for preaching Christ too much, no, not even on earth to the sons of God was the Cross ever too much spoken of!

Outsiders may say, “This man harps only upon one string.” Do you wonder? The carnal mind is enmity against God and it specially shows its hatred by railing at the Cross. Sainly ones find here, in the perpetual monotony of the Cross, a greater variety than in all other doctrines put together. Preach Christ, and Christ, and Christ, and Christ and nothing else but Christ—and opened ears shall find in your ministry a wondrous harmony of linked sweetnesses, a charming perfectness of all manner of delicious voices! All good things lie within the compass of the Cross—its outstretched arms overshadow the whole world of thought—from the east even unto the west it sheds a hallowed influence. Meanwhile, its foot is planted deep in the eternal mysteries and its top pierces all earth-born clouds and rises to the Throne of the Most High. Christ is lifted up upon the Cross that He may draw all men unto Him. And if we desire to draw them, this must be our magnet.

Beloved, the precious blood of Christ should be had by us *in vivid remembrance*. There is something to me most homely about that cup filled with the fruit of the vine. The bread of the Supper is the bread of our common meal and the wine is the usual attendant of feasts. That same pure blood of the grape which is set on our sacramental table I drink with my friends. Look at those ruby, ruddy drops, suggesting your Lord’s own blood. *I had not dared to invent the symbol, nor might any man of mortal mold have ventured on such a thing, lest he should seem to bring that august death down to our lowly level!* But in infinite condescension Jesus,

Himself, chooses the symbol and while by its materialism He sets forth the reality of the Sacrifice, by its commonness He shows how freely we may partake of it! He would not have us know Him after the flesh and forget the spiritual nature of His grief. And yet He would have us know that He was in a real body when He bled—and that He died a real death and became most truly fit for burial and, therefore, He symbolizes His blood, not by some airy fancy, or mystic sign—but by common wine in the cup! Thus would He reach us by our eyes and by our taste, using two gates of our nature which lead up to the castle of the heart, but are not often the King's roadway thereto. O blessed Master, do You arrange to teach us so forcibly? Then let us be impressed with the reality of the lesson and never treat Your passion as a thing of sentiment, nor make it a myth, nor view it as a dream of poetry. You shall be in death most real to us, even as is that cup of which we drink.

The dear memorials of our Lord's blood-shedding are intended for a *personal remembrance*. There is no Lord's Supper except as the wine touches the lips and is received into the communicant's own self. All must partake. He says, "Drink *you* all of it." You cannot take the Lord's Supper by deputy or representative—you must each of you approach the table and personally eat and drink. Beloved, we *must* come into personal contact with the death of Christ. This is essential. We must, each one, say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." *In* His blood you must be personally washed. *By* His blood you must be personally reconciled to God. *Through* His blood you must personally have access to God and by His blood you must personally overcome the enemy of your souls. As the Israelite's own door must be smeared with the blood of the Paschal lamb, so must you individually partake of the true Sacrifice and know, each one for himself, the power of His redemption.

As it is personal, it is a charming fact that it is a *happy remembrance*. Our remembrance of Christ is chastened with repentance, but it is also perfumed with faith. The Lord's Supper is no funeral meal, but a festival! Most fitly do we begin it with the giving of thanks and close it with a hymn. It is called by many the "Eucharist," or the giving of thanks. It is not a fast, but a feast. My happiest moments are spent with the King at His table when His banner over me is love. The death of Christ is a well-spring of solemn joy. Before our great Sacrifice died, the best token of His death was the blood of bulls and of goats. See how the victims writhe in death! The sacrificial knife does terrible work at the foot of the altar. It is hard to stand by and see the creatures bleed. After our Lord's death was over, the blood of animals was not the type, but the blood of the *grape*. That which was terrible in prospect is joyous in remembrance! That which was blood in the shedding is wine in the receiving! It came from Him with a wound, but it comes to us with a blessing. His blood is our song in the house of our pilgrimage and it shall add the best music to our heavenly harmonies as we sing before the throne, "Unto Him that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; to Him be glory forever and ever." If our Lord Jesus has made the memory of His love to be more sweet

than wine, let us never turn from it as though it had become a distasteful theme. Let us find our choicest pleasures at the Cross!

Once more, our Savior meant us to maintain the doctrine of His death and the shedding of His blood for the remission of sins, even to the end of time, for He made it to be of perpetual remembrance. We drink this cup “until He comes.” If the Lord Jesus had foreseen with approbation the changes in religious thought which would be brought about by growing “culture,” He would surely have arranged a change of symbols to suit the change of doctrines! Would He not have warned us that towards the end of the 19th Century men would become so “enlightened” that the faith of Christendom must of necessity take a new departure and, therefore, would He have appointed a change of sacramental memorials? But He has not warned us of the coming of those eminently great and wise men who have changed all things and abolished the old-fashioned Truths of God for which martyrs died!

Brethren, I do not believe in the wisdom of these men and I abhor their changes, but had there been any ground for such changes, the Lord’s Supper would not have been made of perpetual obligation. The perpetuity of ordinances indicates a perpetuity of doctrine! But hear the moderns talk—“The Apostles, the Fathers, the Puritans—they were excellent men, no doubt, but then, you see, they lived before the rising up of those wonderful scientific men who have enlightened us so much.” Let me repeat what I have said. If we had come to a new point as to believing, should we not have come to a new point as to the ordinances in which those beliefs are embodied? I think so. The evident intent of Christ in giving us settled ordinances and especially in settling this one which so clearly commemorates His shedding of His blood, was that we might know that the truth of His Sacrifice is forever fixed and settled—and must unchangeably remain the essence of His Gospel!

Neither 19 centuries, nor 19,000 centuries can make the slightest difference in this Truth of God, nor in the relative proportion of this Truth to other Truths of God so long as this dispensation lasts. Until He comes a second time without a sin offering unto salvation, the grand work of His first coming must be kept first and foremost in all our teaching, trusting and testifying! As in the southern hemisphere the cross is the mariner’s guide, so, under all skies is the death of our Redeemer the polestar of our hope upon the sea of life. In life and in death we will glory in the Cross of Christ and never be ashamed of it, be we where we may!

II. Secondly, note well THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WITH THE COVENANT. Read the text again—“This is My blood of the new testament.” The translation would be better, “This is My blood of the Covenant.”

What is this Covenant? The Covenant is that which I read to you just now in Jeremiah 31:33—“This shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the Lord, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people.” See also Jeremiah 32:40—“And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do

them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts; that they shall not depart from Me." Turn also to Ezekiel 11:19—"I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh." Look in the same prophecy at 36:26—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." What a Magna Charta is this! The old Covenant says, "Keep the Law and live." The new Covenant is, "You shall live and I will lead you to keep My Law, for I will write it on your heart." Happy men who know their standing under this Covenant!

What has the blood of Jesus Christ to do with this Covenant? It has everything to do with it, for the Covenant could never have been made, apart from the blood of Jesus! Atonement was taken for granted in the establishment of the Covenant. No one else could have stood as our Representative to fulfill our side of the Covenant, except the Lord Jesus Christ. And even He could only have performed that Covenant by shedding His blood. In that cup you see the emblem of the blood which made the Covenant possible.

Moreover, the blood of Jesus makes the Covenant sure. His death has fulfilled man's side of the Covenant and God's part stands sure. The stipulation of the Covenant is fulfilled in Christ and now the tenor of it is pure promise. Note how the "shalls" and "wills" follow each other in quick succession. An arrangement of absolute Grace on God's part towards the undeserving sons of men is now in full action through the Sacrifice of Christ!

This Covenant of Grace, when rightly understood, exerts a blessed influence over the minds of men conscious of sin. The chaplain of a jail, a dear Friend of mine, once told me of a surprising case of conversion in which a knowledge of the Covenant of Grace was the chief instrument of the Holy Spirit. My friend had under his charge a man most cunning and brutal. He was singularly repulsive, even in comparison with other convicts. He had been renowned for his daring and for the utter absence of all feeling when committing acts of violence. I think he had been called "the king of the garroters." The chaplain had spoken to him several times, but had not succeeded, even, in getting an answer. The man was sullenly set against all instruction. At last he expressed a desire for a certain book, but as it was not in the library, the chaplain pointed to the Bible which was placed in his cell and said, "Did you ever read *that* Book?"

He gave no answer, but looked at the good man as if he would kill him. The question was kindly repeated, with the assurance that he would find it well worth reading. "Sir," said the convict, "you would not ask me such a question if you knew who I was. What have I to do with a book of that sort?" He was told that his character was well known to the chaplain and that for this very reason he recommended the Bible as a book which would suit his case. "It would do me no good," he cried, "I am past all feeling." Doubling up his fist he struck the iron door of the cell and said, "My heart is as hard as that iron! There is nothing in *any* book that will ever touch me." "Well," said the chaplain, "You need a new heart. Did you ever read the Covenant of Grace?" To which the man answered sullenly by en-

quiring what he meant by such talk. The chaplain replied, "Listen to these words—'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.'" The words struck the man with amazement, as well they might!

He asked to have the passage found for him in the Bible. He read the Words again and again and when the chaplain came back to him the next day, the wild beast was tamed. "Oh, Sir," he said, "if He gives *me* a new heart it will be a miracle of mercy and yet I think," he said, "He is going to work that miracle upon me, for the very hope of a new nature is beginning to touch me as I never was touched before." That man became gentle in manner, obedient to authority and childlike in spirit! Though my friend has nothing left of the sanguine hopes he once entertained of converted criminals, he yet believes that in this case no observer could have questioned the thorough nature of the work—and yet the only means was the Doctrine of the Covenant!

My rebellious heart is not affected by the fact that God commands me to do this or that, but when He declares free and full forgiveness and goes on to promise love and favor and renewal of nature, I feel broken down! How can I rebel against One who does such wonders in me and designs such great things for me?—

***"Dissolved by His goodness, I fall to the ground
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."***

How dear and precious this makes the blood of Christ, since it is the blood of the Everlasting Covenant! Coming under this blessed Covenant, we henceforth adore the fullness of that Grace which, at the cost of the most precious of all lives, has made this arrangement for unworthy men!

You will perhaps say to me, "Why did our translators use the word, 'testament' in our Authorized Version? "They were hardly so wise as usual in this instance, for, "covenant" is the better word of the two to set forth the original, but the idea of a *testament* is there also. The original may signify either or both. The word, "settlement," which has dropped out of use, nowadays, was often employed by our Calvinistic forefathers when they spoke of the everlasting arrangement of Grace. The word, "settlement," might take in both covenant and testament—there is a Covenant of Grace, but the Covenant stipulation being fulfilled by our Lord Jesus, the arrangement becomes virtually a testament through which, by the will of God, countless blessings are secured to the heirs of salvation. The blood of Jesus is the seal of the Covenant and transforms its blessings into bequests of love entailed upon Believers. The settlement or arrangement by which God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly—and can deal with Believers, not on terms of Law, but on terms of pure Grace—is established by the Sacrifice of our Lord. O my Brothers and Sisters, as God's covenanted ones, drink of the cup with joy and renew your pledge with the Lord your God!

III. A third point comes up in the text very manifestly—THE BLOOD HAS AN INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH REMISSION. The text says, "This is My blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Jesus suffering, bleeding, dying, has procured for sinners the forgiveness of their sins!

Of what sins? Of all sins of every sort and kind, however heinous, aggravated and multiplied! The blood of the Covenant takes every sin away, be it what it may. There was never a sin believingly confessed and taken to Christ that ever baffled His power to cleanse it! This Fountain has never been tried in vain. Murderers, thieves, liars, adulterers and what not, have come to Jesus by penitence and faith—and through the merit of His Sacrifice their sins have been put away.

Of what nature is the remission? It is pardon, freely given, acting immediately and abiding forever, so that there is no fear of the guilt ever again being laid to the charge of the forgiven one! Through the precious blood our sins are blotted out, cast into the depths of the sea and removed as far from us as the east is from the west. Our sins cease to be—they are made an end of—they cannot be found against us any more forever. Yes, hear it, hear it, O wide earth! Let the glad news startle your darkest dens of infamy—there is absolute remission of sins! The precious blood of Christ cleanses from all sin! Yes, it turns the scarlet into a whiteness which exceeds that of the newly-fallen snow—a whiteness which never can be tarnished! Washed by Jesus, the blackest of sinners shall appear before the Judgment Seat of the all-seeing Judge without spot!

How is it the blood of Jesus effects this? The secret lies in the vicarious or substitutionary character of our Lord's suffering and death. Because He stood in our place, the justice of God is vindicated and the threats of the Law are fulfilled. It is now just for God to pardon sin. Christ's bearing the penalty of human sin instead of men has made the moral government of God perfect in justice, has laid a basis for peace of conscience and has rendered sin immeasurably hateful, though its punishment does not fall upon the Believer. This is the great secret, this is the heavenly news, the Gospel of salvation—that through the blood of Jesus sin is justly put away! Oh, how my very soul loves this Truth of God! Therefore do I speak it in unmistakable terms.

And for what end is this remission of sins secured? My Brothers and Sisters, if there were no other end for the remission of sins but its own self, it would be a noble purpose and it would be worth preaching every day of our lives! But it does not end here. We are mistaken if we think that the pardon of sins is God's ultimatum. No, no! It is but a *beginning*, a means to a further purpose. He forgives our sins with the design of *curing our sinfulness*. We are pardoned that we may become holy! God forgives the sin that He may purify the sinner. If He had not aimed at your holiness, there had not been so imperative a necessity for an Atonement—but to impress you with the guilt of sin, to make you feel the evil which sin has worked, to let you know your obligation to Divine Love—the Lord has not forgiven you without a Sacrifice. Ah, what a Sacrifice! He aims at the death of your sinfulness, that you may henceforth love Him, serve Him and crucify the lusts which crucified your Lord. The Lord aims at working in you the likeness of His dear Son! Jesus has saved you by His self-sacrificing obedience to Justice, that you may yield your whole soul to God and be willing to die for the upholding of the Kingdom of Love and Truth.

The death of Christ for you pledges you to be dead to sin, that by His Resurrection from the dead you may rise into newness of life and so become like your Lord. Pardon by blood aims at this. Do you catch the thought? If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's intent is to make you like the Firstborn among many brethren and to work in you everything that is comely and of good report. But this is not all—He has a further design to bring you into everlasting fellowship with Himself. He is sanctifying you that you may behold His face and that you may be fit to be a comrade of His only-begotten Son throughout eternity! You are to be the choice and dear companion of the Lord of Love. He has a throne for you, a mansion and a crown for you—and an immortality of such inconceivable glory and blessedness that if you did but form even a distant conception of it, no golden apple of earth would turn you aside from pursuing the prize of your high calling! Oh, to be forever with the Lord! Forever to behold His face! I fail to reach the height of this great argument! See, my Brothers and Sisters, to what the blood of your Lord destines you! O my Soul, bless God for that one cup which reminds you of the great Sacrifice and prophesies to you your glory at the right hand of God forever!

IV. I cannot forget to notice, in closing, THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD WITH MEN. We are told in the text that this blood is shed “*for many* for the remission of sins.” In that large word, “many,” let us exceedingly rejoice. Christ's blood was not shed for only the handful of Apostles. There were but eleven of them who really partook of the blood symbolized by the cup. The Savior does not say, “This is My blood which is shed for you, the favored eleven,” but “shed for many.” Jesus did not die only for the clergy! I recollect in Martin Luther's life that he saw, in one of the Roman churches, a picture of the Pope, the cardinals, bishops, priests, monks and friars all on board a ship. They were all safe, every one of them. As for the laity, poor wretches, they were struggling in the sea and many of them drowning! Only those were saved to whom the good men in the ship were so kind as to hand out a rope or a plank. That is not our Lord's teaching! His blood is shed “for many,” and not for the few. He is not the Christ of a caste, or a class, but the Christ of all conditions of men. His blood is shed for many sinners, that their sins may be remitted.

Those in the upper room were all Jews, but the Lord Jesus Christ said to them, “This blood is shed for *many*,” to let them see that He did not die only for the seed of Abraham, but for all races of men that dwell upon the face of the earth. “Shed for many.” His eyes, I doubt not, glanced at these far-off islands and at the vast lands beyond the western sea. He thought of Africa, India and the land of Sinim. A multitude that no man can number gladdened the far-seeing and foreseeing eyes of the Redeemer! He spoke with joyful emphasis when He said, “shed for many for the remission of sins.” Believe in the immeasurable results of Redemption! Whenever we are making arrangements for the preaching of this precious blood, let us make them on a large scale. The mansion of love should be built for a large family. Let us not sing—

**“We are a garden walled around
Pray keep the walls most tight and sound,”**

But let us expect to see large numbers brought within the sacred enclosure! We must yet break forth on the right hand and on the left. The masses must be compelled to come in! This blood is shed for many.

A group of half-a-dozen converts makes us very glad and so it should, but oh, to have half-a-dozen thousand at once! Why not? This blood is shed “for many.” Let us cast the great net into the sea. You young men, preach the Gospel in the streets of this crowded city, for it is meant for many! You who go from door to door, do not think you can be too hopeful, since your Savior’s blood is shed for many and Christ’s, “many,” is a very great many! It is shed for all who ever shall believe in Him—shed for you, Sinner, if you will now trust Him! Only confess your sin and trust Christ—and be assured that Jesus died in your place! It is shed for many so that no man or woman born shall ever trust Christ in vain, or find the Atonement insufficient for him. Oh, for a large-hearted faith, so that by holy effort we may lengthen our cords and strengthen our stakes, expecting to see the household of our Lord become exceedingly numerous! He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied! By His righteousness shall He justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities! Dwell on that word, “many,” and let it nerve you for far-reaching labors.

V. Now note THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD WITH OURSELVES. Dear Hearer, are you among the many? Why are you not? May His Grace bring you to trust in Him and you may not doubt that you are among the many. “Ah,” you say, “that is what I am listening for! How can I partake in the effect of this Sacrifice?” Do you see that wine cup which I set before you just now? How are you to enjoy that wine which fills the cup? Its ruddy drops—how are they to be yours? The matter is very simple. I think I see you take the chalice in your hand and raise it to your mouth. You drink and the deed is done! This is no mystery. Bread and wine are ours by eating and drinking. Christ is ours by our receiving Him. The merit of His precious blood becomes ours by that simple childlike faith which accepts Jesus to be our All. We say, “Here it is. I believe in it. I take it. I accept it as my own.” It is yours. No man can take from you that which you have eaten and drunk. Christ is yours forever if you receive Him into your heart.

If you have any question as to whether you have drunk, I will tell you how to solve it—*drink again!* If you have been eating and you have really forgotten whether you have eaten or not—such things do occur to busy men who eat but little—if, I say, you would be sure that you have eaten, *eat again!* If you will be assured that you have believed in Jesus, believe again! Whenever you have any doubt about whether Christ is yours, take Him again! I like to begin again. Often I find the best way of going forward is to go back to my first faith in Jesus and, as a sinner, renew my confidence in my Savior. “Oh,” says the devil, “you are a preacher of the Gospel, but you do not know it yourself.” At one time I used to argue with the accuser, but he is not worth it and it is by no means profitable to one’s own heart. We cannot convert or convince the devil—it is better to refer him to our Lord. When he tells me I am not a saint, I answer, “Well, what am I, then?” “A sinner,” he says. “Well, so are you!” “Ah,” he says, “You will

be lost!" "No," say I, "that is why I shall *not* be lost, since Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and I, therefore, trust in Him to save me." This is what Martin Luther calls cutting the devil's head off with his own sword and it is the best course you can follow!

You say, "If I take Christ to myself as a man takes a cup and drinks the contents, am I saved?" Yes, you are. "How am I to know it?" Know it because God says so! "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." If I did not feel a pulse of that life, (as I did not at first), I, nevertheless would believe that I had it simply on the strength of the Divine Assurance. Since my conversion I have felt the pulsing of a life more strong and forcible than the life of the most vigorous youth that ever ran without weariness—but there are times when it is not so. Just now I feel the heavenly life joyously leaping within me, but when I do not feel it, I fall back on this—God has said, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." God's Words against all my feelings! I may get into a fainting fit and my circumstances may operate upon my heart as this hot weather operates upon my body and make me feel dull and sleepy, but this cannot make the Word of God of no effect! I go back to the Book and believe the bare Word of the Lord, "He that believes in Him *has* everlasting life." That is enough for me! I believe and, therefore, I live! Our inward experience is fine corroborative evidence, but God's testimony is the best foundation our confidence can have!

I recollect a story told of William Dawson whom our Wesleyan friends used to call Billy Dawson, one of the best preachers that ever entered a pulpit. He once gave out as his text, "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." When he had given out his text he dropped down to the bottom of the pulpit, so that nothing could be seen of him—only there was a voice heard saying, "Not the man in the pulpit, he is out of sight, but the Man in the Book! The Man described in the Book is the Man through whom is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."

I put myself and you and everybody else out of sight, and I preach to you the remission of sins through Jesus only! I would sing with the children, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Shut your eyes to all things but the Cross. Jesus died and rose again—and went to Heaven—and all your hope must go with Him! Come, my Hearer, take Jesus by a distinct act of faith this morning! May God the Holy Spirit grant you Grace to do so and then you may go on your way rejoicing! So be it in the name of Jesus!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 26:14-30; Jeremiah 31:31-87.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—429, 296.**

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THE NEW WINE OF THE KINGDOM

NO. 3526

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 1916.

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

***“I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day
when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom.”
Matthew 26:29.***

SUCH words could hardly have been spoken at such a time by our Lord Jesus Christ without some deep significance. Let us, then, reverently enquire into their meaning. What thoughts were those that stirred in His own breast? What lessons did He convey to His beloved disciples? And, first, does not our Lord here express—

I. HIS RENUNCIATION FROM THAT MOMENT OF ALL THE JOYS AND COMFORTS OF LIFE?

Putting aside the cup that was filled with the juice of the vine, He said, “I shall henceforth no more drink of this fruit of the vine.” Here He bids farewell to social cheer. Whatever little comforts He had enjoyed were now to be quitted. He had never been rich—full often He had not where to lay His head. His clothing had always been that of a simple peasant—“a garment without seam” had sufficed for Him. Scanty the rest He had ever known. Little luxury He had ever enjoyed, but now He does, as it were, solemnly relinquish every creature gratification, “I will henceforth no more drink of fruit of the vine.” Not as One who had been satiated with the comforts or surfeited with the pleasures of life did our Lord and Master speak. It is no uncommon thing for the pleasure seekers of the world to feel the strongest aversion to the indulgences for which they once had the keenest relish. The world’s joy sours, its sweet honey sickens on the palate, its most fascinating entertainments, by constant repetition, pall the faculty of enjoying them! Our Savior had encountered life in its sterner moods. His main aim was to discharge its duties, not to divert Himself with its amenities. Nor did He put aside that cup out of any ostentation, as though He affected a stoical indifference. We all know that refreshment is needed to recruit the energies of the laborer or the sufferer. Nothing could be less in keeping with our Lord’s disposition than a gloomy asceticism. Yet He willingly now, before His disciples, renounces all that there was of this world’s good. Taking, then, this wine cup as a symbol, and understanding it to represent earthly cheer, we observe how significantly He puts it aside—He will partake of it no more!

We ask the reason why in the presence of so strong a determination, so clear a prediction.

But before I attempt to answer the question, let me remind you that there are occasions in the Christian life when a man is bound to give up all his comforts for Christ's sake. It is by no means impossible or improbable that honest principle and sterling integrity may demand of you or me a total surrender of everything which we have been accustomed to hold dear. A sincere Christian must maintain his conscience, even if he can scarcely maintain himself. He must come down from the broadcloth to the fustian, from the mansion to the cottage, from riding in his carriage to trudging on foot. Our fathers did it and they did it on principle—they did it for Christ's sake. The martyrs did more—they laid down their lives upon the altar when Christ's cause demanded it. The like times may come back to us again. In the competition of the unscrupulous, the righteous must suffer. Business is rotten through and through, nowadays. The whole style of conducting your merchandise is so doubly dyed in deceit, that I should not marvel if a Christian often finds himself a loser by doing the right thing and maintaining a strict integrity! But we must sooner be losers in this way than lose our acceptance with God! We must be willing to sink in the world's esteem and be counted fools for Christ's sake, rather than amass riches and rise to a position of commercial influence through any equivocal dealings or any sort of duplicity! We must keep our consciences from being soiled with the wiles and stratagems of those whose ingenuity is always directed to the promotion of bubble companies, or the practice of some disingenuous finesse whereby they lie in wait to deceive the unwary. Refrain yourselves from every false way! But do not vaunt your own purity or be ostentatious of your own virtue, as if you were better than others. Above all things, do not make a cross for yourselves and then put it on your own back and act the martyr! But when you must take up your cross for your Master's sake, do it as He did—with fidelity, yet with meekness—and say, "I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine. I will no more seek the esteem of my fellows. I will no more cultivate the world's friendship. I will no more foster the affection of those who once loved me in my sins. I will give up anything—I will give up everything—I will give up life, itself, if necessary, that I may glorify God as my Lord and Master did."

Now why did our Lord thus say, "I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine"? It was *because now He had other work to do*. He must, therefore, forego all that would stand in the way of His accomplishing it. He had to sweat the bloody sweat! He had to stand accused before Pilate and Herod! He had to bear His Cross through Jerusalem's malicious crowds! He had to give His hands to the nails, and His feet to the cruel iron. These were no times for thinking of comforts. And the cause of the Master may sometimes make the same demands upon us. The man who will

devote himself to the mission field must be willing to dispense with much of that personal and social comfort and gratification which those who stay at home look upon as the best recompense of their daily toil. The minister of Christ, if he would serve his Master diligently, must deny himself the rest and ease to which he would have a right if he were engaged in secular pursuits. For your Master's work, you must be prepared to forsake all and yield yourself up to Him unreservedly! You are not true to Christ, nor fit to put your hand to His plow, if you pull that hand back because it involves any sacrifice, however heavy. If Christ gave up the wine cup and renounced by that act everything like the comforts of life—you, too, if you have noble work to do for God—must follow His example and in so doing you shall have your reward!

Our Savior did this, again, because *His love to men compelled Him*. Giving up the fruit of the vine was not, in itself, a great act of self-negation, but as a *symbol* it was very significant. As I have already observed, it betokened His putting aside everything that is considered gratifying and joyous in life. Jesus Christ, out of love to us, gave up all. The Heaven of heavens could not contain Him. The adoration of angels fell short of His Glory. He was "God over all, blessed forever." Yet a manger held Him and a Cross upheld Him! What a stoop was that—from the highest Throne in Glory to be a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief—and this out of love to those who hated Him! And they proved their hate by putting Him to death! Most sweetly will this Truth of God refresh us if we remember that it was out of love to *us*. We deserved nothing of Him. Love to miserable sinners, nothing but pure love, could have led Him to resign His gracious breath. He loved me before I had a thought of love to Him! He loved you when you were struggling against His Grace and defying all His Law. Oh, think of His giving up everything out of ardent love! How this ought to nerve us for toil or suffering! How it ought to inflame us with love to Him! How willing it should make us to give up *anything* out of love to Him, and love to our fellow men! Alas, that so few of us ever make sacrifices out of love to souls! We can do a little ordinary service which involves but little fatigue and little inconvenience, but oh, to have the old spirit of chivalry burning in our breasts which would make us cast ourselves upon the very teeth of Death out of zeal for the cause of Christ! Oh, that some young men here could be moved by the love of Jesus to give themselves up from this moment to live and die for Him! Oh, that some holy women would renew their early consecration vows and from this very hour be servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of none beside! The Church needs some few conspicuous specimens of self-denying holiness, and perhaps those few, like standard-bearers lifting up the ensign, would attract many others—and the Church might lift herself up from the low level of our poor, weak, beggarly profession! We might then serve Jesus a little after the manner that He deserves to be

served, and surrender ourselves to Him more after the fashion of His surrendering Himself for us!

I take it that this no more drinking of the fruit of the vine means more than my tongue could ever tell, though I spoke on for many an hour. So I leave the thought with you. It is Jesus renouncing all that makes life happy—giving up everything that cheers and gladdens—sanctifying Himself for our sakes because He is called to a noble work by His Father and by His God. But now, secondly, I would have you think of our Lord—

II. AS TAKING FAREWELL OF EARTH.

He took the cup and, making that the symbol of everything below, He said, “I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine.” He bade farewell to His disciples, and to the earth, upon which He had lived for 33 years—and this He did without any repining. He did not say, “Why am I taken away in the strength of My days? Why, when scarcely 40 years old, must My sun go down at noon? Why, before I have attained the full age of man, must I be laid in the grave?” No, not a word of it, and when your turn and mine shall come to bid farewell to everything on earth, and to part with all below, may we cheerfully yield to the summons without one single word of repining against God! Oh, Lord, You have called me Home to rest—it was but morning, and my work was scarcely begun, and I had fondly mapped it out in the hope of much service to You and Your Church, but if You bid me come Home, I will thank You that I have not to bear the heat and burden of the day. Or if it is in middle life, just when my work is about me, and I am busy in the vineyard, that my time of departure should come, may I still be content! There are the plants and flowers I have so fondly nurtured! Yonder is a tree that was about to bud and here is what I hoped would be a fruit-bearing vine, but, Master, though I should like to have seen all these reach their maturity, and though my pride may say, “What will the Church do without me when I am gone?” Yet, Lord, You did without me before I was born and so here in the strength of my days You call me to leave these things, and I come, I come! And if the call shall come to you at night, or towards evening—as it will do, I know, to some of you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who are getting gray and old in years—I hope you will feel, “Lord, it is well. Our day’s work is over, the shadows have lengthened, it is time to fall asleep. We do not stand so much in the earth as on it—we are waiting to be taken Home, to be gathered into the Garner.” Yes, without regret, I say, without any repining against the will of God, may we heave the anchor and go into port! May we just quietly shut our eyes on earth and open them in Heaven to behold the Beatific Vision, without having made our last word on earth to be an act of rebellion by lamenting that the voice says, “Rise up, and come away.”

Our Lord did not withdraw from the world as an ascetic. He did not dash the cup to the ground or denounce its contents. He did not put

away life, saying, "It is sour. I will taste no more of it!" I think I have heard some people talk about life with very much of that bitter spirit which cannot brook its toils and cares. They want to go Home, they tell us, when in truth there is more infirmity than faith in the wish they express! They are idle. They are not willing to bear their cross. They are weary of suffering for their Master. Oh, shame on us if we are like lazy workmen, always looking for Saturday nights! Such fellows are never worth their pay. Shame upon us if we are courting the grave that we may rest from our labors while there are yet wanderers to be sought, outcasts to be restored, sinners to be saved! Are there not kinsfolk and neighbors of ours that can hear the Gospel from our lips? Are there no children to be taught in our schools? Are there no little ones to be lifted out from the miry clay? Are there not fresh battles to be fought for Christ—new enterprises to be carried forward—regions beyond to be explored? If you have a real interest in the Redeemer's Kingdom, you may well ask for a longer life if it is God's will that you may take a larger share in these labors of love—and have weightier crowns to present to that dear Savior who has gone before us to prepare mansions for our rest! Thus, without repining on the one hand, or even a tinge of asceticism on the other hand, He puts away the cup with as cheerful an air as He took it! He sets His face towards death. "I will no more drink."

And then notice how *He stops, as it were, on the way*. His composure is unruffled, as though death were to Him but the goal of His earthly career, or rather a station on His journey to Heaven! He knows He is about to depart and yet He deplores it not, for He perceives that it is expedient for His disciples and for Himself that He should go away. Oh, that when our days below come to a close, when we hear the Master's call and feel the symptoms of approaching death, we may not be dismayed or frightened! God grant that we may take leave of this mortal life with peaceful confidence and holy calm! Should our exit be slow and painful, may we be steadfast in faith and full of patience! Or should it be otherwise, sudden and unexpected, may we be no less prepared and ready! Floods of wrath rose high at our Lord's death, but there shall be no such tumult about ours. The curse gathered around His dying head—a blessing shall make a halo around ours! There was no sort of pallet for Him to die upon—the Cross was His couch. The sweet comfort of looking up to God was lacking to Him. "*Eli, Eli, lama Sabacthani,*" was His dying cry! But we have our Lord to meet us and He has promised that He will make our bed in our sickness. Our third reflection shall be this—

III. OUR LORD'S WORDS CONTAINED HIS DYING ANTICIPATION.

Said He not, "I will no more drink of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom"? He knew He would die, but He knew that that was not the end! He expected happier and brighter days, fairer banquets, fresher wine and purer joys. Now, did

Christ mean Heaven? I think He did, though that was not all. Yet were it Heaven which He just then anticipated? Follow out the prospect. Does He not picture Heaven to us as a place of festive enjoyment? When He says, "I shall drink no more this fruit of the vine now with you," does He not imply that in Heaven is the meeting place of them that triumph, and the state rooms of them that feast? All the enjoyments that can be imagined, and more, belong to the beatific state of the glorified! Whatever could conduce to make an intellectual mind happy, whatever could tend to make a refined spirit full of bliss, shall be our portion! At God's right hand there are rivers of joy and pleasures forevermore!

We learn, too, that the joys of Heaven are social, for Jesus says, "Until I drink it new *with you*." I wonder what those make of Heaven who think we shall not recognize one another there? I rather admire the reply of a good minister to his wife, who, when she asked him whether he would know her in Heaven, said, "Know you in Heaven! Of course I shall! I know you here, and I shall not be a greater fool there, than I am here." We are to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and they will not have golden masks or veils that shall cover their faces! Heaven is a place where they shall eat and drink, and rejoice together, and I take it that much of the joy of Heaven will consist in seeing the bright spirits whom we shall recognize as being men and women in whom Christ's Spirit dwelt on earth, and in whom Christ's shall dwell above. Oh, I reckon on meeting David, whose Psalms have so often cheered my soul! I long to meet with Martin Luther and Calvin, and to have the power of seeing such men as Whitfield and Wesley, and walking and talking with them in the golden streets. Yes, Heaven would scarcely be so full of charms in the prospect if there were not the full conviction in our minds that we should know the saints and feast with them after a spiritual sort.

But still our Lord's description of Heaven *represents Himself as happy, and happy with His people*, "Until I drink it new with you." Alas, these earthly banquets are too often so vitiated with revelry and excess, that while using them as emblems of the feast above, I feel as if I half dishonored that feast! In many cases the festivities of earth have become so degraded and wicked that the Christian shrinks from mingling with them. But we shall drink it new—this wine of Heaven. The wine of Heaven shall be nothing that can make us sin, or even think of evil! There shall be in it nothing impure or polluted—

***"Pure are the joys above the skies,
And all the region peace."***

And those joys will not be like those of earth—fickle and frothy, volatile and variable—by reason of which we are often lifted up, only to betray our weakness and presumption! The wine will be new! It will be holier joy, purer, sweeter. It will be a Divine joy in which Christ will have His share and we, His people, shall each one take our portion.

I have been wondering what will be the exhilarating contents of the wine cup that we shall drink with Christ in Heaven. I think it will be partly *the joy of hearing that sinners repent on earth*. We shall hear about it. The angels do. "There is joy in Heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Oh, how glad we shall be when we hear that after we were dead and gone our dear boy was converted and that in that place where we were once known to assemble, God's Spirit is still resting on the ministry! It will be a joy to hear the angels come and tell of tens of thousands of sinners brought to Jesus weeping, and finding pardon in His blood! There is a grand cup in store for you that love souls, when you shall hear these good tidings. It is Christ's cup, I know, but you, too, shall drink of it!

Another ingredient of the joy will be *to see the saints holding on their way and increasing in their likeness to Christ*—to see the boy growing up and resisting temptation and all his spiritual faculties developing. It is the joy of Christ to see His saints below growing in Grace and persevering under difficulties, and that is the cup of which we shall drink, too! We shall be cheered by seeing our Brothers and Sisters who will be fighting the battle in this world when we have left it. Shall we see them? See them! Why not? What says the Apostle? "Seeing that we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." Who are the "witnesses" but those bright and immaculate spirits who, from the battlements of Heaven, look downward and rejoice as they see us win the race? And we shall soon take our place among the spectators and look down and see the race of the righteous whom we have left behind, and rejoice as we see them win their crowns!

Another ingredient of that heavenly cup will be *to see the saints come up to Heaven*. Oh, what bliss it is to Christ as, one by one, they come up to His bosom—the purchase of His agonies, each one exhibiting the power of His Grace in the change of their nature! If I could get a place hard by the gate, how I would like to welcome one of the younger ones of this congregation who may not arrive till long after we have entered into rest! No, Christ is not losing His reward! He does see of His soul's travail, and how we, too, will clap our hands as we say to one another—

***"They come, they come, Your exiled bands,
Wherever they rest or roam,
Have heard Your voice in distant lands,
And hasten to their Home!
Thus, though the universe shall burn,
And God, His works destroy,
With songs Your ransomed shall return,
And everlasting joy"***

Above all, and perhaps best of all, the wine cups of Heaven are filled with *the brimming, sparkling joy of delight in God's Glory*. In the latter days the hymn that now breaks on Christian ears shall salute the ear of

every savage and barbarian! They that go down to the sea in ships shall sing the name of Christ as they spread the sail! The ranger in Arabia's deserts shall listen to the name of Jesus, the Savior of men! Far off, the swarthy inhabitants of Africa's sunny plains, and up yonder, where the sun scarcely shines on the natives of frosty Labrador, in every region of the earth, prayer shall be made for Him continually and daily shall He be praised! God shall be glorified, the whole world shall become an altar for God's praise! His saints shall worship Him, and sin, death, and Hell shall be overturned! And Christ, if He drinks of this cup new in His Father's Kingdom, will give us who share in His struggle, also partake in His victory!

But surely this is not all. I think when Christ said, "Until I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom," He referred to *His Second Coming to the establishment of the Kingdom of God*—to the millennial splendor of the Redeemer's reign, and to that which will close it, when He shall deliver up the Kingdom, the mediatorial Kingdom, to God, even the Father, and God shall be All-in-All! I am not going to prophesy. That is not my line. Those brethren who can prophesy succeed so admirably well in duping their followers and also in contradicting one another, that I feel no inclination to enlist in their ranks! But if I can make anything out of God's Word, it is clear that a day shall come when the cause of Christ shall have supremacy, when the Kingdom of God shall be among men, when here on earth the Jew shall acknowledge the Messiah, and the nations of the Gentiles shall come bending before His Throne! There is to be a time when universal peace shall prevail, when the sword shall be beaten into a plowshare, and the spear into a pruning hook, and there is to be a day when Satan shall be bound and cast into his infernal den in prison—when death and Hell are also to be cast into the Lake of Fire. I take that to mean that there will be a day when good will triumph over evil, when righteousness will vanquish iniquity, when God shall have put beneath His feet manifestly before the sons of men all those rebel bands of demons and men who stood out against Him—and all the consequences of their sin in diminishing the Glory of God shall be forever put away!

Such a day shall come when the great hallelujah shall be sung, when the marriage banqueting table shall be spread, when every elect soul shall sit at it—with Christ at the head—when every soul redeemed by Jesus' blood from among men, every soul quickened by the Holy Spirit and kept by the power of God unto salvation, shall, with his body raised from the dead, being perfect according to the adoption and the promise, stand up with Christ at the head, and—

***"Sing hallelujah to God and the Lamb,
And sing hallelujah forever, Amen."***

Then shall this glorious wine cup of the New Jerusalem's best wine be passed from lip to lip! Then shall God be worshipped by all His re-

deemed! Then shall tears be wiped away and sin and grief shall cease forever! Then shall be fulfilled the saying of the Master, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom." Roll on, you wheels of time, roll on and bring the glorious day, and may we be there! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ROMANS 8:26-30; REVELATION 21:10-27; 22:1-5.**

ROMANS 8:26-30.

Verse 26. *Likewise the Spirit also helps our infirmities. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered.* Groans, then, are prayers, yes, and prayers which the Spirit of God most certainly hears! And those desires which altogether exhaust language, or which cannot be put into language by reason of the exhaustion of our sorrow, are nevertheless heard of God, for the Spirit of God is in them.

27. *And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.* That is, when the mind lies still and God the Holy Spirit writes His will upon it, He also writes God's will. Hence such prayers are sure to be effectual, for they are but the shadow of God's secret purpose falling upon the soul as a kind of prelude to the coming fulfillment of that purpose! Saints' prayers are Prophets of God's mercies. We are sure of it! We have no doubt whatever! We know it by experience, as well as by Revelation.

28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them who love God.* Not yet, "all mankind," but those who "love God."

28. *To them who are the called according to His purpose.* For they would never have loved God if He had not called them to it, and had not purposed to call them.

29, 30. *For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-Born among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.* One is tempted to linger over that golden chain and examine every link! It will suffice, however, to observe that every link is well fastened to the next. Where there is the "foreknowledge," which is also the "forelove," there is also "elect"—there must be "called"—there shall certainly be "justification," and where that is, there must be "glory."

REVELATION 21:10-27.

Here we shall see a picture of what the Church of God is to be in the latter days. And inasmuch as this vision came out of Heaven, it gives us

an idea of what is already in Heaven. Crowded as it is with almost impossible beauties, this description is given to us to let us think, and by faith conceive, of the glories of the future state!

Verses 10, 11. *And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.* But what the Glory of God may be, what mortal mind can imagine? All the imagery which the Apostle uses must fall far short of that simple expression, "Having the glory of God." That Glory is to be upon the Church and upon every individual member of it. The glory of every Believer shall be nothing less than the Glory of God!

12, 13. *And had a wall great and high. And had twelve gates, and at the gate twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.* From every quarter of the world, God's chosen shall come and find a gate straight before them, an entrance into Heaven! Die at the Equator, or die at the Pole, there is an immediate entrance into the rest of God from any place where we may die. Blessed be the name of God for this!

14-16. *And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lies foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.* This is an idea scarcely to be grasped, to see a city which is as high as it is broad! Such cities cannot exist on earth. They are meant for that glorious future state. They will exist under the new heavens and in the new earth, for which we look for at the coming of our Lord.

17, 18. *And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was of pure gold, like unto clear glass.* All these joys are without sediment of sin. Gold on earth is a dull thing. You cannot look into it. But the joys of Heaven, if compared to gold, must be transparent. "Pure gold like unto clear glass"—all the earth taken out of it, all its earthly grossness. The joy of Heaven is Divine!

19, 20. *And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.* See how lovingly our Apostle counts the founda-

tions. He might have run them all into one, and said, “The foundations were of these twelve stones,” but it must be the first foundation, the second, the third, the fourth. He dwells on every one! The joys of Heaven will bear dwelling upon—they will bear reflection. Here our joys, when they are over, leave but a handful of thorns—but a handful of ashes like thorns that crackle and blaze under the pot, and leave little behind them. But the eternal and spiritual joys will bear for us to go into detail, and each one shall be most precious.

21. *And the twelve gates were twelve pearls.* Whoever heard of such pearls? In what ocean but in the depth of God could such pearls be found? The twelve gates were twelve pearls!

21. *The twelve gates were twelve pearls. Each individual gate was one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.* Streets are used for fellowship. There men meet each other. And the fellowship of Heaven will be golden, bright, clear, perfect. Here, when we meet with one another, we soon display and discover our mutual faults, but there they shall delight each other with their common beauty, all the beauties being borrowed from the Lamb, who is the Glory of the place!

22. *And I saw no temple therein.* For it was all one temple.

22, 23. *For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Let us be going that way soon, Brothers and Sisters! Ah, may we all meet there. What must it be to be there?

24-27. *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations unto it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defiles, neither whatever works abomination, or makes a lie: but they who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.*

REVELATION 22:1-5.

Verses 1, 2. *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* Abounding joy, varied joy, ever changing, yet ever perfect—a tree which bears twelve fruits, and yet fruits every month! Oh, when shall we get away to those golden orchards? When shall we sit under those vines and press the clusters with our lips?

3. *And there shall be no more curse—Of labor, of sin, of sorrow, of death.*

3. *But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.* So that we shall all be in the throne room, all beholding the King in His beauty, and ourselves made His courtiers.

3. *And His servants shall serve Him*—That is Heaven to me, for here we sometimes are unable to serve Him as we would. We are distracted, worried, carried away from holy service by multitudes of cares, but there, His servants shall serve Him.

4. *And they shall see His face.* What a happy blending—service and communion—the hands busy, but the eyes ravished with the wondrous sight of the face of God! You shall see His face! If any of us could see the face of God on earth, no doubt we would die. The vision would be too bright for us! When one heard this—one of the greatest saints—he said, “Then let me see it and die,” and I do not wonder that he said so, for the sight of God, even should we die here, must still be perpetual and it would make us live again! “They shall see His face.”

4. *And His name shall be on their foreheads.* Their faces made like God’s face, then—His name, His Character, reflected on their brows—is not this worth having?

5. *And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light; and they shall reign forever and ever.* They themselves shall be kings! They shall reign forever and ever!

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

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

THE MEMORABLE HYMN NO. 2982

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 1906.

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

*“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”
Matthew 26:30.*

The occasion on which these words were spoken was the last meal of which Jesus partook in company with His disciples before He went from them to His shameful trial and His ignominious death. It was His farewell supper before a bitter parting—and yet they must sing. He was on the brink of that great depth of misery into which He was about to plunge—and yet He would have them sing “a hymn.” It is amazing that HE sang and, in a second degree, it is remarkable that THEY sang. We will consider both these singular facts.

I. Let us dwell a while on THE FACT THAT JESUS SANG AT SUCH A TIME AS THIS. What does He teach us by this?

Does He not say to each of us, His followers, *“My religion is one of happiness and joy.* I, your Master, by My example, would instruct you to sing even when the last solemn hour is come and all the glooms of death are gathering around you. Here, at the table, I am your Singing-master and set you lessons in music, in which My dying voice shall lead you, notwithstanding all the griefs which overwhelm My heart! I will be to you the Chief Musician and the Sweet Singer of Israel.” There was a time when it would have been natural and consistent with the solemnities of the occasion for the Savior to have bowed His head upon the table, bursting into a flood of tears. Or, if ever theirs was a season when He might have fittingly retired from all company and have bewailed His coming conflict in sighs and groans, it was just then. But no, that brave heart will sing “a hymn.” Our glorious Jesus plays the man beyond all other men! Boldest of the sons of men, He quails not in the hour of battle, but tunes His voice to loftiest Psalmody. The genius of that Christianity of which Jesus is the Head and Founder, its object, spirit and design, are happiness and joy—and they who receive it are able to sing in the very jaws of death!

This remark, however, is quite a secondary one to the next. *Our Lord’s complete fulfillment of the Law of God is even more worthy of our attention.* It was customary, when the Passover was held, to sing, and this is the main reason why the Savior did so. During the Passover it was usual to sing the 113th and five following Psalms which were called the “Hallel.” The first commences, you will observe, in our version, with, “Praise you the Lord!” or, “Hallelujah!” The 115th and the three following, were

usually sung as the closing song of the Passover. Now, our Savior would not diminish the splendor of the great Jewish rite although it was the last time that He would celebrate it. No, there shall be the holy beauty and delight of Psalmody—none of it shall be stinted—the “Hallel” shall be full and complete!

We may safely believe that the Savior sang through, or probably chanted, the whole of these six Psalms. And my heart tells me that there was no one at the table who sang more devoutly or more cheerfully than did our blessed Lord. There are some parts of the 118th Psalm, especially, which strike us as having sounded singularly grand as they flowed from His blessed lips. Note verses 22, 23, 24. Particularly observe those words near the end of the Psalm and imagine you hear the Lord, Himself, singing them—“God is the Lord, which has showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise You: You are my God, I will exalt You. O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.”

Because, then, it was the settled custom of Israel to recite or sing these Psalms, our Lord Jesus Christ did the same, for He would leave nothing unfinished. Just as when He went down into the waters of Baptism, He said, “Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness,” so He seemed to say, when sitting at the table, “Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Therefore let us sing unto the Lord, as God’s people in past ages have done.” Beloved, let us view with holy wonder the strictness of the Savior’s obedience to His Father’s will! And let us endeavor to follow in His steps in all things, seeking to be obedient to the Lord’s Word in the little matters as well as in the great ones.

May we not venture to suggest another and deeper reason? Did not the singing of “a hymn” at the supper show *the holy absorption of the Savior’s soul in His Father’s will*? If, Beloved, you knew that at, say, ten o’clock tonight, you would be led away to be mocked, despised and scourged—and that tomorrow’s sun would see you falsely accused, hanging, a convicted criminal, to die upon a cross—do you think that you could sing tonight, after your last meal? I am sure you could not unless with more than earth-born courage and resignation your soul could say, “bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” You would sing if your spirit were like the Savior’s spirit—if, like He, you could exclaim, “Not as I will, but as You will.” But if there should remain in you any selfishness, any desire to be spared the bitterness of death, you would not be able to chant the “Hallel” with the Master! Blessed Jesus, how wholly were You given up! How perfectly consecrated! So that, whereas other men sing when they are marching to their joys, You sang on Your way to death! Whereas other men lift up their cheerful voices when honor awaits them, You had a brave and holy sonnet on Your lips when shame, spitting and death were to be Your portion!

This singing of the Savior also teaches us *the whole-heartedness of the Master in the work which He was about to do*. The patriot warrior sings as he hastens to battle to the strains of martial music He advances to

meet the enemy and even thus the heart of our all-glorious Champion supplies Him with song even in the dreadful hour of His solitary agony! He views the battle, but He dreads it not—though in the contest His soul will be “exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.” Before it He is like Job’s warhorse, “He says among the trumpets, Ha, ha and He smells the battle afar off.” He has a baptism to be baptized with and He is straitened until it is accomplished. The Master does not go forth to the agony in the garden with a cowed and trembling spirit, all bowed and crushed in the dust, but He advances to the conflict like a Man who has His full strength about Him—taken out to be a Victim, (if I may use such a figure), not as a worn-out ox that has long borne the yoke, but as the firstling of the bullock, in the fullness of His strength! He goes forth to the slaughter with His glorious undaunted spirit fast and firm within Him, glad to suffer for His people’s sake and for His Father’s Glory!—

***“For as at first Your all-pervading look
Saw from your Father’s bosom to the abyss,
Measuring in calm presage
The infinite descent.
So to the end, though now of mortal pangs
Made heir, and emptied of Your Glory a while,
With unaverted eyes
You meet all the storm.”***

Let us, O fellow-heirs of salvation, learn to sing when our suffering time comes, when our season for stern labor approaches! Yes, let us pour forth a canticle of deep, mysterious melody of bliss when our dying hour is near at hand! Courage, Brothers and Sisters! The waters are chilly, but fear will not by any means diminish the terrors of the river! Courage, Brothers and Sisters! Death is solemn work, but playing the coward will not make it less so! Bring out the silver trumpet—let your lips remember the long-loved music—and let the notes be clear and shrill as you dip your feet in the Jordan! “Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”

Dear Friends, let the remembrance of the melodies of that upper room go with you tomorrow into business! And if you expect a great trial and are afraid you will not be able to sing after it, then sing *before* it comes. Get your holy praise work done before affliction mars the tune! Fill the air with music while you can. While yet there is bread upon the table, sing, though famine may threaten. While yet the child runs laughing about the house, while yet the flush of health is in your own cheeks, while yet your goods are spared, while yet your heart is whole and sound, lift up your song of praise to the Most High God and let your Master, the singing Savior, be in this your goodly and comfortable example!

II. We will now consider THE SINGING OF THE DISCIPLES. They united in the “Hallel”—like true Jews, they joined in the national song. Israel had good cause to sing at the Passover, for God had worked for His people what He had done for no other nation on the face of the earth! Every Hebrew must have felt his soul elevated and rejoiced on the

Paschal night! He was “a citizen of no mean city,” and the pedigree which he could look back upon was one compared with which kings and princes were but of yesterday.

Remembering the fact commemorated by the Paschal Supper, Israel might well rejoice. They sang of their nation in bondage, trodden beneath the tyrannical foot of Pharaoh. They began the Psalm right sorrowfully, as they thought of the bricks made without straw and of the iron furnace. But the strain soon mounted from the deep bass and began to climb the scale as they sang of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lord appearing to Him in the burning bush. They remembered the mystic rod which became a serpent and which swallowed up the rods of the magicians. Their music told of the plagues and wonders which God had worked upon Zoan and of that dread night when the first-born of Egypt fell before the avenging sword of the angel of death, while they, themselves, feeding on the lamb which had been slain for them, and who’s blood was sprinkled upon the lintel and upon the side posts of the door, had been graciously preserved. Then the song went up concerning the hour in which all Egypt was humbled at the feet of Jehovah, while as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, by the hand of Moses and Aaron, and they went by the way of the sea, even of the Red Sea. The strain rose still higher as they sang the song of Moses, the servant of God, and of the Lamb. Jubilantly they sang of the Red Sea and of the chariots of Pharaoh which went down into the midst thereof, and the depths covered them till there was not one of them left. It was a glorious chant, indeed, when they sang of Rahab cut in pieces and of the dragon wounded at the sea by the right hand of the Most High for the deliverance of the chosen people!

But, Beloved, if I have said that Israel could so properly sing, *what shall I say of those of us who are the Lord spiritually redeemed?* We have been emancipated from a slavery worse than that of Egypt! “With a high hand and with an outstretched arm,” has God delivered us! The blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God’s Passover, has been sprinkled on our hearts and consciences. By faith we keep the Passover, for we have been saved—we have been brought out of Egypt—and though our sins did once oppose us, they have all been drowned in the Red Sea of the atoning blood of Jesus! “The depths have covered them. There is not one of them left.” If the Jew could sing a “great Hallel,” our “Hallel” ought to be more glowing still! And if every house in “Judaea’s happy land” was full of music when the people ate the Paschal feast, tonight we have much more reason for filling every heart with sacred harmony while we feast upon Jesus Christ who was slain and has redeemed us to God by His blood!

III. The time has now come for me to say HOW EARNESTLY I DESIRE YOU TO “SING A HYMN.”

I do not mean to ask you to use your voices, but let your hearts be brimming with the essence of praise. Whenever we repair to the Lord’s Table, which represents to us the Passover, we ought not to come to it as to a funeral. Let us select solemn hymns, but not dirges. Let us sing

softly, but none the less joyfully. This is no burial feast! These are not funeral cakes which lie upon this Table, and yonder fair white linen cloth is no winding sheet. "This is My body," said Jesus, but the body so represented was no corpse! We feed upon a living Christ! The blood set forth by yonder wine is the fresh life blood of our immortal King. We view not our Lord's body as clay-cold flesh, pierced with wounds, but as glorified at the right hand of the Father! We hold a happy festival when we break bread on the first day of the week. We come not here trembling like bondsmen, cringing before the Lord as wretched condemned serfs! They eat on their knees—we approach as freemen to our Lord's banquet, like His Apostles, to recline at length or sit at ease—not merely to eat bread which may belong to the most sorrowful, but to drink wine which belongs to men whose souls are glad. Let us recognize the rightness, yes, the *duty* of cheerfulness at this commemorative supper and, therefore, let us sing a hymn!

Being satisfied on this point, perhaps you ask, "*What hymn shall we sing?*" Many sorts of hymns were sung in the olden time. Look down the list and you will scarcely find one which may not suit us now.

One of the earliest of earthy things was the war-song. They sang of old a song to the conqueror, when he returned from the battle. "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." Women took their timbrels and rejoiced in the day when the hero returned from the war. Even thus, of old, did the people of God extol Him for His mighty acts, singing aloud with the high-sounding cymbals—"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously...The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name." My Brothers and Sisters, let us lift up a war song tonight! Why not? "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Come, let us praise our Emmanuel, as we see the head of our foe in His right hand! As we behold Him leading captivity captive, ascending up on high with trumpets' joyful sound, let us chant the song—let us shout the war-song—"Io *Triumphe!*" Behold, He comes, all glorious from the war! As we gather at this festive Table which reminds us both of His conflict and of His victory, let us salute Him with a Psalm of gladsome triumph which shall be but the prelude of the song we expect to sing when we get up—

"Where all the singers meet."

Another early form of song was *the pastoral*. When the shepherds sat down among the sheep, they tuned their pipes and warbled forth soft and sweet airs in harmony with rustic quietude. All around was calm and still. The sun was brightly shining and the birds were making melody among the leafy branches. Shall I seem fanciful if I say, "Let us unite in a pastoral tonight?" Sitting round the Table, why should we not sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters"? If there is a place beneath the stars where we might feel perfectly at rest and ease, surely it is at the Table of the Lord! Here, then, let us sing to our great

Shepherd a pastoral of delight. Let the bleating of sheep be in our ears as we remember the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His flock!

You need not to be reminded that the ancients were very fond of *festive songs*. When they assembled at their great festivals, led by their chosen minstrels, they sang right joyously, with boisterous mirth. Let those who will, speak to the praise of wine—my soul shall extol the precious blood of Jesus! Let who will, laud corn and oil, the rich produce of the harvest—my heart shall sing of the Bread which came down from Heaven, whereof, if a man eats, he shall never hunger! Do you speak of royal banquets and minstrelsy fit for a monarch's ears? Ours is a nobler festival and our song is sweeter by far! Here is room at this Table, tonight, for all earth's poetry and music, for this place deserves songs more lustrous with delight, more sparkling with gems of holy mirth than any of which the ancients could conceive!

The *love song* we must not forget, for that is peculiarly the song of this evening. "Now will I sing unto my Well-Beloved a song." His love to us is an immortal theme and as our love, fanned by the breath of Heaven, bursts into a vehement flame! We may sing, yes, and we *will sing* among the lilies, a song of love!

In the Old Testament, we find many Psalms called by the title, "A *Song of Degrees*." This "Song of Degrees" is supposed by me to have been sung as the people ascended the Temple steps, or made pilgrimages to the holy place. The strain often changes—sometimes it is dolorous, but soon it is gladsome. At one season the notes are long drawn out and heavy. At another, they are cheerful and jubilant. We will sing a "Song of Degrees" tonight. We will mourn that we pierced the Lord and we will rejoice in pardon bought with blood! Our strain must vary as we talk of sin, feeling its bitterness and lamenting it—and then of pardon, rejoicing in its glorious fullness!

David wrote a considerable number of Psalms which he entitled "*Maschil*," which may be called in English, "instructive Psalms." Where, Beloved, can we find richer instruction than at the Table of our Lord? He who understands the mystery of Incarnation and of Substitution is a master in Scriptural theology. There is more teaching in the Savior's body and in the Savior's blood than in all the world! O you who wish to learn the way to comfort and how to tread the royal road to heavenly wisdom, come to the Cross and see the Savior suffer and pour out His heart's blood for human sin!

Some of David's Psalms are called, "*Michtam*," which means "golden Psalm." Surely we must sing one of these! Our Psalms must be golden when we sing of the Head of the Church who is as much fine gold. More precious than silver or gold is the inestimable price which He has paid for our ransom! Yes, you sons of harmony, bring your most melodious anthems here and let your Savior have your golden Psalms!

Certain Psalms in the Old Testament are entitled, "*Upon Shoshannim*," that is, "Upon the lilies." O you virgin souls, whose hearts have been

washed in blood and have been made white and pure, bring forth your instruments of song—

***“Here, then, your music bring,
Strike aloud each cheerful string!”***

Let your hearts, when they are in their best state, when they are purest and most cleansed from earthly dross, give to Jesus their glory and their excellence!

Then there are other Psalms which are dedicated “*To the sons of Korah.*” If the guess is right, the reason why we get the title, “To the sons of Korah”—“a song of loves” must be this—when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed up, the sons of Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up, too—but the sons of Korah perished not. Why they were not destroyed, we cannot tell. Perhaps it was that Sovereign Grace spared those whom Justice might have doomed and “the sons of Korah” were ever after made the sweet singers of the sanctuary. And whenever there was a special “song of loves,” it was always dedicated to them. Ah, we will have one of those songs of love tonight, around the Table, for we, too, are saved by distinguishing Grace. We will sing of the heavenly Lover and the many waters which could not quench His love!

We have not half exhausted the list, but it is clear that sitting at the Lord’s Table, we shall have no lack of suitable psalmody. Perhaps no one hymn will quite meet the sentiments of all and, while we would not write a hymn for you, we would pray the Holy Spirit to now write the spirit of praise upon your hearts, that sitting here, you may “after supper” sing “a hymn.”

IV. For one or two minutes let us ask, WHAT SHALL THE TUNE BE?

It must be a strange one, for if we are to sing “a hymn tonight, around the Table, *the tune most have all the parts of music.* Yonder Believer is heavy of heart through manifold sorrows, bereavements and watching by the sick. He loves his Lord and would gladly praise Him, but his soul refuses to use her wings. Brother, we will have a tune in which you can join—and you shall lead the bass. You shall sing of your fellowship with your Beloved in His sufferings—how He, too, lost a friend. How He spent whole nights in sleeplessness. How His soul was exceedingly sorrowful. But the tune must not be all bass, or it would not suit all of us tonight, for some can reach the highest note. We have seen the Lord and our spirit has rejoiced in God our Savior. We want to lift the chorus high, yes, there are some here who are at times so full of joy that they will need special music written for them! “Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell,” said Paul, and so have others said since, when Christ has been with them! Ah, then they have been obliged to mount to the highest notes, to the very loftiest range of song!

Remember, Beloved, that the same Savior who will accept the joyful shouts of the strong, will also receive the plaintive notes of the weak and weeping. You little ones, you babes in Grace, may cry, “Hosanna,” and the King will not silence you. And you strong men, with all your power of faith, may shout, “Hallelujah!” and your notes shall be accepted, too.

Come, then, let us have a tune in which we can all unite, but ah, we cannot make one which will suit the dead—the dead, I mean, “in trespasses and sins”—and there are some such here. Oh, may God open their mouths and unloose their tongues! But as for those of us who are alive unto God, let us, as we come to the Table, all contribute our own share of the music and so make up a song of blended harmony, with many parts—one great united song of praise to Jesus our Lord!

We should not choose a tune for the Communion Table which is not very soft. These are no boisterous themes with which we have to deal when we tarry here. A bleeding Savior, robed in a vesture dyed with blood—this is a theme which you must treat with loving gentleness, for everything that is coarse is out of place. While the tune is soft, it must also be sweet. Silence, you doubts! Be dumb, you fears! Be hushed, you cares! Why do you come here? My music must be sweet and soft when I sing of Him. But oh, it must also be strong! There must be a full swell in my praise. Draw out the stops, and let the organ swell the diapason! In fullness let its roll of thundering harmony go up to Heaven! Let every note be sounded at its loudest. “Praise you Him upon the cymbals, upon the high-sounding cymbals; upon the harp with a solemn sound.” Let the music be soft, sweet and strong.

Alas, you complain that your soul is out of tune. Then ask the Master to tune the heart-strings. Those “Selahs” which we find so often in the Psalms are supposed by many scholars to mean, “Put the harp-strings in tune.” Truly we require many “Selahs,” for our hearts are constantly unstrung. Oh, that tonight the Master would enable each one of us to offer that tuneful prayer which we so often sing—

***“Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above!
Frame the mount—oh, fix me on it,
Mount of God’s unchanging love!”***

V. We close by enquiring, WHO SHALL SING THIS HYMN?

Sitting around the Father’s board, we will raise a joyful song, but who shall do it? “I will,” says one. “And we will,” say others. What is the reason why so many are willing to join? The reason is to be found in the theme we were singing just now—

***“When He’s the subject of the song,
Who can refuse to sing?”***

What? A Christian silent when others are praising His Master? No! He must join in the song. Satan tries to make God’s people dumb, but he cannot, for the Lord has not a tongue-tied child in all His family! They can all speak and they can all cry, even if they cannot all sing—but I think there are times when they *can* all sing—yes, they must, for you know the promise, “Then shall the tongue of the dumb sing.” Surely, when Jesus leads the tune, if there should be any silent ones in the Lord’s family, they must begin to praise the name of the Lord! After Giant Despair’s head had been cut off, Christians and Mr. Greatheart and all the rest of them brought out the best of the provisions and made a feast. And Mr. Bunyan says that after they had feasted, they danced. In the

dance there was one remarkable dancer, namely, Mr. Ready-to-Halt. Now, Mr. Ready-to-Halt usually went upon crutches, but for once he laid them aside. "And," says Bunyan, "I guarantee you he footed it well!" This is quaintly showing us that the very sorrowful ones, the Ready-to-Halts, when they see Giant Despair's head cut off—when they see death, Hell, and sin led in triumphant captivity at the wheels of Christ's victorious chariot—I say they feel that even *they* must for once indulge in a song of gladness! So, when I put the question tonight, "Who will sing?" I trust that Ready-to-Halt will promise, "I will!"

You have not much comfort at home, perhaps. By very hard work you earn that little. Sunday is to you a day of true rest, for you are worked very cruelly all the week. Those cheeks of yours, poor girl, are getting very pale and who knows but what Hood's pathetic line may be true of you?—

***"Stitch, stitch, stitch
In poverty, hunger, and dirt.
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A shroud as well as a shirt."***

But, my Sister, you may surely rejoice tonight in spite of all this! There may be little on earth, but there is much in Heaven. There may be but small comfort for you here apart from Christ but oh when, by faith, you mount into His Glory, your soul is glad! You shall be as rich as the richest tonight if the Holy Spirit shall but bring you to the Table and enable you to feed upon your Lord and Master! Perhaps you have come here tonight when you ought not to have done so. The physician would have told you to stay in your bed, but you persisted in coming up to the House where the Lord has so often met with you. I trust that we shall hear your voice in the song. There appears to have been, in David's day, many things to silence the praise of God, but David was one who would sing. I like that expression of his where the devil seems to come up and put his hand on his mouth and say, "Be quiet!" "No," said David, "I will sing!" Again the devil tries to quiet him, but David is not to be silenced, for three times he puts it, "I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord!" May the Lord make you resolve, this night, that you will praise the Lord Jesus with all your heart!

Alas, there are many of you here whom I cannot invite to this feast of song and who could not truly come if you were invited. Your sins are not forgiven. Your souls are not saved. You have not trusted Christ. You are still in Nature's darkness, still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity! Must it always be so? Will you destroy yourselves? Have you made a league with death and a covenant with Hell? Mercy lingers! Long-suffering continues! Jesus waits! Remember that He hung upon the Cross for sinners such as you are and that if you believe in Him, now, you shall be saved! One act of faith and all the sin you have committed is blotted out. A single glance of faith's eye to the wounds of the Messiah and your load of iniquity is rolled into the depths of the sea—and you are forgiven in a moment!

“Oh,” says one, “would God I could believe!” Poor Soul, may God help you to believe now! God took upon Himself our flesh. Christ was born among men and suffered on account of human guilt, being made to suffer “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” Christ was punished in the place of every man and woman who will believe on Him. If you believe on Him, He was punished for you—and you will never be punished! Your debts are paid, your sins are forgiven. God cannot punish you, for He has punished Christ instead of you—and He will never punish twice for one offense. To believe is to trust. If you will now trust your soul entirely with Him, you are saved, for He loved you and gave Himself for you.

When you know this and feel it to be true, then come to the Lord’s Table and join with us, when, AFTER SUPPER WE SING OUR HYMN—

**“It is finished!”—Oh what pleasure,
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings without measure
Flow to us from Christ the Lord—
‘It is finished!’
Saints, the dying words record.
Tune your harps anew, you seraphs,
Join to sing the pleasing theme!
All on earth, and all in Heaven,
Join to praise Immanuel’s name!
Hallelujah!
Glory to the bleeding Lamb!”**

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—421, 439, 300.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 26:20-30; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:20-26.**

Matthew 26:20. *Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve.* Why so many people celebrate the Lord’s Supper in the morning, I cannot imagine, unless it is that they desire to do everything contrary to their Lord’s command and example! “When the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve.” I do not think there is any binding ordinance making the evening the only time for the observance of this ordinance—but to make the morning the only time is certainly not according to the Word of God!

21, 22. *And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful.* There was enough to make them sorrowful in the fact that their Lord had just told them that one of the 12 who were His bodyguard, His closest companions, His nearest and dearest friends, would betray Him. “They were exceedingly sorrowful.”

22. *And began everyone of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?* It shows a beautiful trait in their character that they did not suspect one another and, least of all, I suppose, they did not suspect Judas, but each one

asked, “Lord, is it I?” It is an admirable way of hearing a sermon to take it home to yourself, especially if there is a rebuke or a caution in it.

23, 24. *And He answered and said, he that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.* The doom of the wicked is something far worse than non-existence, or Christ would not have said, concerning Judas Iscariot, “It had been good for that man if he had never been born.” This is especially true of all those who, having for a while consorted with Christ, afterwards deny it and betray Him. O Brothers and Sisters, may all of us be kept from this terrible sin! May none of us ever betray our Master after all the fellowship we have had with Him! It would be better to die for Him than to deny Him—and it would be better never to have been born than to have been in intimate association with Him and then to have betrayed Him.

25. *Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.* “It is even so.” With a sorrowful gesture, He made it plain to His sad little circle of friends and followers that He knew all that was going to happen and that Judas was the man who was going to turn traitor.

26. *And as they were eating.* As they were eating the Passover. The one ordinance gradually melted into the other—“As they were eating.”

26, 27. *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it.* “Each one of you, My disciples, take a draught of this cup.”

28. *For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* They had had gross sin brought prominently to their minds. They had had a personal reminder of their own liability to sin and now they were to have a personal pledge concerning the pardon of sin—“For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sin.”

29. *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s Kingdom.* Taking, as it were, the great Nazarite vow to never taste of the fruit of the vine “until that day.” He will keep His tryst with us, my Brothers and Sisters; and we shall drink the new vine of His Father’s Kingdom with Him by-and-by. But until then, He waits.

30. *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

1 Corinthians 16:20. *When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.* Merely meeting together, each person bringing his or her own portion of bread and wine, and each one eating the provided portion, was *not* celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

21. *For in eating, everyone takes before others his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunk.* Bad as some professing Christians are even now, they are not as bad as these Corinthians were! One was

hungry, and another was drunk because they had turned the holy feast into a kind of banquet of a most disorderly sort! There was nothing in their conduct to indicate true Christian fellowship. The very meaning of the ordinance was lost in the fact that each one was feasting himself without fear.

22. *What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise you the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.* The Lord's Supper is not to be made an opportunity for eating and drinking in disorderly self-enjoyment. It is a hallowed and holy institution, setting forth the fellowship of true Believers with one another, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was an Apostle, yet he had not been present at the institution of the Lord's Supper, so He had a special Revelation given to him concerning the way in which this ordinance is to be observed.

23. *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.* That is the right kind of teaching which a man first receives from God, and then delivers to the people! Nothing is of authority in the Christian ministry unless we can say of it, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."

23. *That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed took bread.* What a sad interest is given to the Lord's Supper by the fact that it was instituted "the same night in which He was betrayed." Never forget that! God grant that none of us may betray our Lord this night, or any other night! It would be the darkest night in our life should it ever be so. "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed took bread."

24, 25. *And when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament. "The New Covenant."*

26, 26. *In My blood: this do you as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He comes.*

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

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

THE GARDEN OF THE SOUL

NO. 693

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

“A place called Gethsemane.”
Matthew 26:36.

THOUGH I have taken only these few words for my text, I shall endeavor to bring the whole narrative before your mind's eyes. It is a part of the teaching of Holy Writ that man is a composite being—his nature being divisible into three parts—“spirit,” “soul,” and “body.” I am not going to draw any nice distinctions tonight between the spirit and the soul, or to analyze the connecting link between our immaterial life and consciousness and the physical condition of our nature and the materialism of the world around us. Suffice it to say that whenever our vital organization is mentioned, this triple constitution is pretty sure to be referred to.

If you notice it carefully, you will see in our Savior's sufferings on our behalf that the passion extended to His spirit, soul, and body—and although at the last extremity upon the Cross it was hard to tell in which respect He suffered most, all three being strained to the utmost—yet it is certain there were three distinct conflicts in accordance with this threefold endowment of humanity. The first part of our Lord's dolorous pain fell upon His spirit. This took place at the table in that upper chamber where He ate the Passover with His disciples. Those of you who have read the narrative attentively will have noticed these remarkable words in the thirteenth chapter of John and the twenty-first verse: “When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.”

Of that silent conflict in the Savior's heart while He was sitting at the table no one was a spectator. Into any man's spiritual apprehensions it was beyond the power of any other creature to penetrate. How much less into the spiritual conflicts of the Man Christ Jesus? No one could by any possibility have gazed upon these veiled mysteries! He seems to have sat there for a time like one in the deepest abstraction. He fought a mighty battle within Himself. When Judas rose and went out it may have been a relief. The Savior gave out a hymn as if to celebrate His conflict! Then, rising up, He went forth to the Mount of Olives.

His discourse with His disciples there is recorded in that wonderful chapter, the fifteenth of John, so full of holy triumph, beginning thus, “I am the true vine.” He went to the agony in the same joyous spirit like a conqueror, and oh, how He prayed! That famous prayer—what a profound study it is for us! It ought, properly, to be called “The Lord's Prayer.” The manner and the matter are alike impressive. “These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven and said, Father, the hour is come. Glo-

rify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.” He seems to have been chanting a melodious paean just then at the thought that His first battle had been fought—that His spirit, which had been troubled—had risen superior to the conflict, and that He was already victorious in the first of the three terrible struggles.

As soon as this had occurred there came another hour, and with it the power of darkness in which not so much the spirit as the *soul* of our blessed Lord was to sustain the shock of the encounter. This took place in the garden. You know that after He had come forth triumphant in this death struggle He went to the conflict more expressly in His body, undergoing in His physical Nature the scourging, the spitting and the Crucifixion—although in that third case there was a grief of spirit and an anguish of soul likewise which mingled their tributary streams. We would counsel you to meditate upon each separately, according to the time and the circumstance in which the pre-eminence of any one of these is distinctly referred to.

This second conflict which we have now before us well deserves our most reverent attention. I think it has been much misunderstood. Possibly a few thoughts may be given us tonight which shall clear away the mist from our understanding and open some of the mystery to our hearts. It seems to me that the agony in the garden was a repetition of the temptation in the wilderness. These two contests with the Prince of Darkness have many points of exact correspondence. If carefully pondered you may discover that there is a singular and striking connection between the triple temptation and the triple prayer. Having fought Satan at the first in the wilderness, on the threshold of His public ministry, our Lord now finds him at the last in the garden as He nears the termination of His mediatorial work on earth.

Keep in mind that it is the *soul* of Jesus of which we now speak while I take up the several points consecutively, offering a few brief words on each. THE PLACE OF CONFLICT has furnished the theme of so many discourses that you can hardly expect anything new to be said upon it. Let us, however, stir up your minds by way of remembrance. Jesus went to the GARDEN to endure the conflict because it was the place of *meditation*. It seemed fit that His mental conflict should be carried on in the place where man is most at home in the pensive musings of his mind—

“The garden contemplation suits.”

As Jesus had been accustomed to indulge Himself with midnight reveries in the midst of those olive groves, He fitly chooses a place sacred to the studies of the mind to be the place memorable for the struggles of His soul—

***“In a garden man became
Heir of endless death and pain.”***

It was there the first Adam fell, and it was meet that there—

***“The second Adam should restore
The ruins of the first.”***

He went to that particular garden, it strikes me, because it was within the boundaries of Jerusalem. He might have gone to Bethany that night as He had on former nights, but why did He not? Do you not know that it was according to the Levitical law that the Israelites should sleep within the boundaries of Jerusalem on the Paschal night? When they came up to the temple to keep the Passover they must not go away till that Paschal night was over. So our Lord selected a rendezvous within the liberties of the city that He might not transgress even the slightest jot or tittle of the Law.

And again, He chose that garden, among others contiguous to Jerusalem, because Judas knew the place. He wanted retirement, but He did not want a place where He could skulk and hide Himself. It was not for Christ to give Himself up—that were like suicide. It was not for Him to withdraw and secrete Himself—that were like cowardice. So He goes to a place which He is quite sure that Judas, who was aware of His habits, knows He is accustomed to visit. And there, like one who, so far from being afraid to meet His death, pants for the Baptism with which He is to be baptized, He awaits the crisis that He had so distinctly anticipated.

“If they seek Me,” He seemed to say, “I will be where they can readily find Me, and lead Me away.” Every time we walk in a garden I think we ought to remember the garden where the Savior walked, and the sorrows that befell Him there. Did He select a garden, I wonder, because we are all so fond of such places, thus linking our seasons of recreation with the most solemn mementoes of Himself? Did He recollect what forgetful creatures we are, and did He therefore let His blood fall upon the soil of a garden, that so often as we dig and delve therein we might lift up our thoughts to Him who fertilized earth’s soil, and delivered it from the curse by virtue of His own agony and griefs?

Our next thought shall be about the WITNESSES. Christ’s spiritual suffering was altogether within the veil. As I have said, no one could describe it. But His soul-sufferings had some witnesses. Not the rabble, not the multitude—when they saw His bodily suffering that was all they could understand—therefore it was all they were permitted to see. Just so, Jesus had often shown them the flesh, as it were, or the carnal things of His teaching when He gave them a parable. But He had never shown them the *soul*, the hidden life of His teaching. This He reserved for His disciples.

And thus it was in His passion. He let the Greek and the Roman gather around in mockery and see His flesh torn, and rent, and bleeding—but He did not let them go into the garden with Him to witness His anguish or His prayer. Within that enclosure none came but the disciples. And mark, my Brothers and Sisters, not all the disciples were there. There were a hundred and twenty of His disciples, at least, if not more, but only *eleven* bore Him company then. Those eleven must cross that gloomy brook of Kidron with Him. And eight of them are set to keep the door, their faces towards the world, there to sit and watch—only *three* go into the garden—and those three see something of His sufferings.

They behold Him when the agony begins, but still at a distance. He withdraws from them a stone's cast, for He must tread the winepress alone and it is not possible that the priestly Sufferer should have a single peer in the offering which He is to present to His God. At the last it came to this, that there was only one observer. The chosen three had fallen asleep, God's unsleeping eyes alone looked down upon Him. The Father's ear alone attended to the piteous cries of the Redeemer—

***“He knelt, the Savior knelt and prayed,
When but His Father's eyes
Looked through the lonely garden's shade
On that dread agony.
The Lord of all above, beneath,
Was bowed with sorrow unto death!”***

Then there came an unexpected visitor. Amazement wrapped the sky as Christ was seen of angels to be sweating blood for us! “Give strength to Christ,” the Father said as He addressed some strong-winged spirit—

***“The astonished seraph bowed his head,
And flew from worlds on high.”***

He stood to strengthen, not to fight, for Christ must fight alone. But applying some holy cordial, some sacred anointing to the oppressed Champion who was ready to faint, He, our great Deliverer, received strength from on high and rose up to the last of His fights.

Oh, my dear Friends, does not all this teach us that the outside world knows nothing about Christ's soul-sufferings? They draw a picture of Him. They carve a piece of wood or ivory, but they do not know His soul-sufferings—they cannot enter into them! No, the mass of His own people do not know them, for they are not made conformable to those sufferings by a spiritual fellowship. We have not that keen sense of mental things to sympathize with such grieving as He had, and even the favored ones, the three—the elect out of the elect—who have the most of spiritual graces and who have, therefore, the most of suffering to endure, and the most of depression of spirits—even they cannot pry into the fullness of the mystery!

God only knows the soul-anguish of the Savior when He sweat great drops of blood! Angels saw it, but yet they could not understand it. They must have wondered more when they saw the Lord of Life and Glory sorrowful with exceeding sorrowfulness, even unto death, than when they saw this round world spring into beautiful existence from nothingness, or when they saw Jehovah garnish the heavens with His Spirit, and with His hand form the crooked serpent. Brethren, we cannot expect to know the length and breadth and height of these things! Only as our own experience deepens and darkens shall we know more and more of what Christ suffered in the garden.

Having thus spoken about the place and the witnesses, let us say a little concerning THE CUP ITSELF. What was this “cup” about which our Savior prayed—“If it is possible let this cup pass from Me”? Some of us may have entertained the notion that Christ desired, if possible, to escape from the pangs of death. You may conjecture that although He had undertaken to

redeem His people, yet His human nature flinched and started back at the perilous hour. I have thought so myself in times past. But on more mature consideration I am fully persuaded that such a supposition would reflect a dishonor upon the Savior.

I do not consider that the expression “this cup” refers to *death* at all. Nor do I imagine that the dear Savior meant for a single moment to express even a particle of desire to escape from the pangs which were necessary for our redemption. This “cup,” it appears to me, relates to something altogether different. Not to the last conflict, but to the conflict in which He was then engaged. If you study the words—and especially the Greek words—which are used by the various Evangelists, I think you will find that they all tend to suggest and confirm this view of the subject.

The Savior’s spirit, having been vexed and having triumphed, was next attacked by the Evil One upon His *mental* Nature, and this mental Nature became, in consequence, most horribly despondent and cast down. As when on the pinnacle of the temple the Savior felt the fear of falling, so when in the garden He felt a sinking of soul, an awful despondency, and He began to be very sorrowful. The “cup,” then, which He desired to pass from Him was, I believe, that cup of despondency and nothing more.

I am the more disposed so to interpret it, because not a single word recorded by any of the four Evangelists seems to exhibit the slightest wavering on the part of our Savior as to offering Himself up as an atoning Sacrifice. Their testimony is frequent and conclusive—“He set His face to go towards Jerusalem.” “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished.” “The Son of Man goes, as it is written of Him.” You never hear a sentence of reluctance or hesitancy. It does not seem to be consistent with the Character of our blessed Lord, even as Man, to suppose that He desired that final cup of His sufferings to pass away from Him at all.

Moreover, there is this, which I take to be a strong argument—the Apostle tells us that He was “heard in that He feared.” Now, if He feared to die, He was not heard, for He did die. If He feared to bear the wrath of God, or the weight of human sin, and really desired to escape from them, then He was not heard, for He *did* feel the weight of sin, and He did suffer the weight of His Father’s vindictive wrath. Thus it appears to me that what He feared was that dreadful depression of mind which had suddenly come upon Him so that His soul was very heavy. He prayed His Father that that cup might pass away—and so it did—for I do not see in all the Savior’s griefs afterwards that singular overwhelming depression He endured when in the garden.

He suffered much in Pilate’s hall. He suffered much upon the tree. But there was, I was almost about to say, a bold cheerfulness about Him even to the last, when for the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross! Yes, when He cried, “I thirst,” and, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” I think I notice a holy force and vigor about the words and thoughts of the Sufferer which not the weak and trembling state of His body could extinguish! The language of that twenty-second Psalm, which

seems to have struck the keynote, if I may so speak, of His devotion on the Cross, is full of faith and confidence.

If the first verse contains the bitterest of woe, the twenty-first verse changes the plaintive strain. "You have heard (or answered) Me" marks a transition from suffering to satisfaction which it is delightful to dwell upon. Now, perhaps some of you may think that if this cup only meant depression of the spirits and dismay of the soul it was nothing of much significance, or at least it weakens the spell of those words and deeds which twine around Gethsemane. Permit me to beg your pardon. I know personally that there is nothing on earth that the human frame can suffer to be compared with despondency and prostration of mind. Such is the dolefulness and gloom of a heavy soul, yes, a soul exceedingly heavy even unto death that I could imagine the pangs of dissolution to be lighter!

In our last hour joy may lighten up the heart, and the sunshine of Heaven within may bear up the soul when all outside is dark. But when the iron enters into a man's soul he is unmanned, indeed! In the cheerlessness of such exhausted spirits the mind is confused. Well can I understand the saying that is written, "I am a worm and no man," of one that is a prey to such melancholy. Oh that cup! When there is not a promise that can give you comfort. When everything in the world looks dark. When your very mercies frighten you and rise like hideous specters and portents of evil before your view.

When you are like the brothers of Benjamin as they opened the sacks and found the money, but instead of being comforted said, "What is this that God has done unto us?" When everything looks black and you seem, through some morbid sensitiveness into which you have fallen, to distort every object and every circumstance into a dismal caricature, let me say to you, that for us poor sinful men this is a cup more horrible than any which inquisitors could mix! I can imagine Anne Askew on the rack, braving it out, like the bold woman she was, facing all her accusers and saying—

***"I am not she that lets
My anchor to fall;
For every drizzling mist
My ship's substantial,"***

but I cannot think of a man in the soul-sickness of such depression of spirits as I am referring to, finding in thought or song a soothing for his woe.

When God touches the very secret of a man's soul, and his spirit gives way, he cannot bear up very long. And this seems to me to have been the cup which the Savior had to drink just then—from which He prayed to be delivered—and concerning which He was heard. Consider for a moment what depressed His soul. Everything, my Brothers and Sisters, everything was draped in gloom and overcast with darkness that might be felt! There was the past. Putting it as I think He would look at it, His life had been unsuccessful. He could say with Isaiah, "Who has believed Our report,

and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

And how poor was that little success He did have! There were His twelve disciples, and one of them He knew to be on the way to betray Him. Eight of them were asleep at the entrance to the garden and three asleep *within* the garden! He knew that they would all forsake Him, and one of them would deny Him with oaths and curses! What was there to comfort Him? When a man's spirit sinks he needs a cheerful companion—he needs somebody to talk to. Was not this felt by the Savior? Did He not go *three times* to His disciples?

He knew they were but men, but then a man can comfort a man in such a time as that. The sight of a friendly face may cheer one's own countenance and enliven one's heart. But He had to shake them from their slumber, and then they stared at Him with unmeaning gazes. Did He not return back again to prayer because there was no eye to pity, and none that could help? He found no relief! Half a word sometimes, or even a smile—even though it be only from a child—will help you when you are sad and prostrate. But Christ could not get even that! He had to rebuke them almost bitterly. Is not there a tone of irony about His remonstrance—“Sleep on now and take your rest”?

He was not angry, but He did feel it. When a man is low-spirited he feels more keenly and acutely than at other times. And although the splendid charity of our Lord made that excuse—“The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,” yet it did cut Him to the heart and He had an anguish of soul like that which Joseph felt when he was sold into Egypt by his brothers. You will see, then, that both the past and the present were sufficient to depress Him to the greatest degree. But there was the future—and as He looked forward to that, devoted as His heart was, and unfaltering as was the courage of His soul (for it were sacrilege and slander, I think, to impute even a thought of flinching to Him)—yet His human heart shrank back in fear!

He seemed to think—“Oh, how shall I bear it?” The mind started back from the shame and the body started back from the pain, and the soul and body both started back from the thought of death and of death in such an ignominious way—

**“He experienced them all—
The doubt, the strife,
The faint, perplexing dread.
The mists that hang over parting life
All gathered round His head—
That He who gave man's breath might know
The very depths of human woe.”**

Brethren, none of us have such cause for depression as the Savior had! We have not His load to carry and we have a Helper to help us whom He had not, for God, who forsook Him, will *never* forsake us. Our soul may be cast down within us but we can never have such great reason for it, nor can we ever know it to so great an extent as our dear Redeemer did.

I wish I could picture to you that lovely Man—friendless like a stag at bay with the dogs compassing Him round about and the assembly of the wicked enclosing Him, foreseeing every incident of His passion, even to the piercing of His hands and His feet, the parting of His garments, and the lots cast upon His vesture—and anticipating that last death-sweat without a drop of water to cool His lips! I can but conceive that His soul must have felt within itself a solemn trembling such as might well make Him say, “I am exceedingly sorrowful even unto death.” This, then, seems to me to be the “cup” which our Lord Jesus Christ desired to have passed from Him and which *did* pass from Him in due time.

Advancing a little further, I want you to think of the AGONY—which we have been accustomed to call this scene in the garden. You all know that it is a word which signifies “wrestling.” Now there is no wrestling where there is only one individual. To this agony, therefore, there must have been two parties. Were there not, however mystically speaking, two parties in Christ? What do I see in this King of Sharon but, as it were, two armies? There was the stern resolve to do all and to accomplish the work which He had undertaken.

And there was the mental weakness and depression which seemed to say to Him, “You cannot! You will never accomplish it.” “Our fathers trusted in You and You did deliver them. They cried unto You and were delivered. They trusted in You and were not confounded.” “But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” So that the two thoughts come into conflict—the shrinking of the soul—and yet the determination of His invincible will to go on with it and to work it out. He was in an agony in that struggle between the overwhelming fear of His mind and the noble eagerness of His spirit.

I think, too, that Satan afflicted Him—that the powers of darkness were permitted to use their utmost craft in order to drive the Savior to absolute despair. One expression used to depict it I will handle very delicately—a word that, in its rougher sense, means, and has been applied to persons out of their mind and bereft for awhile of reason. The term used concerning the Savior in Gethsemane can only be interpreted by a word equivalent to our “distracted.” He was like one bewildered with an overwhelming weight of anxiety and terror. But His Divine Nature awakened up His spiritual faculties and His mental energy to display their full power. His *faith* resisted the temptation of unbelief.

The heavenly goodness that was within Him so mightily contended with the Satanic suggestions and insinuations which were thrown in His way that it came to a *wrestling*. I should like you to catch the idea of wrestling as though you saw two men trying to throw one another, struggling together till the muscles stand out and the veins start like whip-cord on their brows. That were a fearful spectacle when two men in desperate wrath thus close in with each other. The Savior was thus wrestling with the powers of darkness and He grappled with such terrible earnestness in the fray that He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood—

“The powers of Hell united pressed

***And squeezed His heart, and bruised His breast!
What dreadful conflicts raged within
When sweat and blood forced through His skin!”***

Observe the way in which Christ conducted the agony. It was by *prayer*. He turned to His Father three times with the same words. It is an index of distraction when you repeat yourself. Three times with the same words He approached His God—“My Father, let this cup pass from Me.” Prayer is the great cure-all for depression of spirit. “When my spirit is overwhelmed within me, I will look to the Rock that is higher than I.” There will be a breaking up altogether, and a bursting of spirit unless you pull up the sluices of supplication and let the soul flow out in secret communion with God! If we would state our griefs to God they would not fret and fume within and wear out our patience as they sometimes do.

In connection with the agony and the prayer there seems to have been a bloody sweat. It has been thought by some that the passage only means that the sweat was *like* drops of blood. But then the word “like” is used in Scripture to signify not merely *resemblance* but the identical thing *itself*. We believe that the Savior did sweat, from His entire Person, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Such an occurrence is very rare, indeed, among men. It has happened some few times. Books of surgery record a few instances, but I believe that the persons who under some horri-fying grief experience such a sweat never recover—they have always died.

Our Savior’s anguish had this peculiarity about it, that though He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground so copiously as if in a crimson shower, yet He survived. His blood must needs be shed by the hands of others, and His soul poured out unto death in another form. Remembering the doom of sinful man—that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his face—we see the penalty of sin exacted in awful measure on Him who stood for sinners. As we eat bread this day at the Lord’s Table, we commemorate the drops of blood that He sweat. With perspiration on his face and huge drops on his brow, man toils for the bread that perishes—but bread is only the staff of life.

When Christ toiled to give life itself to men, He sweat, not the common perspiration of the outward form, but the blood which flows from the very *heart* itself. Would that I had words to bring all this before you! I want to make you *see* it. I want to make you *feel* it. The heavenly Lover who had nothing to gain except to redeem our souls from sin and Satan, and to win our hearts for Himself, leaves the shining courts of His eternal Glory and comes down as a poor, feeble, and despised Man!

He is so depressed at the thought of what is yet to be done and suffered and under such pressure of Satanic influence, that He sweat drops of *blood*, falling upon the cold frosty soil in that moon-lit garden. Oh the love of Jesus! Oh the weight of sin! Oh the debt of gratitude which you and I owe Him!—

***“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small!
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all!”***

We must proceed with the rich narrative to meditate upon our SAVIOR CONQUERING. Our imagination is slow to fix upon this precious feature of the dolorous history. Though He had said, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," yet presently we observe how tranquil and calm He is when He rises up from that scene of prostrate devotion! He remarks, as though it were in an ordinary tone of voice, some expected circumstance—"He is at hand that shall betray Me. Rise, let us be going." There is no distraction now. No hurry, no turmoil, no exceedingly sorrow even unto death. Judas comes, and Jesus says, "Friend, why are you come?"

You would hardly know Him to be the same man that was so sorrowful just now. One word with an emanation of His Deity suffices to make all the soldiery fall backwards. Soon He turns round and touches the ear of the high priest's servant and heals it as in happier days He healed the diseases and the wounds of the people that flocked round Him in His journeys. Away He goes, so calm and collected that unjust accusations cannot extort a reply from Him! And though beset on every hand, yet is He led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth.

That was a magnificent calmness of mind that sealed His lips and kept Him passive before His foes! You and I could not have done it. It must have been a deep profound peace within which enabled Him to be thus mute and still amidst the hoarse murmur of the council and the boisterous tumult of the multitude. I believe that having fought the enemy within He had achieved a splendid victory! He was heard in that He feared, and was now able in the fullness of His strength to go out to the last tremendous conflict in which He met the embattled hosts of earth and Hell—and yet unabashed after He had encountered them all—to wave the banner of triumph and to say, "It is finished."

Let us ask, in drawing to a conclusion, what is the LESSON FROM ALL THIS? I think I could draw out twenty lessons, but if I did they would not be so good and profitable as the *one* lesson which the Savior draws Himself. What was the lesson which He particularly taught to His disciples? Now Peter, James, and John, open your ears! And you, Magdalene, and you, Mary, and you, the wife of Herod's steward, and other gracious women, listen for the inference which I am going to draw! It is not mine—it is that of our Lord and Master Himself. With how much heed should we treasure it up! "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." "Watch," and yet again, "Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation."

I have been turning this over in my mind to make out the connection. Why, on this particular occasion, should He exhort them to *watch*? It strikes me that there were two sorts of watching. Did you notice that there were eight disciples at the garden gate? They were watching, or ought to have been. And three were inside the garden. They, too, were watching, or ought to have been.

But they watched differently. Which way were the eight looking? It strikes me that they were set there to look *outwards*—to watch lest Christ should be surprised by those who would attack Him. That was the object

of their being put there. The other three were set to watch His actions and His words—to look *at the Savior* and see if they could help, or cheer, or encourage Him.

Now you and I have reason to look both ways, and the Savior seems to say as we look upon the agony—“You will have to feel something like this, therefore watch.” Watch outwards—be always on your watchtower lest sin surprise you. It is through sin that you will be brought into this agony. It is by giving Satan an advantage over you that the sorrows of your soul will be multiplied. If your foot slips your heart will become the prey of gloom. If you neglect communion with Jesus, if you grow cold or lukewarm in your affections, if you do not live up to your privileges you will become the prey of darkness, dejection, discouragement, and despair. Therefore, watch, lest you enter upon this great and terrible temptation.

Satan cannot bring strong faith, when it is in healthy exercise, into such a state of desolation. It is when your faith declines and your love grows negligent, and your hope is inanimate that he can bring you into such disconsolate heaviness that you see not your signs, nor know whether you are a Believer or not. You will not be able to say, “My Father,” for your soul will doubt whether you are a child of God at all. When the ways of Zion mourn, the harps of the sons and daughters of Zion are unstrung. Therefore, keep good watch, you who like the eight disciples are charged as sentinels at the threshold of the garden.

But you three, watch *inward*. Look at Christ. “Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” Watch the Savior and watch *with* the Savior. Brothers and Sisters, I should like to speak this to you so emphatically that you would never forget it! Be familiar with the passion of your Lord! Get right up to the Cross! Do not be satisfied with that, but get the Cross on your shoulders—get yourself bound to the Cross in the spirit of the Apostle when he said, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live.”

I do not think that I have had sweeter work to do for a long time than when, a few weeks ago, I was looking over all the hymn writers and all the poets I knew of for hymns upon the passion of the Lord. I tried to enjoy them as I selected them, and to get into the vein in which the poets were when they sung them. Believe me, there is no fount that yields such sweet water as the fount that springs from Calvary just at the foot of the Cross! Here it is that there is a sight to be seen more astounding and more ravishing than even from the top of Pisgah!

Get *into* the side of Christ—it is a cleft of the rock in which you may hide until the tempest is passed. *Live* in Christ. Live near to Christ and then let the conflict come and you will overcome even as He overcame! And rising up from your sweat and from your agony you will go forth to meet even death itself with a calm expression on your brow, saying, “My Father, not as I will, but as You will.”—

***“My God, I love You, not because I hope for Heaven thereby,
Nor because they who love You not***

**Must burn eternally.
 You, O my Jesus, You did me
 Upon the Cross embrace.
 For me did bear the nails and spear,
 And manifold disgrace.
 And griefs and torments numberless,
 And sweat of agony!
 Yes, death itself—and all for me
 Who was Your enemy.
 Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
 Should I not love You well?
 Not for the hope of winning Heaven,
 Nor of escaping Hell.
 Not with the hope of gaining anything,
 Nor seeking a reward
 But as You Yourself have loved me,
 O ever-loving Lord,
 Even so I love You, and will love,
 And in Your praise will sing
 Because You are my loving God,
 And my Eternal King.”**

I hope that this meditation may be profitable to some tried Christians and even to impenitent sinners likewise. Oh that the pictures I have been trying to draw might be seen by some who will come and trust in this wondrous Man, this wondrous God who saves all who trust in Him! Oh, rest on Him! “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Do but trust Him and you are saved! I do not say you shall be saved some day, but you are saved *tonight!*

The sin which was on your shoulder, heavy as a burden when you came into this house, shall all be gone. Look now to Him in the garden, on the Cross, and on the Throne! Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him NOW! Trust Him ONLY! Trust Him wholly—

**“Let no other trust intrude—
 None but Jesus
 Can do helpless sinners good.”**

May the Lord bless you, everyone in this assembly, and at the Table may you have His Presence. Amen.

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

CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION NO. 2715

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1901.

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

*“Not as I will, but as You will.”
Matthew 26:39.*

THE Apostle Paul, writing concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, says, “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” He who, as God, knew all things, had to learn obedience in the time of His humiliation. He who is, in Himself, Wisdom Incarnate, did, Himself, condescend to enter the school of suffering—there we learn that important lesson of the Christian life—obedience to the will of God. And here, in Gethsemane’s Garden, you can see the Divine Scholar going forth to practice His lesson. He had been, all His lifetime, learning it, and now He has to learn it for the last time in His agony and bloody sweat, and in His terrible death upon the Cross. Now is He to discover the utmost depths of suffering and to attain to the height of the knowledge of obedience. See how well He has learned His lesson! Note how complete and ripe a scholar He is! He has attained to the very highest class in that school and, in the immediate prospect of death, can say to His Father, “Not as I will, but as You will.”

The objective of this discourse is to commend to you the blessed example of our Lord Jesus Christ and, as God the Holy Spirit shall help me, to urge you to be made like unto your glorious Head, and yourselves to learn, by all the daily Providences with which God is pleased to surround you, this lesson of resignation to the will of God, and of making an entire surrender to Him.

I have been struck lately, in reading works by some writers who belong to the Romish Church, with the marvelous love which they have towards the Lord Jesus Christ. I did think, at one time, that it could not be possible for any to be saved in that church, but, often, after I have risen from reading the books of those holy men and have felt myself to be quite a dwarf by their side, I have said, “Yes, despite their errors, these men must have been taught of the Holy Spirit. Notwithstanding all the evils of which they have drunk so deeply, I am quite certain that they must have had fellowship with Jesus, or else they could not have written as they did.” Such writers are few and far between but, still, there is a remnant according to the election of Grace even in the midst of that apostate church!

Looking at a book by one of them, the other day, I met with this remarkable expression, "Shall that body which has a thorn-crowned Head, have delicate, pain-fearing members? God forbid!" That remark went straight to my heart at once. I thought how often the children of God shun pain, reproach and rebuke—and think it to be a strange thing when some fiery trial happens to them. If they would but remember that their Head had to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and that their Head was crowned with thorns, it would not seem strange to them that the members of His mystical body have also to suffer.

If Christ had been some delicate Person. If our glorious Head had been reposing upon the soft pillow of ease, then might we, who are the members of His Church, have expected to go through this world with joy and comfort. But if He must be bathed in His own blood. If the thorns must pierce His temples. If His lips must be parched and if His mouth must be dried up like a furnace—shall we escape suffering and agony? Is Christ to have a head of brass and hands of gold? Is His head to be as if it glowed in the furnace, and are not we to glow in the furnace, too? Must He pass through seas of suffering and shall we—

***"Be carried to the skies,
On flowery beds of ease"?***

Ah, no! We must be conformed unto our Lord in His humiliation if we would be made like He also in His Glory!

So, Brothers and Sisters, I have to speak to you upon this lesson which some of us have begun to learn, but of which as yet we know so little—this lesson of saying, "Not as I will, but as You will." First, let me *explain the meaning of this prayer. Then, urge you, by certain reasons, to make this your constant cry. Next, show what will be the happy effect of its being the paramount desire of your spirits.* And we will conclude with a practical enquiry—*what can bring us to this blessed condition?*

I. First, then, WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS PRAYER? "Not as I will, but as You will."

I shall not address myself to those Christians who are but as dwarfs, who know little about the things of the Kingdom of God. I will speak rather to those who do business in the deep waters of communion, who know what it is to pillow their heads upon the bosom of Jesus, to walk with God as Enoch did, and to talk with Him as Abraham did. My dear Brothers and Sisters, only such as you can understand this prayer in all its length and breadth. Your Brother, who as yet scarcely knows the meaning of the word, communion, may pray thus in some feeble measure, yet it is not to be expected that he should discern all the spiritual teaching that there is in these words of our Lord. But to you who are Christ-taught. You who have become ripe scholars in the school of Christ—to you I may speak as unto wise men and women—judge what I say.

If you and I mean this prayer and do not use it as a mere form of words, but mean it in all its fullness, we must be prepared for this kind of experience. Sometimes, when we are in the midst of the most active

service, when we are diligently serving God, both with our hands and our heart, and when success is crowning all our labors, *the Lord will lay us aside*—take us right away from the vineyard and thrust us into the furnace! Just at the very time when the church seems to need us most, and when the world's necessities are most of all appealing to us, and when our hearts are full of love towards Christ and towards our fellow creatures—it will often happen that, just then, God will strike us down with sickness, or remove us from our sphere of activity! But if we really mean this prayer, we must be prepared to say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” This is not easy, for does not the Holy Spirit, Himself, teach us to long after active service for our Savior? Does He not, when He gives us love toward our fellow men, constrain us, as it were, to make their salvation our meat and our drink? When He is actively at work within our hearts, do we not feel as if we could not live without serving God? Do we not then feel that to labor for the Lord is our highest rest, and that toil for Jesus is our sweetest pleasure? Does it not then seem most trying to our ardent spirit to be compelled to drink the cup of sickness and to be incapable of doing anything actively for God?

The preacher is seeing men converted and his ministry successful, but, all of a sudden, he is compelled to cease from preaching. Or the Sunday school teacher has, by the Grace of God, been the means of bringing his class into an interesting and hopeful condition—yet, just when the class needs his presence most, he is smitten down, so that he cannot go on with his work. Ah, then it is that the spirit finds it hard to say, “Not as I will, but as You will.” But if we adopt this prayer, this is what it means—that we should be prepared to suffer instead of to serve, and should be as willing to lie in the trenches as to scale the walls—and as willing to be laid aside in the King's hospital as to be fighting in the midst of the rank and file of the King's army. This is hard to flesh and blood, but we must do it if we present this petition.

If we really mean this prayer, there will be a second trial for us. Sometimes *God will demand of us that we labor in unpropitious fields*. He will set His children to plow the rock and to cast their bread upon the waters. He will send His Ezekiel to prophesy in a valley full of dry bones, and His Jonah to carry His message to Nineveh. He will give His servants strange work to do—work which seems as if it could never be successful, or bring honor either to God or to themselves. I doubt not that there are some ministers who toil and labor with all their might, yet who see but little fruit. Far away in the dark places of heathendom, there are men who have been preaching for years, with scarcely a convert to cheer them. And here, too, in England, there are men who are preaching the Word of the Lord in all sincerity and faithfulness, yet they do not see souls converted. They know that they are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, both in them that perish and in them that are saved. Our hearts are, I trust, so full of the Spirit prompting us to cry, like Rachel, “Give me children, or I die,” that we cannot rest content without seeing the success of our labors. Yet the Master, in effect, says to us, “No, I tell you to continue to toil for Me, though I give you no fruit for your labor. You are to keep on

plowing this rock, simply because I tell you to do it." Ah, then, Brothers, it is hard to say, "Not my will, but Yours be done." But we must say it! We must feel that we are ready to forego even the joy of harvest, and the glory of success if God wills it!

At other times *God will remove His people from positions of honorable service, to other offices that are far inferior in the minds of men.* I think that I should feel it hard if I had to be banished from my large congregation and from my thousands of hearers, to a small village where I could only preach the Gospel to a little company of people. Yet I am sure that if I entered fully into the spirit of our Lord's words—"Not as I will, but as You will"—I would be quite as ready to be there as to be here. I have heard that, among the Jesuits, such is the extraordinary obedience which they are compelled to pay to their superiors that, on one occasion, there was a president of one of their colleges who had written some of the most learned books in any language. He was a man of the highest talents, but the superior of the order took a freak into his head, for some reason, to send him straightaway from the country where he was, to Bath, to stand there in the street for a year and sweep the crossing, and the man did it. He was compelled to do it! His vow obliged him to do anything that he was told to do.

Now, in a spiritual sense, this is hard to perform, but, nevertheless, it is a Christian's duty. We remember the saying of a good man that the angels in Heaven are so completely given up to obedience to God that if there should be two works to do—ruling an empire and sweeping a crossing—neither of the two angels who might be selected to go on these two errands would have any choice in the matter, they would just leave it with their Lord to decide which part they were to fulfill. You may, perhaps, be called from the charge of the services in a place of worship, to become one of the humblest members in another church. You may be taken from a place of much honor and put in the very lowest ranks of the army. Are you willing to submit to that kind of treatment? Your flesh and blood say, "Lord, if I may still serve in Your army, let me be a captain, or, at least, let me be a sergeant, or a corporal. If I may help to draw Your chariot, let me be the leading horse, let me run first in the team, let me wear the bright ribbons." But God may say to you, "I have put you there in the thick of the battle. Now I will place you behind. I have given you vigor and strength to fight with great success. Now I will make you tarry by the stuff. I have done with you in the prominent position—now I will use you somewhere else." But if we can only pray this prayer. "Not as I will, but as You will," we shall be ready to serve God anywhere and everywhere, so long as we know that we are doing His will!

But there is another trial which we shall all have to endure, in our measure, which will prove whether we understand by this prayer what Christ meant by it. Sometimes, *in the service of Christ, we must be prepared to endure the loss of reputation, of honor and even of character itself.* I remember, when I first, came to London to preach the Word, I thought that I could bear anything for Christ. But I found myself shamefully slandered. All manner of lies were uttered concerning me and, in

agony, I fell on my face before God and cried unto Him. I felt as though that was a thing I could not bear—my character was very dear to me and I could not endure to have such false things said about me! Then this thought came to me, “You must give up all for Christ, you must surrender everything for Him—character, reputation and all that you have—and if it is the Lord’s will, you shall be reckoned the vilest of the vile! But so long as you can still continue to serve Him and your character is really pure, you need not fear. If it is your Master’s will that you shall be trampled and spit upon by all the wicked men in the world, you must simply bear it and say, ‘Not as I will, but as You will.’” And I remember how I rose, then, from my knees, and sang to myself that verse—

***“If on my face, for Your dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame!
If You remember me.”***

“But how hard it was,” you say, “for you to suffer the loss of character and to have evil things spoken against you falsely for Christ’s name’s sake!” And what was the reason why it was so hard? Why, it was just because I had not fully learned how to pray this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ—and I am afraid that I still have not completely learned it. It is a very delightful thing to have even our enemies speaking well of us, to go through this world with such holiness of character that men who pour scorn upon all religion cannot find fault with us—but it is an equally glorious thing for us to be set in the pillory of shame, to be pelted by every passerby, to be the song of the drunkard, to be the by-word of the swearer when we do not deserve it—and to endure all this for Christ’s sake. *This* is true heroism—*this* is the meaning of the prayer of our text.

Again, some of you have at times thought, “Oh, if the Master will only be pleased to open a door for me where I may be the means of doing some good! *How glad I should be if I could have either more wealth, or more influence, or more knowledge, or more talents with which I might serve Him better!*” You have prayed about the matter and thought about it, and you have said, “If I could only get into such-and-such a position, how excellently should I be able to serve God!” You have seen your Master give to some of His servants ten talents, but He has given you only one. You have gone on your knees and asked Him to be good enough to trust you with two—but He has refused it. Or you have had two and you have asked Him to let you have ten—and He has said, “No, I will give you two talents and no more.” But you say, “Is it not a laudable desire that I should seek to do more good?” Certainly! Trade with your talents—multiply them if you can. But suppose you have no power of utterance? Suppose you have no opportunities of serving God, or even suppose the sphere of your influence is limited, what then? Why, you are to say “Lord, I hoped it was Your will that I might have a wider sphere, but if it is not, although I long to serve You on a larger scale, I will be quite content to glorify You in my present narrower sphere, for I feel that here is an opportunity for the trial of my faith and resignation, and again I say, ‘Not as I will, but as You will.’”

Christian men and women, are you heartily prepared to pray this prayer? I fear there is not a single individual among us who could pray it in all its fullness of meaning. Perhaps you may go as far as I have already gone, but if God should take you at your word, and say, "My will is that your wife should be struck with a fatal illness and, like a fading lily, droop and die before your eyes. My will is that your children should be caught up to my loving bosom in Heaven, that your house should be burned with fire, that you should be left penniless—a pauper dependent on the charity of others. It is My will that you should cross the sea, that you should go to distant lands and endure unheard-of hardships. It is My will that, at last, your bones should lie bleaching on the desert sand in some foreign land." Are you willing to endure all this for Christ? Remember that you have not attained unto the full meaning of this prayer until you have said, "Yes," to all that it means. And, until you can go to the uttermost lengths to which God's Providence may go, you have not gone to the full extent of the resignation in this cry of our Lord!

Many of the early Christians, I think, *did* know this prayer by heart—it is amazing how willing they were to do anything and be anything for Christ. They had got this idea into their heads that they were not to live to themselves—and they had it also in their *hearts*. And they believed that to be martyred was the highest honor they could possibly wish for. Consequently, if they were brought to the tribunals of the judges, they never ran away from their persecutors. They almost courted death, for they thought it was the highest privilege that they could possibly have if they might be torn in pieces by the lions in the arena, or be decapitated with the sword. Now, if we could but get that idea into *our hearts*, with what courage would it gird us! How fully might we then serve God and how patiently might we endure persecution if we could but learn the meaning of this prayer, "Not as I will, but as You will."

II. In the second place, I AM TO TRY AND GIVE YOU SOME REASONS WHY IT WILL BE BEST FOR US ALL TO SEEK TO HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US, SO THAT WE MAY BE BROUGHT INTO THIS FRAME OF MIND AND HEART.

And the first reason is because it is simply *a matter of right*. God ought to have His way at all times and I ought not to have mine whenever it is contrary to His. If ever my will is at cross purposes to the will of the Supreme, it is but right that mine should yield to His. If I could have my own way—if such a poor, feeble creature as I am could thwart the Omnipotent Creator, it would be wrong for me to do it. What? Has He made me, and shall He not do as He wills with me? Is He like the potter and am I but as the clay, and shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, "Why have You made me thus?" No, my Lord, it is but right that You should do what You please with me, for I am Yours—Yours for You have made me—Yours, for You have bought me with Your blood. If I am a jewel purchased with the precious blood of Jesus, then He may cut me into what shape He pleases. He may polish me as He chooses. He may let me lie in the darkness of the casket or let me glitter in His hand or in His diadem. In fact, He may do with me just as He wills, for I am His and so

long as I know that He does it, I must say, "Whatever He does is right. My will shall not be in opposition to His will."

But, again, this is not only a matter of right, *it is a matter of wisdom with us*. Depend upon it, dear Brothers and Sisters, if we could have our own will, it would often be the worst thing in the world for us! But to let God have His way with us, even if it were in our power to thwart Him—would be an act of wisdom on our part. What do I desire when I wish to have my own will? I desire my own happiness! Well, I shall get it far more easily if I let God have His will, for the will of God is both for His own Glory and my happiness! So, however much I may think that my own will would tend to my comfort and happiness, I may rest assured that God's will would be infinitely more profitable to me than my own. And, although God's will may seem to make it dark and dreary for me at the time, yet, from seeming evil He will bring forth good such as never could have been produced from that supposed good after which my weak and feeble judgment is so apt to run!

But, again, suppose it were possible for us to have our own will, *would it not be an infringement of that loving reliance which Christ may well ask at our hands, that we should trust Him?* Are we not saved by trusting our Lord Jesus Christ? Has not faith in Christ been the means of saving me from sin and Hell? Then surely I must not run away from this rule when I come into positions of trial and difficulty. If faith through the blood of Christ has been superior to sin, it will certainly be superior to trial through the almighty arm of Christ! Did I not tell Him, when I first came to Him, that I would trust no one but Him? Did I not declare that all my other confidence were burst and broken, and scattered to the winds? And did I not ask that He would permit me to put my trust in Him alone? And shall I, after that, play the traitor? Shall I now set up some other object in which to place my trust? Oh, no! My love to Jesus, my gratitude to Him for His condescension in accepting my faith binds me to trust to Him, and to Him, alone, forever!

We often lose the force of a Truth of God by not making it palpable to our own mind. Let us try to make this one so. Imagine the Lord Jesus to be visibly present in this pulpit. Suppose that He looks down upon one of you and says, "My child, your will and Mine do not, just now, agree. You desire such-and-such a thing, but I say, 'No, you must not have it.' Now, my child, which will is to prevail, Mine or yours?" Suppose you were to reply, "Lord, I must have my will." Do you not think He would look at you with eyes of infinite sadness and pity and say to you, "What? Did I give up My will for you and will you not give up your will for Me? Did I surrender all I had, even My life, for your sake, and do you say, you self-willed child, 'I must have these things according to my will, and contrary to Your wish and purpose, O my Savior?'"

Surely you could not talk like that! Rather, I think I see you instantly falling on your knees and saying, "Lord Jesus, forgive me for ever harboring such evil thoughts. No, my Lord, even if Your will is hard, I will think it pleasant. If it is bitter, I will believe that the bitterest draught is sweet. Let me but see You dying on the Cross for me. Let me only know that

You love me and wherever You shall put me, I will be in Heaven as long as I can feel that it is Your will that is being done with me. I will be perfectly content to be just wherever You choose me to be and to suffer whatever You choose for me to endure." Yes, dear Friends, it would show a sad lack of that love which we owe to Christ and of that gratitude which He deserves, if we were once to set our wills up in opposition to His! Therefore, again, Beloved, for love's sake, for wisdom's sake, for right's sake, I beseech you ask the Holy Spirit to teach you this prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ and to impart to you its blessed meaning.

III. I notice, in the next place, THE EFFECT OF TRULY SAYING AND FEELING, "NOT AS I WILL, BUT AS YOU WILL."

The first effect is *constant happiness*. If you would find out the cause of most of your sorrows, dig at the root of your self-will, for that is where it lies. When your heart is wholly sanctified unto God and your will is entirely subdued to Him, the bitter becomes sweet, pain is changed to pleasure and suffering is turned into joy. It is not possible for that man's mind to be disturbed whose will is wholly resigned to the will of God. "Well," says one, "that is a very startling statement"—and another says, "I have really sought to have my will resigned to God's will, yet I am disturbed." Yes, and that is simply because, though you have sought, like all the rest of us, you have not yet attained to full resignation to the will of the Lord. But when once you have attained to it—I fear you never will in this life—then shall you be free from everything that shall cause you sorrow or discomposure of mind!

Another blessed effect of this prayer, if it is truly presented, is that *it will give a man holy courage and bravery*. If my mind is wholly resigned to God's will, what have I to fear in all the world? It is with me, then, as it was with Polycarp. When the Roman emperor threatened that he would banish him, he said, "You cannot, for the whole world is my Father's house, and you cannot banish me from it." "But I will slay you," said the emperor. "No, you cannot, for my life is hid with Christ in God." "I will take away all your treasures." "No, you cannot, for I have nothing that you know of. My treasure is in Heaven and my heart is there, also." "But I will drive you away from men and you shall have no friends left." "No, that you cannot do, for I have a Friend in Heaven from whom you cannot separate me! I defy you, for there is nothing that you can do to me." And so the Christian can always say if once his will agrees with God's will! He may defy all men and defy Hell, itself, for he will be able to say, "Nothing can happen to me that is contrary to the will of God and if it is His will, it is my will, too. If it pleases God, it pleases me. God has been pleased to give me part of His will, so I am satisfied with whatever He sends."

Man is, after all, only the second cause of our sorrows. A persecutor says, perhaps, to a child of God, "I can afflict you." "No, you cannot, for you are dependent on the first Great Cause, and He and I are agreed." Ah, dear Friends, there is nothing that makes men such cowards as having wills contrary to the will of God! But, when we resign ourselves wholly into the hands of God, what have we to fear? The thing that made Jacob a coward was that he was not resigned to God's will when Esau

came to meet him. God had foretold that the elder of the two sons of Isaac should serve the younger—Jacob's business was to believe that and to go boldly forward with his wives and children—not to bow down before Esau, but to say, "The promise is the elder shall serve the younger. I am not going to bow down to you—it is your place to fall prostrate before me." But poor Jacob said, "Perhaps it is God's will that Esau should conquer me and smite the mothers and their children. But my will is that it shall not be." The contest is well pictured at the ford Jab-bok, but if Jacob had not disbelieved God's promise, he would never have bowed himself to the earth seven times before his brother Esau. In the holy majesty of his faith, he would have said, "Esau, my brother, you can do me no hurt, for you can do nothing contrary to the will of God. You can do nothing contrary to His decree and I will be pleased with whatever it is."

So, this resignation to God's will gives, first, joy in the heart, and then it gives fearless courage. And yet another thing follows from it. As soon as anyone truly says, "Not as I will, but as You will," this resolve *tends to make every duty light, every trial easy, every tribulation sweet*. We should never feel it to be a hard thing to serve God, yet there are many people, who, if they do a little thing for the Lord, think so much of it. And if there is ever a great thing to be done, you have, first, to plead very hard to get them to do it—and when they do it, very often it is done so badly that you are half sorry you ever asked them to do it! A great many people make very much out of what is really very little. They take one good action which they have performed and they hammer it out till it becomes as thin as gold leaf—and then they think they may cover a whole week with that one good deed. The seven days shall all be glorified by an action which only takes five minutes to perform! It shall be quite enough, they even think, for all time to come! But the Christian whose will is conformed to God's will, says, "My Lord, is there anything else for me to do? Then I will gladly do it. Does it involve need of rest? I will do it. Does it involve loss of time in my business? Does it involve me, sometimes, in toil and fatigue? Lord it shall be done, if it is Your will, for Your will and mine are in complete agreement. If it is possible, I will do it, and I will count all things but loss that I may win Christ and be found in Him, rejoicing in His righteousness, and not in my own."

IV. There are many other sweet and blessed effects which this resignations would produce, but I must close by observing that **THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH THIS SPIRIT CAN BE ATTAINED IS BY THE UNCTION OF THE HOLY ONE**, the outpouring and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

You may try to subdue your own self, but you will never do it alone. You may labor, by self-denial, to keep down your ambition, but you will find that it takes another shape and grows by that wherewith you thought to poison it. You may seek to concentrate all the love of your soul on Christ and, in the very act, you will find self creeping in! I am sometimes astonished—and yet not astonished when I know the evil of my own heart—when I look within myself and find how impure my mo-

tive is at the very moment when I thought it was most pure! And I expect it is the same with you, dear Friends. You perform a good action—some almsgiving to the poor, perhaps. You say, “I will do it very quietly.” Someone speaks of it and you say at once, “I wish you had not spoken of that. I do not like to hear anyone talk of what I have done. It hurts me.” Perhaps it is only your pride that makes you say that it hurts you, for some folk make their modesty to be their pride. It is, in fact, their secret pride that they are doing good and that people do not know it. They glory in that supposed secrecy and, by its coming out, they feel that their modesty is spoilt and they are afraid that people will say, “Ah, you see that it is known what they do—they do not really do their good deeds in secret.” So that even our modesty may be our pride—and what some people think their pride, may happen to be the will of God, and may be real modesty. It is very hard work to give up our own will, but it is possible, and that is one of the lessons we should learn from this text, “Not as I will, but as You will.”

Again, if there is anybody of whom you are a little envious—perhaps a minister who takes a little of the gloss off you by preaching better than you do, or a Sunday school teacher who is more successful in his work—make that particular person the object of your most constant prayer and endeavor as much as lies in you to increase that person’s popularity and success. Someone asks, “But you cannot bring human nature up to that point, can you—to try and exalt one’s own rival?” My dear Friends, you will never know the full meaning of this prayer till you have tried to do this—and actually sought to honor your rival more than yourself! That is the true spirit of the Gospel, “in honor preferring one another.” I have sometimes found it hard work, I must confess, but I have schooled myself down to it. Can this be done? Yes, John the Baptist did it. He said of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” If you had asked John whether he wished to increase, he would have said, “Well, I should like to have more disciples. Still, if it is the Lord’s will, I am quite content to go down, that Christ should go up.”

How important, therefore, it is for us to learn how we may attain to this state of acquiescence with our heavenly Father’s will! I have given you the reasons for it, but how can it be done? Only by the operation of the Spirit of God! As for flesh and blood, they will not help you in the least—they will just go the other way—and when you think that, surely, you have got flesh and blood under control, you will find that they have got the upper hand of you just when you thought you were conquering them! Pray the Holy Spirit to abide with you, to dwell in you, to baptize you, to immerse you in His sacred influence, to cover you, to bury you in His sublime power and so, and only so, when you are completely immersed in the Spirit and steeped, as it were, in the crimson sea of the Savior’s blood, shall you be made to fully realize the meaning of this great prayer, “Not as I will, but as You will.” “Lord, not self, but Christ. Not my own glory, but Your Glory. Not my aggrandizement, but Yours. No, not even my success, but Your success! Not the prosperity of my own

church, or my own self, but the prosperity of Your Church, the increase of Your Glory—let all that be done as You will, not as I will.”

How different this is from everything connected with the world! I have tried to take you up to a very high elevation and if you have been able to get up there, or even to desire to get up there, how striking has the contrast been between this spirit and the spirit of the worldling! I shall not say anything to those of you who are unconverted except this—learn how contrary you are to what God would have you be and what you must be, before you can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. You know that you could not say, “Let God have His will,” and you also know that you could not humble yourself to become as a little child. This shows your deep depravity, so, may the Holy Spirit renew you, for you have need of renewing, that you may be made a new creature in Christ Jesus! May He sanctify you wholly, spirit, soul and body, and at last present you faultless before the Throne of God, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 15:1-11.**

Verse 1. *I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.* If you want to know where the true Church is, Christ here tells you—“I am the true vine.” All who are in Christ are in the true Church. If you want to know who is the Father of the Church, its Keeper and Guardian, Christ here tells you—“My Father is the vinedresser.” Hence, I feel persuaded that the true vine, the Church, will never die, for it is Christ. And I am also persuaded that it will never be uprooted, for Jesus says, “My Father is the vinedresser.” And that fact is a guarantee that He will take care of it.

2. *Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away.* In some sense, men and women may be in Christ by a mere outward profession. But if they have no evidence of a real union to Christ—if they produce no fruit—they will be taken away, some by death, and others by apostasy. But they will be taken away.

2. *And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit!* From these words it is clear that many of the afflictions which we have to endure are not brought upon us because we are unfruitful, but because we are bearing fruit!

3, 4. *Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in Me.* Dear Friends, beware of a Christless Christianity! Beware of trying to be Christians without living daily upon Christ! The branch may just as well try to bear fruit apart from the vine as for you to hope to maintain the reality of Christian life without continual fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ!

5, 6. *I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing. If a man abides not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.* The

vine must either bear fruit or be good for nothing and you, Believer, must be vitally united to Christ and bear fruit in consequence of that union or else you will be like those fruitless branches, of which our Lord said that, “men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.”

7. *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.* Do not take that verse as a promise of unlimited answers to prayer, for it is nothing of the kind! Remember the, “if,” that qualifies it—“*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you,*” for a man who is truly in Christ, as the branch is in the vine, and who is feeding upon Christ’s words will be so influenced by the Holy Spirit that he will not ask anything which is contrary to the mind of God. Consequently, his prayers, though in one sense unrestricted, are really restricted by the tenderness of his conscience and the sensitiveness of his spirit to the influence of the mind of God. There are some Christians who do not get their prayers answered and who never will as long as they do not comply with this condition, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you.” If you do not take notice of Christ’s words, He will not take notice of your words. He is not going to open His door to every stranger who chooses to give a runaway knock at it, but He will pay attention to His own children who pay attention to Him.

8. *Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.* “You shall be known to be My disciples.” Everybody will perceive that you must be branches of that fruitful vine, Christ Jesus, if you bear much fruit!

9. *As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love.* How wondrously Jesus loves those who are truly His! As the Father loved Him, so does He love us—that is, without beginning, without measure, without variation, without end! “Continue you in My love.” That is—live in it, enjoy it, drink it in, be influenced by it.

10. *If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love.* “You shall live in the realization of My love if you live in obedience to Me.”

10, 11. *Even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* For, when Christ is not pleased with us, we are not likely to have joy in ourselves, Oh, that we may so live as to please Christ!

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

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

JESUS DECLINING THE LEGIONS

NO. 1955

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 27, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father,
and He shall presently give me more
than twelve legions of angels?
But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled,
that thus it must be?”
Matthew 26:53, 54.***

IT is the garden of Gethsemane. Here stands our Lord and yonder is the betrayer. He is foremost of the multitude. You know his face, the face of that son of perdition, even Judas Iscariot. He comes forward, leaving the men with the staves, the swords, the torches and lanterns. He proceeds to kiss his Master—it is the token by which the officers are to know their victim. You perceive at once that the disciples are excited. One of them cries, “Lord, shall we smite with the sword?” Their love to their Master has overcome their prudence! There are but 11 of them—a small band to fight against the mob sent by the authorities to arrest their Master—but love makes no reckoning of odds. Before an answer can be given, Peter has struck the first blow and the servant of the High Priest has narrowly escaped having his head split in two! As it is, his ear is cut off.

One is not altogether surprised at Peter's act, for, in addition to his headlong zeal, he had most likely misunderstood the saying of his Lord at supper—“He that has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.” There was not time for our Lord to explain, but they were so accustomed to his concrete style of speech that they should not have misunderstood Him, but they did so. He had simply told them that the days of peace, in which they could go in and out among the people and be joyfully received by them, had now come to an end, for, as He, Himself, who had once been in favor with all the people, would now be “reckoned among the transgressors,” (see Luke 22:35-38), so would they be counted among the offscouring of all things. Now they could no longer reckon on the hospitality of a friendly people, but must carry their own purse and scrip. And instead of feeling safe wherever they went, they must understand that they were in an enemy's country and must travel through the world like men armed for self-defense.

They were now to use their own substance and not to hope for cheerful entertainment among a grateful people. And they would need to be on their guard against those who, in killing them, would think that they were doing God a service. They took His language literally and, therefore, replied, “Lord, behold, here are two swords.” I think He must have smiled

sadly at their blunder as He answered, "It is enough." He could never have thought of their fighting that He might not be delivered unto the Jews, since for that purpose two swords were simply ridiculous! They had missed His meaning, which was simply to warn them of the changed circumstances of His cause—but they caught at the words which He had used and exhibited their two swords.

Possibly, as some have supposed, these were two long sacrificial knives with which they had killed the Paschal lamb, but, indeed, the wearing of weapons is much more general in the East than with us. Our Lord's disciples were largely Galileans and as the Galileans were more of a fighting sort than other Jews, the wearing of swords was probably very general among them. Nevertheless, two of the Apostles had swords—not that they were fighting men—but probably because it was the fashion of their country and they had thought it necessary to wear them when passing through a dangerous district. At any rate, Peter had a sword and instantly used it. He smites the first man he could reach! I wonder he had not struck Judas—one might have excused him if he had—but it is a servant of the High Priest who bears the blow and loses his ear.

Then the Savior comes forward in all His gentleness, as self-possessed as when He was at supper, as calm as if He had not already passed through an agony. Quietly He says, "Suffer it to be so now." He touches the ear and heals it—and in the lull which followed, when even the men that came to seize Him were spell-bound by this wondrous miracle of mercy—He propounds the great Truth of God that they that take the sword shall perish with the sword! And He bids Peter put away his weapon. Then He utters these memorable words—"Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And He also said what John alone appears to have heard—"The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

The wound of Malchus served a gracious purpose, for it enabled our Lord to work a new miracle, the likes of which He had never worked before, namely, the restoration of a member maimed or cut off by *violence*. The blunder of the Apostles was also overruled to answer a very instructive purpose. You wonder that the Lord should, even in appearance, encourage His disciples to have swords and then forbid them to use them. Follow me in a thought which is clear to my own mind. For a man to abstain from using force when he has none to use is no great virtue—it reminds one of the lines of Cowper's ballad—

***"Stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright."***

But for a man to have force ready to his hand and then to abstain from using it is a case of self-restraint and possibly of self-sacrifice of a far nobler kind! Our Savior had His sword at His side that night, though He did not use it. "What?" you ask, "how can that be true?" Our Lord says, "Can I not now *pray* to My Father, and He will give Me twelve legions of angels?" Our Lord had thus the means of self-defense—something far more power-

ful than a sword hung at His belt—but He refused to employ the power within His reach.

His servants could not bear this test. They had no self-restraint—the hand of Peter is on his sword at once. The failure of the servants in this matter seems to me to illustrate the grand self-possession of their Master. “Alas,” He seems to say, “you cannot be trusted even with swords, much less could you be entrusted with greater forces. If you had the angelic bands at your command, down they would come streaming from the sky to execute works of vengeance and so mar My great life-work of love.” Brothers and Sisters, we are better without swords and other forms of force than with them, for we have not yet learned, like our Lord, to control ourselves! Admire the glorious self-restraint of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, armed not with a sword but with the embattled hosts of “helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim,” yet refused even by a *prayer* to bring them down to His relief! Peter’s passionate use of the sword illustrates the happy self-control of His Lord and this is the use of the incident.

Let us now proceed to learn from the Words of the Lord Jesus which we have selected as our text.

I. First, Brothers and Sisters, I would have you notice from the text OUR LORD’S GRAND RESOURCE. “Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father?” Our Lord is surrounded by His adversaries and there are none about Him powerful enough to defend Him from their malice—what can He do? He says, “I can *pray* to My Father.” This is our Lord’s continual resource in the time of danger! Yes, even in that time of which He said, “This is your hour and the power of darkness.” He can even now pray to His Father.

First, Jesus had no possessions on earth, but *He had a Father*. I rejoice in His saying, “Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father?” He is a betrayed Man. He is given up into the hands of those who thirst for His blood, but He has an Almighty and Divine Father. If our Lord had merely meant to say that God could deliver Him, He might have said, “Do you think not that I can pray to Jehovah?” Or, “to God?” But He uses the sweet expression, “My Father,” both here and in that text in John, where He says, “The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” O Brothers and Sisters, remember that we have a Father in Heaven! When all is gone and spent, we can say, “Our Father.”

Relatives are dead, but our Father lives! Supposed friends have left us, even as the swallows quit in our wintry weather, but we are not alone, for the Father is with us! Cling to that blessed text, “I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you.” In every moment of distress, anxiety, perplexity, we have a Father in whose wisdom, truth and power we can rely! Your dear children do not trouble themselves much, do they—if they have a need, they go to father. If they are puzzled, they ask father. If they are ill-treated, they appeal to father. If but a thorn is in their finger, they run to mother for relief. Be it little or great, the child’s sorrow is the parent’s care! This makes a child’s life easy—it would make ours easy if we would but act as children towards God. Let us imitate the Elder Brother and

when we, too, are in our Gethsemane, let us, as He did, continue to cry, "My Father, My Father." This is a better defense than shield or sword!

Our Lord's resource was to approach His Father with prevailing prayer. "Can I not, now, pray to My Father?" Our Lord Jesus could use that marvelous weapon of All-Prayer which is shield, sword, spear, helmet and breast-plate, all in one. When you can do nothing else, you can pray. If you can do many things besides, it will still be your wisdom to say, "Let us pray!" But I think I hear you object that our Lord had been praying and yet His griefs were not removed. He had prayed Himself into a bloody sweat with prayer and yet He was left unprotected, to fall into His enemies' hands. This is true and yet it is not all the truth, for He had been *strengthened*—and power for deliverance was at His disposal. He had only to press His suit to be rescued at once! The Greek word here is not the same word which would set forth ordinary prayer—the Revised Version puts it, "Do you think that I cannot *beseech* My Father?" We make a great mistake if we throw all prayer into one category and think that every form of true prayer is alike. We may pray and plead and even do this with extreme earnestness—and yet we may not use that mode of beseeching which would surely bring the blessing.

Up to now our Lord had prayed and prayed intensely, too, but there was yet a higher form of prayer to which He might have mounted if it had been proper to do so. He could have besought so that the Father *must* have answered, but He would not. O Brothers and Sisters, you have prayed a great deal, perhaps, about your trouble, but there is a reserve force of beseeching in you yet—by the aid of the Spirit of God you may pray after a higher and more prevailing rate! This is a far better weapon than a sword. I was speaking to a Brother, yesterday, about a prayer which my Lord had remarkably answered in my own case and I could not help saying to him, "But I cannot always pray in that fashion. Not only can I not so pray, but I would not dare to do so even if I could."

Moved by the Spirit of God, we sometimes pray with a power of faith which can never fail at the Mercy Seat—but without such an impulse we must not push our own wills to the front. There are many occasions upon which, if one had all the faith which could move mountains, he would most wisely show it by saying nothing beyond, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." Had our Lord chosen to do so, He still had in reserve a prayer power which would have effectually saved Him from His enemies. He did not think it right to use it— but He could have done so had He pleased.

Notice that our Lord, *felt that He could even, then, pray.* Matters had not gone too far for prayer. When can they do so? The word, "now," practically occurs twice in our version, for we get it first as, "now," and then as, "presently." It occurs only once in the original, but as its exact position in the verse cannot easily be decided. Our translators, with a singular wisdom, have placed it in both the former and the latter part of the sentence. Our Savior certainly meant—"I have come, now, to extremities. The people are far away whose favor formerly protected Me from the Pharisees and I am about to be seized by armed men. But even now I can pray to My Fa-

ther.” Prayer is an always open door. There is no predicament in which we cannot pray. If we follow the Lamb where ever He goes, we can now pray effectually unto our Father, even as He could have done.

Do I hear you say, “The fatal hour is near”? You may now pray. “But the danger is imminent!” You may now pray. If, like Jonah, you are now at the bottom of the mountains and the weeds are wrapped about your head, you may even now pray! Prayer is a weapon that is usable in every position in the hour of conflict. The Greeks had long spears and these were of grand service to the troops so long as the rank was not broken. The Romans used a short sword and that was a far more effectual weapon at close quarters. Prayer is both the long spear and the short sword. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, you may even pray between the jaws of the lion! We glory in our blessed Master, that He knew in fullness of faith that if He would bring forth His full power of prayer, He could set all Heaven on the wing. As soon as His beseeching prayer had reached the Father’s ear, immediately, like flames of fire, angels would flash death upon His adversaries!

Our Lord’s resort was not to the carnal weapon, but to the mighty engine of supplication. Behold, my Brethren, where our grand resort must always be. Look not to the arm of flesh, but to the Lord our God! Church of God, look not piteously to the State, but fly to the Mercy Seat! Church of God, look not to the ministry, but resort to the Throne of Grace! Church of God, depend not upon learned or moneyed men, but beseech God in supplicating faith! Prayer is the tower of David built for an armory. Prayer is our battle-axe and weapons of war. We say to our antagonist—“Do you think that I cannot now pray to my Father.” Let this suffice to display our Savior’s grand resource in the night of His direst distress.

II. Secondly, let me invite your attention to OUR LORD’S UNDIMINISHED POWER IN HEAVEN at the time when He seemed to have no power on earth. He says, when about to be bound and taken away to Caiaphas, “I can presently call down 12 legions of angels from the skies.” He had influence in Heaven with the Father, the great Lord of angels. He could have of the Father all that the Father possessed! Heaven would be emptied, if necessary, to satisfy the wish of the Beloved Son. The Man Christ Jesus who is about to be hung upon the Cross has such power with the Father that He has but to ask and to have. The Father would answer Him at once—“He shall *presently* send Me 12 legions of angels.” There would be no delay, no hesitation. The Father was ready to help Him, waiting to deliver Him. All Heaven was concerned about Him. All the angelic bands were waiting on the wing and Jesus had but to express the desire and instantly the garden of Gethsemane would have been as populous with shining ones as the New Jerusalem itself!

Our Lord speaks of angels that His Father would give Him, or send Him. We may interpret it that the Father would at once put at His disposal the glorious inhabitants of Heaven. Think of seraphs at the disposal of the Man of Sorrows! He is despised and rejected of men and yet angels that excel in strength are at His beck and call! Swift of wing, quick of hand and wise of thought, they are charmed to be the messengers of the

Son of Man, the servitors of Jesus. Think of this, Beloved, when you bow before the thorn-crowned head and when you gaze upon the nailed hands and feet! Remember that angels and principalities and powers—and all the ranks of pure spirits by whatever name they are named—were all at the beck and call of Jesus when He was newly risen from His agony and was about to be led away bound to the High Priest! He is our Lord and God—even at His lowest and weakest!

Jesus speaks of “twelve legions.” I suppose He mentions the number, 12, as a legion for each one of the eleven disciples and for Himself. They were only twelve and yet the innumerable hosts of Heaven would make forced marches for their rescue. A legion in the Roman army was 6,000 men at the very lowest. Twelve times 6,000 angels would come in answer to a wish from Jesus! No, He says, “more” than 12 legions! There can be no limit to the available resources of the Christ of God. Thousands of thousands would fill the air if Jesus willed it! The band that Judas led would be an insignificant squad to be swallowed up at once if the Savior would but summon His allies. Behold, dear Brothers and Sisters, the glory of our betrayed and arrested Lord! If He was such, then, what is He, now, when all power is given Him of His Father? Bear in your minds the clear idea that Jesus in His humiliation, was, nevertheless, Lord of *all things*—and especially of the unseen world and of the armies which people it. The more clearly you perceive this, the more will you admire the all-conquering, all-abjuring love which took Him to the death of the Cross.

Tarry here just a minute to remember that the angels are also, according to your measure and degree, at *your* call. You have but to pray to God and angels shall bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone. We do not think enough of these heavenly beings, yet they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those that are heirs of salvation! Like Elijah’s servant, if your eyes were opened you would see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the servants of God. Let us learn from our Master to reckon upon invisible forces! Let us not trust in that which is seen of the eyes and heard of the ears, but let us have respect to *spiritual* agencies which evade the senses, but are known to *faith*. Angels play a far greater part in the affairs of Providence than we know. God can raise us up friends on earth, but if He does not do so, He can find us abler friends in Heaven! There is no need to pluck out the sword with which to cut off men’s ears—ininitely better agencies will work for us! Have faith in God and all things shall work for your good. The angels of God think it an honor and a delight to protect the least of His children.

III. But I cannot linger, although I feel a great temptation to do so. My text is full of teaching, but a main point is the third one—OUR LORD’S PERFECT WILLINGNESS IN SUFFERING. I hope I have already brought that before you. Our Lord would be betrayed into the hands of sinners—and He would go with them willingly. He had not shunned the garden though Judas knew the place. No part of our Lord’s sufferings came upon Him by the necessity of His Nature. Neither as God nor as sinless Man was He bound to suffer. There was no necessity that Christ should endure

any of the inflictions laid upon Him, except the necessity of His fulfilling the Scriptures and performing the work of mercy which He came to do. He must die because He became the great Sacrifice for sin. But apart from that, no necessity of death was on Him. They scourged Him, but they could not have lifted the whip if He had not permitted it. He thirsted on the cruel tree, but all the springs of water in the world He makes and fills and, therefore, He needed not to have thirsted if He had not chosen to submit thereto! When He died, He did not die through the failure of His natural strength—He died because He had surrendered Himself to death as our great Propitiation. Even in His expiring moment, our Lord cried with a *loud voice*, to show that His life was still in Him. He “gave up the ghost,” freely parting with a life which He might have retained. He voluntarily surrendered His spirit to God. It was not snatched from Him by a force superior to His own will—He willingly bore our sins and willingly died as our Substitute. Let us love and bless the willing Sufferer!

Indeed, our Lord was not merely submissive to the Divine will, but, if I may use words in a paradoxical manner, I would say that He was *actively* submissive. A single prayer would have brought our Lord deliverance from His enemies—but He exercised force upon Himself and held in His natural impulse to beseech the Father. He held in abeyance that noblest of spiritual gifts, that choicest of all forms of power—the power of prayer. One would have thought that a good man might always exercise prayer to the fullest of his ability, and yet Jesus laid His hand upon His prayer power as if it had been a sword and put it back into its sheath. “He saved others, Himself He could not save.” He prayed for others, but, in this instance, for Himself He would not pray as He might have done. He would do nothing, even though it were to pray a prayer which even in the slightest degree would oppose the will of the Father! He was so perfectly submissive, yes, so eager to accomplish our salvation, that He would not pray to avoid the cruelty of His enemies and the bitterness of death! He sees it is the Father’s will and, therefore, He will not have a wish in opposition to it. “The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” Remember that He needed not to commit any wrong thing to prevent His being taken and slain—a good thing, namely, a *prayer*, would do it! But He will not pray—He has undertaken the work of Redemption and He must and will go through with it! He has such a desire for your salvation and for mine, such a thirst to honor and glorify His Father in the work which He had engaged to do, that He will not even prevent His sufferings by a prayer!

Wonderful is that question, “How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?” It is as much as to say, “Who else can drink this cup? Who else can tread the winepress of Almighty wrath? No, I must do it. I cannot lay this load upon any other shoulders.” Therefore, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. He was willing, yes, *willing from beginning to end*, to be our suffering Savior! He was willing to be born at Bethlehem, to work at Nazareth, to be mocked at Jerusalem and, at last, to die at Calvary! At any one point He could have drawn back. No constraint was upon Him but that of a love stronger than death.

I want you, dear Hearers, to draw the inference that Jesus is willing to save. A willing *Sufferer* must be a willing *Savior*. If He willingly died, He must, with equal willingness, be ready to give to us the fruit of His death! If any of you would have Jesus, you may surely have Him at once! He freely delivered Himself up for us all. If He was so willing to become a Sacrifice, how willing must He be that the glorious result of His sacrifice should be shared in by you and by all who come to God by Him! If there is unwillingness anywhere, *you* are unwilling. He rejoices to be gracious. I wish the charm of this Truth of God would affect your heart as it does mine. I love Him greatly because I see that at any moment He might have drawn back from redeeming me—and yet He would not. A single prayer would have set Him free, but He would not pray it, for He loved us so!—

***“This was compassion like a God
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity never withdrew.”***

Do not grieve Him by thinking that He is unwilling to forgive, that He is unwilling to receive a sinner such as you! Has He not said, “He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”? You will delight Him if you come to Him, whoever you may be. If you will but draw near to Him by simple trust, He will see in you the purchase of His agony—and all the merit of His death shall flow out freely to you. Come and welcome, Sinner, come!

IV. Now I must lead you, with great brevity, to notice OUR LORD’S GREAT RESPECT FOR HOLY SCRIPTURE. He can have 12 legions of angels, but, “how, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”

Notice, that our Lord believed in *the Divinity of Scripture*. He says, “How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?” But if the Scriptures are only the writings of men, there is no necessity that they should be fulfilled! If they are merely the fallible utterances of good men, I see no particular necessity that they should be fulfilled. Our Lord Jesus Christ insisted upon it that the Scriptures *must* be fulfilled—and the reason was that they are not the word of man, but the Word of God! The Scriptures were evidently the Word of God to our Lord Jesus Christ. He never trifles with them, nor differs from them, nor predicts that they will vanish. It is He that says, “Think not that I have come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all is fulfilled.”

He believed in the Divine origin of the Scriptures and also in *their infallibility*. “How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” He does not hint that the Scriptures might be a little mistaken. He does not argue, “I will bring the 12 legions of angels down to deliver Myself and it is no matter to Me that then the Scriptures will be made void.” Oh, no! The Scriptures must be true and they must be fulfilled and, therefore, He must be betrayed into the hands of men! He settles it as a matter of necessity that Scripture must infallibly be verified, even to its jots and tittles.

See, Brothers and Sisters, *the priceless worth* of Scripture in the estimation of our Lord. In effect He says, "I will die rather than any Scripture shall be unfulfilled. I will go to the Cross rather than any one Word of God should not be carried out." The Prophet Zechariah has written, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." The fulfillment of that prophecy fell due *that night* and the Son of God was prepared to be smitten as the Shepherd of the sheep, rather than the Word of the Father should fall to the ground. Skin for skin, yes—all that a man has will he give for his life—and Jesus would give His life for the Scriptures! Brethren, it were worth while for the whole Church to die rather than any Truth of Scripture should be given up! Let all our thousands be consumed upon the altar as one great holocaust sooner than the Scriptures should be dishonored. The Word of the Lord must live and prevail whether we die or not. Our Lord teaches us to prize it beyond liberty or life.

The force of our Lord's language goes further. Let me repeat the words and then enlarge upon them. "How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Holy Scripture is the transcript of the secret decree of God. We do not believe in fate—a blind, hard thing. We believe in predestination—the settled purpose of a wise and loving Father. The Book of Fate is cruel reading, but the book of Divine Fore-ordination is full of charming sentences and those lines out of it which are written in the Scriptures we joyfully choose to have fulfilled. It is the will of our Father who is in Heaven which settles the things which must be and, because of this, we cheerfully yield ourselves up to predestination. Once being assured that God has appointed it, we have no struggles, no, we will not even breathe a wish to have the matter otherwise! Let the will of the Father be the supreme Law. It ought to be so.

We find a depth of comfort in saying, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him." Now, the prophecies of Scripture were to the Lord Christ the Revelation of the predestination of God so that it must be—and He cheerfully, joyfully, even without a prayer against it, gives Himself up at once to that which must be because God has appointed it. If any of you do not believe in the predestination of God, you will, probably, in some hour of depression, ascribe your sorrows to a cruel fate. The human mind, somehow or other, is driven, at last, to this decision, that some things are beyond the control of man and of his will and that these are fixed by necessity. How much better to see that God has fixed them! There is the wheel revolving surely and unalterably—would it not comfort you to believe that it is full of eyes and that it is moving according to the settled purpose of the Lord? That man who says, "It is my Father's will" is the happy man! Predestination is as sure and as certain as fate, but there is at the back of it a living and loving Personality, ordering all things. To this we cheerfully yield ourselves.

Beloved, let us value Scripture as much as Christ did! I was going to say, let us value it even more, for if our Lord valued unfulfilled Scripture—which was but a shell till He became its kernel—how much more should

we value it, to whom the Scriptures are fulfilled, in a large degree, because the Christ has suffered and has done even as it was written of Him by the Prophets of God!

Time flies so quickly that I must pass on. You perceive that I have a pregnant text—it is full of living instruction to those who desire to learn. God help us to receive with joy all its holy teaching!

V. But I must come to the last point. We will consider OUR LORD'S LESSONS TO EACH ONE OF US in this text.

The first lesson is this—Desire no other forces for God's work than God, Himself, ordains to use. Do not desire that the Government should come to your rescue to support your Church. Do not desire that the charms of eloquence should be given to ministers, that they may, therefore, command listening ears and so maintain the faith by the wisdom of words. Do not ask that learning and rank and prestige may come upon the side of Christianity and so religion may become respectable and influential. Means that God has not chosen to use should not be looked upon by us with covetous eyes. Has He not said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts"? Jesus has all those squadrons of angels at His disposal—do you wish that He would use them? What a glorious vision is before us as we see their serried ranks and mark their glittering splendor! But Jesus bids them stand still and see the salvation of God worked out without their interposition!

He has not put the new world in subjection to them. They must not meddle with the redemption of men. The conflict for truth is to be a spiritual battle between man and the serpent—nothing but spiritual force is to be employed—and that not by angels, but by men! Man must overcome sin by spiritual means only. Put up the sword, Peter! Jesus does not need its keen edge. Keep your swords in your sheaths, you seraphim! Jesus does not need even your blades of celestial temper. His weakness has done more than human or angelic strength! His suffering and death have done the deed which all the hierarchy of angels could never have accomplished! The Truth of God is to win the fight. The Spirit is to subdue the powers of evil. Brothers and Sisters, do not ask anybody else to interfere. Let us have this fight out on the ground which God has chosen. Let us know that God is Omnipotent in the realm of mind and that by His truth and Spirit He will overcome! He holds back all forces other than those of argument, persuasion and enlightenment by His Spirit—do not let us even *wish* to put our hands to any force other than what He ordains to use.

And, next, take care that when other forces are within reach, you do not use them for the promotion of the heavenly Kingdom. When you are in argument for the Truth of God, do not grow angry, for this would be to fight the Lord's battles with the devil's weapons. Do not wish to oppress a person whose views are erroneous or even blasphemous. The use of bribes for the propagation of opinions is evil and the refusal of charities to those who differ from us in sentiment is detestable! Let no threat escape your lips, nor bribe pollute your hands. It is not thus that the battles of the Truths of God are to be fought! If you ever feel inclined to shut a man's mouth by wishing him banishment, or sickness, or any sort of ill, be

grieved with yourself that so unchristly a thought should have entered your head! Desire only good for the most perverse of men. Fighting for Christ would be wounding Him sorely. The French king heard of the cruelties perpetrated upon our Lord and he exclaimed, "Oh, if I had been there with a troop of my guards, I would have cut the villains in pieces!"

Yes, but Jesus did not need the King of France nor his guards—He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them! The Lord Jesus desires you, my Brothers and Sisters, to fight for Him by your *faith*, by your holy *life*, by your confidence in the Truth of God, by your reliance upon the Spirit of God! Whenever your hands begin to itch for the sword, then may you hear Him say, "Put up your sword into its sheath." He will conquer by love and by love, alone! If at this present moment I could take this Church and endow it with all the wealth of the Establishment and gather into its midst all the wisdom and talent and eloquence which now adorns society. And if I could do this by one single *prayer*, I would long hesitate to offer the petition. These might prove idols and provoke the living God to jealousy! Infinitely better for us to be poor and weak and devoid of that which is highly esteemed among men! And then to be baptized into the Holy Spirit, rather than to become strong and be left of our God. We shall war this warfare with no unsanctified weapons, with no instrument other than God appoints! Speaking the Truth in the power of the Spirit of God, we are not afraid of the result. Surely this is what Christ means—"I could pray to My Father and receive at once a bodyguard of angels, but I will do nothing of the kind, for by other means than these must My Kingdom come."

And the next lesson is—Never attempt to escape suffering at the expense of the Truth of God—"How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?" Christ says, "I can escape being taken, bound and made a felon of—but then how are the Scriptures to be fulfilled?" Would you like to be, throughout life, screened from all affliction? I think I hear a great many say, "I would." Would you? Would you be always free from sickness, poverty, care, bereavement, slander, persecution? How, then, could that Word of God be true, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction"! What would that text mean, "What son is he whom the Father chastens not"? Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple." Are you to be an exception to the rule? Oh, do not kick against suffering, for in so doing you may be fighting against God! When Peter drew his sword, he was unconsciously fighting to prevent our redemption! When we struggle against tribulation or persecution, we may be warring against untold benefit. Do you desire to ride through the world like princes? Do not desire such a dangerous fate, for how, then, could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that the disciple is not above his Lord? Bow your spirit before the majesty of Scripture and patiently endure all things for the elect's sake.

Again, never tremble when force is on the wrong side. You see they are coming—Pharisees and priests and the *posse comitatus* sent by the authorities to arrest the Savior—but He is not afraid. Why should He be? He could command 12 legions of angels to beat off the foe! The man who knows he has a reserve behind him may walk into an ambush without

fear. The multitude think that there stands before them a mere Man—a feeble Man, strangely red as with bloody sweat. Ah, they know neither Him nor His Father! Let Him give a whistle and from behind the olives of the grove—and from the walls of the garden and from every stone of the Mount of Olives would spring up warriors mightier than those of Caesar—valiant ones, before whom armies would be consumed! *One* of these angels of God slew of Sennacherib’s army, 185,000 men in a single night! Another smote all the first-born of Egypt! Think, then, what more than 12 legions of them could accomplish!

Brothers and Sisters, all these holy, heavenly beings are on our side! “Oh, but there are so many against us!” Yes I know there are, but more are they that are *for* us! All the myriads of Heaven are our allies. See you not the legions waiting for the summons? Who wants to give the word of command till our great Commander-in-Chief decides that the hour is come? Let us patiently wait till He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God! Then will the reserves pour forth from Heaven’s gate and all the holy angels shall swell the pomp of the great appearing! Till that moment, wait! In your patience possess your souls! The Lord Jesus waited. His angels waited. His Father waited. They are all *still* waiting! Heaven’s long-suffering still runs like a silver thread through the centuries. Jesus will come with His angels in all the Glory of the Father, but dream not that He must come tomorrow or else be charged with being slack concerning His promise. Desire that He may come in your lifetime and look for Him, but if He tarries, be not dismayed.

If He tarries for another century do not be weary. If another thousand years should intervene between us and the bright millennial day, yet stand fast, each man, in his place, fearing nothing, but setting up your banners in the name of the Lord. “The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.” We have no lack of strength, it is only that God wills that it be not put forth and that our weakness for the present should be the instrument of His most majestic conquests. Lord, we are content to trust in You and wait patiently for You, but leave us not, we beseech You. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
 Luke 22:31-53; Matthew 26:47-54.
 HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—307, 291, 298.**

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NEVERTHELESS, HEREAFTER

NO. 1364

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

***“Jesus said unto him, You have said (or said so), nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven.”
Matthew 26:64.***

Our Lord, before His enemies, was silent in His own defense, but He faithfully warned and boldly avowed the Truth of God. His was the silence of patience, not of indifference—of courage, not of cowardice. It is written that “before Pontius Pilate He witnessed a good confession,” and that statement may, also, be well applied to His utterances before Caiaphas, for there He was not silent when it came to confession of necessary Truths of God. If you will read the chapter now open before us, you will notice that the High Priest commanded Him to speak the truth, saying, “Are You the Christ, the Son of God?” to which He replied at once, “You have said it.”

He did not disown His Messiahship. He claimed to be the Promised One, the Messenger from Heaven, Christ the Anointed of the Most High. Neither did He, for a moment, disavow His personal Deity! He acknowledged and confessed that He was the Son of God. How could He be silent when such a vital point as to His Person was in question? He did not hold them in suspense, but openly declared His Godhead by saying, “I am,” for so are His words reported by one of the Evangelists.

He then proceeded to reveal the solemn fact that He would soon sit at the right hand of God, even the Father. In the words of our text He declared that those who were condemning Him would see Him glorified and, in due time, would stand at His bar when He would come upon the clouds of Heaven to judge the quick and dead according to our Gospel. See, then, dear Brothers and Sisters, in a few words, the great Truths of our holy religion clearly set forth by our Lord Jesus! He claimed to be the Christ of God and the Son of God! And His brief statement, by implication, speaks of Jesus dead, buried and risen, and now enthroned at the right hand of God in the power of the Father, and Jesus soon to come in His glorious Second Advent to judge the world in righteousness.

Our Lord’s confession was very full and, happy is he who heartily embraces it! I intend to dwell upon three catch-words around which there gathers a world of encouraging and solemn thought. The first is, “nevertheless,” and the second is, “hereafter.” What the *third* is you shall know later, but not just now.

I. “NEVERTHELESS,” said Christ, “hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of

Heaven.” This, then, is the string from which we must draw forth music. “Nevertheless,” which, being interpreted by being pulled in pieces, signifies that the Truth of God is never-the-less sure because of opposition. “Nevertheless,” not one atom the less is the Truth of God certain to prevail for all that you say or do against it. Jesus will surely sit at the right hand of the Power and come in due season, upon the clouds of Heaven.

Let us dwell for a little time upon this important fact, that the Truth of God is none the less certain because of the opposition of men and devils. Observe, first, that the Savior’s condition when He made use of that, “nevertheless,” was no proof that He would not rise to power. There He stood, a poor, defenseless, emaciated Man, newly led from the night watch in the garden and its bloody sweat. He was a spectacle of meek and lowly suffering led by His captors like a lamb to the slaughter, with none to speak a word on His behalf. He was surrounded by those who hated Him and He was forsaken by His friends.

Scribes, Pharisees, priests were there, all thirsting for His heart’s blood. A lamb in the midst of wolves is but a faint picture of Christ standing there before the Sanhedrim in patient silence. And yet, though His present condition seemed to contradict it, He who was the faithful and true Witness spoke truly when He testified, “Nevertheless, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven. Despite My present shame and suffering, so it shall be.” He gives Himself that lowly, humble title of Son of Man, as best indicating Himself in His condition at that time. “Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven.”

The humiliation of Christ did not in the least endanger His later Glory. His sufferings, His shame, His death, even, did not render it any the less certain that He would climb to His Throne. Nor did the caviling of His opposers keep Him, for one instant, from His place of honor. I want you to remember this, for there is a great principle in it. There are many poor weak-minded people who cannot take sides with a persecuted Truth of God, nor accept anything but the most popular and fashionable form of religion. They dare not be with the Truth of God when men spit in its face, or buffet it, or pour contempt upon it—but it will be victorious, none the less, although cowards desert it and false-hearted men oppose it.

If it stands alone at the bar of the world, a culprit to be condemned—if it receives nothing but a universal hiss of human execration—yet, if it is the Truth of God, it may be condemned, but it will be justified! It may be buried, but it will rise! It may be rejected, but it will be glorified, even as it has happened to the Christ of God! Who would be ashamed of the Truth of God at any time when he knows the preciousness of it? Who will tremble because of present opposition when he foresees what will yet come of it? What a sublime spectacle—the Man of Sorrows standing before His cruel judges in all manner of weakness and poverty and contempt—and at the same time heir of all things and appointed, nevertheless, to sit at the right hand of the Power and to come on the clouds of Heaven!

Nor may we think only of His condition as a despised and rejected Man, for He was, in His trial, charged with grievous wrong and about to be condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities. The scribes, most learned in the Law, declared that He blasphemed. And the priests, familiar with the ordinances of God, exclaimed, "Away with Him! It is not meet that He should live." The High Priest, himself, gave judgment that it was expedient for Him to be put to death. It is a very serious thing, is it not, when all the *ecclesiastical* authorities are against you—when they are unanimous in your condemnation? Yes, verily, and it may cause great searching of heart, for no peaceable man desires to be opposed to constituted authority, but would sooner have the good word of those who sit in Moses' seat.

But this was not the last time in which the established ecclesiastical authorities were wrong, grievously wrong! They were condemning the innocent and blaspheming the Lord from Heaven! Nor, I say, was this the last time in which the miter and the gown have been upon the side of cruel wrong—yet this did not un-Christ our Savior or rob Him of His Deity or His Throne! On the same principle, human history brings before us abundance of instances in which, nevertheless, though scribes, priests, bishops, pontiffs and popes condemned the Truth of God, it was just as sure and became as triumphant as it had a right to do! There stands the one lone Man and there are all the great ones around Him—men of authority and reputation, sanctity and pomp—and they unanimously deny that He can ever sit at the right hand of God!

"But, nevertheless," He says, "hereafter you shall see the Son of Man at the right hand of the Power." He spoke the Truth of God! His declaration has been most gloriously fulfilled up to now. Even thus, over the neck of clergy, priests, pontiffs, popes, His triumphant chariot of salvation shall still roll and the Truth of God—the simple Truth of His glorious Gospel—shall, despite them all, win the day and reign over the sons of men! Nor is this all. Our Lord, at that time, was surrounded by those who were in possession of earthly power. The priests had the ear of Pilate and Pilate had the Roman legions at his back. Who could resist such a combination of force? Craft and authority form a dreadful league!

One disciple had drawn a sword, but just at the time when our Lord stood before the Sanhedrim that one chivalrous warrior had denied Him so that all the physical force was on the other side. As a Man He was helpless when He stood bound before the council. I am not speaking, now of that almighty power which faith knows to have dwelt in Him—but as to *human* power, He was weakness at its weakest. His cause seemed at the lowest ebb. He had none to stand up in His defense—no, none to speak a word on His behalf, for, "Who shall declare His generation?" And yet, for all that, and even *because* of it, He did rise to sit at the right hand of the Power and He shall come on the clouds of Heaven!

So if it ever comes to pass, my Brother, that you should be the lone advocate of a forgotten Truth of God—if your Master should ever put you, in all your weakness and infirmity, in the midst of the mighty and the strong, do not fear or tremble, for the possession of power is but a trifle

compared with the possession of the Truth of God! And he that has the right may safely defy the might of the world. He shall win and conquer, let the princes and powers that betake to themselves what force and craft they choose. Jesus, nevertheless, wins, though the power is all against Him—and so shall the Truth which He represents—for it wears about it a hidden power which baffles all opponents.

Nor was it merely all the power—there was a great deal of furious rage against Him. That Caiaphas, how he spoke to Him! “I command you,” he said, “by God.” And after he has spoken, he tears his garments in indignation! His anger burns like fire, but the Christ is very quiet. The Lamb of God is still and, looking His adversary in the face, He says, “Nevertheless, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven.” He was strong and, therefore, calm. He was confident and, therefore, peaceful. He was fully assured and, therefore, patient. He could wait, for He believed—and His prophecy was true, notwithstanding the High Priest’s rage!

So, if we meet with any man at any time who gnashes his teeth at us, who foams in passion, who dips his pen into the bitterest gall to write down our holy faith, who is indefatigable in his violent efforts against the Christ of God—what does it matter? “Nevertheless, you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power.” “Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion,” said Jehovah—and He declared the decree though the heathen raged and the people imagined a vain thing! Well may He smile at rage who is so sure of victory!

Yes, but it was not merely *one* person that raged! The people of Jerusalem and the multitudes that had come up to the Passover, bribed and egged on by the priests and the Pharisees, were all hot after our Savior’s death, clamoring, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” And yet there He stood and, as He heard their tumult and anticipated its growing demand for His blood, He lost not His confidence, but He calmly said, “Nevertheless, hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power.” Behold His perfect inward peace and see how He manifests it by a bold confession in the very teeth of all His adversaries! “You may be as many as the waves of the sea and you may foam and rage like the ocean in a storm, but the purpose and the decree of God will, nevertheless, be fulfilled. You cannot delay or hinder it one whit. You, to your everlasting confusion, shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power.”

Beloved, you know that after He had said this, our Lord was taken before Herod and Pilate and at last was put to death. He knew all this, foreseeing it most clearly, and yet it did not make Him hesitate. He knew that He would be crucified and that His enemies would boast that there was the end of Him and of His Kingdom. He knew that His disciples would hide themselves in holes and corners and that nobody would dare to say a word concerning the Man of Nazareth. He foreknew that the name of the Nazarene would be bandied about amid general opprobrium and Jerusalem would say, “That cause is crushed out! That egg of mischief has been broken.”

But He, foreseeing all that and more, declared, “Nevertheless, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven.” I cannot help harping upon the text—I hope I shall not weary you with it, for to me it is music! I do not like running over the word, “nevertheless,” too quickly. I like to draw it out and repeat it as, “never-the-less.” No, not one jot the less will His victory come! Not in the least degree was His royal power endangered or His sure triumph imperiled! Not even by His death and the consequent scattering of His disciples was the least hazard occasioned! But, indeed, all these things worked together for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose concerning Him! The lower He stooped the more sure He was to rise ultimately to His Glory!

And now, Beloved, it is even so. The man, Christ Jesus, was despised and rejected of men, but at this moment He sits at the right hand of the Power! All power is given to Him in Heaven and in earth and, therefore, does He bid us proclaim His Gospel. There is not an angel but does His bidding. Providence is arranged by His will, for, “the government shall be upon His shoulders and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Atoning work is done and, therefore, He sits. His work is well done and, therefore, He sits at the right hand of God, in the place of honor and dignity!

Before long He will come. We cannot tell when. He may come tonight, or He may tarry many a weary year—but He will surely come in Person, for did not the angels say to the men of Galilee, as they stood gazing into Heaven—“This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven”? He shall come with blast of trumpet and with thousands of angelic beings, all doing Him honor! He shall come with flaming fire to visit the trembling earth. He shall come with all His Father’s glories! Kings and princes shall stand before Him and He shall gloriously reign among His ancients. The tumults of the people and the plotting of their rulers shall be remembered in that day, but it shall be to their own eternal shame!

His Throne shall be none the less resplendent. I beg you to learn the spiritual lesson which comes out of this. I have already indicated it and it is this—never be afraid to stand by a losing cause. Never hesitate to stand alone when the Truth of God is to be confessed. Never be overawed by sacerdotalism, or daunted by rage, or swayed by multitudes. Unpopular Truth is, nevertheless, eternal—and that doctrine which is ridiculed and cast out as evil, today, shall bring immortal honor to the man who dares to stand by its side and share its humiliation! Oh, for the love of the Christ who thus threw a, “nevertheless,” at the feet of His foes, follow Him wherever He goes. Through flood or flame, in loneliness, in shame, in obloquy, in reproach—follow Him! If it is outside the camp, follow Him!

If every step shall cost you abuse and scorn, still follow! Yes, to prison and to death still follow Him, for as surely as He sits at the right hand of the Power, so shall those who love Him and have been faithful to His Truth sit down upon His Throne with Him. His overcoming and en-

thronement are the pledges of the victory both of the Truth of God and of those who courageously espouse it. Thus have we sounded our first great bell—“NEVERTHELESS.” Let its music ring through the place and charm each opened ear!

II. The second bell is “HEREAFTER.” “Nevertheless, hereafter.” I like the sound of those two bells together! Let us ring them again. “Nevertheless, hereafter.” The hereafter seems, in brief, to say to me that the main glory of Christ lies in the future. Not today, perhaps, nor tomorrow will the issue be seen! Have patience! Wait a while! “Your strength is to sit still.” God has great leisure, for He is the Eternal. Let us partake in His restfulness while we sing, “Nevertheless, hereafter.” O for the Holy Spirit’s power at this moment, for it is written, “He will show you things to come.”

It is one great reason why the unregenerate sons of men cannot see any Glory in the kingdom of Christ because to them it is such a future thing. Its hopes look into eternity! Its great rewards are beyond this present time and state—and the most of mortal eyes cannot see so far. Unregenerate men are like Passion in John Bunyan’s parable—they will have all their good things *now*—and so they have their toys and break them and they are gone! And then their hereafter is a dreary outlook of regret and woe. Men of faith know better and, like Patience in the same parable, they choose to have their best things *last*, for that which comes last, lasts on forever. He whose turn comes last has none to follow him and his good things shall never be taken away from him.

The poor, almost-blind world cannot see beyond its own nose and so it must have its joys and riches at once. To them, speedy victory is the main thing and the Truth of God is nothing. Is the cause triumphant today? Off with your caps and throw them up and cry, “Hurrah!” no matter that it is the cause of a lie! Do the multitudes incline that way? Then, Sir, if you are worldly-wise, run with them! Pull off the palm branches, strew the roads and shout, “Hosanna to the hero of the hour!” though he is a despot or a deceiver. But not so—not so with those who are taught of God. They take eternity into their estimate and they are content to go with the despised and rejected of men for the present, because they recollect the hereafter! They can swim against the flood for they know where the course of this world is tending.

O blind world, if you were wise, you would amend your line of action and begin to think of the hereafter, too, for the hereafter will soon be here! What a short time it is since Adam walked in the Garden of Eden! Compared with the ages of the rocks, compared with the history of the stars, compared with the life of God it is as the winking of an eye, or as a flash of lightning! One has but to grow a little older and years become shorter and time appears to travel at a much faster rate than before—so that a year rushes by you like a meteor across the midnight heavens. When we are older, still, and look down from the serene abodes above, I suppose that centuries and ages will be as moments to us, for to the Lord they are as nothing!

Suppose the coming of the Lord should be put off for 10,000 years—it is but supposition—but if it were, 10,000 years will soon be gone and when the august spectacle of Christ coming on the clouds of Heaven shall be seen, the delay will be as though but an hour had intervened. The space between now and then, or rather the space between what is “now,” at this time, and what will be, “now,” at the last—how short a span it is! Men will look back from the eternal world and say, “How could we have thought so much of the fleeting life we have lived on earth when it was to be followed by eternity? What fools we were to make such count of momentary, transient pleasures when now the things which are not seen and are eternal, have come upon us and we are unprepared for them!”

Christ will soon come and, at the longest, when He comes, the interval between today and then will seem to be just nothing at all—so that, “hereafter,” is not as the sound of a far-off cannon, nor as the boom of distant thunder—but it is the rolling of rushing wheels hastening to overtake us. “Hereafter!” “Hereafter!” Oh, when that hereafter comes, how overwhelming it will be to Jesus’ foes! *Now* where is Caiaphas? Will he now command the Lord to speak? Now, you priests, lift up your haughty heads! Utter a sentence against Him, now! There sits your Victim upon the clouds of Heaven! Say *now* that He blasphemes and hold up your torn rags and condemn Him again! But where is Caiaphas? He hides his guilty head! He is utterly confused and begs the mountains to fall upon him!

And, oh, you men of the Sanhedrim who sat at midnight and glared at your innocent Victim with your cold, cruel eyes and afterwards gloated over the death of your martyred Prince—where are you now—now that He has come with all His Father’s power to judge you? They are asking the hills to open their caverns and conceal them! The rocks deny them shelter. And where, on that day, will you be, you who deny His Deity, who profane His Sabbaths, who slander His people and denounce His Gospel—oh, where will you be in that terrible day which as surely comes as comes tomorrow’s rising sun?

Oh, Sirs, consider this word—“Hereafter!” I would gladly whisper it in the ears of the sinner fascinated by his pleasures. Come near and let me do so—“Hereafter!” I would make it the alarm of the sleeping transgressor who is dreaming of peace and safety while he is slumbering himself into Hell. Hereafter! Hereafter! Oh, yes, you may suck the sweet and eat the fat, and drink as you will, but hereafter! Hereafter! What will you do hereafter, when that which is sweet in the mouth shall be as gall in the belly and when the pleasures of today shall be a mixture of misery for *eternity*? Hereafter! Oh, hereafter! Now, O Divine Spirit, be pleased to open careless ears that they may listen to this prophetic sound. To the Lord’s own people there is no sound more sweet than that of, “hereafter.” “Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven.”

Welcome, welcome, welcome, welcome, Redeemer, Savior! Welcome in every Character in which You come! What acclamations and congratulations will go up from the countless myriads of His redeemed, when first the ensigns of the Son of Man shall be seen in the heavens! On one of

earth's mornings, when the children of men shall be "marrying and giving in marriage," while saints shall be looking for His appearing, they shall, first of all, perceive that He is actually coming! Long desired and come at last! Then the trumpet shall be heard, waxing exceedingly loud and long—ringing out a sweeter note to the true Israel than ever trumpet heard on the morn of Jubilee!

What delight! What lifting up of gladsome eyes! What floods of bliss! Oppression is over! The idols are broken! The reign of sin is ended! Darkness shall no more cover the nations! He comes! He comes! Glory be to His name!—

***“Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”***

O blessed day of acclamations! Heaven's vault shall be opened with them when His saints shall see for themselves what was reserved for Him and for them in the "hereafter!" "You shall see the Son of Man at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven." That word, "hereafter," my Brothers and Sisters, is, at this moment, our grandest solace, and I wish to bring it before you in that light. Have you been misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered because of fidelity to the right and to the true? Do not trouble yourself! Vindicate not your own cause. Refer it to the King's Bench above and say, "Hereafter, hereafter."

Have you been accused of being mad, fanatical and I know not what, besides, because to you, party is nothing, ecclesiastical pride nothing and the stamp of popular opinion nothing? Have you been ridiculed because you are determined to follow the steps of your Master and believe the true and do the right? Then be in no hurry—the sure hereafter will settle the debate! Or are you very poor, very sick and very sad? But are you Christ's own? Do you trust Him? Do you live in fellowship with Him? Then the hope of the hereafter may well take the sting out of the present. It is not for long that you shall suffer—the Glory will soon be revealed in you and around you. There are streets of gold symbolic of your future wealth and there are celestial harps emblematical of your eternal joy! You shall have a white robe, soon, and the dusty garments of toil shall be laid aside forever! You shall have a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of Glory and, therefore, the light affliction which is but for a moment may well be endured with patience.

Have you labored in vain? Have you tried to bring souls to Christ and had no recompense? Fret not, but remember the hereafter! Many a laborer, unsuccessful in the eyes of man, will receive a, "Well done, good and faithful servant," from his Master on that day! Set little store by anything you have and wish but lightly for anything that you have not. Let the present be to you as it really is—a dream, an empty show—and project your soul into the hereafter which is solid and enduring! Oh, what music there is in the hereafter!—what delight to a true child of God! "Nevertheless, hereafter." I feel half inclined to have done and to send you out, singing all the way, "Nevertheless, hereafter." The people outside might not

understand you, but it would be a perfectly justifiable enthusiasm of delight!

III. Now, thirdly. Where am I to look for my third bell? Where is the third word I spoke of? In truth, I cannot find it in the version which we commonly use and there is no third word in the original. And yet the word I am thinking of is there. The truth is that the second word, which has been rendered by, "hereafter," bears another meaning. I will give you what the Greek critics say. As nearly as can be, the meaning of the word is, "FROM NOW ON." "From now on you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven." "From now on."

That is another word and the teaching gathered out of it is this—even in the *present* there are tokens of the victory of Christ. "But," says one, "did Christ say to those priests that from now on they should see Him sitting at the right hand of the Power?" Yes, yes, that is what He meant. He meant, "You look at Me and scorn Me, but, Sirs, you shall not be able to do this any longer, for from now on you shall see for yourselves that I am not what I appear to be, but that I sit at the right hand of the Power. From now on, and as long as you live, you shall know that galling Truth of God."

And did that come true? Yes, it came true that night—for when the Savior died, there came a messenger unto the members of the Sanhedrim and others and told them that the veil of the Temple was torn in two! In that moment, when the Man of Nazareth died, that splendid piece of tapestry seemed to tear itself asunder from end to end as if in horror at the death of its Lord! The members of that council, when they met each other in the street and spoke of the news, must have been dumb in sheer astonishment. And while they looked upon each other, the earth they stood upon reeled and reeled again—and they could scarcely stand up!

This was not the first wonder which had startled them that day, for the sun had been beclouded in unnatural darkness. At midday the sun had ceased to shine and now the earth ceases to be stable. Lo, also, in the darkness of the evening, certain members of this council saw the sheeted dead, newly arisen from their sepulchers, walking through the streets! The rocks split, the earth shook, the graves opened and the dead came forth and appeared unto many! Thus, early, they began to know that the Man of Nazareth was at the right hand of the Power! Early on the third morning, when they were met together, there came a messenger in hot haste who said, "The stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulcher. Remember that you placed a watch and that you set your seal upon the stone! But early this morning the soldiers say that He came forth! He rose, that dreaded One whom we put to death and at the sight of Him the keepers did quake and became as dead men."

Now, these men—these members of the Sanhedrim—believed that fact! We have clear evidence that they did, for they bribed the soldiers and said, "Say, 'His disciples came and stole away His body while we slept.'" Then did the word, also, continue to be fulfilled and they plainly saw that Je-

sus, whom they had condemned, was at the right hand of the Power! A few weeks passed over their heads and, lo, there was a noise in the city and an extraordinary excitement. Peter had been preaching and 3,000 persons in one day had been baptized into the name which they dreaded so much! And they were told and heard it on the best of evidence, that there had been a wonderful manifestation of the Holy Spirit, such as was spoken of in the Book of the Prophet Joel. Then they must have looked one another in the face and stroked their beards and bit their lips, and said to one another, "Did He not say that we should see Him at the right hand of the Power?"

They had often to remember that word and, again and again, to see its truth, for when Peter and John were brought before them it was proven that they had restored a lame man. And these two unlearned and ignorant men told them that it was through the name of Jesus that the lame were made to leap and walk! Day after day they were continuously obliged, against their will, to see, in the spread of the religion of the Man whom they had put to death, that His name had power about it such as they could not possibly imagine or resist. Lo, one of their number, Paul, had been converted and was preaching the faith which he had endeavored to destroy! They must have been much amazed and chagrined, as in this, also, they discerned that the Son of Man was at the right hand of the Power!

Yes, you say, but did they see Him coming on the clouds of Heaven? I answer, yes. From now on they saw that, also, for they began to have upon their minds forebodings and dark thoughts. The Jewish nation was in an ill state. The people were getting disquieted. Imposters were rising and the leading men of the nation trembled as to what the Romans would do. At last there came an outbreak and the imperial power was defied—and then, such of them as still survived, began to realize the words of Christ. When they saw the comet in the sky and the drawn sword hanging over Jerusalem. When they saw the city compassed about with armies. When they watched the legions dig the trenches and throw up the earthworks and surround the devoted city while all around was fire and famine—when from every tower upon the walls they could see one of their own countrymen nailed to a cross, for the Romans put the Jews to death by crucifixion by hundreds and even by thousands—then they must have begun to see the coming of the Son of Man!

And when, at last, the city was destroyed and a firebrand was hurled even into the holy place and the Jews were banished and sold for slaves till they would not fetch the price of a pair of shoes, so many were they and so greatly despised—then they saw the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven to take vengeance on His adversaries. Read the text as meaning, "*From now on* you shall see the Son of Man at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of Heaven." It is not the full meaning of the passage, but it is a *part* of that meaning, beyond all question. Beloved, even at the present time we may see the tokens of the power of Christ among us! Only tokens, mark you! I do not want to take you off

from the hereafter, but from now on and even now there are tokens of the power of our Lord Jesus!

Look at revivals. When they break out in the Church, how they stagger all the adversaries of Christ! They said—yes, they *dared* to say—that the Gospel had lost all its power! They dared to say that since the days of Whitefield and Wesley there was no hope of the masses being stirred! Yet when they see, even in this house, from Sabbath to Sabbath, vast crowds listening to the Word of God and, when, some few months ago no house could be built that was large enough to accommodate the thronging masses who sought to hear our American Brothers, then were they smitten in the mouth, so that they could speak no more, for it was manifested that the Lord Christ still lives and that, if His Gospel is fully and simply preached, it will still draw all men to Him and souls will be saved, and that not a few!

And look in the brave world outside, apart from religion—what influences there are abroad which are due to the power of the Christ of God! Would you have believed it, 20 years ago, that in America there should be no more slaves? That united Italy should be free of her despots? Could you have believed that the Pope would be pulling about his being a prisoner in the Vatican and that the power of antichrist would be shorn away? No, the wonders of history, even within the last few years, are enough to show us that Christ is at the right hand of the Power! Come what will in the future, mark this, my Brothers and Sisters, it will never be possible to uphold tyranny and oppression long, for the Lord Christ is to the front for the poor and needy of the earth.

O despots, you may do what you will and use your craft and policy if you please, but all over this world the Lord Jesus Christ has lifted up a plummet and set up a righteous standard! He will draw a straight line and it will pass through everything that offends, that it may be cut off. And it will, also, pass over all that is good and lovely and right and just and true—and these shall be established in His reign among men. I believe in the reign of Christ! Kings, sultans, czars— these are puppets, all of them—and your parliaments and congresses are but vanity of vanity! God is great and none but He! Jesus is the King in all the earth! He is the Man, the King of men, the Lord of all. Glory be to His name! As the years progress we shall see it more and more, for He has had long patience, but He is beginning, now, to cut the work short in righteousness.

He is baring His right arm for war and that which denies manhood's just claims—that which treads upon the neck of the humanity which Christ has taken—that which stands against His Throne and dominion must be broken in pieces like a potter's vessel, for the scepter in His hand is a rod of iron and He will use it mightily! The Christ, then, still gives tokens of His power. They are only tokens, but they are sure ones, even as the dawn does not deceive us, though it is not the noontide. And oh, let me say, there are some of you present who are enemies of Christ, but you, also, must have perceived some tokens of His power! I have seen Him shake the infidel by the Gospel till he has said, "You almost persuade me

to be a Christian.” He has taken him in the silence of the night and probed his conscience—in His gentleness, love and pity He has led the man to *think*—and though he has not altogether yielded, yet he has felt that there is a solemn power about the Christ of God.

Some of the worst of men have been forced to acknowledge that Christ has conquered them. Remember how Julian, as he died, said, “The Nazarene has overcome me! The Nazarene has overcome me”? May you not have to say that in the article of death, but, oh, that you may say it now! May His love overpower you! May His compassion win you and you will see in your own salvation tokens of His power! But I must have done, for my time has fled. But I desire to add that it will be a blessed thing if everyone here, becoming a Believer in Jesus, shall, from now on see Him at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of Heaven! Would to God we could live with that vision in full view, believing Jesus to be at the right hand of the Power, trusting Him and resting in Him!

Because we know Him to be the Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, we ought never to have a doubt when we are doing what is right. We ought never to have a doubt when we are following Jesus, for He is more than a conqueror and so shall His followers be! Let us go on courageously, trusting in Him as a child trusts in his father, for He is mighty upon whom we repose our confidence. Let us, also, keep before our mind’s eyes, the fact that He is coming. Be not as the virgins that fell asleep! Even now my ears seem to hear the midnight cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom comes!” Arise, you virgins, sleep no longer, for the Bridegroom is near!

As for you, you *foolish* virgins, God grant that there may yet be time enough left to awake even you, that you may yet have oil for your lamps before He comes. He comes, we know not when, but He comes quickly! Be ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes. Be as men that watch for their Lord and as servants that are ready to give in their account because the master of the house is near. In that spirit let us come to the Lord’s Table, as often as we gather there, for He has said to us, “Do this until I come.” Outward ordinances will cease when He comes, for we shall need no memorial when the Lord, Himself, will be among us!

Let us here pledge Him in the cup, that He is coming, we do verily believe! That He is coming, we do joyfully proclaim! Is it a subject of joy for you? If not—

***“You sinners seek His face,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Bow to the scepter of His Grace,
And find salvation there.”***

God bless you for Christ’s sake.

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AN AWFUL CONTRAST

NO. 2473

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 12, 1896.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 11, 1886.**

***“Then they spat in His face.”
Matthew 26:67.***

***“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose
face the earth and the Heaven fled away.”
Revelation 20:11.***

GUIDED by our text in Matthew's Gospel, let us first go in thought to the palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest, and there let us, in deepest sorrow, realize the meaning of these terrible words—“Then they spat in His face.” There is more of deep and awful thunder in them than in the bolt that bursts overhead. There is more of vivid terror in them than in the sharpest lightning flash—“Then they spat in His face.”

Observe that these men, the priests, scribes, elders and their servitors did this shameful deed after they had heard our Lord say, “Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.” It was in contempt of this claim, in derision of this honor which He foretold for Himself that, “then they spat in His face,” as if they could bear it no longer, that He, who stood to be judged of them, should claim to be their Judge—that He whom they had brought at dead of night from the Garden of Gethsemane as their captive, should talk of coming in the clouds of Heaven—“Then they spat in His face.”

Nor may I fail to add that they thus assaulted our Lord after the High Priest had torn his clothes. My Brothers and Sisters, do not forget that the High Priest was supposed to be the representative of everything that was good and venerable among the Jews! The High Priest was the earthly head of their religion. He it was who, alone of mortal men, might enter within the mysterious veil—yet it was he who condemned the Lord of Glory as he tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy.” It makes me tremble as I think of how eminent we may be in the service of God and yet how awfully we may be enemies of the Christ of God! Let none of us think that though we clamber up to the highest places in the Church we are, therefore, saved. We may be High Priests and wear the Urim and the Thummim. We may put on the breastplate

with all its wondrous mystic stones and bind around us the curious girdle of the ephod, and yet, for all that, we may be ringleaders in expressing contempt of God and of His Christ!

It was when Caiaphas, the High Priest, had pronounced the word of condemnation against Christ that, "then they spat in His face." God grant that we may never take upon ourselves any office in the Church of God and then, girt about with the authority and influence which such an office might lend to us, be the first to pour derision and contempt upon the Christ of God! Yet I do not hesitate to say that when men look to the earthly priesthood instead of looking to Christ, the Great High Priest. When men are taught to trust in the "mass" instead of trusting in Christ's one Sacrifice for sin upon the Cross, it is *then* that the very priests lead the way in spitting in His face! Antichrist never more surely dwells anywhere than in the place where Christ is thus dishonored—and none do Him such dire disgrace as those who ought to bow at His feet and lift Him high among the sons of men—yet who reject Him and refuse His rightful claims.

"Then they spat in His face," after He had proclaimed His Godhead as King and Judge of all, and after the man who ought to have been His principal earthly servant had turned arch-traitor and led the way in contempt of Him by accusing Him of blaspheming! "Then they spat in His face."

There are two or three thoughts that come to my mind when I think that these wicked men actually spat in Christ's face—in that face which is the light of Heaven, the joy of angels, the bliss of saints and the very brightness of the Father's Glory! This spitting shows us, first, *how far sin will go*. If we need proof of the depravity of the heart of man, I will not point you to the stews of Sodom and Gomorrah, nor will I take you to the places where blood is shed in streams by wretches like Herod and men of that sort. No, the clearest proof that man is utterly fallen and that the natural heart is enmity against God is seen in the fact that they spat in Christ's face, did falsely accuse Him, condemn Him, lead Him out as a malefactor and hang Him up as a felon that He might die upon the Cross! Why, what evil had He done? What was there in His whole life that should give them occasion to spit in His face? Even at that moment, did His face flash with indignation against them? Did He look with contempt upon them? Not He, for He was all gentleness and tenderness even towards these, His enemies, and their hearts must have been hard and brutal, indeed, that, "then they spat in His face."

He had healed their sick. He had fed their hungry. He had been among them a very fountain of blessing up and down Judea and Samaria, and yet, "then they spat in His face." I say again, relate not to me the crimes of ancient nations, nor the horrible evils committed by uncivilized men, nor the more elaborate iniquities of our great cities! Tell me not of the abominations of Greece or Rome—this, this, in the sight of the angels of God and in the eyes of the God of the angels, is the masterpiece of all in-

iquity—"Then they spat in His face." To enter into the King's own palace and draw near to His only-begotten Son—and to spit in His face—this is the crime of crimes which reveals the infamous wickedness of men! Humanity stands condemned of the blackest iniquity now that it has gone as far as to spit in Christ's face!

My meditation also turns towards the Well-Beloved into whose face they spat. And my thought concerning Him is this—*how deep was the humiliation He had to endure!* When He was made sin for us, though He, Himself, knew no sin, when our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the iniquities of His people and was burdened with the tremendous weight of their guilt—it became incumbent upon the justice of God to treat Him as if He were actually a sinner. He was no sinner and He could not be one—He was perfect Man and perfect God—yet He stood in the place of sinners and the Lord caused to meet upon Him the iniquity of all His people! Therefore, in the time of humiliation He must not be treated as the Son of God, neither must He be held in honor as a righteous Man! He must first be given up to shame and to contempt—and then to suffering and to death and, consequently, He was not spared this last and most brutal of insults—"Then they spat in His face." O my Lord, to what terrible degradation are You brought! Into what depths are You dragged through my sin and the sin of all the multitudes whose iniquities were made to meet upon You! O my Brothers, let us hate sin! O my Sisters, let us loathe sin, not only because it pierced those blessed hands and feet of our dear Redeemer, but because it dared even to spit in His face! No one can ever know all the shame the Lord of Glory suffered when they spat in His face.

These words glide over my tongue all too smoothly—perhaps I do not feel them as they ought to be felt—though I would do so if I could. But could I feel as I ought to feel in sympathy with the terrible shame of Christ and then could I interpret those feelings by any language known to mortal man, surely you would bow your heads and blush! And you would feel rising within your spirits a burning indignation against the sin that dared to put the Christ of God to such shame as this! I want to kiss His feet when I think that they spat in His face.

Then, once more, my thoughts run to Him, again, in this way—I think of *the tender Omnipotence of His love*. How could He bear this spitting when, with one glance of His eyes, had He been but angry, the flame might have slain them and withered them all up? Yet He stood still even when they spit in His face! And they were not the only ones who thus insulted Him, for, afterwards, when He was taken by the soldiers into Pilate's hall, they also spat upon Him in cruel contempt and scorn—

***"See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator's face."***

How could He bear it? Friends, He could not have borne it if He had not been Omnipotent. That very Omnipotence which would have enabled

Him to destroy them was Omnipotence of *love*, as well as Omnipotence of force. It was this that made Him—if I may so say—“restrain Himself,” for there is no Omnipotence like that which restrains Omnipotence. Yet so it was that He could endure this spitting from men! Can you think of this marvelous condescension without feeling your hearts all on fire with love for Him, so that you long to do some special act of homage to Him by which you may show that you would gladly pay Him for this shame if you could? I will not say more about that point, for the shameful fact stands indelibly recorded in the Scripture—“Then they spat in His face”—but I want to bring the Truth of God home, Brothers and Sisters, and show you how we may have done to Christ what these wicked men did. “Oh,” says one, “I was not there! *I* did not spit in His face.” Listen! Perhaps you *have* spat in His face. Perhaps even *you* have spat in His face. You remember that touching hymn that we sometimes sing—

***“My Jesus! Say what wretch has dared
Your sacred hands to bind?
And who has dared to buffet so
Your face so meek and kind?
My Jesus! Whose the hands that wove
That cruel thorny crown?
Who made that hard and heavy Cross
That weighs Your shoulders down?
My Jesus! Who with spittle vile
Profaned Your sacred brow?
Or whose un pitying scourge has made
Your precious blood to flow?
'Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For Your sweet mercy's sake!”***

There are still some who spit in Christ's face by *denying His Godhead*. They say, “He is a mere man—a good man, it is true, but only a man.” How they dare say that, I cannot make out, for he would be no good man who claimed to be God if he were not God! Jesus of Nazareth was the basest of impostors who ever lived if He permitted His disciples to worship Him and if He left behind Him a life which compels us to worship Him! If He were not really and truly God, then of all those who declare that He is not God—and there is a very great company of them even among the nominally religious people of the present day, we must sorrowfully, but truthfully say, “Then they spat in His face.”

They also do the same who *rail at His Gospel*. There are many, in these days, who seem as if they cannot be happy unless they are tearing the Gospel to pieces. Especially is that Divine mystery of the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ the mark for the arrows of these wise men, I mean those who are wise according to the wisdom of this world. We delight to know that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the place of His people—

***“He bore that we might never bear
His Father's righteous ire.”***

Yet I have read some horrible things which have been written against that blessed doctrine and, as I read them, I could only say to myself, "Then they spat in His face." If there is *anything* that is beyond all else, the Glory of Christ, it is His atoning Sacrifice! And if ever you thrust your finger into the very apple of His eye and touch His honor in the most tender possible point, it is when you have anything to say against His offering of Himself a Sacrifice to God, without blemish and without spot, that He might put away the iniquities of His people! Therefore judge yourselves in this matter and if you have ever denied Christ's Deity, or if you have ever assailed His atoning Sacrifice, it might truly have been said of *you*—"Then they spat in His face."

Further, this evil is also done *when men prefer their own righteousness to the righteousness of Christ*. There are some who say, "We do not need pardon, we do not need to be justified by faith in Christ—we are already good enough." Or, "We are working out our own salvation—we mean to save ourselves." O Sirs, if you can save yourselves, why did Jesus bleed upon the Cross? It was a superfluity, indeed, that the Son of God should die in human form if there is a *possibility* of salvation by your own merits! And if you prefer your merits to His, it must be said of you, also, "Then they spat in His face." Your righteousnesses are only filthy rags! And if you prefer these to the fair white linen which is the righteousness of saints. If you think to wash yourselves in your tears and so despise that precious blood apart from which there is no purging of our sin—to *you* does our text apply—"then they spat in His face," when they preferred their own righteousness to Christ's.

I have often spoken to you about the parable of the prodigal son, but, possibly, your case is more like that of the elder brother in the parable. You have your portion of goods and it is all your own, and you are keeping it. You are rich, and increased in goods and have need of nothing. You are self-righteous. You think that you can do very well without God and without Christ—and you half suspect that God can hardly do without you. You are doing so very well in the observance of rites and ceremonies, and the performance of charity and devotions, that if *you* go into the far country, you will cut a very respectable figure! You will be one of those excellent citizens of that country who will, in due time, send some poor prodigal into your fields to feed your swine. I am inclined to believe that your case is even more sad and hopeless than that of the prodigal, himself! You, too, have gone far away from God. You are living without Him. He is not in all your thoughts. You could almost wish that there were no God, for then there would be no dark cloud hovering in the distance to spoil your summer's day, no fear of storms to come to mar the joy of the hour. Just as truly as of the avowed infidel who openly rejects Christ, it must be said of you, "Then they spat in His face."

The same thing is oh so sadly true *when anyone forsakes the profession of being a follower of Christ's*. There are some, alas, who, for a time, have appeared to stand well in the Church of God—I will not judge

them—but there have been some who, after making a profession of religion, have deliberately gone back to the world. After seeming for a while to be very zealous, they have become worldly and, perhaps, even lascivious and vile. They break the Sabbath, they neglect the Word of God, they forsake the Mercy Seat—and their last end is worse than their first. When a man forsakes Christ for a harlot, when he gives up Heaven for gold, when he resigns the joys he professed to have had in Christ in order that he may find mirth in the company of the ungodly, it is another instance of the truth of these words, “Then they spat in His face.” To prefer any of these things to Christ is infamous—and the mere act of spitting from the mouth seems little compared with this sin of spitting with the very heart and soul—and pouring contempt upon Christ by choosing some sin in preference to Him. Yet, alas, how many are thus still spitting in Christ’s face! Perhaps some now present are doing it.

If, dear Friends, our conscience in any measure accuses us of this sin, *let us at once confess it*. Let us humble ourselves before the Lord and with the very mouth that spat upon Him, let us kiss the Son lest He be angry and we perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little!

And when we have confessed the sin, *let us believe that He is able and willing to forgive us*. I know that it requires a great act of faith, when sin is consciously felt, to believe in the splendor of Divine Mercy. But, dear Friends, believe it! Do the Lord Jesus the great honor of saying to Him, “Gracious Lord, wash me in Your precious blood. Though I did spit in Your face, wash me in that cleansing Fountain and I shall be whiter than snow.” And according to your faith, so shall it be done to you. You shall have the forgiveness, even, of this great sin if you confess it and believe that Christ is both able and willing to forgive it!

And when you have done that, then *let your whole life be spent in trying to magnify and glorify Him* whom you and others have defamed and dishonored! Oh, I think that if I had ever denied Christ’s Deity, I would want to stand in this pulpit night and day to revoke what I had said—and to declare Him to be the Son of God with power! I think that if I had ever set up anything in opposition to Him, I should want, day and night, to be setting Him up above everything else, as, indeed, I long to do! Come, Christian Brothers and Sisters, let us do something unusual in Christ’s honor! Let us find out something or invent something fresh, either in the company of others or all by ourselves, by which we may further glorify His blessed name!

Yet once more, if ever anybody should despise us for Christ’s sake, let us not count it hard, but *let us be willing to bear scorn and contempt for Him*. Let us say to ourselves, “‘Then they spat in His face.’ What, then, if they also spit in mine? If they do, I will ‘hail reproach and welcome shame,’ since it comes upon me for His dear sake!” Look, that wretch is about to spit in Christ’s face! Put *your* cheek forward, that you may catch that spittle upon *your* face, that it fall not upon Him, again, for as He was put to such terrible shame, everyone who has been redeemed with

His precious blood ought to count it an honor to be a partaker of the shame, if by any means we may screen Him from being further despised and rejected of men!

There, dear Friends, I have not preached, I have just talked very, very feebly and not at all as I wished and hoped I might be able to about this wonderful text—“Then they spat in His face.”

Now try to follow me, just for a few minutes, while I let you see that same face in a very different light. Our second text is in the 20th Chapter of the Revelation, at the 11th verse—“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, *from whose face the earth and Heaven fled away*; and there was found no place for them.”

This passage needs no words of mine to explain it. Notice how the Apostle begins—“*I saw.*” Oh, I wish I had the power to make you see this great sight! Sometimes, to vividly realize a Truth even once is far better than to have merely heard it stated ten thousand times. I remember the story of a soldier who was employed in connection with one of the surveys of Palestine. He was with some others of the company in the valley of Jehoshaphat and, without thinking seriously of his words, he said to his comrades, “Some people say that when Christ shall come a second time to judge the world, the judgment will take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, in this very place where we now are.” Then he added, “When the Great White Throne shall be set, I wonder whereabouts I shall be.” It is said that he carelessly exclaimed, “I shall sit here upon this big stone.” And he sat down, but in an instant he was struck with horror and fainted because, in the act of sitting down, he had begun to realize somewhat of the grandeur and the terror of that tremendous scene!

I wish I knew how to do or say *anything* by which I could make you realize this scene that John saw in his vision. The Lord Jesus Christ went up to Heaven from the top of Olivet in His own proper body—and He shall so come in like manner as He was taken up into Heaven—but He shall come, not the lowly Man of Sorrows, but as Judge of All, seated upon a great white throne! And John says, “I saw it.” As we sang, a few minutes ago—

**“The Lord shall come! But not the same
As once in lowliness He came—
A silent lamb before His foes,
A weary Man, and full of woes.
The Lord shall come! A dreadful form,
With rainbow wreath and robes of storm.
On cherub wings, and wings of wind,
Appointed Judge of all mankind.”**

I wish, dear Friends, that even in your *dreams* you might see this sight, for, though I have no trust in dreams by themselves, yet any realization of this great Truth of God will be better than the mere hearing of it.

“I saw,” said John, “a great white throne.” He saw *a throne*, for Christ now reigns! He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords—and when He comes

again, He will come in the power of universal sovereignty as the appointed Judge of all mankind! He will come upon a throne!

That throne is said to be *white*. What other throne can be so described? The thrones of mere mortals are often stained with injustice, or bespattered with the blood of cruel wars. But Christ's Throne is white, for He does justice and righteousness and His name is Truth.

It will also be a *great white throne*—a throne so great that all the thrones of former kings and princes shall be as *nothing* in comparison with it. The thrones of Assyria, and Babylon, and Persia, and Greece, and Rome shall all seem only like tiny drops of dew to be exhaled in a moment! But this Great White Throne shall be the recognized seat of the King of Kings, the Sovereign over all sovereignties—"I saw a great white throne."

John not only saw the Great White Throne, but also, "*HIM that sat upon it.*" What a wondrous sight that was! John saw Him, whose eyes are "as a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." John saw Him whose Divine Majesty shall shine resplendent even through the nail-prints which He shall still wear when seated on the Great White Throne. What a sight it was to John, who had leaned His head upon Christ's breast, to behold that same Master, whom He had seen die upon the Cross, now sitting upon the throne of universal judgement! "I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat upon it."

Now notice what happened—"from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away." As soon as ever this Great White Throne appeared, Heaven and earth began to roll away like a wave receding from the shore! What must HE be, before whose face Heaven and earth shall retreat as in dismay?

Observe, first, *Christ's power*. He does not drive away the Heaven and the earth. He does not even speak to them. The sight of His face is all that is needed—and the old Heaven, and the old sin-stained earth shall begin to flee away—"the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." And all that by the mere showing of Christ's face! He does not have to lift His arm, He has not to seize a javelin and to hurl it at the condemned earth—at the sight of His face, *Heaven and earth shall flee away!*

Behold the terror of *Christ's majesty*. And what will you do in that day—you who spit in His face, you who despised Him? What will you do in that day? Suppose the Great Judgment Day had already come! Suppose that the Great White Throne was just over yonder and that when this service was over, you must appear with all the risen dead before your Judge. One would have to say, "I have refused Him! How shall I dare look in His face?" Another would cry, "He drew me, once. I felt the tugging of His love, the drawings of His Spirit, but I resisted and would not yield. How can I meet Him now? How can I look Him in the face?" Another will have to say, "I had to strive hard to escape from the grasp of His hand of mercy. I stifled conscience and I went back into the world."

You will all have to look into that face, and that face will look at all of you! One will have to say, "I gave up Christ for the world." "I gave Him up for the theater," another must say. "I gave Him up for the dancing saloon," another will say. "I gave Him up for the love of women," another will say. "I gave Him up that I might carry on my business as I could not carry it on if I was a true Christian—I gave up Christ for what I could get." You will have to say all this—and that very soon. As surely as you see me upon this platform, you *will* see the King upon the Great White Throne—that King who was once despised and rejected of men!

O Sirs, I would that you would think of all this! It is not one hundredth part so much my concern as it is yours! I am not afraid to see Christ's face, for He has looked on me in love and blotted out all my sin—and I love Him and *long to be with Him forever and ever*. But if you have never had that look of love. If you have never been reconciled to Him, I ask you, by the love you bear yourselves, to begin to think about this matter! Begin to prepare to meet this King of Men, this Lord of Love, who, as surely as He is the Lord of Love, will be the King of Wrath, for there is no anger like the anger of love! There is no indignation like "the wrath of the Lamb," of which we read a few minutes ago. Divine Love, when it has become righteous indignation, burns like coals of juniper and is quenchless as Hell! Therefore—

***"You sinners, seek His Grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross
And find salvation there"***

and before Heaven and earth begin to flee away from the face of Him who sits upon the Throne, and before you, yourselves, begin to cry to the rocks to cover you and the mountains to hide you from that face—seek His face with humble penitence and faith that you may be prepared to meet Him with joy in that last tremendous day!

If what I have been saying is all a dream, dismiss it and go your ways to your sins. But if these things are the very Truth of God—and verily they are—act as sane men should and think them over, and prepare to meet your Judge! God help you to do so, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

MATTHEW 26:57-68;. REVELATION 6:12-17; 19:11-16; 20:11-15; 21:1.

We shall read two or three short portions of God's Word in order to bring before you the wonderful contrast to which I am about to direct your thoughts.

Matthew 26:57. *And they that had laid hold on Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the High Priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.* It was night, but these wicked men could sit up for this gruel deed, to judge the Lord of Glory, and to put the Innocent One to shame! They "led Him away to Caiaphas the High Priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled."

58. *But Peter followed Him afar off to the High Priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.* I have heard Peter represented as if he did wrong to follow Christ "afar off." I think he was the bravest of all the Apostles, for scarcely one of them followed Christ at all, at that time. Afterwards, John came to his senses and went into the Judgment Hall. Peter kept at a distance from his Lord, but he *did* follow Him and he *did* go into the High Priest's palace. He "went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end." Peter was right enough in following Christ—it was *afterward*, when the temptation came, that he fell so grievously.

59, 60. *Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council sought false witness against Jesus, to put Him to death; but found none.* Because they did not agree, they would not hold together. This is the weakness of falsehood—that it contradicts itself. These men felt that they must have some show of truth-likeness, even in condemning Christ, and this they could not get, at first, even from their false witnesses!

60, 61. *Yes, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses and said, This Fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days.* Brothers and Sisters, observe that this was a little twisting of Christ's words, but that slight wresting made them as different as possible from what Christ had really said. I suppose that if you want to know how this twisting or wresting is done, any one of our general elections will give you the most wonderful examples of how everything that any man may say can be twisted to mean the very reverse of what he said! If there is one thing in which English people are expert beyond all others, it is in the art of misquoting, misstating and misrepresenting. As our Lord was wronged in this fashion, nobody need be surprised if the same should happen to him. "This Fellow said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days."

62. *And the High Priest arose, and said to Him, Answer You nothing? What is it which these witness against You?* What was the good of answering? What is ever the good of answering when the only evidence brought against one is palpable and willful misrepresentation? So the Savior was silent. And thus He not only proved His wisdom, but He also fulfilled that marvelous prophecy of Isaiah, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."

63. *But Jesus held His peace. And the High Priest answered and said to Him, I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.* Now came the answer! The good confession that our Lord witnessed before His cruel adversaries.

64. *Jesus said to Him, You have said: nevertheless I say to you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.* How that sentence must have come with

the vividness of a lightning flash before their faces! What a declaration of power from One who stood there, bound before His enemies, apparently helpless and about to die!

65-68. *Then the High Priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard His blasphemy. What do you think? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Then they spat in His face, and buffeted Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy to us, You Christ, Who is he that struck You? Our Lord had told these mockers that they should one day see Him coming in the clouds of Heaven. Let us read in the Book of the Revelation concerning that great event.*

Revelation 6:12-16. *And I beheld when He had opened the sixth seal and, lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood, and the stars of Heaven fell to the earth, even as a fig tree casts its late figs, when it is shaken by a mighty wind. And the Heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every slave, and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb! Think of the contrast between this awful cry and the sentence we read just now—"Then they spat in His face." "Mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne." Think, too, of the contrast of which we were reminded in our opening hymn—*

***"While sinners in despair shall call,
'Rocks hide us; mountains, on us fall!'
The saints, ascending from the tomb,
Shall joyfully sing, 'The Lord is come!'"***

17. *For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?* Let us read further on in the same Book.

Revelation 19:11, 12. *And I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and He that sat upon Him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns—*

***"Bright with all His crowns of glory,
See the royal Victor's brow."***

Again, note the contrast—"Then they spat in His face." "And on His head were many crowns"—

12-16. *And He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in Heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His vesture and*

on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And this is He in whose face His enemies did spit!

Now turn to the next chapter.

Revelation 20:11 *And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. Driven, like chaff before the wind, from the face of Him who sat upon the Throne!*

12-15. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged, every man according to their works. And death and Hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the second death. And whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire.*

Revelation 21:1. *And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth: for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—364, 275, 363.

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

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

THE DREAM OF PILATE'S WIFE

NO. 1647

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 26, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have you nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.”
Matthew 27:19.

I EARNESTLY wished to pursue the story of our Savior's trials previous to His Crucifixion, but when I sat down to study the subject I found myself altogether incapable of the exercise. “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.” My emotions grew so strong and my sense of our Lord's grief became so extremely vivid that I felt I must waive the subject for a time. I could not watch with Him another hour and yet I could not leave the hallowed scene! It was, therefore, a relief to meet with the episode of Pilate's wife and her dream. It enables me to continue the thread of my narrative and yet to relax the extreme tension of the feelings caused by a near view of the Master's grief and shame.

My spirit failed before the terrible sight. I thought I saw Him brought back from Herod where the men of war had set Him at naught. I followed Him through the streets, again, as the cruel priests pushed through the crowd and hastened Him back to Pilate's hall. I thought I heard them in the streets electing Barabbas, the robber, to be set free, instead of Jesus, the Savior, and I detected the first rising of that awful cry, “Crucify, crucify,” which they shrieked out from their bloodthirsty throats! And there He stood, who loved me and gave Himself for me, like a lamb in the midst of wolves, with none to pity and none to help Him.

The vision overwhelmed me, especially when I knew that the next stage would be that Pilate, who had cleared Him, by declaring, “I find no fault in Him,” would give Him over to the tormentors that He might be scourged, that the mercenary soldiery would crown Him with thorns and mercilessly insult Him—and that He would be brought forth to the people and announced to them with those heart-rending words, “Behold the Man!” Was there ever sorrow like His sorrow? Rather than speak about it this day, I feel inclined to act like Job's friends, of whom it is written, that at the sight of him, “they lifted up their voices and wept; and sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.”

We leave the Master awhile to look at this dream of Pilate's wife which is only spoken of once in the Scriptures—by Matthew. I know not why only that Evangelist should have been commissioned to record it. Perhaps he, alone, heard of it, but the one record is sufficient for our faith—and long enough to furnish food for meditation. We receive the story as certified by the Holy Spirit. Pilate, throughout his term of office, had grossly

misbehaved himself. He had been an unjust and unscrupulous ruler of the Jews. The Galileans and the Samaritans, both, felt the terror of his arms, for he did not hesitate to massacre them at the slightest sign of revolt. And among the Jews, he had sent men with daggers into the midst of the crowds at the great gatherings and so had cut off those who were obnoxious to him.

Gain was his objective and pride ruled his spirit. At the time when Jesus of Nazareth was brought before him, a complaint against him was on the way to Tiberius the Emperor, and he feared lest he should be called to account for his oppressions, extortions and murders. His sins at this moment were beginning to punish him, as Job would word it, "The iniquities of his heels compassed him about." One terrible portion of the penalty of sin is its power to force a man to commit yet farther iniquity. Pilate's transgressions were now howling around him like a pack of wolves—he could not face them and he had not Grace to flee to the One Great Refuge!

But his fears drove him to flee before them and there was no way, apparently, open for him but that which led him into yet deeper abominations. He knew that Jesus was without a single fault and yet, since the Jews clamored for His death, he felt that he must yield to their demands, or else they would raise another accusation against him, namely, that he was not loyal to the sovereignty of Caesar, for he had allowed One to escape who had called Himself a King. If he had behaved justly, he would not have been afraid of the chief priests and scribes. Innocence is brave, but guilt is cowardly. Pilate's old sins found him out and made him weak in the presence of the ignoble crew, whom otherwise he would have driven from the judgment seat.

He had power enough to have silenced them, but he had not sufficient decision of character to end the contention. The power was gone from his mind because he knew that his conduct would not bear investigation and he dreaded the loss of his office, which he held only for his own ends. See there with pity that scornful but vacillating creature wavering in the presence of men who were more wicked than himself and more determined in their purpose! The fell determination of the wicked priests caused hesitating policy to quail in their presence and Pilate was driven to do what he would gladly have avoided. The manner and the words of Jesus had impressed Pilate. I say the *manner* of Jesus, for His matchless meekness must have struck the governor as being a very unusual thing in a prisoner.

He had seen, in captured Jews, the fierce courage of fanaticism, but there was no fanaticism in Christ! He had also seen in many prisoners the meanness which will do or say anything to escape from death—but he saw nothing of that about our Lord. He saw in Him unusual gentleness and humility combined with majestic dignity. He beheld submission blended with innocence! This made Pilate feel how awful goodness is. He was impressed—he could not help being impressed with this unique Sufferer. Besides, our Lord had before him witnessed a good confession—you remember how we considered it the other day—and though Pilate had huffed it off with the pert question, "What is truth?" and had gone back

into the judgment hall, yet there was an arrow fixed within him which he could not shake off.

It may have been mainly superstition, but he felt an awe of One whom he half suspected to be an extraordinary Person. He felt that he, himself, was placed in a very extraordinary position, being asked to condemn One whom he knew to be perfectly innocent. His duty was clear enough—he could never have had a question about that—but duty was nothing to Pilate in comparison with his own interests! He would spare the Just One *if* he could do so without endangering himself, but his cowardly fears lashed him on to the shedding of innocent blood. At the very moment when he was vacillating—when he had proffered to the Jews the choice of Barabbas, or Jesus of Nazareth. At that very moment, I say, when he had taken his seat upon the bench and was waiting for their choice—there came from the hand of God a warning to him—a warning which would forever make it clear that if he condemned Jesus, it would be done voluntarily by his own guilty hands.

Jesus must die by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God and yet, it must be by wicked hands that He is crucified and slain. And, therefore, Pilate must not sin in ignorance. A warning to Pilate came from his own wife concerning her morning's dream, a vision of mystery and terror—warning him not to touch that just Person—"For," she said, "I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." There are times in most men's lives when, though they have been wrong, yet they have not quite been set on mischief, but have come to a pause and have deliberated as to their way. And then God, in great mercy, has sent them a caution and has set up a danger signal bidding them stop in their mad career before they plunged themselves finally into irretrievable ruin! Somewhere in that direction lies the subject of our present discourse. O that the Spirit of God may make it useful to many!

I. And, first, I call your attention to THE COOPERATION OF PROVIDENCE WITH THE WORK OF GOD. I call it the work of God to warn men against sin and I call your attention to Providence working with it to bring the preventives and cautions of Divine Mercy home to men's minds. For, first, observe the Providence of God in sending this dream. If anything beneath the moon may be thought to be exempt from law and to be the creature of pure chance, surely it is a dream! True, there were, in old times, dreams in which God spoke to men prophetically—but ordinarily they are the carnival of thought, a maze of mental states—a dance of disorder!

The dreams which would naturally come to the wife of a Roman governor would not be likely to have much of tenderness or conscience in them and would not, in all probability, of themselves, run in the line of mercy. Dreams ordinarily are the most disorderly of phenomena and yet it seems that they are ordered of the Lord. I can well understand that every drop of spray which flashes from the wave, when it dashes against the cliff, has its appointed orbit as truly as the stars of Heaven—but the *thoughts* of men appear to be utterly lawless, especially the thoughts of men when *deep sleep* falls upon them! As well might one foretell the flight of a bird as the course of a dream!

Such wild fantasies seem to be ungoverned and ungovernable. Many things operate naturally to fashion a dream. Dreams frequently depend upon the condition of the stomach, upon the meat and drink taken by the sleeper before going to rest. They often owe their shape to the state of the body or the agitation of the mind. Dreams may, no doubt, be caused by that which transpires in the chamber of the house—a little movement of the bed caused by passing wheels, or the tramp of a band of men, or the passing of a domestic across the floor—or even the running of a mouse behind the wainscot may suggest and shape a dream.

Any slight matter affecting the senses at such time may raise within the slumbering mind a mob of strange ideas. Yet whatever may have operated in this lady's case, the hand of Providence was in it all, and her mind, though fancy free, wandered nowhere but just according to the will of God to effect the Divine purpose! She must dream just so and no way else! And that dream must be of such-and-such an order, and none other! Even dreamland knows no god but God and even phantoms and shadows come and go at His bidding—neither can the images of a night vision escape from the supreme authority of the Most High.

See the Providence of God in the fact that the dream of Pilate's wife, however caused, should be of such a form and come at such a time as this! Certain old writers trace her dream to the devil, who thus hoped to prevent the death of our Lord and so prevent our redemption. I do not agree with the notion! But even if it were so, I admire all the more the Providence which overrules even the devices of Satan for the purposes of wisdom! Pilate must be warned so that his sentence may be his own act and deed. And that warning is given him through his wife's dream. So does Providence work.

Note, next, the Providence of God in arranging that with this dream there should be great mental suffering. "I have suffered many things in a dream concerning Him!" I cannot tell what vision passed before her mind's eye, but it was one which caused her terrible agony. A modern artist has painted a picture of what he imagined the dream to be, but I shall not attempt to follow that great man in the exercise of fancy. Pilate's wife may have realized in her sleep the dreadful spectacle of the crown of thorns and the scourge, or even of the Crucifixion and the death agony. And, truly, I know of nothing more calculated to make the heart suffer many things concerning the Lord Jesus than a glance at His death! Around the Cross there gathers grief enough to cause many a sleepless night if the soul has any tenderness left in it. Or her dream may have been of quite another kind. She may have seen in vision the Just One coming in the clouds of Heaven. Her mind may have pictured Him upon the Great White Throne, even the Man whom her husband was about to condemn to die. She may have seen her husband brought forth to judgment, himself a prisoner to be tried by the Just One, who had before been accused before him. She may have awoken, startled at the shriek of her husband as he fell back into the Pit that knows no bottom! Whatever it was, she had suffered repeated painful emotions in the dream, and she awoke startled and amazed! The terror of the night was upon her and it threatened to become

a terror to her for all her days and she, therefore, hastens to stay her husband's hand.

Now, herein is the hand of God and the simple story goes to prove that the wandering of dreamland are still under His control—and He can cause them to produce distress and anguish—if some grand end is to be served thereby. Equally remarkable is it that she should have sent to her husband the message, “Have nothing to do with that just Man.” Most dreams we quite forget. A few we mention as remarkable, but only now and then is one impressed upon us so that we remember it for years. Scarcely have any of you had a dream which made you send a message to a magistrate upon the bench. Such an intention would only be resorted to in an urgent case. Though the judge were your own husband, you would be very hard-pressed before you would worry him with your *dreams* while he was occupied with important public business.

Mostly a dream may wait till business is over. But so deep was the impression upon this Roman lady's mind that she does not wait until her lord comes home, but sends to him at once. Her advice is urgent—“Have you nothing to do with that just Man.” She must warn him *now*, before he has laid a stroke on Him, much less stained his hands in His blood. Not, “Have a little to do and scourge Him and let Him go,” but, “Have you *nothing* to do with Him. Say not an unkind word, nor do Him any injury! Deliver Him from His adversaries! If He must die, let it be by some other hand than yours! My Husband, my Husband, my Husband, I beseech you, have nothing to do with that just Man. Let Him alone, I pray you!”

She words her message very emphatically. “Have you nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things in a dream concerning Him. Think of your wife! Think of yourself! Let my sufferings about this Holy One be a warning to you. For my sake let Him alone!” And yet, do you know, her message, to my ear, sounds rather authoritative for a woman to her husband, and he a judge! There is a tone about it that is not ordinarily in the address of wives to husbands. “Have you nothing to do with this just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.” It shows a wonderful Providence of God that this lady was moved to send so strong a message to her self-willed husband—to beseech, to entreat, to implore—almost to *demand* of him that he let this just Man go. O Providence, how mightily can you work! O Lord, the seraphim obey You, but You find an equally willing servitor in a wife who, at Your bidding, stands between her husband and a crime!

Once more, about this Providence I want you to notice the peculiar time in which her warning came. It was evidently a dream of the morning—“I have suffered many things in a dream this day.” The day had not long broken—it was yet early in the morning. The Romans had a superstition that morning dreams are true. I suppose it was after her husband had left her that she thus dreamed. If I may be allowed not to state a *fact*, but to make a conjecture, which seems to me most probable, she was a dearly beloved wife, but sickly and, therefore, needed to rest further into the day than her husband. And when he had left his couch, she had yet another sleep. And being a sensitive person and all the more likely to dream, she

awoke from her morning sleep oppressed with a terror which she could not shake off. Pilate was gone and she was told that he was in the judgment hall.

She asked her attendants why he was there so early and they replied that there had been an unusual clamor in the courtyard, for the High Priests and a mob of Jews had been there and the governor had gone out to them. They might, perhaps, also tell her that Jesus of Nazareth was brought there a prisoner and the priests were entreating Pilate to put Him to death, though they had heard the governor say that he found no fault in Him. "Go," she said to her maid, "call to one of the guards and bid him go at once to my husband and say what I tell you. Let him speak aloud, that some of the cruel Jews may hear it, and be moved from their cruel purpose. Let him say that I implore my husband to have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things this very morning in a dream concerning Him."

Just at the moment, you see, when Pilate had sat down on the judgment seat, the warning came to him. When there was a little lull and he was anxious to acquit his Prisoner—at that instant of time which was the most hopeful, this weight was thrown into the right side of the scale—thrown in most wisely and mercifully to keep back Pilate from his grievous sin. The warning came at the nick of time, as we say, though, alas, it came in vain! Admire the punctuality of Providence! God never is before His time. He never is too late. It shall be seen concerning all that He does that on the same day determined by the prophecy, the fulfillment came. My soul stands trembling while she sings the glory of her God, whose Providence is high, even like Ezekiel's wheels! But the wheels are full of eyes and, as they turn, all the surroundings are observed and provided for so that there are no slips, or oversights, or accidents, or delays. Prompt and effectual is the operation of the Lord!

Thus much concerning Providence and I think you will all agree that my point is proven—that Providence is always co-working with the Grace of God. A great writer who knows but little about Divine things, yet, nevertheless, tells us that he perceives a power in the world which works for righteousness. Exactly so! It is well spoken, for this is the chief of all powers! When you and I go out to warn men of sin, we are not alone, all Providence is at our back! When we preach Christ Crucified, we are workers, together, with God! God is working *with* us as well as *by* us! Everything that happens is driving towards the end for which we work when we seek to convince men of sin and of righteousness. Where the Spirit of God is, all the forces of Nature and Providence are mustered!

The fall of empires, the death of despots, the rising up of nations, the making or the breaking of treaties, terrific wars and blighting famines—are all working out the grand end! Yes, and domestic matters, such as the death of children, the sickness of wives, the loss of work, the poverty of the family and a thousand other things are working, working, always working for the improvement of men. And you and I, lending our poor feebleness to cooperate with God, are marching with all the forces of the universe! Have comfort, then, in this, O workers for Jesus! Suffering many

things for Him, be of good courage, for the stars in their courses fight for the servants of the living God! And the stones of the field are in league with you!

II. Secondly, I gather from this story THE ACCESSIBILITY OF CONSCIENCE TO GOD. How are we to reach Pilate? How are we to warn him? He has rejected the voice of Jesus and the sight of Jesus—could not Peter be fetched to expostulate with him? Alas, Peter has denied his Master. Could not John be brought in? Even *he* has forsaken the Lord! Where shall a messenger be found? It shall be found in a dream—God can get at men's hearts, however hardened they may be. Never give them up, never despair of awakening them. If my ministry, your ministry and the ministry of the blessed Book should all seem to be nothing, God can reach the conscience by a dream! If the sword comes not at them at close quarters, yet what seems but a stray arrow from a bow drawn at a venture shall find the joints in their harness.

We ought to believe in God about wicked men and never say of them, "It is impossible that they should be converted." The Lord can wound leviathan, for His weapons are many and they are suited to the foe. I do not think a dream would operate upon my mind to convince me, but certain minds lie open in that direction, and to them a dream may be a power. God may use even superstition to accomplish His beneficent purposes. Many besides Pilate have been warned by dreams. Better still, Pilate was accessible through the dream of his wife. Henry Melvill has a very wonderful discourse upon this topic, in which he tries to show that probably, if Pilate had dreamed this dream, himself, it would not have been so operative upon him as when his wife dreamed it. He takes it as a supposition, which nobody can deny, that Pilate had an affectionate and tender wife who was very dear to him. The one brief narrative which we have of her certainly looks that way—it is evident that she loved her husband dearly—and would, therefore, prevent his acting unjustly to Jesus.

To send a warning by her was to reach Pilate's conscience through his affections. If his beloved wife was distressed, it would be sure to weigh heavily with him, for he would not have her troubled. He would gladly shield his tender one from every breath of wind and give her perfect comfort. And when she pleads, it is his delight to yield. It is, therefore, no small trouble to him that she is suffering—suffering so much as to send a message to him. She was suffering because of One who deserves her good opinion—One whom Pilate, himself, knows to be without fault. If this lady was, indeed, the wife of Pilate's youth, tender and dearly beloved, and if she was gradually sickening before his eyes, her pale face would rise before his loving memory and her words would have boundless power over him when she said, "I have suffered many things in a dream."

O Claudia Procula, if that were your name, well did the Lord of Mercy entrust His message to your persuasive lips, for from you it would come with tenfold influence! Tradition declares this lady to have been a Christian and the Greek Church has placed her in their calendar as a saint. For this we have no evidence—all that we know is that she was Pilate's wife and used her wifely influence to stay him from this crime. How often

has a tender, suffering, loving woman exercised great power over a coarse, rough man! The All-Wise One knows this and, therefore, He often speaks to sinful men by this influential agency. He converts one in a family that she may be His missionary to the rest. Thus He speaks with something better than the tongues of men and of angels, for He uses Love, itself, to be His orator.

Affection has more might than eloquence. That is why, my Friend, God sent you, for a little while, that dear child who prattled to you about the Savior! She is gone to Heaven, now, but the music of her little hymns rings in your ears even now and her talk about Jesus and the angels is yet with you. She has been called Home, but God sent her to you for a season to charm you to Himself and win you to the right way. Thus He bade you cease from sin and turn to Christ. And that dear mother of yours, who is now before the Throne of God, do you remember what she said to you when she was dying? You have heard me a great many times, but you never heard a sermon from me like that address from her dying couch! You can never quite forget it, or shake yourself free from its power. Beware how you trifle with it!

To Pilate, his wife's message was God's ultimatum! He never warned him again and even Jesus stood silent before him. O my Friend, to you it may be that your child, your mother, or your affectionate wife may be God's last messenger, the final effort of the warning angel to bring you to a better mind! A loving relative pleading with tears is often the forlorn hope of mercy. An attack so skillfully planned and wisely conducted may be regarded as the last assault of love upon a stubborn spirit and, after this, it will be left to its own devices. The selection of the wife was, no doubt, made by infinite wisdom and tenderness, that if possible, Pilate might be stopped in his career of crime and strengthened to the performance of an act of justice by which he would have avoided the most terrible of crimes.

So, then, we may safely conclude that the Lord has His missionaries where the city missionary cannot enter. He sends the little children to sing and pray where the preacher is never heard. He moves the godly woman to proclaim the Gospel by her lip and life where the Bible is not read. He sends a sweet girl to grow up and win a brother or a father where no other voice would be allowed to tell of Jesus and His love! We thank God it is so! It gives hope for the households of this godless city—it gives us hope, even, for those for whom the Sabbath bell rings out in vain. They will hear, they *must* hear these home preachers—these messengers who tug at their hearts! Yes, and let me add that where God does *not* employ a dream, nor use a wife, yet He can get at men's conscience by no visible means but by thoughts which come unbidden and abide upon the soul.

Truths long buried suddenly rise up and when the man is in the very act of sin he is stopped in the way, as Balaam was when the angel met him. How often it has happened that conscience has met a guilty man even in the moment when he meant to enjoy the pleasure filled with wrong, even as Elijah met Ahab at the gate of Naboth's vineyard! How the king starts back as he beholds the Prophet—he would sooner have seen

the very devil, than Elijah! Angrily he cries, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" Though, indeed, Elijah was his best friend, had he known it! Often does conscience pounce upon a man when the sweet morsel of sin has just been rolled under his tongue and he is sitting down to enjoy it! The visitation of conscience turns the stolen honey into bitterness and the forbidden joy into anguish!

Conscience often lies like a lion in a thicket—and when the sinner comes along the broad road it leaps upon him and, for a while, he is sorely put to it. The bad man is comparable to leviathan, of whom we read that his scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal—so that the sword of him that lays at him cannot hold, nor the spear, the dart, nor the javelin—and yet the Lord has a way of coming at him and sorely wounding him. Let us, therefore, both hope and pray for the very worst of men! Brothers and Sisters, use for the good of men anything which comes in your way! Use not only sober argument and sound doctrine, but even if a dream has touched your heart, do not hesitate to repeat it where it may have effect. Any weapon may be used in this war.

See to it that you seek the souls of men, all of you! You who are wives should be especially stirred up to this sacred work. Remember Pilate's wife and think of her as affectionately giving the warning to her husband and go and do likewise. Never keep back from an ungodly husband the Word of God which may convert him from the error of his ways! And you, dear children, you sisters, you of the gentler sort, do not hesitate, in your own quiet way, to be heralds for Jesus wherever your lot is cast. As for us all, let us take care that we use every occasion for repressing sin and creating holiness. Let us warn the ungodly at once, for perhaps the man to whom we are sent has not yet performed the fatal deed. Let us stand in the gap while yet there is space for repentance.

Pilate is even now sitting on the judgment seat. Time is precious. Make haste! Make haste, before he commits the deed of blood! Send the messenger to him! Stop him before the deed is done even though he should complain of your interference. Say to him, "Have you nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things because of Him and I pray you do nothing against Him." That is our second point. God bless it. Although I cannot preach upon it as I would, the Spirit of God can put power into it.

III. Thirdly, we have, now, the lamentable task of observing THE FREQUENT FAILURE EVEN OF THE BEST MEANS. I have ventured to say that, humanly speaking, it was the best means of reaching Pilate's conscience for his wife to be led to expostulate with him. He would hear but few, but he *would* hear her. And yet even her warning was in vain. What was the reason? First, self-interest was involved in the matter and that is a powerful factor. Pilate was afraid of losing his governorship. The Jews would be angry if he did not obey their cruel bidding. They might complain to Tiberius and he would lose his lucrative position.

Alas, such things as these are holding some of *you* captives to sin at this moment. You cannot afford to be true and right, for it would cost too much! You know the will of the Lord. You know what is right, but you re-

nounce Christ by putting Him off and by abiding in the ways of sin that you may gain the wages thereof. You are afraid that to be a true Christian would involve the loss of a friend's goodwill, or the patronage of an ungodly person, or the smile of an influential worldling—and this you cannot afford. You count the cost and reckon that it is too high. You resolve to gain the world, even though you lose your soul! What then? You will go to Hell rich! A sorry result this! Do you see anything desirable in such an attainment? Oh that you would consider your ways and listen to the voice of wisdom!

The next reason why his wife's appeal was ineffectual was the fact that Pilate was a coward. A man with legions at his back and yet afraid of a Jewish mob—afraid to let one poor Prisoner go whom he knew to be innocent—afraid because he knew his conduct would not bear inspection! He was, morally, a coward! Multitudes of people go to Hell because they have not the courage to fight their way to Heaven. "The fearful and unbelieving shall have their portion in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." So says the Word of God! They are afraid of encountering a fool's *laugh* and so rush upon everlasting contempt! They could not bear to tear themselves away from old companions and excite remarks and sarcasm among ungodly wits—and so they keep their companions and perish with them!

They have not the pluck to say, "No," and swim against the stream. They are such cowardly creatures that they will sooner be forever lost than face a little scorn. Yet while there was cowardice in Pilate, there was presumption, too. He who was afraid of man and afraid to do right, yet dared to incur the guilt of innocent blood! Oh, the cowardice of Pilate to take water and wash his hands, as if he could wash blood off with water! And then to say, "I am innocent of His blood"—which was a lie—"see you to it." By those last words he brought the blood upon himself, for he consigned his Prisoner to their tender mercies and they could not have laid a hand upon Him unless he had given them leave. Oh, the daring of Pilate in the sight of God to commit murder and disclaim it!

There is a strange mingling of cowardliness and courage about many men. They are afraid of a man, but not afraid of the eternal God who can destroy both body and soul in Hell! This is why men are not saved even when the best of means are used, because they are presumptuous and dare defy the Lord! Besides this, Pilate was double-minded. He had a heart and a heart. He had a heart after that which was right, for he sought to release Jesus. But he had another heart after that which was gainful, for he would not run the risk of losing his post by incurring the displeasure of the Jews. We have plenty around us who are double-minded. Such are here this morning—but where were they last night? You will be touched by today's sermon! How will you be affected tomorrow by a lewd speech or a lascivious song?

Many men run two ways. They seem earnest about their souls, but they are far more eager after gain or pleasure. Strange perversity of man that he should tear himself in two! We have heard of tyrants tying men to wild horses and dragging them asunder, but these people do this with *them-*

selves. They have too much conscience to neglect the Sabbath and to forego attendance at the House of Prayer—too much conscience to be utterly irreligious, to be honestly infidel—and yet, at the same time, they have not enough conscience to keep them from being hypocrites! They let, “I dare not,” wait upon, “I would.” They want to do justly, but it would be too costly! They dare not run risks and yet, meanwhile, they run the awful risk of being driven forever from the Presence of God to the place where hope can never come!

Oh that my words were shot as from a cannon! Oh that they would hurl a cannon-shot at indecision! Oh that I could speak like God's own thunder which makes the hinds to calve and breaks the rocks in pieces! Even so, I solemnly warn men against these desperate evils which thwart the efforts of mercy, so that, even when the man's own wife, with tender love, bids him escape from the wrath to come, he still chooses his own destruction!

IV. Lastly, we have a point which is yet more terrible, THE OVERWHELMING CONDEMNATION OF THOSE WHO THUS TRANSGRESS. This Pilate was guilty beyond all excuse. He deliberately and of his own free will condemned the just Son of God to die, being informed that He was the Son of God and knowing both from his own examination and from his wife that He was a “just Man.” Observe that the message which he received was most distinct. It was suggested by a dream, but there is nothing dreamy about it. It is as plain as words can be put— “Have you nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.”

Pilate condemned the Lord with his eyes open and that is an awful way of sinning. Oh, my dear Friends, am I addressing any here who are purposing to do some very sinful thing, but have lately received a warning from God? I would add one more caution! I pray you, by the blessed God, and by the bleeding Savior, and as you love yourself, and as you love her from whom the warning may have come to you, stop and hold your hand! Do not do this abominable thing! You know better. The warning is not put to you in some mysterious and obscure way, but it comes point blank to you in unmistakable terms. God has sent conscience to you and He has enlightened that conscience so that it speaks very plain English to you! This morning's discourse stops you on the highway of sin, puts its pistol to your ear and demands that you “Stand and deliver.”

Stir an inch and it will be at your own soul's peril. Do you hear me? Will you regard this Heaven-sent expostulation? Oh, that you would stand still, awhile, and hear what God shall speak while He bids you yield yourself to Christ today! It may be now or never with you, as it was with Pilate that day. He had the evil thing which he was about to do fully described to him and, therefore, if he ventured on it, his presumption would be great. His wife had not said, “Have nothing to do with that Man,” but, “with that *just Man*,” and that word rang in his ears—and again and again repeated itself till he repeated it, too! Read the 24th verse. When He was washing his wicked hands he said, “I am innocent of the blood of this *just Person*”—the very name his wife had given to our Lord!

The arrows stuck in him! He could not shake them off! Like a wild beast, he had the javelin sticking in his side, and though he rushed into the forest of his sin, it was evidently still rankling in him—“this just Person” haunted him! Sometimes God makes a man see sin as sin and makes him see the blackness of it. And if he then perseveres in it, he becomes doubly guilty and pulls down upon himself a doom intolerable beyond that of Sodom of old. Beside that, Pilate was sinning not only after distinct warning—and a warning which set out the blackness of the sin—but he was sinning after his conscience had been touched and moved through his affections.

It is a dreadful thing to sin against a mother's prayers! She stands in your way. She stretches out her arms—with tears she declares that she will block your road to Hell! Will you force your way to ruin over her prostrate form? She kneels! She grasps your knees! She begs you not to be lost! Are you so brutal as to trample on her love? Your little child entreats you—will you disregard her tears? Alas, she was yours, but death has removed her, and before she departed she entreated you to follow her to Heaven and she sang her little hymn—“Yes, we'll gather at the river.” Will you fling your babe aside as though you were another Herod that would slay the innocents and all in order that you may curse yourself forever and be your own destroyer?

It is hard for me to talk to you like this. If it is coming home to any of you, it will be very hard for you to hear it. Indeed, I hope it will be so hard that you will end it by saying, “I will yield to love which assails me by such tender entreaties.” It will not be a piece of mere imagination if I conceive that at the Last Great Day, when Jesus sits upon the Judgment Seat, and Pilate stands there to be judged for the deeds done in the body, that his wife will be a swift witness against him to condemn him! I can imagine that at the Last Great Day there will be many such scenes as that, wherein those who loved us best will bring the most weighty evidences against us, if we are still in our sins! I know how it affected me as a lad when my mother, after setting before her children the way of salvation, said to us, “If you refuse Christ and perish, I cannot plead in your favor and say that you were ignorant. No, but I must say, Amen, to your condemnation.”

I could not bear that! Would my mother say, “Amen,” to my condemnation? And yet, Pilate's wife, what can you do otherwise? When all must speak the truth, what can you say but that your husband was tenderly and earnestly warned by you and yet consigned the Savior to His enemies? Oh, my ungodly Hearers, my soul goes out after you! “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” Why will you sin against the Savior? God grant you may not reject your own salvation, but may turn to Christ and find eternal redemption in Him! “Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life.”

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ALL ARE GUILTY

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

“Pilate said unto them...Let Him be crucified.”
Matthew 27:22, 23.

THIS morning [See Sermon #678, Volume 12—PRAISE YOUR GOD, O ZION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at www.spurgeongems.org.] we heard the shouts of “Hosanna!” It was very delightful to us to behold the multitude marching with the King of Zion through the streets of Jerusalem, welcoming Him with glad acclaim. But the shouts of “Hosanna” had hardly died away before they were followed by the cruel note, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Or, as the text puts it, “Let Him be crucified!” Clearly in this case the Vox populi was not the Vox Dei. The one is fickle and shifting, the other is fixed and steadfast. The voice of the people is changeable as the wind. The Word of the Lord is firm as a rock, and it endures forever. The multitude will always be found fitful and vacillating. They will enthrone a man, today, and chase him from the streets tomorrow. Take but small account of human applause. The breath of fame’s trumpet is a poor reward for a life of toil to serve one’s generation. Care not for it, O you of noble spirit! Heed not the world’s frowns and court not its smiles. When you are flattered by its approbation, or calumniated by its persecution, remember that men’s temper and disposition vary like the climate and change like the weather! Hosannas turn into execrations. The idol of one hour is the aversion of another.

The point, however, to which I shall endeavor to draw your attention tonight (and may the Holy Spirit assist us) is of far more importance than the prattling gossip of the vulgar crowd. In this sad and brutal cry, “Let Him be crucified,” I observe—

I. A VERY STRANGE ILLUSTRATION OF THE ASSERTED DIGNITY OF HUMAN NATURE.

I have heard till I have been sick of hearing. I have read till I am weary of reading, all sorts of praise passed upon it. I know not what a grand and noble being the creature man is in the estimation of certain lackadaisical divines. They seem to make this their chief end—to laud and magnify their own species! The drift of all their preaching is to please men’s ears with their rhetoric and to delude men’s judgment with their flattery. And as for their logic, it exalts the ideal of man, while it ignores the actual sinner. It sets up the image and says, “Behold what a splendid intellectual creature man is!” We look around and fail to catch a sight of the individuals they portray! I hesitate not to say that he who praises man does the opposite to glorifying God and is as far as the poles asund-

er from testifying to the Truth of God. The Truth, as we learn it in the Word of God, is most uncomplimentary to man—it rolls him in the very dust, ranks him with the worms, makes nothing of him—yes, less than nothing! So desperate is his moral condition that it adjudges him as his only fit place, the lowest pit of Hell as the due reward of his deeds. But inasmuch as they thus praise human nature, I would like the admirers of it to look a little while on this scene—where humanity gathers around the Savior, Christ the Lord, and cries, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”

And, first, what do you say to this dignity of human nature, in that *it does not know God*? This is taking the sin at the lowest point, for had they known Him, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Through ignorance they did it—ignorance, alike, on the part of the rabble and their rulers. It is the best excuse that can possibly be afforded for their cry, their cruelty and their crime. But what an excuse! How humiliating! Here were men who did not know the God that made them! Why boast of intellect—the keen perception of the human mind—in the face of such imbecility? They did not know the God that fed them! “The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master’s crib,” but Israel did not know her Lord, her King, her God! He came with a thousand prophecies to herald Him, and He answered to them all! The simplest Sunday school child reading through the Old Testament can see that the Christ of the New Testament is He of whom the Seers and the Prophets spoke in vision by the power of the Spirit! But here was human nature left to itself with the Book in its hand, and totally unable to decipher the evidences or recognize the Messiah! He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. You call this “bright-eyed human nature,” and it cannot see the sun! You talk about its superior intelligence and yet that which was an axiom to angels, *they* could not discern! Angels knew Him—how could they fail to know Him? But these eyes of men are so blinded with the mire of prejudice and the love of sin, that though the Godhead shone gloriously through the Manhood of Jesus, they could not—they *would not* perceive Him to be the Christ! And they put the Son of God, the Heir of Heaven, to an ignominious death! Talk no more of wisdom! Boast not of your sages! Cry not up your philosophy and your deep knowledge! Oh, the bat has brighter eyes than you, and moles see more than do those men who, groveling in the earth, fail to perceive the Lord! Men knew not God, Himself, when He was Incarnate in human flesh!

The sin, however, was of a deeper dye when men said, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Clearly, human nature *hated goodness in its most attractive form*. A flattering preacher once closed a glowing period with some such words as these—“O Virtue, you fair and lovely object, could you descend among men, and appear in your perfection, all men would prostrate themselves before you as a deity, and you would be beloved of all mankind.”

What monstrous assumption! What an extravagant perversion of fact! Virtue *did* descend into this world and was Incarnate! That Incarnate Virtue they hailed not as “God,” but as “devil.” Instead of worshipping Him, they hounded Him even to death, and nailed Him to the tree! In our

Lord Jesus Christ there was perfect virtue. You cannot detect an error! No, neither an excrescence or a deficiency! Yet virtue consists not merely in abstaining from harm, but it involved the exercise of every faculty in doing good. His Character was matchless and His goodness was set in the most attractive sphere, for, mark you, it was not virtue in majestic mien, like that of Lycurgus, enacting laws and administering the prerogatives of government. Or like that of Moses writing upon the tables of stone, statutes and ordinances of infinite verity, having the sanctions of God with consequences of faithful indemnity or of fearful penalty. Christ's was virtue in the attitude of lowly service with the emotions of tender sympathy, proving itself by acts of unfailing benevolence. He did not come to tell men they must do this and that, but He came to show them and to teach them how to do the will of God from the heart! It was virtue irradiated with pity, adorned with patience, bejeweled with richest love—forever and ever kindly affectionate. His was benevolence more rare, for it was unique. Never was there greater love than that of Christ!

Sometimes virtue becomes repulsive to men because of its sternness—they cannot bear a perfect law if, like that of Draco, it should be written in blood. But here was Christ, all affable and amiable—a Man among men! He was with them at their wedding feasts and with them at their funeral rites. He was to men, a Brother, and He showed and proved Himself such indeed. Yet, for all that, virtue thus comely, thus embellished, thus familiar in the habitations of mankind, He was disliked, abhorred and hunted to the death! Sometimes men oppose goodness if they see it in high places—they will envy the rank and, therefore, forget the virtue. But here was the Christ of God in lowliness, wearing the peasant's garb—eating the bread of the people—poor, yes, so poor that He had not even so much wealth as the fox that has its hole, or the bird that has a nest where to lay its head! Surely virtue which condescended to such a condition ought to have secured the admiration of mankind! And Christ had laid aside all His princely power. He did not come as a King with Sovereign rule, to compel men to do His bidding. Sometimes men will revolt against that which seems to coerce them. They say they will be drawn, but they will not be driven. But Christ was no driver. As a shepherd goes before his sheep, so He gently led the way. And yet, perfect, immaculate virtue—virtue enshrined in everything that was attractive—without anything that ought to have excited animosity. Incarnate Virtue! How did it fare? Hear then, O you that boast of human dignity and the glory of human nature!—This Holy One was made the central objective for all the arrows of malice and of spite! He in whom these excellencies were exhibited had for His medal of honor the cry, "Let Him be crucified." O poor fallen human nature—what do you say to this?

I impeach humanity again of the utmost possible folly because, in crucifying Christ, *it crucified its best Friend*. Jesus Christ was not only the Friend of man, so as to take human nature upon Himself, but He was the friend of sinners, so that He came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. The only errand that Christ pursued in life was a

disinterested one. Everybody could see that. He neither hoarded wealth, nor gained high places in the government! Neither did He seek popular esteem. He saved others, but for Himself, He reserved nothing. He gave up all for the sons of men. Yet when they could clearly see that the lost and most self-denying of all philanthropists was before them, they treated Him as a criminal, and nailed Him to a Cross! What a Friend He was to those who conspired against Him as a foe! How generously He had espoused the cause of those very people who now turned upon Him and said, "Let Him be crucified!" He had healed their sick. He had raised their dead. He had opened the eyes of their blind and He had restored the withered limbs of their paralyzed. For which of these things did they crucify Him? He was always the people's Friend, the Champion of the populace. He came to break oppression, to set the captive free—and all that heard Him must have known that the was the great Prophet of liberty, the up-lifter of the fallen, the destroyer of everything that was oppressive, unjust, or even unmerciful. Still, though never man was such a Friend as He, this stupid world, this worse than swinish world, must put its best Friend to death! O humanity! Blush for yourself, lest angels blush at your impiety and even devils laugh at your infatuation!

Then there was this about human nature—*it destroyed its best Instructor*. The teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the confession of His enemies, was too sound to be disparaged and He was too wise to be entangled in the meshes of their controversies. He never taught tyranny. Commend me to a single sentence in the whole of Christ's teaching that would make a despot sit more steadfastly upon his throne. He never taught anarchy. Find, if you can, a single word that would make men burst the bonds of righteous fidelity and lead lawless lives. He taught no asceticism that would denude life of wholesome pleasure or healthful enjoyment. Far, far was He, on the other hand, from teaching any libertinism that would tolerate anything that is unclean, unchaste or impure, in word or deed. His teaching was for man—instructing him in what was best for him to do, how it was best to do it and in what was necessary for his own good that he should eschew and avoid. "Never man spoke like this Man!" I was in the Hall of Philosophers a little while ago, where were the busts of Socrates, Plato, Solon, and all the great men of former ages. But if they were all put together, of what small account were the maxims that they taught mankind for the promotion of real happiness and true goodness? Why, the sum total is nothing in comparison with that one sermon of the Christ of Nazareth which He preached upon the Mount! That one sermon put into the scale outweighs the wisdom of Greece and Rome! And yet, when the Man had come who unselfishly, lovingly, tenderly, wisely would lead our fallen race into the paths of holiness and onward to the goal of perfect happiness, what did humanity do but grind its teeth, gather up its weapons and say, "Away with such a Fellow from the earth—it is not fit that He should live!" Alas, human nature! How demented and imbecile you are! The very beasts might lay claim to more sagacity and shrewdness than you have!

Then, too, those who boast of human nature, might, perhaps, say that the multitude on that occasion were not so much to blame as the priests, for the priests persuaded the people. Yes, Sirs, I grant you that. But I suppose priests are human, though I sometimes question it. Surely, if ever a man comes to be near akin to a devil, it must be when he assumes to be a priest, and to have the power to open and to shut the gates of Heaven and Hell!

I would rather any day a man call me a demon than a priest! There is something so degraded, so detestable in the profession of a priest that my soul loathes it! I would tear off the last rag of priestcraft that ever stuck to my flesh and feel it to be like that tunic of fire which burned into the flesh of the heroes of old. Away with it! But what must men be—what must human nature be that it submits to priests? I say you degrade human nature further when you say they put Christ to death because they submitted to the persuasions of the priests. It is true, but where is the manhood of man that he will be led by the nose by a fellow man who chooses to put on a strange, uncouth garb, and feign himself the messenger of God while he perverts the oracles of God and teaches lies? When will the day come that human nature will prove itself to have pure mettle and manly spirit in it by shaking off the horrible iniquities of priestcraft? Set this crime down to priestcraft, if you will. The priests do conspire—they always did and always will conspire to set the people against God! And against Christ. But where is manhood that it should put itself beneath the foot of such a thing—a thing that men call a priest? Shame on you, human nature, that you should become so abject as to be the football of a priest and submit yourself to an order which sacrilegiously usurps Divine Authority and insolently tyrannizes over human conscience!

I must close this indictment against human nature with its vaunted dignity by accusing it of *wanton cruelty in slaying a defenseless Man*. Who ever thought it to be other than dastardly to strike a man who will not defend himself, or to smite one who, being smitten, only turns the other cheek?

Cowardice! Cowardice! Cowardice, craven, base, lies at your door, O Humanity! The Christ who was like a sheep—harmless and defenseless—was treated as if He had been one of the wild beasts of the forest! Who could have had the heart to smite Him who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair? O Humanity! If I stand at the bar to impeach you, I scarcely know where to commence the indictment and, having commenced it, I know not where to close it! How fallen, dishonored, infamous are you, O Humanity! Low, depraved, heinous, indeed, have you become that you could put the Messiah, Himself, to death, and crucify the Lord of Glory! Passing onward, I shall now occupy a few minutes as I—

II. ENDEAVOR TO CLOSE THE DOOR AGAINST CERTAIN SELF-RIGHTEOUS DISCLAIMERS.

I think I hear one and another of you say, "But I would not have done so. I will not allow that my nature be so corrupt or abandoned." Listen, Friend! Is not your self-esteem a little suspicious? Of whom were you born but of a woman, as they were? Your circumstances may be somewhat different. Praise your circumstances, not yourself, for had you been in their circumstances, you would have done the same! It is suspicious, I say, when a man begins to say, "I am better than these." Why, this is just what those very persons, the priests of old, pretended! What said they but this, "We will build the sepulchers of the Prophets whom our fathers slew, for had we lived in our fathers' day, we would not have slain them." And by that very speech of theirs—that self-righteous speech—the Lord Jesus said that they proved that they were the true sons of their fathers! When men begin to plead that they're so much better than others, that they would not have done such things, the suspicion crosses one's mind that they know not what spirit they are of. Certainly they are rather proud in heart than humble in mind.

But now what would you have done if you had been there. A French king who once heard this story said, "I wish I had been there with ten thousand of my guards! I'd have cut the throat of every man of them." Just so. No doubt that is what he would have done—and in so doing he would have crucified the Savior in the worst possible way, for he would have implicated the Savior in a bloody massacre—which had been to Christ a worse crucifixion, if worse could be than which He suffered. Out spoke the man in the truth and honesty of his soul, and he confessed that he would practically have crucified the Savior. "But," says one, "I would have spoken for Him, had I been there." Yes, and do you speak for Him now? "Well, I would not hear Him maligned," says one. But suppose your life depended on it, or your office, or your fame? I will tell you what you would have done—you would have spoken for Him, like Pilate, and washed your hands and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. See you to it." You would have gone no farther than that, I guarantee you, unless your heart was renewed—unless Christ had changed your heart, and I am not dealing, now, with renewed human nature, nor with changed hearts—I am speaking of that which is originally in us men. And if we had gone as far as Pilate, I fear there is not one of us but would have gone farther!

To come to close quarters with you, dear Hearer, if you are an un-saved, unregenerate man, I will ask you what you have done already! Perhaps I speak to some here who have made a sneer at the Gospel. You have been accustomed to ridiculing it and when you have heard of anyone who has been peculiarly bold in the service of Christ, without enquiring whether your verdict was true or not, you set him down at once as being a hypocrite, a fanatic, or a fool! Now, I ask you whether that spirit which leads you to malign the Christian is not precisely that spirit which led others to condemn the Christ, and to say, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" In one age they nail men to a cross of wood. In another age, when they cannot do that, they hold them up to contempt—the spirit is just the same. There lived a man a hundred years ago in this land whose whole

life was spent in the service of Christ—a man of gigantic talents who attracted thousands to listen to his ministry—a man who never spent a farthing of worldly pelf, but lived to win souls, to feed the poor and bless the sick. Now that man, Whitefield, was so abused, traduced and slandered, that even Cowper, when he sung his praises, had to begin them thus—

***“Leuconomus (beneath well-sounding Greek,
I hide a name a poet must not speak).”***

Though he proceeds to speak highly of him, he does not mention his name, except under the Greek form. And so there have lived in this world men of whom the world was not worthy—and the only return they have had has been abuse. What is this but the same spirit which crucified the Lord? But you tell me you have persecuted nobody and you have ridiculed nobody? I am glad to hear it, but what is your standing, now, with regard to the Christ of the Gospel? Are you trusting in Him? Are you relying on Him as your Savior? Have you given up all your good works and are you depending upon what He has done? Do you answer, “No”? Then I tell you, you are crucifying Him! You are rejecting Him in the point on which He is most jealous—you are setting up yourself your own savior in opposition to Him—and this is to Him a worse grief and a direr insult even than the nailing of Him to the accursed tree! Oh, but you say you have not set up any righteousness of your own! You don’t think at all about the matter—you don’t care about it! Be it so, then, according to your own admission! Albeit the Pharisees would give 30 pieces of silver for Him, you would not give a penny for Him—that is the only difference! You have the Gospel brought to you and when you hear it, you criticize the speaker—that is all. You have the Bible, and when you get it, you bind it in morocco—and put it on a shelf and never read it. And, perhaps, many of this congregation, though living in the land of Gospel Light, are quite ignorant of what the Gospel is. Oh, Sirs, is not this to crucify Him? This is to ignore Him and this is not only to kill Him, but to bury Him! You have wrapped Him in the winding sheet and laid Him in His grave as best you can. You have, in fact, said, “It is nothing to me. I care not for His book, nor His people, nor His Cross, except it be an ornament after the way of the world’s church—but as to the essence, and marrow, and truth of the thing—I will have none of it.” Oh, this is the cry of many, and while they so cry let them not self-righteously hope to excuse themselves!

But I address some tonight who would shudder at all this, and say, “Oh, Sir, I have neither persecuted His people, nor thought lightly of Him. Neither have I been negligent concerning Him, for oh, I long to be saved by Him. I seek His face day and night and confess my sins into His ear, and I ask for pardon through His blood.” Beloved, I am glad to hear you say this, but I must ask you a question, too. Have you ever doubted whether He could save you? Do you doubt now whether He is willing to save you? Ah, then you crucify Him, for there is nothing that so grieves Him as that unkind, ungenerous thought that He is unwilling to forgive! This touches Him in the heart. This pierces His heart as with a spear, for you to think that He will not, or cannot, pardon you! Be guilty of this no

longer! Satan told you it was humility—no, but it is dishonoring your Savior! Come, poor awakened Sinner, full of guilt, and full of fear, and say, “I do believe! I will believe that He is both able and willing to save me!” Then, but not until then, may you be able to say, “I have not crucified Him.” Now I shall leave that, more especially to address—

III. THOSE WHO HAVE CONFESSED THE SIN OF CRUCIFYING CHRIST—AND HAVE RECEIVED PARDON FOR IT.

Beloved, we are coming to the Table of the Lord. With what profound emotions should these meditations fill our breasts as we observe this ordinance? When we remember that our sins did crucify Christ (for He would not have needed to have died if we had not sinned), we ought to think of it with deep repentance—

***“Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail.
And unbelief a spear.
“Twas you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head!
Break, break my heart, yes burst my eyes,
And be my coldness dead.”***

Oh, what a sorrow to think we stabbed our Friend in the heart. For our sake He died. There was a little bit of poetry some of us used to repeat at school, “The death of Gellert.” When the Welsh chieftain found that in hot-blooded haste he had slain the hound that had saved his child, he wept right bitterly. That was for a dog. If you went home tonight and found that you had by some mischance killed your friend. And he had died—and by his death had saved your life—I know you would treasure up his memory. But it is the Christ of God that you and I have murdered by our sins! They say, in old tradition, that as often as ever Peter heard a cock crow, he was accustomed to weep. And as often as we come to this Table, we might very well be accustomed to weep, too, to think that our sins made our Savior bleed. Then what a holy jealousy should stir within us! If my sins did this, by God’s Holy Spirit’s help, there shall be an end of my sins! Away with you, you murderers, I will not spare you—neither the pleasurable sin, nor the profitable sin, nor the fashionable sin, nor the little sin, as men call it! I cry, “Revenge!” against my sins, and slay the murderers, too! Oh, ask for Grace tonight that you may put sin to death!

And, once more, when we remember that our sins crucified Him, how it ought to waken in our souls a devout resolution that we will crown Him! Did they say, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!”? Then our voice shall be still louder, “Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!” And does a ribald world still say, “Crucify Him!”? Then we who have received the second birth will say, “Crown Him! Crown Him! Crown Him!” The world still clamors, “Crucify!” Go forth, you sons of God, and proclaim the coronation of the Christ who once wore the crown of thorns! Blush not and be not afraid to defend Him before His adversaries, for He will soon come to put His adversaries to shame, and on His head shall His crown flourish forever! I would, coming to this Table, tonight, speak thus to my heart—O

my Soul, was Jesus put thus to suffering for you? Then what can you do for Him? Have you an unbroken alabaster box in all your possessions? Then bring it out now! Can you not devise some new way by which you might serve Him, so as to bring yourself to the pinch to bear much sacrifice with stern self-denial? Come, my Soul, do something that you may glorify Him! Give to His cause. Help His poor! Speak to His wounded ones! Console His distressed people, lay yourself out for Him. Are there any members of this Church that are doing nothing for Jesus? Oh, I pity you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are idle! But while I cannot suggest to you what to do, I pray the Lord to put it into your hearts, tonight, to do something more than you have ever done to honor Christ! You need not tell anybody about it—the less said about it the better. Go and do it, not letting your left hand know what your right hand does! Go and weave some crown for Him, though it is but of the poor fading flowers of your heart's love. Go and honor Him! You cannot wipe out the dishonor you have caused Him in your former estate, but you can do something—you can bring Him honor as long as you have any being by bringing others, through the help of His blessed Spirit, to love and honor Him! God grant us a refreshing season at the Communion Table—may we have the company of the King, Himself!

Now are there any here that confess their guilt in the death of Christ? Then let me say to every sinner here, if you will look to Him that was pierced, you shall live! There is only one look at Jesus that is needed to give you pardon! "He that believes on Him is not condemned." You have nailed Him to the Cross—now look at Him! Moses hung the serpent on the pole—then looked, himself, and bade all Israel look. I, who had my share in crucifying Him, do look tonight! He is all my salvation—I trust in nothing else. Look you, then—yes, look you! God help you now to look, each one, and you are saved! God grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 1:19-33; 19:1-16.**

JOHN 1:19-33

Verses 19-28. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, Who then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that Prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who are you? that we may give an answer to those that sent us. What say you of yourself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Isaiah. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptize you, then, if you are not that Christ, nor Elijah neither that Prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there stands One among you, whom you know not: He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe laces I am unworthy to unloose. These things were*

done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. Was that the place where the Israelites crossed the Jordan? It is said to have been so, and truly this is the place where we cross the Jordan, too—come out of old Judaism into the true faith of the revealed Christ!

29. *The next day John sees Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world. I think I hear the Elijah-like tones of that son of the desert, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.”*

30. *This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me. Ah, how infinitely before John! How before him having no beginning of days, before him in His exalted Nature, before him in His superior rank and office!*

31. *And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore have I come baptizing with water. It was by baptism that the Christ was to be known. John knew more of Jesus Christ than anybody else, yet he did not know Him to be the Lamb of God until he had baptized Him.*

32, 33. *And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. I doubt not that John had assuredly guessed that Jesus was the One, but he had nothing to do with guesses—he was a witness for God and he could only speak as God revealed things to him.*

JOHN 19:1-16.

Verses 1-3. *Then Pilate, therefore, took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! Just as they were gathered to say, “Ave Imperator”—“Hail emperor”—so imitating that word which they applied to Caesar, and applying it to Jesus in mockery, “King of the Jews,” the utmost scorn was thrown into the last word, “of the Jews.” There had been a general tradition that there should arise among the Jews a king who would subdue the nations—and the Romans jested at the very thought that they should be conquered by the leader of such a despised race as the Jews! And so they said, “King of the Jews.”*

3, 4. *And they struck Him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and said unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him. That is the second time he said it. He had declared it before—in the 38th verse of the previous Chapter we read, “I find in Him no fault at all.” And now again, “That you may know that I find no fault in Him.” “Then came Jesus forth”—you can see Him going down the steps out of Pilate’s Hall into that same courtyard—“wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them”—“Ecce Homo”—“behold the Man.” He does not call Him, king—he only gives Him the title of Man. As if to say, “How foolish are you to think*

there is any danger from Him—look at Him in all His suffering and shame.”

5, 6. *Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate said unto them, Behold the Man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, You take Him and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him.* That is the third time. It was well that he who had the principal hand in the slaughter of the Lamb of God should make his report that He was “a Lamb without blemish and without spot” and, therefore, fit to be presented in sacrifice before God. For the third time he acquits Him! The Jews answered him, “We have a law”—it may not be your law—“and by our law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God.” This is a reviving of the charge of blasphemy which they had brought against Him in the palace of the high priest.

7, 8. *The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God. When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid.* It shows he was afraid all along—the coward—the vacillating coward—and now a fresh superstition seizes upon him! He believed, as a Roman, in many gods. “What?” he said to himself. “What if, after all, I should have been torturing a Divine Being, a God who has come among men in their likeness?”

9, 10. *And went again into the judgment hall, and said unto Jesus, Where are You from? But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, Do You not speak to me? Know You not that I have power to crucify You, and have power to release You?* And he trembled with fear, “and went again into the judgment hall,” taking his prisoner with him—you can see the two sitting there alone—“and said to Jesus, ‘Where are You from? Tell me now, what is Your character, Your origin, Your rank?’ But Jesus gave him no answer.” Pilate’s day of Grace was over! He had had his opportunity, but that was now ended—there was no answer. It is a very solemn thing when God gives no answer to a man—when a man turns to Scripture, but there is no answer—when he goes to hear the voice, but there is no voice from the oracle for him! And when he even bows the knee in prayer, but gets no answer. The silence of the Christ of God is very terrible. “Then said Pilate unto Him,” with all the pride of a Roman in his face, “Do You not speak to me? Don’t You know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release you?”

11. *Jesus answered, You could have no power at all against Me, except it were given you from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin.* “You have the power to execute the sentence, lent to you from Heaven, but he that brought Me here, and laid the charge against Me, even Caiaphas, as the representative of the Jews, has the greater sin.” And then the Blessed One closed His lips, never to open them again until on the Cross! From this time, “like a sheep before her shearers,” He is dumb. Notice that even though that word is the word of the Judge who judges Pilate, who judges the Jews, yet there is a strain of the gentleness of His Character about it, for though He does virtually declare Pilate

guilty of great sin, yet He says there is a greater, and while there is no apology for Pilate, yet He puts it softly.

12. *And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend: whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.* One of the Herods had put upon his coins the name, "Caesar's friend," and so they quoted the title which one of their kings had taken, and they tell Pilate that he will not be the friend of Tiberius. Here was a sore point with Pilate. He knew that just then Tiberius was gloomy and morose, too ready to catch anything against his servants—and the man by whose influence Pilate had come into power had just then lost all influence at court. So he was afraid it would be his disgrace and discharge as governor if the Jews brought a charge against him to Tiberius. Therefore he trembled.

13. *When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.* The usual form of the Roman judgment place, in the open air, with a stone pavement, and a raised throne.

14, 15. *And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he said unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Pilate said unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.* "To crucify your King." In bitter sarcasm—"You call Him, King, and ask to have Him crucified?" "The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.'" Verily they thus proved the truth of that word, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes." And here He was sent of God! He had come at last, for the scepter has evidently departed from Judah, and these men are crying, "We have no king but the alien monarch, the all-conquering Caesar."

16. *Then he delivered Him, therefore, unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus and led Him away.*

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

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

PILATE AND OURSELVES GUILTY OF THE SAVIOR'S DEATH NO. 1648

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 5, 1882,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see you to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.”
Matthew 27:24, 25.*

THE Crucifixion of Christ was the crowning sin of our race. In His death we shall find all the sins of mankind uniting in foul conspiracy. Envy and pride and hate are there, with covetousness, falsehood and blasphemy eager to rush on to cruelty, revenge, and murder! The devil awakened around the Seed of the woman the iniquities of us all—they compassed the Lord about, yes, they compassed Him about like bees. All the evils of human hearts of all ages were concentrated around the Cross, even as all the rivers run into the sea and as all the clouds empty themselves upon the earth, so did all the crimes of man gather to the slaying of the Son of God! It seemed as if Hell held a formal reception and all the various forms of sin came flocking to the rendezvous—army upon army they hastened to the battle!

As the vultures hasten to the body, so came the flocks of sins to make the Lord their prey. By all the assembled troops of sins there was consummated the foulest crime which the sun has ever beheld. By wicked hands they did crucify and slay the Savior of the world! We have been singing two hymns in which we took to ourselves a share of the guilt of our Lord's death. We sang—

*“Oh, the sharp pangs of smarting pain
My dear Redeemer bore,
When knotty whips and rugged thorns
His sacred body tore.
But knotty whips and rugged thorns
In vain do I accuse!
In vain I blame the Roman bands
And the more spiteful Jews!
'Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.”*

And then after the same manner we sorrowfully asked a question and sang a penitential reply—

*“My Jesus! Who with spit vile
Profaned Your sacred brow?
Or whose un pitying scourge has made*

***Your precious blood to flow?
'Tis I have thus ungrateful been,
Yet, Jesus, pity take!
Oh, spare and pardon me, my Lord,
For Your sweet mercy's sake!"***

Perhaps some of you hardly understand what you have been singing. But others of us have sincerely and intelligently pleaded guilty of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know that He not only suffered *for* our transgressions, but *by* our iniquities. This is not clear to a great many and I would not have them pretend that it is. They cannot see that they have anything to do with the matter of Jesus' death and, therefore, they are not moved to repentance by hearing of it. Indeed, they imitate the example of Pilate in our text when he took water and washed his hands before the multitude and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person."

The object of our present discourse will be to awaken slumbering consciences. Without going into any metaphysical questions as to whether such a man did or did not actually have a share in the particular action by which Jesus died, I shall show you that in many ways men practically commit a like crime and so prove that they have similar dispositions to those ancient Kill-Christ's! Though they repudiate the Crucifixion, they repeat it, if not in form, yet in spirit. Though Jesus is not here in flesh and blood, yet the cause of holiness and truth and His Divine Spirit are still among us and men act towards the Kingdom of Christ, which is set up among them, in the same way as the Jews and Romans acted towards the Incarnate God!

True, all men are not, alike, against Him, for the Lord spoke of some who have "the greater sin," and few are as guilty as the traitor Judas, that son of perdition! But in every form of it the rejection of Christ is a great sin and it will be a great Gospel blessing if it is repented of after the fashion of the Prophet when he said, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." I shall now take up the story of our Lord's appearance before Pilate, from the moment of His being sent back to Herod to the time when He was delivered to the Jews to be led away for Crucifixion. And I shall try to exhibit, by this narrative, several ways in which men virtually put the Christ to death and, therefore, become partakers of the ancient transgression which was committed at Jerusalem.

I. First, there are some—and these are they who have the greater sin—who are DETERMINEDLY AND AVOWEDLY THE OPPONENTS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. These are the men who are represented by the chief priests and elders of the Jews, who of old sought the Savior's blood because they could not endure His teaching. Nothing else would satisfy them but that He should be removed from the earth, for He was a standing protest against their evil deeds. They hated Him because by His Light their wicked lives were reprov'd. These were the true murderers of Christ, who gloried in their shame and defied the punishment of it, crying, "His blood be on us, and on our children."

We still have among us those who cannot endure the teaching of our Lord Jesus. His very name seems to excite their worst passions. They rave at the mention of Him! Oh, the atrocious things that some have said of late of the Christ of God! They have gone out of their way to insult Him. If anyone else had been slandered as He has been, society would not have tolerated the loathsome tongues! Accusations against Jehovah and His Son would seem to be delectable morsels to modern blasphemers, dainties upon which they feed greedily. My flesh trembles when I think of the hard speeches which the ungodly still utter against Him, who, in the day of His humiliation, endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

Many of these calumnies of today are absurd and to be dismissed with utter contempt if it were not for the guilt of the men, themselves, for in these speeches we see that the poison of asps is under their lips! Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. They do not treat so the heroes of war, the philosophers of antiquity, nor even the notorious scum of the race! To all of these they show some candor and often award honors which are doubtfully due—but when they touch upon the Person and life of our blessed Lord, candor and honesty are dismissed—anything like an attempt to understand Him is refused and He and His are treated with ridicule, misrepresentation and falsehood! They heap up their coarsest epithets! They put the worst interpretation upon His words! They give the vilest misrepresentations of His deeds and attribute to Him motives to which He was an utter stranger.

Such men are among us, clamoring to be heard. There have been unbelievers and deriders of Jesus in all times, but just now the race is of fouler speech than usual. Once infidelity was philosophical and thoughtful—and great names were to be found upon her roll, but now her noisiest advocates are bullies after the manner of Tom Paine—men who seem to delight in wounding the feelings of the godly and crushing every sacred thing under their feet. These are the true followers of the men whose mouths were full of, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” They cannot endure that Jesus should be remembered, much less revered! They claim to be “liberal” and to be large-hearted towards all religions—but their unmitigated scorn of the faith of Jesus is displayed on every possible occasion—proving that the spirit of persecution burns within them.

It would be idle for these to say that they would not crucify Christ, for they *do* crucify Him to the utmost of their power by their profane speeches against Him. A certain number's main attack is aimed against the royal authority and reigning power of the Lord Jesus. They exclaim against Him because He claims universal sovereignty. They might not object so much to Christianity as one of various creeds, but as it claims to be supreme, they will have nothing to do with it. The Roman Senate was willing to set up Jesus in the Pantheon, among other gods, but when they learned that Christ claimed to be worshipped, alone, then He was denied a place in the circle of adoration! If the Gospel claims to be the Truth of God and judges other systems to be false, straightway it arouses the opposition of the broad school! We have men among us today who say, “Yes, there is something good in Christianity just as there is in Buddhism.”

Of this precious Buddhism they seem, of late, to be wonderfully fond! Any idol will suit men so long as they can be rid of the living God. A Christ who will be everything or nothing is not to their taste. When He says that He will utterly demolish the idols and break His enemies in pieces as with a rod of iron, they give Him the cold shoulder, for they are distinctly the enemies of Jesus Christ if He is set forth as Lord of All. And we have some of milder cast, who, nevertheless, join with this band, for their opposition is to the *Deity* of Christ. These, in effect, cry, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God."

They grow indignant over the claims which Christians advance for their God and Savior. Christ, the best of Men! Christ, the noblest of Prophets! Christ near akin to Deity, possibly a delegated God—they will go as far as that—but further they will not stir. "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father" is not to their minds. If Jesus is preached as "very God of very God," straightway we hear from them the cry, "Away with Him! Away with Him!" When we proclaim Jesus as King upon God's holy hill of Zion and say of Him, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever," they refuse to bow before His Divine majesty. They do, so far as they are able, destroy the Divinity of Christ and reduce Him to a mere man.

How can such people blame the Jews and the Romans? They could but slay His manhood, but these would destroy His Deity! Is not their guilt as great? I charge all deniers of the Godhead of our Lord with being, as far as they can be, His murderers, for they strike at His noblest Nature by assailing His Divine power and Godhead! May the Spirit of God be here to convince them of their error and lead them to worship Jesus who is exalted at the right hand of the Father! I must charge home the accusation in the name of God and Truth. Avowed opposers of Christ, had they been alive in the days of His flesh, would have wished Him to be put to death, for, so far as they are concerned, He is either dead to them in His true Character, or else they are doing their best in their own conscience and upon the conscience of others to sweep Him out of existence!

If they say they would not have put Jesus to a literal death on the Cross, I say they are putting Him to a death which He would deprecate even more, namely, the destruction of all His influence over the minds of men. By decrying His Atonement by which He reconciles men to God. By setting men's hearts against Him and causing them to refuse His salvation, these men, as far as they can, rob Him of the joy that was set before Him, for which He endured the Cross, despising the shame! Is this nothing? Put me to death if you will, for I shall live when I am dead by the words which I have spoken! I should count it a far worse murder if you could sweep out of men's minds all that I have taught and overthrow all the good which I have attempted to do. And if it is so of a mere *man*, much more must it be so of Jesus—that merely to murder Him upon the Cross is comparatively little compared with declaring—"We will not be influenced by Him, nor believe in Him as Savior and God. And to the best of our power we will prevent others from believing in Him."

What a wretched objective for a man to live for! What a horrible fame for a man to seek after—to stamp out the Gospel of Jesus! Terrible will be

the punishment of this sin! Oh, opponent of Jesus, instead of being less guilty than the Jews of our Lord's day, you are even more culpable! You are not slaying Him in one way, but you are doing it in another, and the crime is the same in spirit! I see a mystic Cross to which your cruel words nail my Lord! I see before my mental eyes a Calvary whereon the Lord Jesus is crucified afresh and put to an open shame by infidel sarcasms and skeptical insinuations! I see Him derided and made nothing of by those who deny His Deity and refuse to believe in His Sacrifice!

Enough of this! May conscience be present here and the Spirit of God be present, too, that men may not dare to wash their hands in innocence if they have been the open antagonists of Jesus and still are so! Oh that you would turn to Him and become His disciples! His beauties are such that they might well charm every honest heart! His teaching is so tenderly reasonable, so full of sweetness and of light, that it is marvelous that men do not receive it with joy! His Cross is unique—a bleeding sufferer bearing offenses that were not His own—that His own *enemies* might live! The conception is so strange that it could never have originated in the selfish mind of fallen man. It bears its own witness on its brow. Woe unto those that fight against it, for it shall cost them dearly. He that stumbles upon this Stone shall be broken, but upon whomever this Stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder!

See what came to these Jewish people—they were, themselves, crucified by Titus in such numbers that they could no longer find wood enough for their execution! Jerusalem destroyed is the result of Jesus Crucified! Beware, you that fight against Him, for the Omnipotent Father will take up His quarrel and all the forces of Creation and of Providence will be at His command to wage war for Truth and righteousness! The Nazarene has triumphed and He will triumph even to the end when He shall have all His enemies under His feet! O you that hate Him, be wise and close the hopeless contest in which you chiefly fight against your own souls!

II. I hope there are not many here to whom this first part of my sermon applies. We will advance to a second point. Pilate, having a conscience which troubled him, was exceedingly anxious not to put Jesus to death and yet could not see how he could avoid doing so, seeing that the Jews threatened to accuse him of lack of loyalty to Caesar and that Caesar, the gloomy tyrant Tiberius, was unrelenting in his fury. After first sending his Prisoner to Herod, he finds that he cannot escape in that way and, therefore, he grasps at a second hope. He tells the mob that the custom of the feast required that one prisoner should be released and that the choice remained with them. He hopes that they will choose Jesus of Nazareth. A vain hope, indeed!

It so happened that there was another Jesus in prison at the time, namely, Jesus Barabbas, who had been a murderer and was guilty both of sedition and robbery. Pilate brings out the two and he gives the Jews their choice. It would make a wonderful picture if it were really so, as a writer on the Life of Christ suggests, that Pilate actually set the two individuals before the crowd. See there the dark-browed, scowling assassin, with fierce looks and every mark of fury and hate upon his face! The man was

taken red-handed, familiar with blood, the brigand whose very profession was strife! There he stands like a wolf—and by his side is set the gentle Lamb of God. See there in His face all that is good, tender, benevolent, heroic.

The incarnations of hate and love are before them—and Pilate gives the crowd their choice. Without hesitation they cry, “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” “Now Barabbas was a robber.” The murderer walks away free and the innocent Jesus is left to die! In this I shall have to impeach a second class of men IN THE MATTER OF THEIR CHOICE. Many among us have, by Divine Grace, chosen Jesus to be our Savior, King and Lord. He is the groundwork of our eternal hope and the spring of our present joy—we have selected Christ to be the Guide and Leader of our lives—and we are not ashamed of the choice! It has been made deliberately and solemnly and we renew it from day to day—

***“High Heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest hour we bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear.”***

I fear that some among you have not chosen Christ. But what have you chosen? Let me mention two or three objects of human choice, worthy to be ranked with Barabbas of old. Too many have chosen *lust* to be their delight—I will not paint the hideous monster—I have no colors. It is a foul and bestial thing! The cheek of Modesty blushes at the very mention of it! Yet, for the pleasures of wantonness, Christ is set aside. For the strange woman, many a man has thrown away his soul and chosen infamy instead of Glory! I half excuse the Jews for choosing Barabbas when I see a man obeying the lusts of the flesh instead of Christ—and yet I am probably addressing individuals who secretly indulge their baser passions and are, thereby, held back from becoming decided Christians. They know they cannot be followers of Christ and yet indulge in wantonness and chambering and, therefore, for this vile self-indulgence they let Jesus go.

Very frequently I meet with persons who have chosen another Barabbas instead of Jesus. What if, to borrow from heathenism, I call it Bacchus? Drink is the demon which enthralls millions! It is a vice which degrades men and defaces the image of God in them. We insult the brutes when we say that a drunken man sinks to the level of the beasts, for the cattle never go so low as that! Alas, I have known men—yes, and women, too—who have been hearers of the Gospel and have, in a measure, felt its power—and yet for this sin they have sold their souls and given up their Savior! No drunk has eternal life abiding in him and, to speak plain English, there are professing Christians who deserve to be called by that name!

I say that they prefer the drink-demon to the holy Lord Jesus! You condemn the Jews for choosing Barabbas? Where will you find a counselor to plead for you when you choose drunkenness? If it was sinful for them to choose a murderer, what must it be for you to choose this cursed vice which murders its hundreds of thousands? Oh, this national vice of ours is the vice which makes this nation a byword and a proverb among the nations of the earth! What shall I say of it? And is this to be set in rivalry

with my Lord? Oh, shame, cruel shame that this should be selected in preference to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us!

“Well, well,” says one, “I do not fall into that sin.” No, my Friend, but what is it that you *do* choose instead of Christ, for if you do not set Him on the throne of your heart, you are choosing something else! Is it that you do not want to be a Christian because you wish to save yourself trouble and would be happy and comfortable and enjoy yourself? You do not choose any openly vicious way in particular, but you prefer to be moderately sinful and to take care of yourself and save all care, thought and anxiety about death and Heaven and Hell. You think that by leading a careless life you are happier than if you yielded yourself to Jesus? You are laboring under a mistake and one thing is clear—*self* is your god—and that is an idol as groveling as any other! The idolater who worships a god of gold or silver, or even of stone or mud, is not quite so degraded as the man who worships himself! Self-worship is coming very low, indeed.

When I am my own god, or my belly is my god, can there be a lower depth? If I live merely to be easy and comfortable and have no care for God, or Christ, or heavenly things—what a choice I am making! Think of it and be ashamed! Oh, I say again, in many a man's choice of what should be the object of his life, he sins precisely as they sinned who put away Jesus and chose Barabbas! I say no more. May the Holy Spirit send home this sadly convicting truth.

III. Thirdly. Pilate, seeing that he cannot, thus, set his Prisoner free, gives Him over into the hands of the soldiers, who straightway make merry over Him and treat Him as an object of contempt. The words are cruel and are enough to draw tears from all eyes as we read them—“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe.”

“I am innocent here,” cries one of my Hearers. What? Are you quite sure that you are free from THE SIN OF CONTEMPT AND OF CAUSING PAIN TO JESUS? Listen a while. When you have been so busy about the world that you could not think of Him. When you have been so eager to be rich that you laughed at the true riches, do you not know that you were twisting a crown of thorns to put upon His head? Your folly in despising your own soul sorely wounds Him! He pities you and cannot bear to see that the thorns of this world should be the harvest which you sow and reap. If He were not so loving of heart and tender of spirit it would not matter, but this unkindness to yourself is unkindness to Him! And virtually when you have been full of cares and anxieties concerning the world and have had no care and no anxiety about Him or about your own soul, you have put a crown of thorns upon His head!

Is this nothing? Let me ask you, when you have gone up to the place of worship on Sunday, as you always do, and have pretended to adore Him, though you do not love Him—do you know what you have done? You have *mocked* Him by a feigned worship and thus you have put the purple robe upon Him! That purple robe meant that they made Him a nominal king, a king who was not, in truth, a king, but a mere show. Your Sunday relig-

ion, which has been forgotten in the week, has been a scepter of reed, a powerless ensign, a mere sham! You have mocked and insulted Him even in your hymns and prayers, for your religion is a pretense with no heart in it! You brought Him an adoration that was no adoration, a confession that was no confession and a prayer that was no prayer! Is it not so?

I pray you be honest with yourselves. Is it not so? And then all the week long have you not preferred *anyone* to Jesus? Any *book* to the Bible? Any *exercise* to prayer? Any enjoyment to communion with Him? Political objects have awakened you, but not the Lord's Glory nor the spread of His Kingdom! Is not this despising Jesus? Is not this mocking Him? Are there not among you some who are weary of the Lord? Weary of the Sabbath? Weary of sermons about Jesus? Weary of atoning blood? Weary of praising the Redeemer? What is this but contempt of Him? Too many have even jested about the holiest of things—if they have not mocked Jesus, personally, they have ridiculed His people for His sake and made mirth of His Gospel!

By some, religion is set up as a scarecrow, and piety is treated as a by-word! Conscientious scruples are laughed at as old-fashioned absurdities and devotion to Christ is set down as next of kin to insanity! We know it is so, even among some who are hearers of the Gospel and outwardly its upholders. There is contempt for the life and power of it—they know and honor its name—but the reality of vital godliness they do not value. At times their conscience thunders heavily at them and then they are compelled to wish they had what, at other times, they disdain! They do despite to the blood of Jesus and yet would gladly be partakers in its pardoning power.

I fear none of us dare wash our hands of this as a sin of our fallen estate! Time was when those of us who love Jesus and could kiss every wound of His, yet thought so little of Him that anything was better than He. The story of His sufferings was as wearisome as a worn-out tale and as for giving our whole selves to Him, we deemed it a fanatical expression or an enthusiastic dream! Blessed Savior, You have forgiven us! Forgive others who are doing the same!

IV. I have but a minute to spare for each point, so now I must turn to another sin of which many are guilty, namely, THE SIN OF HEARTLESSNESS WITH REGARD TO THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR LORD. Pilate thought he had another way of letting his Prisoner go, and this he tried. He scourged Him! I will not tell you how dreadful Roman scourging was. It could not, now, be equaled except, perhaps, by the Russian executioner. It was the most terrible of tortures. Many died under it and almost all the victims fainted after a few blows. By it the human frame was reduced to a mass of bruised, bleeding, quivering flesh. When the Savior was all a mass of wounds and bruises, Pilate brought Him forth and said, "Behold the Man," appealing to what little humanity he hoped there still might be in the chief priests and elders. "Behold the Man!" he said.

"Is not this enough? He is crashed and battered and bleeding all over—is not this enough?" But they had no feeling for Him, whatever, and only cried, "Away with Him." If the spectacle of woe which our Lord presented

on this occasion does not touch you, it is a lamentable proof of hardness of heart! Do not many read the story of His sufferings without emotion? Despised, reviled, crowned with thorns and scourged, our Lord stands alone as the Man of Sorrows, the Monarch of Miseries! Grievings without parallel! Woes unique and by themselves! Have you no tears to shed for Him whom soldiers mocked and Jews derided? No? Is it possible that you answer, "No"? Have you heard the story till it has less effect than an idle romance? For shame! For shame!

And the worst of it is that it should not affect men when they remember that these griefs were voluntarily borne out of love—not of necessity nor from any selfish motive! His woes were borne for His enemies! He bade His disciples begin to preach at Jerusalem that the men who spat in His face might know that they had a share in His compassion—and that he who drove the lance into His heart was one for whom He tasted death! He dies praying for His murderers! Ah me! That it should be so. A man dying for his friend is a noble sight. But a Man dying for those who put him to death is the most extraordinary sight that angels ever beheld! There is this about it, too, which touches Believers most tenderly—our Lord suffered thus on our account. In His death is our hope, or else we are lost forever. If we have not part and lot in the merits of the agony, then for us there remains nothing but a fearful looking for judgment and of fiery indignation!

Do we not mourn when we see Jesus dying for us? O Feeling, you are fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason! Surely our hearts will be like the rock in Horeb! Stricken by the rod of the Cross, our souls will gush with rivers of penitential grief! And here is a marvelous proof of our guilt—that we have compassion for everybody but the Savior! That we can cry over a lapdog and yet can hear of Christ with utter indifference! There are multitudes of persons of this kind and I pray God's Spirit to touch their conscience upon this matter of heartlessness toward Jesus. But I must hasten on, though I might wish to linger, leaving with meditations the enlargement of these charges.

V. There is another crime of which many are guilty which was seen in Pilate and that was the crime of COWARDICE. No less than three times did Pilate say of our Lord, "I find no fault in Him," and yet he did not let Him go. He himself said, "I have power to crucify You and have power to release You," and yet he dared not exercise the power to deliver. Through cowardice he dared not let his perfectly innocent Prisoner go free. He knew, but he did not act up to his knowledge. Have I any before me whose knowledge of good things far outruns their practice? This, surely, will be one of the never-dying worms of Hell—the gnawing of an instructed and disregarded conscience! Over the door of their prison, the lost shall read this inscription—"You knew your duty but you did it not." The knowledge which makes men responsible for their deeds increases that responsibility as it is, itself, increased—and with it their guilt and their punishment!

Moreover, Pilate did not only know the right, but after his own fashion he wished to do it. One almost pities the vacillating coward! See how he struggles to release Jesus in some indirect fashion which may cost him

nothing. He wishes. He resolves. And then he hangs back. Like a vessel tossed with contrary winds, he is, at one time, almost in harbor. But soon he is far out at sea! Oh, the quantities of dead wishes that one might gather in this Tabernacle, as men gather untimely fruit which the wind has shaken from the trees! Men wish to repent, wish to believe, wish to decide, wish to be holy, wish to be right with God—but their wishing leads to no practical decision—and so they perish at the threshold of mercy! Their goodness ends in empty desires which do but evidence their responsibility and so secure their condemnation!

Yet, to be just, we must admit that Pilate did more than wish. He spoke *for* Christ. But having spoken in His favor he did not proceed to *action*, as he was bound to have done. It is possible for a man to say with his tongue, “I find no fault in Him,” and then by his actions to condemn Jesus by giving Him up to die. Words are a poor homage to the Savior. Not by words does He save mankind and not by lip service is He to be repaid! Pilate spoke boldly enough and then retreated before the clamors of the crowd—and yet sometimes Pilate could be firm. When Jesus was nailed to the Cross, the priests begged Pilate to change the accusation which was written over His head, but he would not, but replied, “What I have written, I have written.”

Why could he not have shown a little backbone when Jesus yet lived? He was not altogether such a weak, effeminate being as to be incapable of putting his foot down firmly. If he did so once, he might have done it before and so have saved himself from this great transgression. Are there any Pilates here—persons who would long ago have been Christians if they had possessed enough moral courage? Some foolish companion would laugh at them if they became religious and this they could not bear. Poor cowards! I heard the other day of a lad who dared not pray in the room where two or three others slept and so, like a coward, he crept into bed and succumbed to the fear of others. I fear that some men would sooner be damned than be laughed at!

Another person has a wicked companion and he knows that he must cut his acquaintance if he becomes a follower of Jesus—this he would do, but he lacks courage! O you who shrink back from that which Christ's service involves because of the fear of *men*, know you not the portion of the fearful? O you trembling ones, is Jesus covered with wounds and shame for you and are you ashamed of Him? Death is coming upon Him, speedily, and do you hide your faces from Him? This is cruelty, indeed, both to Christ and to yourself! Can you not leave His enemies? “Come you out from among them, and be you separate: touch not the unclean thing.” Will you not espouse His cause? “If any man will serve Me, let him follow Me.” By this cowardice you do as much as you are able to put the Christ to death!

“How?” you ask. Well, suppose everybody acted as you do? Would there be any Christianity in the world? If everybody was cowardly, would there be a Church at all? Are you not killing Christ and burying Christ as far as you can? Are you not destroying His influence and weakening His Church by refusing to acknowledge Him? Is it not so? Look at it. What influence

you have in the world, you refuse to use for Jesus. Though multitudes are active in despising and opposing Him, you do not lift a hand in His favor. Why do you not come out and say, "I am on His side"? By your supposed neutrality you act as His foe! You must be on one side or the other—now that you have heard the Gospel—for Jesus has said, "He that is not with Me is against Me: he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad." You are against Him and you are scattering abroad!

Suppose others follow your example? "Well," you say, "there is nothing bad in *my* example, except that I am not a Christian." Just so, and under some aspects the very goodness of your example makes it operate all the more powerfully for evil! I do not think that the example of a thoroughly drunken man, for instance, leads many young people into intemperance. On the contrary, many take warning from the spectacle and fly to total abstinence for security. I have often had young men and women coming to join the Church who have been total abstainers of the most intense kind because a drunken father made their childhood so wretched and kept the home so poor that they abhorred the accursed thing! See, then, how an evil example may lose its evil power by very excess.

Yours is another case—your example is, in some respects, admirable—but then you throw it on the side of the devil. The better man you are, the more mischief you are doing by siding with evil! Inasmuch as you are that which is moral, excellent, amiable, you are the very man whose influence Christ ought to have on His side—and if you cause it to go against Him, the fact is all the more deplorable! If the weight of your character goes to make men ignore the claims of the Son of God, what is this but spiritually to compass His death?

VI. Lastly, and oh that the Spirit of God may bless this sharp medicine to some heart that it may feel the pangs of penitence this morning—there is the sin of SELF-RIGHTEOUS HYPOCRISY. This Pilate committed in set form. He took water and washed his hands and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see you to it." What a contradiction! He is innocent, but he gives them permission to be guilty! They could not murder the Lord without his permission. He gives the necessary permit and yet he says, "I am innocent." Do I not see another of the same class over yonder? He says, "I do not despise Christ, or speak a word against Him. I am perfectly innocent of any ill will towards Him. Of course, if others oppose Him they may, for it is a free country—let them do as they like, but I am perfectly clear of it."

It is not the way that a man acts if he sees another being murdered! He does not look on and say that he would rather not interfere. You say you cannot help other people's opinions? Have you no opinion of Jesus of your own? Do you say, "No. I never think of Him"? Is not that contempt? Do you decline to hold any opinion about one who claims to be your God? About one who must be your Savior or you must perish forever? You cannot sheer off in that way! Now that rebellion is afoot, you must either be loyal or be a traitor! The standard is unfurled and each man must take his side. Your negligence of Jesus contradicts your claim to be neutral. You pretend to leave Him alone, but that leaving alone is fatal!

A man is in yon upper room of a burning house and you can save him. I use this illustration, for it is no concern of yours either way, and so you leave it to the firemen and their helpers. Meanwhile, the man perishes because you will not help him. I say that you are inexcusable—that man's blood lies at your door. It was your duty to have rescued him. So the Lord Jesus Christ comes here among men and He is persecuted. You quietly say, "No doubt it is a pity, but I cannot help it." Just so. But by your inaction you side with His foes! Do you say that you are so righteous that you do not need a Savior? That, indeed, is smiting Him on the face!

He comes to be a Savior and you tell Him that He is superfluous? That you are so good that you can do without being washed in His blood? That is spitting in His face and telling Him that He was a fool to die for you! Why should He shed His blood if you are innocent enough without it? In effect you charge God with folly for providing a great Propitiation when such good people as you are need nothing of the kind! I do not believe anybody can more grossly insult the Son of the Highest! This is crucifying Him, indeed! The self-righteous man who says, "I am clean," deprives Christ's Sacrifice of its Glory, His life of its end, His Person of its dignity, His whole work of its wisdom! The very heart of God is set upon the objective for which Christ died and yet the self-righteous man counts this a folly!

Come, my Hearers, there is no room for any of us to accuse his fellow—let us all come with humble confessions to the feet of Jesus, now risen from the dead—and let us each say to Him right sorrowfully—

***"Tis I to whom these pains belong,
'Tis I should suffer for my wrong.
Bound hand and foot in heavy chains
Your scourge, Your fetters, whatever
You bear, 'tis my soul should bear,
For she has well deserved such pains.
Yet you do even for my sake
On you, in love, the burdens take
That weighed my spirit to the ground!
Yes You are made a curse for me
That I might yet be blest through Thee:
My healing in Your wounds is found."***

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 19:1-16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 581, 580.**

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THE WHOLE BAND AGAINST CHRIST NO. 2333

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1889.

*“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Common Hall
and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers.”
Matthew 27:27.*

I HAVE not observed that anyone has turned to account the fact that “the whole band of soldiers” gathered in the Praetorium, or Common Hall, for the purpose of mocking our Lord. That they did mock Him has often been noticed and preached upon, but that they should have gathered unto Him the whole garrison—that all should have been there—is mentioned both by Matthew and by Mark. And this being twice recorded cannot have been without some meaning and some lesson for us.

To begin, then, our blessed Lord, being condemned to die, was given over to the brutal soldiers who garrisoned Jerusalem. They lived in quarters round about the palace of the governor and when the Savior was delivered to them to be put to death, they made Him the center of their mockery and derision before they executed the terrible sentence upon Him. Does it not strike you that any man condemned to die ought to be protected against such usage as that? If he must die, some respect should be paid to one who is about to endure the death penalty. I think that there should be great indulgence shown in such a case—at any rate, nothing should be done or said to hurt the feelings, or to wound the sensibilities. Pity seems to say, “If the man must die, then so be it, but let us not, for a single moment make jest of him. Let there not be mirth—that is a brutality not to be thought of at such a time as this! And to make a man, about to die, the subject of scorn is a superfluity of cruelty and wickedness.” I think that even a devil might be ashamed of such savagery as this!

But there was no law to protect the Savior from these soldiers. Every man's heart seems to have been steeled against Him—the common dictates of the most ignorant humanity appear to have been violated. They said by their actions, if not in words, “He shall not only die, but He shall be stripped of all His honor. He shall be robbed of every comfort. He shall become the butt and target of all the cruel arrows of contempt that we can shoot at Him.”

Still, why is it said that, in order to make Him the object of derision, they gathered together, “the whole band”? I do not know how many sol-

diers constituted the garrison, or how many were barracked round about the governor's palace, but they gathered together, "the whole band"—not merely a few of them who were on duty that day, but *all* were summoned to make a mockery of Christ. It was not because He needed to be guarded lest He should escape, for He had no desire to be set free. It was not because the soldiers would have needed to keep Him securely guarded lest the people should attempt to rescue Him, for the Jews did not want Him to be rescued. On the contrary, it was by their clamor that He was doomed to die. They had cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" He had no friends to stand up for Him, no band of disciples to come and force the soldiers away and set Him free. Therefore these soldiers did not guard Him with the whole strength of the band on that account.

Nor were they all needed to execute the death sentence. With a people eager for His death, four soldiers, a single quaternion, sufficed. He carried His own Cross and they had but to drive the nails into His hands and feet and fasten Him to the tree. That could have soon done it to a Victim so defenseless, so inoffensive—it did not need that they should gather together, "the whole band," and so we are told it as a remarkable circumstance which did not rise necessarily out of the narrative. It must have a meaning of its own, "They gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers."

I shall speak thus upon it. First, it would appear that *the soldiers were unanimous in mocking their Prisoner*. Secondly, *so are men united in opposing Christ*. And, thirdly, *what shall we say of both the facts of which we are to speak tonight?*

I. First, then, it is clear that THE SOLDIERS WERE UNANIMOUS IN MOCKING THEIR PRISONER.

Upon this, I remark, first, that *men are very apt to go together when they go wrong*. You notice, in a workshop, how the religion of Christ will be despised and how certain men will lead the way in uttering calumnies against it. And then the rest will follow. When men go astray, they are like a flock of sheep—one gets through the hedge and all the rest go after it. We have heard of one sheep leaping the parapet of a bridge into a river—and the whole flock went after it and all were destroyed. Men are such curious beings, not only the creatures of their own habits, but the imitators of other men's example! I know not how it is, but persons who, alone and apart, would seem to have some good inclinations, will shake them all off when they get into evil company. At home, they will talk reasonably, but, in the crowd, they speak madly. At home and alone, they are amenable to rebuke and conviction. But when they got with other men, they will not hear a word of it—they shut their ears to anything like good teaching—and they run greedily to do mischief. I do not, therefore, so much wonder that when our Lord was given over to the soldiers, they gathered together the whole band, for it is so usual for men to go together when they go wrong.

Frequently, too, it will happen that *there is not one man to bear his protest*. Would you not have expected that, in a large band of soldiers, there

would have been at least *one* man of noble spirit who would have said, “No, do not torture Him—He is about to die”? Would it have been at all amazing if one man had stood forward, and said, “This Man has done nothing amiss. Our governor has said that he finds no fault in Him. Why, therefore, do you set Him in that chair and robe Him, and bow the knee in mockery, and spit upon Him?” It would not have been very surprising if there had been among the Roman soldiers some one or two who had espoused Christ’s cause, for, truth to tell, those valiant men, although they grew brutalized by living amidst scenes of blood, were capable of deeds of high virtue. One has but to read the old Roman story to stand amazed, sometimes, that such fair flowers of virtue and benevolence could grow on such a dunghill as the Roman State was then. Yet you see that not one out of the whole band of soldiers would say a word for Christ, or absent himself from the ring when their comrades mocked Him.

Perhaps I address some men here who work together and who are in the habit of scoffing at the Cross of Christ. I hope that there is not a workshop in London without one man, at least, who will stand forward and defend his Master’s cause. But if I speak to one to whom that thought has occurred and yet he has said, “I dare not! I would be, myself, the subject of so much persecution that I could not stand forth alone,” now, listen, Sir, if a Caius, or a Fabius, or a Julius had stood forth alone to defend the Lord’s cause, we would have had his name here! And if he had even suffered death for it, he would have been among the brightest of the martyr host! And you know not what honor you lose if you conceal your testimony. If you allow the whole drift of the talk to be infidel and atheistic and never put in your good word for Him whom you call Master and Lord, you dishonor yourself! But if you could have the courage and I hope that you may, to say, “He, of whom you speak thus ill, has saved my soul, snatched me from habits of vice and renewed my character”—if you could stand forward, and bear such testimony for Him—I know that it were a short road to Glory, honor and immortality! It is not likely that you would have to suffer as the martyrs did, but suppose that you did? The more of suffering, the brighter that ruby crown which would be set upon your head in the day of your Lord’s appearing! I hope that Christian men are still made of that grand old stuff which defied the Roman emperors and made them weary of slaughter, for they could not mow down the crops of the Church as fast as they grew! The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church and the more copiously it was shed, the more the Church multiplied!

But, once more, *the number of those who thus mocked Christ made their conduct all the baser*. When you, young fellow, get in with 50 more, and in the workshop you mock at some solitary Christian youth. When you, each one, have your jibe—when you give him what you call, “chaff,” which is sport to you, but cruel enough to be death to him—did it never occur to you that it was a most cowardly thing and altogether unworthy of you, that ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, should all set upon one? What if a man

believes in religion? Has he not a right to do so if he likes? Some of you who talk so much about freedom are the biggest bullies in the world! You boast loudly of religious liberty, but to you it means liberty to be irreligious! Surely I have as much right to worship Christ as you have to despise Him—and if my views of religion should seem to you to be peculiar, yet, if peculiar, have I not as good reason to hold them as you have to reject them?

I speak thus plainly because I know of many, many cases where, if men were men at all, they would cease to persecute Christians, seeing that they persecute one or two wherever they can if they, themselves, happen to be in the majority. Think of this lot of howling dogs around this one gentle Lamb of God, the Christ who had never even a hard word for them, whose mightiest weapon was silence and patience! Think of Him surrounded by all these men of war from their youth up, these Roman legionaries with their imperial eagles! It was a cruel shame. The more there were of them, the meaner it was of them thus, as a whole band, to gather together to mock the Savior.

But I suppose that *their number accounted for the excess to which they went*. If there had only been two or three of them, they would not have thought of all the cruel things that they did to our Lord. To put an old cloak upon Him and to call Him the purpled Caesar is commonplace enough, but one cries, “Let us make a crown for Him,” and they plait the thorns with cruel hands, piercing His temples with the sharp spines. Another says, “Fetch a scepter and put it in His hand. Set Him in that chair and let us bow before Him! Let us cry, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” They would have stopped at that point had there not been so many of them. But, being so large a band, one coarse fellow must go still further and he spits into that blessed face!—

***“See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in His lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
And spit in their Creator’s face.”***

I hardly think that one, two, three, or even half-a-dozen, by themselves, could have been guilty of such detestable, loathsome conduct to Christ! But the whole band being together, they thought of fresh insults.

Take heed of sinning in a crowd! Young man, abandon the idea that you may sin in a crowd! Beware of the notion that because many do it, it is less a guilt to any one of them. Remember that the broad way was always the *wrong* road and that it leads to destruction, none the less because many walk in it. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.” Though you finish up the day’s work of sin with three cheers for your noble selves, you shall find yourselves arraigned, each one, before the Judgment Seat of God—each one to give account for the deeds done in his body according to what he has done, whether it is good or whether it is evil. Oh, the pitiful story, a whole company of soldiers united against Christ, with not one to quit the ranks and say, “No, com-

rades! Do not do this!" But all wallowing in their cruelty, like swine in the mire!

II. That leads me to talk to you, secondly, about another point. As these soldiers were unanimous in mocking their illustrious Prisoner, SO ARE MEN UNITED IN OPPOSING CHRIST.

Like these soldiers, *many do not pass Christ by with neglect*. I should have thought that many a brave man of that Roman legion would have said, "Pshaw! I shall not go to taunt the poor Jew who has been hunted down by the priests. Nobody gives Him a good word—even His own followers have fled from Him. I heard one of them declare that He did not know Him, though I knew that man was a liar, for I saw Him in the Garden with his Master. My comrades are going to the Praetorium to mock Him, but I shall not go. Such mirth is unworthy of a man, especially of a Roman." Instead thereof, they were all there! Curiosity fetched them up—they must all come to see this Man of whom they had heard so much—and an evil conscience made them bitter against Him, for, because *they* were evil, His being good was a protest against their wicked deeds.

So they were all united against Him and *they came up, every one of them, to show their scorn*. It is a strange thing, but if Christ is fully preached, somehow men cannot be indifferent to Him. If they can get away and never hear of Him, they may be indifferent. But the true Gospel either offends men, or else it charms them. I believe that you may preach a certain sort of gospel, from the first of January to the end of December, and everybody will say, "Yes, that is very good, very, very good, perfectly harmless." Yes, a chip in the porridge, with no flavor in it. But if it is the real out-and-out Gospel of a Crucified Savior, there will be someone who will say, "Ah, that is what I need! I like that," but there will be others who will grind their teeth and say, "I will never hear that man again! I cannot bear his talk. I hate it."

Do not be surprised when I say that, if I hear that So-and-So was very angry at one of my sermons. I state as my belief, "That man will go to Heaven. I have the hook in that fish and I shall yet catch him!" But when I hear people simply say, "Oh, yes, we heard the sermon!" and they make some trifling remark about it and go their way, nothing good comes of it. It is better that a man should be in a downright rage against Christ than be utterly indifferent to Him! And where He really comes so that men are obliged to see Him, they cannot long be indifferent. "That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," is one of the objects of His death.

The Cross of Christ is the great detector of men. Fix it up and men straightway go to the right or to the left of it. It is the parter and divider of the ways. Jesus, Himself, said, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad." Men cannot pass by utterly with neglect after once hearing the story of the Cross. They must gather up for Christ or against Him, and, alas, many of them do gather up to pour their scorn upon Him!

Many ungodly men *feel an inward contempt for Christ's claims*. "No," says one, "I have no such contempt for Christ." I would not wish to charge you wrongfully, but if you are not a believer in Him. If you have never accepted Him to be your Savior and your Lord, I venture to repeat the charge—you have an inward contempt for His claims, my Hearers. Whether you are Christians or not, you are the subjects of King Jesus. God has put you into His hands and you will have to stand before His Judgment Seat at the last. The Man, Christ Jesus, who died on Calvary and rose again, and went to Heaven, will judge every one of you at the Last Great Day—and He claims that you *now* should become His servants, and yield obedience to Him!

Now, I know that you will say in your hearts, "We shall not do anything of the kind!" Just so, and have I not proved what I said? "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and that carnal mind may be in a man who always goes to Church, or to Chapel. If he has not been renewed, he does not believe in Christ as King and, as far as his heart is concerned, he mocks at the idea of his being a servant of Christ and Christ being Lord over him. In his very soul he thinks this to be a preposterous claim, that he should be obedient to Christ in everything. Besides, the mass of men do not seek to know what Christ's claims are. They are ignorant of His Royalty and Sovereignty—and it is in this way that their minds are filled with an indistinctly expressed, but still very powerful, contempt for Him.

And so it happens, in the next place, that *men invent different ways of showing their derision*. It is very curious that you find very learned men opposed to Christ and they go to work, usually, by destructive criticism, trying to get rid of this part of the Bible and that. But an ignorant man cannot do that, so he says that he does not believe in the Bible at all. Here you find a rich man despising Christ, sneering at "the common people," as he calls Christ's followers, and there you see another man who is very poor, despising Christ by wishing to overthrow all the rules of His sacred Kingdom. Herod and Pilate hate one another till Christ comes—and then they join together in reviling Him.

These Roman soldiers, having all come together, found employment in mocking Christ. First, some of them stripped Him. Oh, have I not seen men at it in these days, stripping Christ of His Deity, stripping Him of His Priesthood, stripping Him of His Sovereignty, stripping Him of His Righteousness, stripping Christ of everything that makes Him Christ? Is not that the way with many of the rich, the great and the "advanced" theologians of the present day? They show their hatred of Christ by stripping Him!

There are others who go to work the other way—they put a scarlet robe on Him. I have seen them do it—put other men's garments upon Him, make Him out to be what He never was—travesty the Doctrines of Grace, caricature the Gospel and hold it all up to contempt, imputing to Christ the faults of all His followers and even laying at His door the sin of men who, like Judas, have betrayed Him! That is another method of showing enmity to Christ. Then we see all around us men who mock at Christ's

Royalty. They crown Him with a crown of thorns by their harsh speeches against His people. By their persecutions of those who love Him, Christ is often crowned, again, with thorns. The husband has done it in his unkindness to his believing wife. Parents have done it in their objection to their children following Christ. The man or woman who has given the cold shoulder to a pious friend, has thus put another crown of thorns upon the Savior's head.

And have we not seen them put the reed into His hand by representing Christ as being a mere myth and His Doctrine as a dream, a holy fancy, a proper thing to keep the people quiet, but with no matter of fact or truth in it? So they put into His hand the reed-scepter to mock Him and He regards it as mockery. And thus, around the Christ, today, I seem to see, with eyes closed, but by the vision of faith, a multitude kneeling before Him and pretending to worship Him—hypocritical worshippers—those who even by their bedsides are hypocrites, repeating a form of prayer and yet never really praying! They are drawing near to Him with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him. Oh, how do sinners thus prove their unanimity of enmity to Christ! Even in their pretended worship, they do but show the opposition of their hearts to Him.

Here and there, also, I see one coarser than other men who spits upon Jesus and smites Him. You cannot live long in London without hearing from men who are opposed to the Cross of Christ, expressions that disgust you. I have given up all idea, now, that we are living in a Christian country. Believers in England are a band of Christ's soldiers who are holding the fort against deadly odds! Ours is a heathen country with an admixture of Christian people and a smear, a varnish of pretended religion, but still a heathen country! And every now and then some outspoken heathen, by his awful profanity, makes us wish that we could not hear at all! This is how they spit on Christ. One does it very politely with a bow. Another comes forward and abuses both the Christ and His Cross. He has spat in His face and honestly lets us know where he stands. One will undermine the Truth of God—another brings the battering ram, in open day, to beat down the citadel—but they are so united together that, with one accord, the whole band of soldiers is gathered against Christ.

Dear Friends, if men attacked any one Doctrine, you would find only one band of men opposing it, but when Christ, Himself, is the object of mockery, the whole band gathers round Him! If I preach some of the Doctrines of Calvinism, I shall find men who are fatalists, and necessitarians and the like, who will agree with me. But if I preach the whole Gospel of Christ, these very men who might have been my friends under one form of doctrine, will be my enemies against the whole of it! Only let Jesus appear, and Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, learned and unlearned—until they are renewed by Grace—count His Cross to be a stumbling block and His Doctrine to be foolishness!

Now notice that men *who could mock Christ like this were capable of doing anything evil*. If they could revile Christ, it was no wonder that they

cast lots for His clothes just at His feet when He hung on the Cross. I am often astounded at things that I read about gamblers and what they have been known to do. It is 50 years ago since there was a story told by a policeman—and I do not doubt its truth—of two men at Hampstead who, having bet with one another all that they had, at last had a wager as to which should hang the other. And one of them did hang the other. The policeman came along just in time to save him and when the man was cut down, what do you think he said? Why, he said that he would have hung the other man, if he could, to win the bet!

That was thought to be very extraordinary, but it is not so very long ago since, at the laying of the first stone of a chapel, a friend of mine stood behind two gentlemen from Newmarket and, when one whom I know stood up to pray over the first stone, these two made a bet about how long he would be praying! Men will do anything for a wager. That mischievous vice which is becoming so common, nowadays, leads to an extraordinary hardness of heart beyond anything else! And I cannot so much wonder that men who were brought up as these Roman soldiers were, were capable of mocking Christ and of anything else that was evil.

III. I have finished when I have asked and answered this question, WHAT SHALL WE SAY OF BOTH THE FACTS WHEREOF WE HAVE SPOKEN TONIGHT?

These cruel soldiers unanimously came together to see Christ as a prisoner and to put Him to extraordinary scorn—*yet out of this band Christ found witnesses*. Their chief officer, “the centurion, and they that were with him,” as they stood and saw Christ die, said, “Truly this was the Son of God.” And some of these soldiers, being appointed to watch the tomb of Christ, came and declared that He had risen from the dead. They were fine witnesses, were they not? Men who were too rough to lie to help a sect. They came forward to bear testimony to the Christ. O God, if there are any here who have blasphemed You, who have cursed Christ to His face, who have persecuted Christ’s people, save them, tonight, and make them witnesses of Your power to bless! When such a man gets saved, he is a good witness for Christ. He says, “I know what Christ can do, for He has changed my heart, He has appeared to me by the way and manifested Himself to me. And I know and am sure of that which I testify, that, verily, this is the Son of God.”

Next, learn another lesson. *All this mockery should rebuke the backwardness among Christ’s friends*. When He was to be mocked, all the soldiers came up. Some of them were down in the canteen, but they left their wine and came up to mock Him. Some of the soldiers, perhaps, had furlough for that day, but they gave up their holiday to go to mock Christ. Now, then, Brothers and Sisters, if His enemies could gather together the whole band *against* Him, let us gather together the whole band *for* Him. Why, just look at some of you on the Lord’s-Day! There are a few drops of rain that might spoil your best bonnets, or wet your new clothes, so you cannot go to Chapel. You would have gone to market, you know, rain or

shine! How many there are who will not be able to come to the Prayer Meeting tomorrow night! One pleaded, some time ago, at the Prayer Meeting, "Lord, bless those that are at home on beds of sickness!" "Yes," said the preacher, "and, Lord, bless those that are at home on sofas of wellness!" There are plenty of that kind, who stay at home because they have not enough of the hearty spirit that ought to be in them to let the whole band gather together to confess Christ. Do you love Jesus Christ, my dear Sister? Then come and confess it! Do you love Jesus Christ, my Brother? Then out with your avowal of it! Do not try to go to Heaven behind the hedges. Get on the King's High Road and travel in broad daylight as a soldier of Christ should. Say—

***"I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause."***

Next, I think that *these mockers chide the uninventiveness of many Christians*. See how they brought out the old red cloak, plaited the crown of thorns and cried, "Put them on Him!" Then they brought the scepter of reed, saying, "Stick it in His hand and shout, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" Then came the spitting and the smiting—they could not have made the mockery more complete. They soon rigged up all that mimicry of royalty. Come, then, Brothers and Sisters, let us be inventive in honoring Christ—

***"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."***

See, is there not some new plan to be tried, some method that you have not yet attempted by which you could make Jesus loved and honored in the soul of somebody, be it only a poor child, a servant girl, or the most humble man in the street? Surely, if enmity was so quick to deride Him, love ought to be equally alert and inventive to find out ways by which to honor Him!

But, once more, *all this mockery should excite our admiration of our patient Lord*. Remember that as He sat there, flouted and made a jest of, He might with one glance of His eyes have flashed Hell into their souls and slain every one of them! Had He only opened those lips, He could have spoken thunderbolts that would have destroyed them at once! But He sat there and patiently bore it all. As a sheep before her shearers, He was dumb. He opened not His mouth because He was bearing all this to save you and to save me. Blessed Savior! Oh, come, let us worship and adore and love Him!

The last lesson is, *let us summon all our faculties to honor Christ tonight*. Gather together the whole band, your memory of all His goodness, your judgment of all His greatness, all your hopes and all your fears—your quieted conscience, your soul at rest—come, and with the whole band of faculties that God has given you, from the highest to the lowest, bow down in grateful adoration before Him who bowed so low that He might lift us up to be with Him forever! Dear Hearers, are you trusting Christ? There is no other trust that will do for a soul for time and for eternity! On a dying bed, it must be none but Jesus—let it be none but Jesus on your bed, tonight,

before you fall asleep. Do not dare to close your eyes till you have committed your soul into the keeping of Him who still holds out His hands, as He did upon the Cross, that He may receive you with open arms and save you with an everlasting salvation! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:22-50.**

Our Lord was brought before the Roman governor, Pilate. He was anxious to let Jesus go, but he was a weak-minded man, easily swayed by the noisy cry of the people, prompted by the chief priests and elders.

Verses 22, 23. *Pilate said unto them, What shall I do, then, with Jesus which is called Christ? They all said unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil has He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified.* A blind, unreasoning hate had taken possession of the people. They gave no answer to Pilate's wondering enquiry, "Why, what evil has He done?" for He had done nothing amiss. But they only repeated the brutal demand, "Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified!" The world's hatred of Christ is shown in similar fashion today. He has done no evil, no one has suffered harm at His hands, all unite to pronounce Him innocent, and yet they practically say, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!"

24. *When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see you to it.* Ah, Pilate, you cannot rid yourself of responsibility by that farce! He who has power to prevent a wrong is guilty of the act if he permits others to do it, even though he does not actually commit it himself. If you are placed in positions of power and responsibility, do not *dream* that you can escape from guilt by merely allowing other people to do what you would not do yourself.

25. *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.* All the people willingly took upon themselves the guilt of the murder of our dear Lord—"His blood be on us, and on our children." This fearful imprecation must have been remembered by many when the soldiers of Titus spared neither age nor sex and the Jewish capital became the veritable Aceldama, the Field of Blood.

26. *Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.* Why scourge Him before delivering Him up to be crucified? Surely this was a superfluity of cruelty! The Roman scourging was something which I scarcely care to describe—it was one of the most terrible punishments to which anyone could be subjected—yet Pilate first scourged Jesus and *then* gave Him up to die by crucifixion.

27, 28. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Common Hall, and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped*

Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. Some old soldier's coat that they found lying about, they cast upon Christ in imitation of the royal robes of Caesar or Herod.

29-31. *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.* By that fact, though they did not intend it, our Lord was recognized in the street as the same Person who had been taken into the Praetorium by the soldiers. Had Jesus been brought forth in the scarlet robe, persons looking at Him might not have known Him to be the same Man who wore the garment woven from the top throughout—but in His own seamless raiment, they readily recognized the Nazarene.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross.* I wonder if He was a black man. There was a Simon in the early Church and it certainly was the lot of the Ethiopian to bear the Cross for many and many an age. This Simon was a stranger, anyway, and a foreigner—he was truly honored to be compelled to bear the Cross after Christ.

33. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull.* From its shape. There appears to be to this day a hill, still in the form of a human skull, outside the gate of Jerusalem. When they came to that common place of execution, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of the city,

34. *They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* A stupefying draught was given to the condemned—that is the only mercy that there was about the whole thing. The Romans did give to the crucified a draught of myrrh to take away something of the agony of crucifixion, but our Lord came not to be stupefied—He came to suffer—therefore He would not take anything that would at all impair His faculties. He drank even to the dregs the bitter cup of grief and woe.

35. *And they crucified Him.* Horrible scene, to see those blessed hands and feet pierced with nails, and fastened to the Cross!

35. *And parted His garments, casting lots.* Rattling the dice at the foot of the Cross! Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. I believe that crimes have been committed by persons under the influence of gambling, which never could have been committed by them in any other condition of mind—“They parted His garments, casting lots.” See here, you gamblers! With Christ's blood bespattering them, these soldiers still dared to raffle for His robe.

35, 36. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there.* His enemies gloating their cruel

eyes with the sight of His sufferings. His friends with many tears watching His amazing griefs. It is for us, tonight, with humble faith and grateful love, to mark the incidents connected with His painful death.

37, 38. *And set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. Giving Him the place of honor, which means, in this case, the place of dishonor. He was the apex of that terrible triangle.*

39, 40. *And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, You that destroys the Temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. This is the cry of the Socinians, today, "Come down from the Cross. Give up the atoning Sacrifice and we will be Christians." But, by rejecting His vicarious Atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as those mockers at Golgotha did!*

41, 42. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. Just so. Get rid of a crucified Savior, then they will believe in Him! Atonement, Substitution, vicarious Sacrifice—this staggers them. They will have Christ if they can have Him without His Cross.*

43-46. *He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Every word in this terrible cry from the Cross is emphatic! Every syllable cuts and pierces to the heart!*

47. *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This Man calls for Elijah. They knew better, yet they jested at the Savior's prayer*

48. *And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge, It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life! In His death, the whole circle of creation was completed.*

48-50. *And filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. The rest said, Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him. Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. Christ's strength was not exhausted! His last Word was uttered, "with a loud voice," like the shout of a conquering warrior! He need not have died on account of any infirmity in Himself, but voluntarily, for your sake—for your sake and mine—He "yielded up the ghost." Blessed be His holy name!*

MOCKING THE KING

NO. 3138

A SERMON
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“And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head.”
Matthew 27:28-30.

[There are two other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon on verse 29—Sermons #1168, Volume 20—THE CROWN OF THORNS and #2824, Volume 49—MOCKED OF THE SOLDIERS—
Read/download the entire sermons, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.]

I AM certain that I would fail if I were to attempt to preach a sermon that should be worthy of such a text as this. I shall make no such attempt but, during the few minutes available for the address of this evening, I shall try to set forth our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, as He was when—

“Sinners in derision crowned Him.”

I pray the Holy Spirit to enable me to do this, for unless He shall do so, my words will be of no avail.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we have before us a King—such a King as was never known before! His pedigree is more glorious than that of any mere earthly monarch. His right to reign is indisputable. His power to subdue all to Himself is infinite, whether He chooses to use it or not. His Character is such as never belonged to any king before. He is as eminent in goodness as He is supreme in power—“the Son of the Highest,” “who is over all, God blessed forever”—yet who became the Son of Man for our sakes! This is the King who is now before us.

But what an enthronement was accorded to Him! See that scarlet robe? It is a contemptuous imitation of the imperial purple that a king wears. See that old chair into which the soldiers have thrust Him so that He may be seated upon a mockery of a throne? See, above all, that crown upon His head? It has rubies in it, but the rubies are composed of His own blood, forced from His blessed temples by the cruel thorns! Look, they pay Him homage, but the homage is their own filthy spit which runs down His cheeks. They bow the knee before Him, but it is only in mockery. They salute Him with the cry, “Hail, King of the Jews!” but it is done in scorn. Was there ever grief like His? It amazes us that such superlative goodness should have been treated with such fiendish malice, that such mercy should have been in such misery, that such majesty should have been reduced to such despising! Truly, He was “despised and re-

jected of men; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” And they do not exaggerate who speak of Him as the Emperor of Sorrow and the enthroned Prince of Misery. Look at Him and then restrain your tears if you can. Gaze upon Him, you who love Him and who know how fair was His glorious Countenance before it was marred more than the face of any man—and see it all stained with His own blood—and then let your heart delight if it can. No, rather let me say indulge your griefs and let your sorrow flow in copious streams, for of all spectacles that were ever witnessed by human eyes, this surely is the most grievous!

There are three things upon which I am going to speak. There are many other things to be seen in this strange exhibition of Majesty in misery, but these three things will suffice to occupy our thoughts at this time.

I. The first is this. I see in our Savior thus mocked and put to shame, **THE EMBLEM OF WHAT OUR SIN HAS DONE.**

Remember that *Jesus Christ stood in the sinner's place*. This is an old Truth of God with which you are very familiar, but of which you are never tired of hearing. Having been “made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a Man,” and having agreed to stand in the place of sinners as if He had been, Himself, a sinner, you see in Jesus Christ the full result of epitomized sin. Man wanted to be a king, or to be more than a king. “You shall be as gods,” said the serpent to Eve in the Garden of Eden, insinuating that the great God was jealous of man and fearful that man would grow so great as to be His rival! Thus tempted, man put out his hand and touched the fruit of which he had been forbidden to partake. He had been a happy subject, but he hoped that he might become a happier king! It had been his delight to do the will of the Lord, but now he thought he would be able to do his own will and that he would be able to reign side by side with God, or even in His place!

Ah, foolish man, see what kind of royalty it is that sin can bring you! Come here and see as in a mirror the image of the coronation which sin gives to man. See how it crowns him with mock dignity and honor. It makes him look like a king, but it is only a tinsel splendor—all outside show and sham. It gives him no royal rank or regal character in any case whatever. It is true that there is a crown upon man's head, but it is a crown of thorns and this is the only crown that sin can ever give to poor humanity. Man wanted to be lord of the earth and so he was in a certain sense, but his first act of lordship was to cause a blast and blight upon Paradise and to sow the earth with thorns and thistles so that from then on he should never eat bread without being reminded of his sin through the very sweat on his face! O yes, Man, you are a king! I can see your crown! Set great store by it if you can—proud, foolish monarch! You scorned to be a subject of the great Ruler of the universe and now you have become a monarch yourself! Behold your royal regalia! Especially notice your crown—a crown of thorns! This is how sin crowns us! We see the same thing in our Savior, when He stood in our place—He was mocked, despised, rejected, crowned with thorns—and this is what we become through sin. “Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.” Christ

on the Cross is a yet fuller type of what man would have become had sin been let alone. It brings manhood ever lower and lower until it plucks his very life out of him and lays him dead beneath the clods of the valley. Sin's only throne is a mock one! Its only crown is a painful one and its only reward is sorrow and shame. In Jesus, mocked by the soldiers, we see what sin had brought our race to and all that sin could do for us.

But our Lord, as a spectacle of shame, was also a Representative of all of us in another way as to what sin would make of us. *In the time of His shame nobody had a good word for Jesus.* All His disciples forsook Him and fled. He was deserted by all other men and given over to mockery. That is just what our condition would be apart from Christ! And, mark you, it is just what will be the condition of every sinner who has no share in Christ's substitutionary Sacrifice. The angels that kept their first estate must be ashamed of men—and redeemed men, themselves, will, throughout eternity, be ashamed of ungodly men. Daniel tells us that when men shall awake, after the resurrection—unforgiven, unsaved—they will wake up “to shame and everlasting contempt.” Among the pains and miseries of the world to come, to the ungodly, this will perhaps be one of the most crushing—that the whole universe will ring with scorn of them! There will not be any beings capable of thought that will have any admiration for sinners, then! They will all wonder with the wonderment of contempt how men could ever have acted as they have done. I think some angel will say to them, “You, created by God and fed by His bounty, used your breath only to speak against the Most High. Though every day you owed every morsel that you ate and even the garments on your backs to the benevolence of God—the gifts of His charity—you ungratefully lifted up your heel against Him! You were constantly receiving favors from the plentiful Benefactor and yet were never grateful for them. Shame on you, you ungrateful men and women!” And then the angel might say, “And after you had sinned so foully, the Gospel was brought to you and you were bid to believe in Jesus. Christ crucified was set before you, but even that wondrous sight never touched your heart, or, if your heart was touched for a little while, the impression soon wore off, for you turned your back upon that wondrous sight and said, by your actions, if not by your words, that it was nothing to you that Jesus should die!” It seems to me that an angel, looking down upon a sinner who has rejected Christ, will think of him as some sevenfold atrocity of nature!

My dear Hearers, do not think that I am speaking too strongly. I am not, for there can be no crime that can be equal to that of the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by a sinner who has had the Gospel preached to him! It will be proven to be so in the world to come if not in this. And I believe that you impenitent sinners will be ashamed of yourselves, then, and that you will call upon the mountains and rocks to fall upon you, to hide you from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, because you will feel so mean, so wretched, so contemptible even to yourselves as you remember that Jesus Christ upon the Cross, with unparalleled love, had no charms for you! You will then see what you do not appear to see now—that you must have been the meanest creature that ever existed

that you did not at once fly to His arms, kiss His feet and then and there say, "Blessed be God for such a Savior! I love Him and will spend and be spent for Him all my days."

Jesus Christ there, as an object of shame and scorn, is only a picture and emblem of what every sinner is and what every sinner will be unless renewed by Grace—he will be an object of everlasting shame and contempt! How the very devils in Hell will mock him throughout eternity! He shall wear his mock crown—it will not even be a crown of thorns—it will be a circle of flames of fire! But how terrible will be the laughter of the fiends in the Pit as they gather around him and cry, "You would be your own master, would you not? You would be a king, would you not? You would not kiss the Son, you would not yield to His sway, you would have your own way! Now see what it has all come to—a crown of fire that cannot be quenched! You said that you could save yourself—why did you not do so? You said that you could make yourself fit for Heaven any day without a Savior—why did you not do so?" Such mocking as these, which will come as much from the man, himself, as from his companions in misery, will make him realize that the fruit of sin is shame—and that it is bitter beyond all description or imagination!

II. Now, secondly, our Savior thus mocked, despised and rejected of men, gives us A PICTURE OF THE WORLD'S ESTIMATE OF HIM.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth as the Savior sent from God, not, "to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." What does the world think of Him? He has lived upon the earth 33 years and all that time He has done nothing but deeds of kindness to all with whom He has come into contact. And now the world is about to give its verdict concerning Him. What eulogy will it pass upon this great Lover of humanity? What will it say to this grandest of all philanthropists? What are the rewards with which it will seek to ennoble Him? There they are! There they are! Coarse laughter and cruel mockery in the common room of the Praetorian guards! That is what the world thinks of Christ—it thinks *nothing* of Him! It ridicules and despises Him!

"But," some of you say, "we have never treated Christ like that!" Listen, Sirs, there are some of you in this house who are quite indifferent to the Lord Jesus Christ. You pay some outward deference to religious worship, but you have never given your hearts to Christ. You have never spent even an hour in your whole lives in seriously meditating upon His blessed Person and His glorious work. You are not in a right state of heart to speak to His praise and glory, neither can you do anything to extend His cause and Kingdom in the earth. It is true that you do not blaspheme Him—you are not openly in opposition to Him, but you are just indifferent. Can there be anything much worse than indifference to the Lord Jesus Christ? He is so loving and gentle, and so tender of heart that to be indifferent to Him is to cut Him to the quick! Oh, had He been indifferent to us—when there was no other eye to pity us and no other arm to save us—if He had been indifferent to us, then, instead of meeting in this place tonight to hear of Him, we would, all of us, have been in Hell! But

He was not indifferent to us, so let none of us be so cruel as to be indifferent to Him.

There are some who are not indifferent, for they are opposed to Christ—not to the Christ whom they have imagined, but to the real Christ of Calvary! If they hear the Gospel preached simply as we find it in the Bible, they are very angry. They can admire any false gospel that men have manufactured, but the Gospel of the Bible does not suit them. When they listen to that, they are carried away with wrath and indignation. For instance, the great central Doctrine of Substitution—Christ suffering in the sinner's place—how many turn away with contempt from that plainly revealed Truth! Then the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, which is the very marrow of Christ's Gospel—how many are incensed at that and cry out against it! The true Christ, the real Christ—they are angry at every mention of Him! Perhaps there are some of you who have been persecuting your children because they have been speaking about the Savior. Do I address a husband who has spoken very bitterly to his wife because of her religion, or a brother who has been persecuting his sister because she is a Christian, or an employer who has been sneering at and ridiculing his godly employee? Do you not know that in acting thus, you are ridiculing Christ Himself? For, if these people are really followers of Christ, He counts that whatever is done to them is done to Himself. He said to Saul of Tarsus, "Why do you persecute *Me*?" Saul had no idea that he was persecuting the Lord—he thought it was only a few poor deluded men and women that he was hauling off to prison or to death—but it was Christ, Himself, in the person of His followers, whom Saul was persecuting! Take care what you are doing, I pray you, you who are thus persecuting the Christ of God, for it is very common for Christ, in this way, to receive from the world nothing but indifference and contempt, or actual opposition and persecution!

And, alas, I grieve to have to say it, but I fear that Christ is crowned with thorns and mocked by a great many who scarcely think they are doing so. I mean, for instance, do you not feel that it is mocking the Savior to have His image set up in many countries as an idol to be worshipped? Even in our own land you may find tens of thousands bowing down before what they think to be the image of Christ or before a picture of His Cross! I would rather die a thousand deaths, if I could do so, than that anyone should set up my image and turn it into a god! Yet I am only a poor weak, sinful man and, therefore, so to degrade me would not matter much—but to take Jesus Christ, the pure and perfect Son of God, and make an idol of Him—a detestable loathsome thing, for such is an idol—must cut Him to the quick! It must daily crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame. If you will make idols, take devils and make idols of them! But to take the Son of God and make an idol of Him is infamous! When the poor heathen bow before their ugly idol of wood or stone, it is degraded by being put to such an evil use—but when the immaculate Son of God has His image prostituted to such a vile use as that of being made part of the machinery of idolatry, it is atrocious! Now is He mocked indeed!

But there are other people who seem determined to mock Christ in other ways. He instituted the ordinance of Believers' Baptism to be the introductory rite into Church fellowship, but the mockers have changed the subject, mode and meaning of the ordinance and turned it into a piece of witchcraft which, they say, regenerates unconscious babies and makes them members of Christ, children of God and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven! Christ also instituted a simple Supper of bread and wine to be a memorial of His death. But the mockers have changed that ordinance into the sacrifice of the "mass," a thing for "priests" to perform, saying that they make the bread and wine into the *actual flesh and blood* of Jesus Christ! Oh, these are dreadful horrors! I sometimes marvel that the earth does not open and swallow up these mockers and that Almighty God still allows these abominations to continue! Surely the mockery of Christ by the Praetorian guard was not such a crime as this! Then there are others who mock Christ in another way. They preach Christ but say that He is nothing but a man. They exalt His humanity, but deny His Deity! Is not this doing spiritually what the soldiers did literally? Such preachers put on Christ a purple robe but, as they deny His Deity, it is only a mock robe—it is not the true purple of Omnipotence and Omniscience which belongs to Him of whom the Psalmist said, "The Lord reigns, He is clothed with majesty." They put on Him the crown of humanity, but it is only a crown of thorns! They put in His hand a scepter, but it is nothing but a reed! Their Christ is nothing but a man and not the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God, Christ Jesus our dear Lord and Savior! They have taken away the King's real regalia, His real scepter and His real crown—and thus they have degraded Him to their own level. Or rather, I should say that they would do so if they could! It is thus that Jesus is still mocked and shamefully entreated by some whose preaching consists of philosophical essays in which there is no mention of the precious blood of Christ—the Atonement and all the other grand old Doctrines of Christianity are utterly ignored! This is just imitating the Roman soldiers who set Christ up on an old chair and mocked Him with all the emblem of royalty travestied and with everything that constituted regal power and majesty taken away from Him.

Worst of all, there are some professors who, in a certain sense, hold the Truth, but who hold it in unrighteousness! There are some who say that they love the Lord Jesus Christ and they will probably come with us to the Communion Table tonight pretending that they do love Him, yet knowing all the while that Christ has no real power over their lives. I marvel at some of you who can degrade yourselves by drunkenness and by even worse sins, or who can be guilty of dishonesty in business, or who live altogether graceless lives and yet dare to talk as if you were trusting in the precious blood and righteousness of Christ! Oh, how you mock Him and insult Him by acting thus! Never did the soldiers' spit, which ran down His blessed cheeks in that season of shame, dishonor Him as much as when His praises are sung here by you who will, tomorrow, be singing a lascivious song, or who even dare to come to His Table fresh from the haunts of sin! May God have mercy upon you and turn

you from your evil ways, for, if He shall not do so, there shall be no punishment too stern to mark His sense of your gross insults to His Son! I charge you, in the name of the thrice holy Jehovah, if you are living in sin, to refrain from pretending to be saints! If you cannot keep close to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will not follow after holiness, I beseech you not to play the fool with God and the liar to yourselves by saying that Christ is your King! The devil is your king, so you cannot love the cup of the Lord while you love the cup of the drunkard! And you must not sit down to feast with the saints while you revel in uncleanness! How can you enjoy the pleasures of religion while you are satiated with the pleasures of the world?

You think that I am speaking severely and so I am, for I sometimes feel almost brokenhearted over some whose inconsistencies make sad havoc in the Church, "of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ." Talk not of Roman soldiers mocking Jesus while there are wanton professors, while there are dishonest professors, while there are unforgiving and unchaste professors who dare even to come to the Table of the Lord! May God preserve all of us from ever mocking Christ in such a way as this!

III. Time fails me, or it would do so if I lingered over this theme as I might and, therefore, my last point shall be this. The Lord Jesus, thus mocked and despised, is THE MODEL TO US OF WHAT OUR CONDUCT SHOULD BE.

Oh, how He loved us! Oh, how He loved us! I cannot find any other sentence coming to my tongue but that same one a third time as I look at Him—oh, how He loved us! This is He whose "eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set," whose "lips are like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh," whose "head is as the most fine gold and His locks are bushy and black as a raven." He is the Altogether Lovely One, yet He was most shamefully treated—and He willingly endured it for our sake! There is a famous picture which represents the Savior wearing the crown of thorns. And at the bottom of it are these words, written in German, "I suffered this for you; what have you done for Me?" Count Zinzendorf, then frivolous and worldly, walked into the picture gallery and read those words. He stopped a while and then he went out a new man in Christ—to be a most devoted servant of the Lord for the rest of his days! I wish I could paint that picture now by my words so that Christ might be visibly set forth before you and that you might then hear Him say, "I suffered this for you; what have you done for Me?" What actions can ever be worthy of such self-sacrificing love? What gifts can ever be equal to such unparalleled affection? What high and fervent thoughts shall ever rise to the height of this great argument? What consecration shall ever be worthy of Him? What all-consuming zeal, eating us up for His sake, shall ever approach the ardor of His love for us? I ask you that say that you love Him, to judge for yourselves how you ought to act towards Him who was willingly put into the place of scorn for you!

One or two things are perfectly clear. First, that *none of us ought, henceforth, to ever court ease, pomp and show*. When the Crusaders took Jerusalem and Baldwin was proclaimed king, he refused to have a crown put on his head, for he said, "How can I wear a crown of gold where my Master wore a crown of thorns?" I sometimes wonder how professing Christians can dress as finely as some of them do. I wish they had clearly before their eyes the likeness of their Lord dressed in the scarlet robe, crowned with thorns and made the subject of the soldiers' cruel mockery. They would not then care as they do now for those pretty things which, after all, are often only ugly things to those who have true taste. Jesus Christ would not pick out as His imitators those who make a grand display—He was notable for His poverty and His shame—but some professing Christians are never happy unless they are notable for show. Let us give all that sort of thing up for the love of Jesus Christ our Lord!

Then, again, it is quite clear that *we ought not to care about scorn*. Scorn? Let us scorn scorn! Does the world laugh at us? Let us laugh at the world's laughter and say to it, "Do you despise us? It is not one half as much as we despise you! Our fathers despised your sword, O world—your dungeons, your racks, your gallows, your stakes—and do you think that we shall tremble at your scoffs and jeers?" Certain infidel writers, when they caricature Christian people or the Church as a whole, think they have done a clever thing—but how insignificant and trifling it all is—a thing scarcely worth mentioning! Our Lord was so scorned, that any satire we may have to endure will be only a compliment in comparison with what He had to bear! And present-day ridicule and scorn cannot mix a cup anything like that which He drank to the dregs. His cup was so bitter that anything they can give us to drink is comparatively sweet. They began so fiercely with Him that they cannot do anything as bad as that to us! They called the Master of the house, Beelzebub, so they cannot call His servants by any worse name than that! They mocked Him and put Him to death. They brought forth their sharpest weapons, first, so that the puny laughter and scorn that they bring against Christians, now, are really not worthy of a moment's consideration! Yet I know some who are very much troubled by them.

"Ah," says one, "I am a Christian, I hope, but I have been misrepresented by those who ought to know what I really am." Well, but is that a new thing? You need not be astonished, for that is just what they did with Jesus. You might doubt whether you were a true servant of Christ if they did not tar you with the same brush that they used for Him! "Ah, but they say such cruel things about me and have such a way of jeering at me that it quite stings me." Just so, but if they even crown you with thorns, you may be sure that the points off the thorns are first broken off, for Christ had them on His head and He has taken away the sharpness of them! And if the ungodly mock you, it never can be with that refined irony with which the soldiers mocked Him when they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Who is ashamed to be a Christian? Yes, who is ashamed to be a Nonconformist Christian? Who is ashamed to be called by the name of that Church to which he belongs? If there are any such

here, let them sneak out the back way, for cowards are not needed in the army of God! But if you know that you are followers of Christ, glory in that blessed fact and never blush at being put to shame for it! No, rather count “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.”

Before I close, I just want to say that I think such a text as this ought to stir up all of us who love the Lord *to be doing something for Christ that will demand self-denial*. I think it must be the reading of such a passage as this that has made some of our Brothers and Sisters go and labor among the very lowest of our population—where filth and vice abound. I can understand a delicately-nurtured lady devoting herself to such work as that, and a gentleman of the highest culture toiling heroically among the people in the worst slums in London, after having seen Christ wearing the crown of thorns. I can understand a missionary, for Christ’s sake, living and laboring in the midst of tenfold filth in China and making himself a Chinaman among the Chinese that he may win them to the Savior. I can understand something of the spirit that has made men and women devote themselves entirely to the causes of Christ, going about preaching the Word, or ministering to the poor or the sick. I can understand how some have even gone to plague-infested cities and lived and died among the sick and the dying.

When once we have seen Christ and His crown of thorns, there ought to be such enthusiasm as would make us capable of any deed of daring for Him! As I look at my Master’s head environed with thorns, I feel that any man who loves the Savior must grow heroic at the sight if the Spirit of God will but help him to see it as he should. But, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, it is not for me to suggest what you should do, but for each one of you to suggest it to yourselves. But I would ask each one of you whether you cannot do something for Jesus which you have never done before. Make some sacrifice, wear a crown of thorns—I mean spiritually—for His sake. Go a step farther than you have ever gone before, plunge deeper into the waters of consecration, give yourselves up to Christ more completely from this night forward! I pray that you may. I pray the Spirit of God to enable you to do it and unto the Lord Jesus shall be honor and glory in compensation for His shame—and surely He richly deserves that compensation! May He have it now, for His own dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: ACTS 28.

Verses 1-3. *And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us, every one, because of the present rain and because of the cold.* [See Sermon #3136, Volume 55—LESSONS FROM THE MALTA FIRE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] *And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks.* It must have been a fine sight to see the great Apostle of the Gentiles ga-

thering a bundle of sticks to put on the fire! But the men who can do great things are usually the men who do not disdain to do little things.

3-5. *And laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffers not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Was not this a fulfillment of the Master's words concerning the signs following faith in Him? "They shall take up serpents."* Whether this viper had bitten Paul so as to really fill his veins with venom, we do not know—but it is an equal miracle whether it had done so or not. Whether the sting had already poisoned him or not, his life was preserved, and that was sufficient.

6. *Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.* Those who saw what had happened to him regarded it as so marvelous that they thought he must be one of their heathen deities who had come down to the earth! He was not a god, however—but he was a man of God, and God had preserved him in the hour of peril.

7-10. *In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island whose name was Publius, who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. And it came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, others, also, which had diseases in the island, came and were healed: who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they loaded us with such things as were necessary.* Happy island of Melita to have such a missionary driven on its shore, to heal the sick and preach the Gospel to the people! The calamities of ministers are often a benediction to the people. The shipwreck of Paul resulted in blessing to that island which otherwise it might have missed. Let us, as God's servants, leave ourselves in His hands and believe that He can sometimes use us better by means of a shipwreck than if He had given the winds and waves charge concerning us to bear us safely to our desired haven!

11-13. *And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. And from there we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli.* Those who have ever been there regard the spot as almost sacred where Paul set his foot on his way to Rome. It is a place where there is an abundance of hot springs, a place which of old was frequented for healing. I have stood there with intense delight! "We came the next day to Puteoli."

14. *Where we found brethren.* There were some Christians there. See how soon the Gospel had spread as far as to this seaport town? Probably some Christian sailors carried it there. Blessed will it be when the ships of Tarshish shall bear not only men especially set apart as missionaries,

but when every sailor shall be a missionary for Christ! “We came the next day to Puteoli: where we found brethren.”

14. *And were desired to tarry with them seven days.* So they were able to have one Lord’s-Day together! They were probably only a very small company of poor Christians, but what a joyful privilege it was for them to have the beloved Apostle with them for that memorable week in their lives!

14. *And so we went toward Rome.* Now it was a marching band of soldiers taking them as prisoners to appear before the emperor at Rome.

15. *And from there, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.* It must have cheered his heart to see that there were some who loved him sufficiently to make a weary tramp along the Appian Road to meet him and salute him in the name of their common Lord!

16. *And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was allowed to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.* This was a great favor, no doubt, but do not forget that he had to have his right hand chained to the left hand of the soldier day and night and that was not very pleasant either for him or for the soldier! Yet he thus had an opportunity of personal conversation with the soldiers of the Praetorian Guard and as they were continually being changed, Paul no doubt had opportunities of conversation with hundreds of them—and thus the Gospel was spread in a very unlikely quarter! Would you like to be chained to a soldier day after day, and month after month? There are some who would not have that experience for half an hour without putting the Gospel plainly before the soldier so that he should at least know what it is, even if he did not accept it. That is a wonderful way of preaching—man to man! When they were chained hand to hand, there was no getting away from what Paul had to say!

17. *And it came to pass, that after three days.* That was quick work! He had only got into his house three days when he began to work. “After three days,”

17. *Paul called the chief of the Jews together.* There are said to have been seven synagogues in Rome at that time, so the Apostle sent for a number of the chief men in the various congregations.

17-20. *And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spoke against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. For this reason, therefore, have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.* They were all looking for the Messiah, for there was at that time a general expectation of His coming.

21, 22. *And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning you, neither any of the brethren that came showed or*

spoke any harm of you. But we desire to hear of you what you think: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against. Although men did not understand it, they spoke against it. This is often a blessing. This is the kind of advertisement that helps the Gospel, for if men will only be sufficiently interested in it to speak against it, they will be likely to come and hear it—and some of them will be almost certain to receive it. The Truth never spreads so fast as when men oppose it!

23. *And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified of the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, [See Sermon #1970, Volume 33—LOVING PERSUASION—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] both out of the law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, from morning till evening. It was a long and blessed day, a grand opportunity for Paul thus to be able, hour after hour, to expound the Gospel. But see the result—the result which always seems to follow the faithful preaching of the Truth.*

24-28. *And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. [See Sermon #516, Volume 9—THE MINISTER'S STOCK-TAKING—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at <http://www.spurgeongems.org>.] And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after Paul had spoken one word, Well spoke the Holy Spirit by Isaiah the Prophet unto our fathers, saying, go unto this people and say, Hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. Oh, blessed confidence of the Apostle! If some reject the Gospel, others will receive it!*

29-31. *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house and received all that came in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. What a subject Paul had to preach about—"the Kingdom of God, and those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ," and how faithfully and fearlessly he proclaimed this great theme!*

31. *With all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

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

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

THE CROWN OF THORNS

NO. 1168

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 12, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head.”
Matthew 27:29.***

BEFORE we enter the common hall of the soldiers and gaze upon “the sacred head once wounded,” it will be well to consider who and what He was who was thus cruelly put to shame. Forget not the intrinsic excellence of His Person, for He is the brightness of the Father’s Glory and the express image of His Person. He is in Himself God over all, blessed forever, the eternal Word by whom all things were made and by whom all things consist. Though Heir of all things, the Prince of the kings of the earth, He was despised and rejected of men, “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” His head was scornfully surrounded with thorns for a crown. His body was bedecked with a faded purple robe. A poor reed was put into His hand for a scepter, and then the ribald soldiers dared to spit upon His face, and worry Him with their filthy jests—

***“The soldiers also spit upon that face
Which angels did desire to have the grace,
And Prophets once to see, but found no place.
Was ever grief like Mine?”***

Forget not the glory to which He had been accustomed, for before He came to earth He had been in the bosom of the Father, adored of cherubim and seraphim, obeyed by every angel, worshipped by every principality and power in the heavenly places! Yet here He sits, treated worse than a felon, made the center of a comedy before He became the victim of a tragedy. They sat Him down in some broken chair, covered Him with an old soldier’s cloak, and then insulted Him as a mimic monarch—

***“They bow their knees to Me, and cry, Hail king.
Whatever scoffs and scornfulness can bring,
I am the floor, the sink, where they’d fling.
Was ever grief like Mine?”***

What a descent His love to us compelled Him to make! See how He fell to lift us from our Fall! Do not, also, fail to remember that at the very time when they were thus mocking Him, He was still the Lord of All and could have summoned 12 legions of angels to His rescue. There was majesty in His misery! He had laid aside, it is true, the glorious imperial pomp of His Father’s courts, and He was now the lowly Man of Nazareth, but for all that, had He willed it, one glance of those eyes would have withered up the Roman cohorts. One word from those silent lips would have shaken Pilate’s palace from roof to foundation—and had He willed it—the vacillating governor and the malicious crowd would, together, have gone down alive into the pit, even as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram of old!

Lo, God’s own Son, Heaven’s Darling and earth’s Prince, sits there and wears the cruel chaplet which wounds both mind and body at once—the

mind with insult, and the body with piercing pain! His royal face was marred with “wounds which could not cease to bleed, trickling faint and slow.” Yet that “noblest brow and dearest head” had once been fairer than the children of men and was even, then, the countenance of Immanuel, God with us! Remember these things and you will gaze upon Him with enlightened eyes and tender hearts—and you will be able, the more fully, to enter into fellowship with Him in His griefs. Remember from where He came and it will the more astound you that He should have stooped so low! Remember what He was and it will be the more marvelous that He should become our Substitute.

And now let us press into the guard room and look at our Savior wearing His crown of thorns. I will not detain you long with any guesses as to what kind of thorns He wore. According to the Rabbis and the botanists, there would seem to have been from 20 to 25 different species of thorny plants growing in Palestine. And different writers have, according to their own judgments or fancies, selected one and another of these plants as the peculiar thorns which were used upon this occasion. But why select one thorn out of many? He bore not one grief, but *all*—any and every thorn will suffice. The very dubiousness as to the peculiar species yields us instruction.

It may well be that more than one kind of thorn was platted in that crown—at any rate sin has so thickly strewn the earth with thorns and thistles that there was no difficulty in finding the materials, even as there was no scarcity of griefs with which to chasten Him every morning and make Him a mourner all His days. The soldiers may have used pliant boughs of the acacia, or shittim tree—that unrotting wood of which many of the sacred tables and vessels of the sanctuary were made—and, therefore, significantly used if such were the case. It may have been true, as the old writers generally consider, that the plant was the *spina Christi*, for it has many small and sharp spines. And its green leaves would have made a wreath such as those with which generals and emperors were crowned after a battle.

But we will leave the matter. It was a crown of thorns which pierced His head and caused Him suffering as well as shame—and that suffices us. Our inquiry, now, is—what do we see when our eyes behold Jesus Christ crowned with thorns? There are six things which strike me most. And as I lift the curtain I pray you watch with me and may the Holy Spirit pour forth His Divine illumination and light up the scene before our wondering souls.

I. The first thing which is seen by the most casual observer, before he looks beneath the surface, is A SORROWFUL SPECTACLE. Here is the Christ, the generous, loving, tender Christ, treated with indignity and scorn! Here is the Prince of Life and Glory made an object of derision by ribald soldiers! Behold, today, the lily among thorns, Purity, itself, in the midst of opposing sin! See here the Sacrifice caught in the thicket, and held fast there, as a victim in our place to fulfill the ancient type of the ram held by the bushes which Abraham slew instead of Isaac!

Three things are to be carefully noted in this spectacle of sorrow. Here is Christ’s *lowliness and weakness triumphed over* by the lusty soldiers.

When they brought Jesus into the guard room they felt that He was entirely in their power and that His claims to be a king were so absurd as to be only a theme for contemptuous jest. He was but meanly dressed, for He wore only the smock frock of a peasant—was He a claimant of the purple? He held His peace—was He the man to stir a nation to sedition? He was all wounds and bruises, fresh from the scourger's lash—was He the hero to inspire an army's enthusiasm and overturn old Rome?

It seemed rare mirth for them and as wild beasts sport with their victims, so did they. Many, I warrant you, were the jibes and jeers of the Roman soldiers at His expense, and loud was the laughter amid their ranks. Look at His face, how meek He appears! How different from the haughty countenances of tyrants! To mock His royal claims seemed but natural to rough soldiers. He was gentle as a child, tender as a woman! His dignity was that of calm quiet endurance—and this was not a dignity whose force these semi-barbarous men could feel and, therefore they did pour contempt upon Him. Let us remember that our Lord's weakness was undertaken for our sakes—for us He became a lamb—for us He laid aside His Glory. And therefore it is the more painful for us to see that this voluntary humiliation of Himself must be made the object of so much derision and scorn, though worthy of the utmost praise.

He stoops to save us and we laugh at Him as He stoops! He leaves the Truth of God that He may lift us up to it, but while He is graciously descending, the hoarse laughter of an ungodly world is His only reward! Ah, me, was ever love treated after so unlovely a sort? Surely the cruelty it received was proportioned to the honor it deserved, so perverse are the sons of men—

***“O head so full of bruises!
Brow that its lifeblood loses!
Oh great humility.
Upon His face are falling
Indignities most galling!
He bears them all for me.”***

It was not merely that they mocked His humility, but *they mocked His claims to be a king*. “Aha,” they seemed to say, “is this a king? It must be after some uncouth Jewish fashion, surely, that this poor Peasant claims to wear a crown. Is this the Son of David? When will He drive Caesar and his armies into the sea and set up a new state, and reign at Rome? This Jew, this Peasant—is He to fulfill His nation's dream and rule over all mankind?

Wonderfully did they ridicule this idea and we do not wonder that they did, for they could not perceive His true Glory. But, Beloved, my point lies here, *He was a King* in the truest and most emphatic sense. If He had not been a king, then He would, as an impostor, have deserved the scorn, but would not have keenly felt it. But being truly and really a King, every word must have stung His royal soul and every syllable must have cut His kingly spirit to the quick. When the impostor's claims are exposed and held up to scorn, he himself must well know that he deserves all the contempt he receives—and what can he say? But if the real Heir to all the estates of Heaven and earth has His claims denied and His Person mocked—

then is His heart wounded and rebuke and reproach fill Him with many sorrows.

Is it not sad that the Son of God, the blessed and only Potentate, should have been thus disgraced? Nor was it merely mockery, but *cruelty added pain to insult*. If they had only intended to mock Him, they might have platted a crown of *straw*. But they meant to *hurt* Him and, therefore, they fashioned a crown of *thorns*. Look, I pray you, at His Person as He suffers under their hands! They had scourged Him till probably there was no part of His body which was not bleeding beneath their blows—except His head—and now that head must be made to suffer, too.

Alas, our whole head was sick and our whole heart faint—and so He must be made, in His chastisement, like unto us in our transgression. There was no part of our humanity without sin—and there must be no part of His humanity without *suffering*. If we had escaped, in some measure, from iniquity, so might He have escaped from pain. But as we had worn the foul garment of transgression and it covered us from head to foot, even so must He wear the garments of shame and derision from the crown of His head, even to the sole of His feet—

**“O Love, too boundless to be shown
By any but the Lord alone!
O Love offended, which sustains
The bold offender’s curse and pains!
O Love, which could no motive have,
But mere benignity to save.”**

Beloved, I always feel as if my tongue were tied when I come to talk of the sufferings of my Master. I can *think* of them. I can *picture* them to myself. I can sit down and weep over them, but I know not how to paint them to others! Did you ever know pen or pencil that could? A Michelangelo or a Raphael might well shrink back from attempting to paint this picture! And the tongue of an archangel might be consumed in the effort to sing the griefs of Him who was loaded with shame because of our shameful transgressions.

I ask you rather to meditate than to listen—and to sit down and view your Lord with your own loving eyes rather than to have regard words of mine. I can only sketch the picture, roughly outlining it as with charcoal. I must leave you to put in the colors and then to sit and study it—but you will fail as I do. Dive as we may, we cannot reach the depths of this abyss of woe and shame! Climb as we may, these storm-swept hills of agony are still above us.

II. Removing the curtain, again, from this sorrowful spectacle, I see here a SOLEMN WARNING which speaks softly and meltingly to us out of the spectacle of sorrow. Do you ask me what is that warning? It is a warning against our ever committing the same crime as the soldiers did. “The same?” you ask, “why, we should never plat a crown of thorns for that dear head.” I pray you never may. But there are many who have done so and are doing it! Those are guilty of this crime who, as these soldiers did, *deny His claims*. Busy are the wise men of this world at this very time all over the world—busy in gathering thorns and twisting them—that they may afflict the Lord’s Anointed. Some of them cry, “Yes, He was a good Man, but not the Son of God!”

Others even deny His superlative excellence in life and teaching. They quibble at His perfection and imagine flaws where none exist. Never are they happier than when impugning His Character. I may be addressing some avowed infidel here, some skeptic as to the Redeemer's Person and Doctrine—and I charge him with crowning the Christ of God with thorns every time he invents bitter charges against the Lord Jesus and utters railing words against His cause and His people! Your denial of His claims, and especially your ridicule of them, is a repetition of the unhappy scene before us. There are some who ply all their wit and tax their utmost skill for nothing else but to discover discrepancies in the Gospel narratives, or to conjure up differences between their supposed scientific discoveries and the declarations of the Word of God. Full often have they torn their own hands in weaving crowns of thorns for Him and I fear, as the result of their displays of scientific research after briars with which to afflict the Lover of mankind, some of them will have to lie upon a *bed* of thorns when they come to die.

It will be well if they have not to lie on worse than thorns forever when Christ shall come to judge them and condemn them and cast them into the Lake of Fire for all their impieties concerning Him. Oh, that they would cease this useless and malicious trade of weaving crowns of thorns for Him who is the world's only hope, whose religion is the lone star that gilds the midnight of human sorrow and guides mortal man to the port of peace! Even for the temporal benefits of Christianity the good Jesus should be treated with respect. He has emancipated the slave and uplifted the downtrodden! His Gospel is the charter of liberty, the scourge of tyrants and the death of priests! Spread it and you spread peace, freedom, order, love and joy! He is the greatest of philanthropists, the truest Friend of man—why, then, array yourselves against Him—you who talk of progress and enlightenment? If men did but know Him, they would crown Him with diadems of reverent love more precious than the pearls of India, for His reign will usher in the golden age. Even now it softens the rigor of the present, as it has removed the miseries of the past. It is an ill business, this carping and quibbling, and I beseech those engaged in it to cease their ungenerous labors, unworthy of rational beings and destructive to their immortal souls!

This crowning with thorns is worked in another fashion by *hypocritical professions of allegiance to Him*. These soldiers put a crown on Christ's head, but they did not mean that He should be king. They put a scepter in His hand, but it was not the substantial ivory rod which signifies real power—it was only a weak and slender reed. Therein they remind us that Christ is mocked by insincere professors. O you who love Him not in your inmost souls, you are those who mock Him! But you say, "Wherein have I failed to crown Him? Did I not join the Church? Have I not said that I am a Believer?" On, but if your *hearts* are not right within you, you have only crowned Him with thorns! If you have not given Him your very soul, you have, in awful mockery, thrust a scepter of reed into His hand! Your very *religion* mocks Him! Your lying professions mock Him!

Who has required this at your hands, to tread His courts? You insult Him at His table! You insult Him on your knees! How can you say you love

Him, when your hearts are not with Him? If you have never believed in Him and repented of sin. If you have never yielded obedience to His commands. If you do not acknowledge Him in your daily life to be both Lord and King, I charge you, lay down the profession which is so dishonoring to Him! If He is God, serve Him! If He is King, obey Him! If He is neither, then do not profess to be Christians! Be honest and bring no crown if you do not accept Him as King! What need, again, to insult Him with nominal dominion, mimic homage and pretended service? O you hypocrites! Consider your ways, lest soon the Lord whom you provoke should ease Him of His adversaries!

In a measure the same thing may be done by those who are sincere, but through lack of watchfulness *walk so as to dishonor their profession*. Here, if I speak rightly, I shall compel every one of you to confess it in your spirits that you stand condemned—for every time that we act according to our sinful flesh we crown the Savior's head with thorns. Which of us has not done this? Dear Head, every hair of which is more precious than fine gold, when we gave our hearts to You we thought we should always adore You! We thought that our whole lives would be one long Psalm, praising and blessing and crowning You!

Alas, how far have we fallen short of our own ideals? We have hedged You about with the briers of our sin. We have been betrayed into angry tempers so that we have spoken unadvisedly with our lips. Or we have been worldly and loved that which You abhor, or we have yielded to our passions and indulged our evil desires. Our vanities, follies, forgetfulness, omissions and offenses have set upon Your head a coronet of dishonor—and we tremble to think of it! Oh, cruel hearts and hands to have so maltreated the Well-Beloved, whom it should have been our daily care to glorify!

Do I speak to any backslider whose open sin has dishonored the Cross of Christ? I fear I must be addressing some who once had a name to live, but now are numbered with the dead in sin! Surely if there is a spark of Divine Grace in you, what I am now saying must cut you to the quick and act like salt upon a raw wound to make your very soul to smart! Do not your ears tingle as I accuse you of deliberate acts of inconsistency which have twisted a thorny crown for our dear Master's head? It is assuredly so, for you have opened the mouths of blasphemers, taught gainsayers to revile Him, grieved the generation of His people and made many to stumble! Ungodly men have laid your faults at the door of the innocent Savior—they have said—"This is Your religion."

You have grown the thorns, but He has had to wear them! We call your offenses inconsistencies, but worldly men regard them as the fruit of Christianity and condemn the Vine because of our sour clusters! They charge the holy Jesus with the faults of His erring followers. Dear Friends, is there not room to look at home in the case of each one of us? As we do so, let us come with the sorrowful and loving penitent and wash His dear feet with tears of repentance because we have crowned His head with thorns. Thus our thorn-crowned Lord and Master stands before us as a sorrowful spectacle, conveying to us a solemn warning.

III. Lifting the veil again, in the Person of our tortured and insulted Lord we see TRIUMPHANT ENDURANCE. He could not be conquered! He was victorious even in the hour of deepest shame—

***“He with unflinching heart
Bore all disgrace and shame,
And mid the keenest smart
Loved on, yes loved the same.”***

He was bearing at that moment, first, *the substitutionary griefs* which were due to Him because He stood in our place and from bearing them He did not turn aside. We were sinners and the reward of sin is pain and death—therefore *He bore the chastisement of our peace.*

He was enduring, at that time, what *we* ought to have endured—and He was draining the cup which Justice had mingled for us. Did He start back from it? Oh, no! When He first came to drink of that wormwood and gall in the Garden, He put it to His lips and the draught seemed, for an instant, to stagger even His strong spirit. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. He was like one demented, tossed to and fro with inward agony. “My Father,” He said, “if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” Three times did He utter that prayer, while every portion of His Manhood was the battlefield of legions of griefs! His soul rushed out at every pore to find a vent for its swelling woes! His whole body became covered with gory sweat.

After that tremendous struggle, the strength of Love mastered the weakness of Manhood—He put that cup to His lips and never shrank—He drank right on till not a drop was left! And now the cup of wrath is empty—no trace of the terrible wine of the wrath of God can be found within it! At one tremendous draught of love the Lord drank destruction dry, forever, for all His people. “Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes, rather, that has risen again.” And “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

Now, surely, endurance had reached a very high point when our Master was made to endure the painful mockery which our text describes, yet He quailed not, nor removed from His settled purpose. He had undertaken and He would go through with it. Look at Him and see, there, a miracle of patient endurance of griefs which would have sent a world to Hell had He not borne them on our behalf! Besides the shame and suffering due for sin, with which it pleased the Father to bruise Him, He was enduring *a superfluity of malice from the hate of men.* Why did men need to concentrate all their scorn and cruelty into His execution? Was it not enough that He must die? Did it give pleasure to their iron hearts to rack His tender sensibilities? Why these inventions for deepening his woe?

Had any of *us* been thus derided we should have resented it. There is not a man or woman here who could have been silent under such indignities! But Jesus sat in Omnipotence of patience possessing His soul right royally. Glorious Pattern of patience, we adore You as we see how malice could not conquer Your almighty love! The pain which He had endured from the scourges caused Him to throb with exquisite anguish—but we read neither of tears nor groans—much less of angry complaints or revengeful threats. He does not seek pity, or make one appeal for leniency.

He does not ask why they torture or why they mock. Brave Witness! Courageous Martyr! Suffering exquisitely, You also suffered calmly! Such a perfect frame as His—His body being conceived without sin—He must have been capable of tortures which our bodies, corrupted by sin, cannot feel.

His delicate purity felt a horror of ribald jests which our more hardened spirits cannot estimate! Yet Jesus bore all as only the Son of God could bear it. They might heap on the load as they would—He would only put forth more endurance and bear it all— He would not shrink or complain. I venture to suggest that such was the picture of patience which our blessed Lord exhibited that it may have moved even some of the soldiers, themselves. Has it ever occurred to you to ask how Matthew came to know all about that mockery? Matthew was not there! Mark, also, gives an account of it, but he would not have been tolerated in the guard room. The Praetorians were far too proud and rough to tolerate Jews, much less disciples of Jesus, in their common hall.

Since there could have been nobody there except the soldiers themselves, it is well to inquire—Who told this tale? It must have been an eyewitness. May it not have been that centurion who in the same chapter is reported to have said, “Certainly this was the Son of God”? May not that scene, as well as the Lord’s death, have led him to that conclusion? We do not know, but this much is very evident—the story must have been told by an eyewitness, and also by one who sympathized with the Sufferer—for to my ears it does not read like the description of an unconcerned spectator. I should not wonder—I would almost venture to assert—that our Lord’s marred, but patient visage, preached such a sermon that one, at least, who gazed upon it felt its mysterious power!

Certainly at least *one* felt that such patience was more than human—and accepted the thorn-crowned Savior as his Lord and his King! This I do know, that if you and I want to conquer human hearts for Jesus, we, too, must be patient. And if, when they ridicule and persecute us, we can but endure without repining or retaliation, we shall exercise an influence which even the most brutal will feel—and to which chosen minds will submit themselves.

IV. Drawing up the veil again, I think we have before us, in the fourth place, in the Person of the triumphant Sufferer, a SACRED MEDICINE. I can only hint at the diseases which it will cure. These blood-sprinkled thorns are plants of renown, precious in heavenly surgery if they are rightly used. Take but a thorn out of this crown and use it as a lancet, and it will let out the hot blood of passion and abate the fever of pride! It is a wonderful remedy for swelling flesh and grievous boils of sin. He who sees Jesus crowned with thorns will loathe to look on self, except it be through tears of contrition. This thorn at the breast will make men sing, but not with notes of self-congratulation—the notes will be those of a dove moaning for her mate.

Gideon taught the men of Buccoth with thorns, but the lessons were not so salutary as those which we learn from the thorns of Jesus. The sacred medicine which the good Physician brings to us in His thorny crown

acts as a tonic and strengthens us to endure, without depression, whatever shame or loss His service may bring upon us—

***“Who defeats my fiercest foes?
Who consoles my saddest woes?
Who revives my fainting heart,
Healing all its hidden smart?
Jesus crowned with thorns.”***

When you begin to serve God and for His sake endeavor to benefit your fellow mortals, do not expect any reward from men, except to be misunderstood, suspected and abused. The best men in the world are usually the worst spoken of. An evil world cannot speak well of holy lives. The sweetest fruit is most pecked at by the birds. The mountain nearest Heaven is most beaten by the storms—and the loveliest character is the most assailed. Those whom you would save will not thank you for your anxiety, but blame you for your interference.

If you rebuke their sins they will frequently resent your warnings. If you invite them to Jesus, they will make light of your entreaties. Are you prepared for this? If not, consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself lest you become weary and faint in your minds. If you succeed in bringing many to Christ, you must not reckon upon universal honor—you will be charged with self-seeking, popularity-hunting, or some such crime—you will be misrepresented, belied, caricatured and counted as a fool or a knave by the ungodly world. The probabilities are that the crown you will win in this world, if you serve God, will contain more spikes than sapphires, more briars than beryls! When it is put upon your head, pray for Divine Grace to wear it right gladly, counting it all joy to be like your Lord.

Say in your heart, “I feel no dishonor in this dishonor. Men may impute shameful things to me, but I am not ashamed. They may degrade me, but I am not degraded. They may cast contempt upon me, but I am not contemptible.” The Master of the house was called Beelzebub and spit upon—they cannot do worse to His household—therefore we scorn their scorn! Thus are we nerved to patience by the patience of the despised Nazarene. The thorn crown is also a remedy for discontent and affliction. When enduring bodily pain we are apt to wince and fret, but if we remember Jesus crowned with thorns, we say—

***“His way was much rougher and darker than mine.
Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?”***

And so our complaints grow dumb—for very shame we dare not compare our maladies with His woes! Resignation is learned at Jesus’ feet when we see our great Exemplar made perfect through suffering. The thorn crown is a cure for care. We would cheerfully wear any array which our Lord may prepare for us, but it is a great folly to plat needless thorn crowns for ourselves. Yet I have seen some who are, I hope, true Believers, take much trouble to trouble themselves and labor to increase their own labors.

They hasten to be rich—they fret, they toil, they worry and torment themselves to load themselves with the burden of wealth—they wound themselves to wear the thorny crown of worldly greatness! Many are the ways of making rods for our own backs. I have known mothers make thorn crowns out of their children whom they could not trust with God—

they have been worn with family anxieties when they might have rejoiced in God. I have known others make thorn crowns out of silly fears for which there were no grounds, whatever—but they seemed ambitious to be fretful, eager to prick themselves with briars. O Believer, say to yourself, “My Lord wore my crown of thorns for me! Why should I wear it, too?”

He took our griefs and carried our sorrows that we might be a happy people and be able to obey the command, “Take no thought for tomorrow, for tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself.” Ours is the crown of lovingkindness and tender mercies—and we wear it when we cast all our cares on Him who cares for us. That thorn crown cures us of desire for the vainglorious of the world! It dims all human pomp and glory till it turns to smoke! Could we fetch, here, the Pope’s triple crown, or the imperial diadem of Germany, or the regalia of the Czar of All the Russias—none of them can compare with Jesus’ crown of thorns! Let us set some great one on his throne and see how little he looks when Jesus sits beside him! What is there kingly in being able to tax men and live upon their labors, giving little in return? The most royal thing is to lay them all under obligations to our disinterested love and be the fountain of blessing to them.

Oh, it takes the glitter from your gold, the luster from your gems and the beauty from all your dainty gewgaws to see that no imperial purple can equal the glory of His blood—no gems can rival His thorns! Show and parade cease to attract the soul when once the superlative excellencies of the dying Savior have been discerned by the enlightened eyes! Who seeks for ease when he has seen the Lord Christ? If Christ wears a crown of thorns, shall we covet a crown of laurel? Even the fierce Crusader, when he entered into Jerusalem and was elected king, had sense enough to say, “I will not wear a crown of gold in the same city where my Savior wore a crown of thorns.”

Why should we desire, like feather-bed soldiers, to have everything arranged for our ease and pleasure? Why this reclining upon couches when Jesus hangs on the Cross? Why this soft raiment when He is naked? Why these luxuries when He is treated barbarously? Thus the crown of thorns cures us, at once, of the vainglory of the world and of our own selfish love of ease. The world’s minstrel may cry, “Ho, boy, come here and crown me with rose buds!” But the pleasure seeker’s request is not for us. For us neither delights of the flesh nor the pride of life can have charms while the Man of Sorrows is in view. For us it remains to suffer and to labor till the King shall bid us share His rest.

V. I must notice, in the fifth place, that there is before us a MYSTIC CORONATION. Bear with my many divisions. The coronation of Christ with thorns was symbolical and had great meaning in it, for, first, it was to Him *a triumphal crown*. Christ had fought with sin from the day when He first stood foot to foot with it in the wilderness, up to the time when He entered Pilate’s Hall—and He had conquered it. As a witness that He had gained the victory, behold sin’s crown seized as a trophy! What was the crown of sin? Thorns. These sprang from the curse. “Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you,” was the coronation of sin—and now Christ has taken away its crown and put it on His own head.

He has spoiled sin of its richest regalia and He wears it Himself. Glorious Champion, all hail! What if I say that the thorns constituted a mural crown? Paradise was set round with a hedge of thorns so sharp that none could enter it, but our Champion leaped, first, upon the bristling rampart and bore the blood-red banner of His Cross into the heart of that better new Eden which He won for us—never to be lost again. Jesus wears the mural chaplet which denotes that He has opened Paradise. It was a wrestler's crown He wore, for He wrestled not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers and He overthrew His foe. It was a racer's crown He wore, for He had run with the mighty and outstripped them in the race. He had well-near finished His course and had but a step or two more to take to reach the goal. Here is a marvelous field for enlargement—and we must stop at once lest we go too far! It was a crown rich with glory despite the shame which was intended by it.

We see in Jesus the Monarch of the realms of misery, the Chief among ten thousand sufferers. Never say, "I am a great sufferer." What are our griefs compared with His? As the poet stood upon the Palatine Mount and thought of Rome's dire ruin, he exclaimed, "What are our woes and sufferings?" Even so I ask, What are our shallow griefs compared with the infinite sorrows of Immanuel? Well may we "control in our close breasts our petty misery." Jesus is, moreover, the Prince of Martyrs. He leads the van among the noble army of suffering witnesses and confessors of the Truth of God. Though they died at the stake, or pined in dungeons, or were cast to wild beasts—none of them claim the first rank—He, the faithful and the true Witness with the thorn crown and the Cross, stands at the head of them all!

It may never be our lot to join the august band, but if there is an honor for which we might legitimately envy saints of former times, it is this—that they were born in those brave days when the ruby crown was within human grasp—and when the supreme sacrifice might have been made! We are cowards, indeed, if in these softer days we are ashamed to confess our Master and are afraid of a little scorn, or tremble at the criticisms of the would-be wise. Rather let us follow the Lamb where ever He goes, content to wear His crown of thorns that we may, in His kingdom, behold His Glory!

VI. The last word is this. In the thorn crown I see a MIGHTY STIMULUS. A mighty stimulus to what? Why, first, to fervent love of Him. Can you see Him crowned with thorns and not be drawn to Him? I think if He could come among us this morning and we could see Him, there would be a loving press around Him to touch the hem of His garment or to kiss His feet. Savior, You are very precious to us! Dearest of all the names above, my Savior and my God, You are always glorious, but in these eyes You are never more lovely than when arrayed in shameful mockery. The Lily of the Valley and the Rose of Sharon—both in one is He, fair in the perfection of His Character—and blood-red in the greatness of His sufferings. Worship Him! Adore Him! Bless Him! And let your voices sing, "Worthy the Lamb."

This sight is a stimulus, next, to *repentance*. Did our sins put thorns around His head? Oh, my poor fallen Nature, I will scourge you for scourging Him and make you feel the thorns for causing Him to endure

them! What? Can you see your Master put to such shame and yet hold truce or parley with the sins which pierced Him? It cannot be! Let us declare before God our soul's keen grief that we should make the Savior suffer so! Then let us pray for Grace to hedge our lives around with thorns that from this very day sin may not approach us.

I thought, this day, of how often I have seen the blackthorn growing in the hedge all bristling with a thousand prickles, but right in the center of the bush have I seen the pretty nest of a little bird. Why did the creature place its habitation there? Because the thorns become a protection to it and shelter it from harm. As I meditated, last night, upon this blessed subject, I thought I would bid you build your nests within the thorns of Christ. It is a safe place for sinners! Neither Satan, sin, nor Death can reach you there. Gaze on your Savior's sufferings and you will see sin atoned for. Fly into His wounds! Fly, you timid, trembling Doves! There is no resting place so safe for you! Build your nests, I say again, among these thorns, and when you have done so, and trusted Jesus, and counted Him to be All in All to you, then come and crown His sacred head with other crowns!

What glory does He deserve? What is good enough for Him? If we could take all the precious things from all the treasuries of monarchs, they would not be worthy to be pebbles beneath His feet! If we could bring Him all the scepters, miters, tiaras, diadems and all other pomp on earth, they would be altogether unworthy to be thrown in the dust before Him! With what shall we crown Him? Come, let us weave our praises together and set our tears for pearls—our love for gold—they will sparkle like so many diamonds in His esteem, for He loves repentance and He loves faith. Let us make a wreath, this morning, with our praises, and crown Him as the Laureate of Grace! This day on which He rose from the dead, let us extol Him! Oh, for Grace to do it in the heart! And then in the life! And then with the tongue, that we may praise Him forever who bowed His head in shame for us!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 27:11-54.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—336, 282, 275, 417 (vs. 1 & 4).**

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MOCKED OF THE SOLDIERS NO. 2824

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 29, 1903.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 3, 1883.

*“And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!”
Matthew 27:29.*

IT is a shameful spectacle where cruelty uses its keenest instrument to cut, not into the flesh, but into the very spirit, for scorn, contempt, insult and ridicule, are as painful to the mind and heart as a scourge is to the body—and they cut like the sharpest lance. These Roman soldiers were a rough body of men—fierce, courageous, terrible in battle, uncouth, untaught, uncivilized, little better than barbarians. And when they had this unique King in their power, they made the most of their opportunity to torment Him. Oh, how they laughed to think that He should call Himself a King—this poor, emaciated creature who looked as if He would faint and die in their hands—whose blessed visage was marred more than that of any of the sons of men! It must have seemed to them a sorry jest that He should be a rival to imperial Caesar, so they said, “If He is a King, let us clothe Him with royal purple,” and they flung over His shoulders a soldier’s tunic. “As He is a King, let us plait Him a crown,” and they made it of thorns. Then they bowed the knee in mock homage to the Man whom His own people despised, whom even the mob rejected and whom the chief men of the nation abhorred. It seemed to them that He was such a poor, miserable, dejected Creature that all they could do was to make fun of Him and treat Him as the butt for their utmost ridicule.

These Roman soldiers had in them, as men, a spirit which I sometimes grieve to see in boys at this present day. That same cruel spirit that will torture a bird or a beetle, or hunt a dog or cat simply because it looks miserable and because it is in their power—that was the sort of spirit that was in these soldiers. They had never been taught to avoid cruelty. No, cruelty was the element in which they lived. It was worked into their very being! It was their recreation. Their grandest holiday was to go and sit in those tiers of seats at the Coliseum, or at some provincial amphitheatre and watch lions contending with men, or wild beasts tearing one another in pieces. They were trained and accustomed to cruelty—they seemed to have been suckled upon blood and to have been fed on such food as made them capable of the utmost cruelty—and, therefore, when

Christ was in their hands, He was in a sorry case, indeed. They called together the whole band and put a purple robe upon Him and a crown of thorns upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed their knees before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then they spat upon Him and took the reed from His hand, and struck Him on the head.

Now we will leave those Roman soldiers and the Jews that had a hand in persecuting Him, for he that delivered Him unto them had committed even greater sin. Neither Pilate nor his legionaries were the chief criminals at that time, as we well know. From this incident in our Lord's life, I think we may learn, first, *lessons for the heart*. And, secondly, *lessons for the conscience*.

I. First, we have here A SET OF LESSONS FOR OUR HEART.

Beloved, we begin with this one. Where I see the great Substitute for sinners put to such shame, scorn and ridicule, my heart says to itself, "*See what sin deserves?*" There is nothing in the world that more richly deserves to be despised, abhorred, condemned, than sin! If we look at it aright, we shall see that it is the most abominable thing, the most shameful thing in the whole universe. Of all the things that ever were, this is the thing which most of all deserves to be loathed and spurned. It is not a thing of God's creating, remember—it is an abortion—a phantom of the night which plucked a host of angels from their thrones in Heaven, drove our first parents out of Paradise and brought upon us unnumbered miseries.

Think, for a minute, what sin is, and you will see that it deserves ridicule for its folly. What is sin? It is rebellion against the Omnipotent, a revolt against the Almighty. What utter folly that is! Who shall hurl himself against the bosses of Jehovah's buckler and not be dashed in pieces? Who shall rush upon the point of His spear and hope to vanquish Him? Laugh to scorn such folly as that! Under that aspect, sin is the apex of folly, the climax of absurdity—for what power can ever stand up against God and win the day?

But, further, sin deserves to be scorned because it is a wanton attack upon One who is full of goodness, justice and truth. Note that evil thing that assails the Most High and brand it so that the mark of the iron shall abide on it forever! Set it up in the public pillory and let all true hearts and hands hurl scorn upon it for having disobeyed the perfect Law of God, angered the generous Creator and Preserver of men, done despite to Eternal Love and infinite damage to the best interests of the human race! It is a ridiculous thing because it is fruitless and must end in being defeated. It is a shameful thing because of its wanton, malicious, unprovoked attack upon God. If you will look back a little and consider what sin attempted to do, you will see the reason why it should be shamed for its audacity. "You shall be as gods," said he who was the mouthpiece of sin—but are we, by nature, like gods? Are we not more like devils? And he who uttered that lie—even Satan—did he succeed as he expected when he dared to rebel against his Creator? See how his former glory has vanished! How are you fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning, and how is your brightness quenched in everlasting night! Yet sin,

speaking through the lips of Satan, talked about being a king and of making all of us kings—but it has only degraded us to the dunghill and to utter beggary! Yes, to worse than that—to death and Hell! What spitting, sin deserves! If it is to be crowned, let it be crowned with thorns! Bow not your knee to it, but pour upon it all the scorn you can! Every true and honest heart in Heaven, among the angels and the glorified spirits, and on earth, among sanctified men and women, must look upon sin as a thing worthy of unspeakable contempt. May God make sin as contemptible in our sight as Christ appeared to be to the Roman soldiers! May we scoff at its temptations. May we scorn its proffered rewards. And may we never bow our hearts to it in any degree whatever, since God has set us free from its accursed thralldom!

That is the first lesson for our hearts to learn from the mockery of our Savior by the soldiers—see what a contemptible thing sin is.

Learn, next, my dear Brothers and Sisters, *how low our glorious Substitute stooped for our sake*. In Him was no sin either of nature or of act. He was pure, entirely without spot before God, Himself, yet, as our Representative, He took our sin upon Himself. “He was made sin for us,” says the Scripture most emphatically. And, inasmuch as He was regarded as being the sinner, though in Him was no sin, it naturally followed that He should become the object of contempt. But what a wonder that it should be so! He, who created all things by the word of His power and by whom all things consist—He who counted it not robbery (not a thing to be grasped) to be equal with God—sits in an old chair to be made a mimic king and to be mocked and spat upon! All other miracles put together are not equal to this miracle! This one rises above them all and out-miracles all miracles—that God, Himself, having espoused our cause and assumed our Nature, should deign to stoop to such a depth of scorn as this!

Though myriads of holy angels adored Him, though they would have gladly left their high estate in Heaven to smite His foes and set Him free, He voluntarily subjected Himself to all the ignominy that I have described—and much more which is utterly indescribable—for who knows what things were said and done in that rough guard-room which holy pens could not record, or what foul jests were made, and what obscene remarks were uttered, which were even more shocking to Christ than the filthy spit which ran down His blessed cheeks in that time of shameful mockery? Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, you cannot imagine how low your Lord stooped on your account! When I hear any say that they have been so slandered for His sake that they cannot endure it, I have wished that they knew what He endured on their account. If we stood in the pillory and all mankind hooted at us for a million million years, it would be as nothing compared with the wondrous condescension of Him who is God Over All, blessed forever, stooping as He did for our sake!

That is the second lesson for our hearts to learn.

Then let me say to you very tenderly, wishing that some other voice could speak of it more effectively—see how your Redeemer loved you. You know that when Christ stood by the grave of Lazarus and wept, the Jews said, “Behold how He loved him!” Ah, but look at Him there among those

Roman soldiers—despised, rejected, insulted, ridiculed! And then let me say to you, “Behold how He loved us—you and me—and all His people!” In such a case I might quote the words of John, “Behold, what manner of love!” But this love of Jesus is beyond all manner and measure of which we can have any conception. If I were to take all our love to Him and heap it up like a vast mountain. If I were to gather all the members of the one Church of Christ on earth and bid them empty their hearts, and then fetched out of Heaven the myriads of redeemed and perfected spirits before the Throne of God, and they added all their heart’s love. And if I could collect all the love that ever has been and that ever shall be throughout eternity in all the saints—all that would be but as a drop in a bucket compared with the boundless, fathomless love of Christ to us that brought Him down so low as to be the object of the scorn and derision of these wicked men for our sake! So, Beloved, from this sad scene let us learn how greatly Jesus loved us and let each one of us, in return, love Him with all our heart.

I cannot leave this set of lessons for your heart without giving you one more. That is, *see the grand facts behind the scorn*. I do believe—I cannot help believing—that our blessed Master, when He was in the hands of those cruel soldiers and they crowned Him with thorns, bowed before Him in mock reverence and insulted Him in every possible way, all the while looked behind the curtain of the visible circumstances and saw that the heartless pantomime—no, tragedy—only partially hid the Divine reality, for He was a King, even then, and He had a Throne and that crown of thorns was the emblem of the diadem of universal sovereignty that shall, in due season, adorn His blessed brow. That reed was to Him a type of the scepter which He shall yet wield as King of kings and Lord of lords. And when they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” He heard, behind that mocking cry, the triumphant note of His future Glory, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! And He shall reign forever and ever!” For when they mockingly bowed the knee to Him, He saw all nations really bowing before Him and His enemies licking the dust at His feet.

Our Savior knew that these ribald soldiers, unconsciously to themselves, were setting before Him pictures of the great reward of His soul-travail. Let us not be discouraged if we have to endure anything of the same sort as our Lord suffered. He was not discouraged, but remained steadfast through it all. Mockery is the unintentional homage which falsehood pays to truth. Scorn is the unconscious praise which sin gives to holiness. What higher tribute could these soldiers give to Christ than to spit upon Him? If Christ had received honor from such men, there would have been no honor in it to Him. You know how even a heathen moralist, when they said to him, “So-and-So spoke well of you yesterday in the market,” asked, “What have I done amiss that such a wretch as that should speak well of me?” He rightly counted it a disgrace to be praised by a bad man—and because our Lord had done nothing amiss, all that these men could do was to speak ill of Him and treat Him with contumely, for their nature and character were the very opposite of His. Representing, as these soldiers did, the unregenerate, God-hating world,

I say that their scorn was the truest reverence that they could offer to Christ while they continued as they were!

And so, at the back of persecution, at the back of heresy, at the back of the hatred of ungodly men to the Cross of Christ, I see His everlasting Kingdom advancing and I believe that “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be exalted above the hills,” and that “all nations shall flow unto it,” even as Isaiah foretold that Jesus shall sit upon the throne of David, and that of the increase of His Kingdom there shall be no end, for the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor unto Him, “and He shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah!” Glory be to His holy name!

Have all our hearts truly learned these four grand lessons—the shamefulness of sin—the condescension of our Lord—the immeasurable love which made Him so condescending—and the ineffable glory which hides behind the skirts of all this shame and sorrow? If not, let us beseech the Holy Spirit to teach them to us.

II. Now I want to give you, from this same incident, A SET OF LESSONS FOR YOUR CONSCIENCE.

And, first, it is a very painful reflection—let your conscience feel the pain of it—that *Jesus Christ can still be mocked*. He has gone into the heavens and He sits there in Glory, but yet, spiritually, so as to bring great guilt upon him who does it, the glorious Christ of God can still be mocked and He is mocked by those who deride His people. Now, men of the world, if you see faults and failings in us, we do not wish you to screen us. Because we are the servants of God, we do not ask for exemption from honest criticism. We do not desire that our sins should be treated with more leniency than those of other men, but, at the same time, we bid you beware that you do not slander, scandalize and persecute those who are the true followers of Christ, for, if you do, you are mocking and persecuting Him. I believe that if it is the poorest of His people, the least gifted and the most faulty, yet, if they are evilly spoken of for Christ’s sake, our Lord takes it all as done to Himself. You remember how Saul of Tarsus, when he lay smitten on the ground, heard a Voice which said to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?” “Well, but,” he might have said, “I have never persecuted *You*, Lord.” No, but he dragged Christian men and women to prison and scourged them, and compelled them to blaspheme—and because he had done this to Christ’s people, Christ could truly say to him, “Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me.” If you persecutors need to amuse yourselves, you can find much cheaper sport than that of slandering the servants of Christ! Remember that the Lord has said concerning them, “He that touches you, touches the apple of His eye.” If you were to touch the apple of a man’s eye, you would be provoking him to defend himself, so do not awaken Christ’s righteous anger by scoffing at any of His people! I say no more upon that point. If the message is meant for any man here, let him give heed to the warning.

Next, Christ may be mocked by despising His Doctrine. It seems to me a fearful thing that men should ever hold up Christianity to scorn. Yet nowadays there is scarcely any portion of the Truth of God which is not ridiculed and caricatured. It is stripped of its own clothes and dressed up

in somebody else's old purple cloak and then it is set in a chair, while men pretend great homage for it, and salute it, saying that they have great reverence for Christ's teaching. But, before long they spit in its face and treat it with the utmost disdain. There are some who deny the Deity of Christ, others who hate the central Doctrine of His atoning Sacrifice, while many rail at Justification by Faith which is the very heart of the Gospel! Is there any Doctrine—I scarcely know one—which has escaped the mockery and scorn of ungodly men? In the present day if a man wants to make himself a name, he does not write upon something which he understands and which is for the public welfare, but he straightway begins to assail some Doctrine of Scripture of which he does not know the meaning! He misrepresents it and sets up some notion of his own in opposition to it, for he is a "modern thought" man, a person of much importance.

It is easy work to scoff at the Bible and to deny the Truth of God. I think that I could, myself, pose as a learned man, in that way, if ever the devil should sufficiently control me to make me feel any ambition of that sort. In fact, there is scarcely a fool in Christendom who cannot make himself a name among modern thinkers if he will but blaspheme loudly enough, for that seems to be the road to fame, nowadays, among the great mass of mankind! They are dubbed "thoughtful" who thus insult the Truth of God as the soldiers, with their spit, insulted the Christ of God!

I shall come closely home to some of you who attend here regularly, when I say that Christ can still be mocked by resolves which never lead to obedience. Let me speak very softly upon this solemn Truth of God. Give me your hand, my Friend. Let me look into your eyes. I would gladly look into your soul if I could, while I put this matter very personally to you. Several times, before leaving this House, you have said, "I will repent of my sin. I will seek the Lord. I will believe in Jesus." You meant these words when you uttered them. Why, then, have you not fulfilled your promises? I do not care what excuse you give, because any reason which you give will be most unreasonable, for it will only amount to this—that there was something better than to do what Christ bids you, something better for you than to be saved by Him, something better than the forgiveness of your sins, something better than regeneration, something better than Christ's eternal love! You would have chosen Christ, but Barabbas came across your path, so you said, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" You would have thought seriously about the salvation of your soul, but you had promised to go to a certain place of amusement, so you put off seeking the Savior till a more convenient season. Possibly you said, "My trade is of such a character that I shall have to give it up if I become a Christian—and I cannot afford to do that." I heard of one who listened to a sermon which impressed him—and he did not often hear sermons—and he wished that he could be a Christian, but he had made various bets for large amounts and he felt that he could not think of other things till they were settled.

There are many such things that keep men from Christ. I do not care what it is that you prefer to the Savior—you have insulted Him if you

prefer anything to Him. If it were the whole world and all that it contains, that you had chosen, these things are but trifles when compared with the Sovereignty of Christ—His crown rights to every man's heart, and the immeasurable riches that He is prepared to give to every soul that comes and trusts in Him! Do you prefer a harlot to the Lord Jesus Christ? Then don't tell me that you do not spit in His face! You do what is even worse than that! Do you prefer profits wrongly gained to accepting Jesus as your Savior? Do not tell me, Sir, that you have never bowed the knee before Him in scorn, for you have done far worse than that! Or was it a little paltry pleasure—mere trifling laughter and folly of an hour—that you preferred to your Lord? Oh, what must He feel when He sees these contemptible things preferred to Him, knowing that eternal damnation is at the back of your foolish choice? Yet men choose moment's folly and Hell, instead of Christ and Heaven! Was ever such an insult as that paid to Christ by Roman soldiers? Go, legionaries, you are not the worst of men! There are some who, being pricked in their conscience, make a promise of repentance and then, for the world's sake, and for their flesh's sake, and for the devil's sake, break that promise—the soldiers did not sin against Christ so grossly as that!

Listen once more. I must again come very closely home to some of you. Was it not a shameful thing that they should call Christ, King, and yet not mean it? And, apparently, give Him a crown, a scepter, a royal robe, the bowing of the knee and the salutation of the lips, but not to mean any of it? It cuts me to the heart to think of what I am going to say, yet I must say it. There are some professors—members of Christian churches—members of *this* Church—who call Christ Master and Lord, yet they do not do the things which He says. They profess to believe the Truth of God, yet it is not like the Truth of God to them, for they never yield to its power and they act as if what they call Truth were fiction and human invention! There are still some, like those of whom the Apostle wrote, and I can say as he did—"of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ"—though in the nominal church! Their God is their belly, they glory in their shame and they mind earthly things. Yet they bow the knee before Christ, they sing, "crown Him, crown Him," and they eat the bread and drink the wine which set forth His broken body and shed blood—yet they have no part nor lot in Him.

It has always been so in the nominal church, and it will be so, I suppose, till Christ comes to separate the chaff from the wheat. But, oh, how dreadful it is! To insult Christ in the Roman guard-room was bad enough, but to insult Him at the Communion Table is far worse! For a Roman soldier to spit in His face was bad enough, but to come and mingle with His people, call yourself His servant and then to go deliberately to drink with the drunkard, or to be unchaste in your life, or dishonest in your trade, or false in your talk, or foul in your heart is even more abominable! I know no milder word that can express the truth! To call Christ, Master, and yet never to do His bidding—this is mockery and scorn of the worst possible kind, for it wounds Him at the very heart!

I was reading, today, part of a Welsh sermon which struck me much. The preacher said, "Let all who are in this congregation avow their real master. I will first call upon the servants of the devil to acknowledge him. He is a fine master, and a glorious one to serve, and his service is joy and delight. Now all of you who are serving him, say, 'Amen. Glory be to the devil!' Say it! But nobody spoke. "Now," he said, "don't be ashamed to acknowledge him whom you serve every day of your life. Speak out and say, 'Glory be to my master, the devil!' or else hold your tongues forever." And still nobody spoke, so the minister said, "Then, I hope that when I ask you to glorify Christ, you will speak." And they did speak, till the chapel seemed to ring again as they cried, "Glory be to Christ!" That was good. But if I were to test you in a similar fashion, I feel tolerably certain that nobody here would acknowledge his master, if his master is the devil! And I am afraid that some of the devil's servants would join us in our hallelujahs to Christ! That is the mischief of it—the devil himself can use self-denial and he can teach his servants to deny their master—and in that very way to do him the most honor. O dear Friends, be true to Christ and, whatever you do, never mock Him! There are many other things which you can do that will be much more profitable to you than mocking Christ. If God is God, serve Him. If Christ is your Lord and Master, honor Him. But if you do not mean to honor Him, do not call Him Master, for if you do, all your faults and sins will be laid at His door and He will be dishonored through you.

Now I think that I hear somebody say, "I am afraid, Sir, that I have mocked Christ. What am I to do?" Well, my answer is—Do not despair, because that would be mocking Him in another way by doubting His power to save you. "I am inclined to throw it all up." Do not act so, for that would be to insult your Maker by another sin, namely, open revolt against Him. "What shall I do, then?" Well, go and tell Him your grief and sorrow. He told His disciples to preach the Gospel first at Jerusalem, because that was where those soldiers lived, the very men who had mocked Him. And He prayed for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In a like manner, He presents His mercy to you, first. Come to Him, then, and if you are conscious that you have mocked Him in any one of these ways that I have mentioned, say to yourself, "Then, if He will but forgive me, I will henceforth live all the more to His praise. I cannot wipe out my sin, but He can, and if He will do so, I will love Him much because I shall have had much forgiven. And I will spend and be spent to glorify His holy name."

My time has almost gone, so this must be my last remark. Whether we have mocked Christ or not, come, dear Brothers and Sisters, *let us now glorify Him*. This very hour let us crown Him with our heart's love and trust. Bring forth that royal crown—the crown of your love, of your trust, of your complete consecration to Him—and put it upon His head now, saying, "My Lord, my God, my King." Now put the scepter into His hand by yielding absolute obedience to His will. Is there anything He bids you do? Do it! Is there anything He bids you give? Give it! Is there anything He bids you abstain from? Abstain from it! Put not a reed scepter into His hand, but give Him the entire control of your whole being. Let Him be

your real Lord, reigning over your spirit, soul and body! What next? Bow before Him and worship Him in the quiet of your inmost heart. You need not bow your bodies, but let your spirits fall down before Him that sits upon the Throne of God, and cry, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

And when you have worshipped Him, then proclaim Him King. As those soldiers said in mockery, "Hail, King of the Jews!" so now do you in real earnestness proclaim Him King of Jews and Gentiles, too! Go home and tell your Friends that Jesus is King! Tell it out among the nations that "the Lord reigns," as the old version has it, "reigns from the tree." He has made His Cross to be His Throne, and there He reigns in majesty and in mercy! Tell it to your children, tell it to your servants, tell it to your neighbors, tell it in every place wherever you can be heard—that the Lord, even Jesus, reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords! Say to them, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little."

And then, when you have proclaimed Him, kiss Him yourself. As the rough soldiers spat upon Him, so do you give to Him the kiss of homage and affection, saying, "Lord Jesus, You are mine forever and ever." Say, with the spouse, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." I suggest to you that each individual here who loves His Lord much, should think of something fresh that He can do for Christ during this week—some special gift that you can bestow upon Him—some special action that you can do which shall be quite different and shall be only for Jesus, and altogether for Jesus, as an act of homage to His name. I often wish that God's people were more inventive, like that woman who wanted greatly to honor Him, so she brought out her alabaster box and broke it, and poured the precious ointment upon His head. Think of something special that you can do for Christ, or give to Him.

A dear Friend, now in Heaven, but who used to worship in this place, had a son who had been a great scapegrace, and was, in fact, living a vicious life. He had been long away from his father, and his father did not know what to do about getting him home, for he had treated him very badly, marred his comfort and spoiled his home. But, as I was preaching one night, this thought came to him, "I will find out, tomorrow morning, where my son is, and I will go to him." The father knew that the son was very angry with him, and very bitter against him, so he thought of a certain fruit, of which his son was very fond, and he sent him a basketful of it the next morning. And when the son received it, He said, "Then, my father still has some affection for me." And the next day the father called—and the day after he had him at home again! And that was the means of bringing the son to the Savior! He had worn himself out with vice and he soon died, but his father told me that it was a great joy to his heart to think that he could have a good hope concerning his son. Had the son died away from home. Had the father not sought him out, he would never have forgiven himself!

He did that for Christ's sake. Cannot some of you do a similar deed for the same reason? Is there any skeleton in your closet? Is there any mischief you could set right? Or have you anything you can give to your Lord and Master? Think, each one of you for himself or herself, what you can do and, inasmuch as Christ was so shamefully despised and rejected, seek to honor and glorify Him in the best way that you can and He will accept your homage and your offering for His love's sake. May He help you to do so! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:15-54; JOHN 18:28-38.**

We are now to read about our Lord before Pontius Pilate.

Matthew 27. Verses 15-30. *Now at that feast the governor was accustomed to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will you that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered Him. When he was set down on the Judgment Seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have you nothing to do with that just Man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. The governor answered and said unto them, Which of the two will you that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate said unto them, What shall I do, then, with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil has He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see you to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and struck Him on the head. Surely, mockery could have gone no further! We marvel at the boldness and ingenuity of their scorn. Oh, that we were half as earnest in seeking to honor Him—as careful to think of everything that might make our homage perfect. But we, alas, too often fail to give Him due honor and glory, even when others are all aflame with zeal to insult Him.*

31. *And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off from Him and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. Perhaps they were afraid that He would die from sheer exhaustion and so, with a cruel mercy, they would keep Him alive for the infliction of further tortures.*

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross.* Any one of us might well have wished to have been Simon, yet we need not envy him. There is a cross for everyone who is a follower of the Crucified—may we have Grace to carry it after Him!

33, 34. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* He wholly abstained from that which might have lessened His pain. He came to suffer and He intended to go through with all that He had undertaken. He would do nothing that would blunt the edge of the sacrificial knife. He forbids not the soothing draught to other sufferers who are in pain, but, as for Himself, He will not partake of it.

35-37. *And they crucified Him, and parted His garment, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garment among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there, and set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.* And so He is, and so He shall be—King of the Jews even on that Cross and never so royal as when He had surrendered everything for love of those whom He came to redeem!

38-43. *Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, You that destroys the temple, and builds it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief priest mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.* What pain this taunt must have caused to the Savior! Because He is so pure and never yields to temptation, we are very apt to forget that temptation was really temptation, even to Him, and that it grieved His pure and holy Soul thus to be tempted to turn aside from the path of perfect trust in His Father and complete obedience to Him. No doubt the pain of temptation is in inverse ratio to our willingness to yield to it. When we yield to temptation, we feel a pleasure in it, but when we are horrified at it, and start back from it, then we feel the pain of it. Oh, for a mind and heart, so perfectly subject to the will of God, that we should feel such a temptation as this to be the very agony of grief to us, as it was to our Lord!

44. *The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth.* Nobody seemed to look upon Him with any desire to help Him, but even the lowest of the low would contribute their portion of mockery to increase His misery.

43-54. *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This Man calls for Elijah. And straightway one of them*

ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. The rest said, let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him. Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost, and, behold, the veil of the temple was ripped in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks split; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with Him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. John gives us some details of our Lord before Pilate which Matthew does not mention.

John 18:28-38. Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the Hall of Judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring you against this Man? They answered and said unto him, If He were not a malefactor we would not have delivered Him up unto you. Then said Pilate unto them, Take you Him, and judge Him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying what death He should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Are You the King of the Jews? Jesus answered Him, Say you this thing of yourself, or did others tell it you of Me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You unto me: what have You done? Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this world: if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My Kingdom not from here. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Are You a king then? Jesus answered, You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the Truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice. Pilate said unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in Him no fault at all. Thus did all who came into contact with Jesus bear witness that the Lamb of God was indeed “holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—414, 333.

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PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1914.**

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

***“And they spit upon Him.”
Matthew 27:30.***

The night before He had “sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground,” that fair visage, which was “fairer than that of any of the sons of men,” had been marred by agony and grief without parallel. During that night He had no rest—He was dragged away from one tribunal to another. First, He was brought before a council of priests. Soon after He stood before Pilate and now, after the mockery of a trial, He is given up to the soldiers, that they may mock Him before His execution. ‘Tis He—the world’s Redeemer, the long expected Messiah—He is led out as a condemned criminal—condemned as a traitor and given up for blasphemy, that He may die the death! Do you see Him? They bring forth an old stool—they call that a throne—the Monarch who sways the scepter of the universe, is placed thereon! They thrust into His hand a reed to mock that golden scepter, the touch of which has so often given mercy to rebels! And now they play the worshipper before Him. But what is their worship? It consists of ribaldry and jeer. Having made sport of His kingship, they turn to ridicule His Character as a Prophet. They blindfold Him and strike Him in the face, some on one cheek, and some on the other, buffeting Him with the palms of their hands! They pluck His facial hair and then they say, making fools of themselves rather than of Him whom they thought to make a fool of, “Prophesy, who is he that struck You?” “Who is this that just now plucked Your beard?” “Who is it that struck You on the cheek?” Not content with this, they loosen the blindfold and He sees. What a sight is before Him! Faces in every conceivable shape mocking Him—thrusting out the tongue or screwing it into the cheek, calling Him all the names that their low-lived dictionary could summon up, not content with heaping common scorn upon Him, but counting Him to be the very offscouring of all things. Names with which they would not degrade a dog, they use to defile Him! Then, to consummate all, they spit into His face. Those eyes, which make Heaven glad, and cause the angels to rejoice, are covered with the spit of these rascal soldiers. Down His cheek it trickles. That awful brow, the nod or shake of which reveals the everlasting decrees of God, is stained with spit from the mouths of wretches whom His own hands had made, whom He could have dashed into eternal destruction had He willed!

When I muse on this, my soul is filled with sorrow. The very idea that Jesus Christ could ever have been spit upon by one in human shape appalls me! Do you remember *what sort of face it was that these soldiers spit into?* Shall I read you a description of it? One that loved Him and knew Him well, speaks of Him thus—"My Beloved is white. . . His Countenance is lovely." (Solomon's Song, 5:10, etc.). It was into this dear face, a coarse brutal soldiery must void their vile spit! O Church of Christ, was ever grief like yours, that your Husband should thus be defiled and that, too, for your sake? Was ever love like His that He should suffer these indignities for you? The angels crowd around His Throne to catch a glimpse of that fair Countenance. When He was born, they came to Bethlehem's manger that they might gaze upon that face while He was yet an Infant! And all through His devious path of sorrow, He was "seen of angels." They never turned away their eyes from Him, for never had they seen a visage so enchanting! What must they have thought when gathering round their Lord? Surely they would have gladly stretched their wings to have shielded that dear face! What anger must have filled their holy souls, what grief, if grief can be known by beings like themselves, when they saw these wretches, these inhuman creatures, spitting on Perfection! Oh, how they must have grieved when they saw the nasty spit about that mouth which is "most sweet," trickling down from those eyes which are "like the eyes of doves by rivers of waters," staining the cheeks which are "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers," and falling on those lips which are "like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." This is a subject upon which I must meditate, even though I cannot preach. I cannot describe it to you unless your soul can now draw near to your buffeted Master, unless the Holy Spirit shall give you a near and dear—an intimate, quiet, soul-satisfying view and vision of Him. I cannot give it to you. As well might I attempt to hold a candle to show you the sun as to hope, by anything that I can say, to touch your passions or move your hearts towards my dear Lord and Master, if the vision of Him does not move you to grieve for sin, and to love Him because He suffered thus for you. All I propose tonight is to offer just a few thoughts on this startling fact in the history of our Redemption.

"They spit upon Him." *Let us learn here the deep depravity of the human race.* When I see Adam in the midst of comfort putting forth his hand to take that one fruit which his Master had reserved for Himself, I see, indeed, sin and arrogance, daring assumption and a heinous crime! But I do not see so much of levity and lawlessness, there, as I do in this, that creatures should spit on the Creator! As I look through the annals of human guilt, I see strange stories of man in reckless, defiant rebellion against his Divine Sovereign. From that first evil hour until now, what strange monsters of guilt has the earth seen! We have heard of rapine and murder, crimes for which new names have been coined to meet the new atrocities which have been committed! Homicide, fratricide, patricide and matricide in which every sanctity of kin has been outraged. We have read of fornication and of adultery, and of lusts worse than bestial. Good

God, what is not man capable of? Take but the bit from his mouth and the bridle from his jaws and to what depth of iniquity will he not descend? There is not a filthy dream that Satan ever had in the dark watches of his midnight reverie which man will not embody in act, and carry out in all its grim and dread reality! Strange are those tales that have come from a far-off land, where the heathen worship in their darkness. They not merely bow down to blocks of wood and stone, but degrade themselves with vices into which we could never have imagined humanity could plunge! O God, my heart is heavy as a stone, and smitten with very grief when I think of what an evil thing man is! Why did You not sweep him from the world? How can You permit a viper so obnoxious to nestle in the bosom of Your Providence? *Oh, why do You permit such a den of thieves* to wander abroad such a cage of unclean birds to swing in ether, and to be carried by Your power round the sun? Why do You not blast it, smite its mountains with desolation and fill its valleys with ashes of fire? Why do You not sweep the race of humans clean away and let their very name become a hissing and a scorn? But, my Brothers and Sisters, bad as man is, I think he never was so bad—or rather, his badness never came out to the full so much—as when gathering all his spite, his pride, his lust, his desperate defiance, his abominable wickedness into one mouthful—he spat into the face of the Son of God, Himself! Oh, this is an act that transcends every other! There are other deeds connected with the Crucifixion quite as malignant, but could there be any so vile? Surely we may say of the men that drove the nails into the Savior's hands that they did but that which they were ordered to do. They were soldiers, and because they were commanded by their military superiors, therefore, they did it. But this was a gratuitous act—this was done without command, without any pressure! It was the base wickedness of their own hearts. Sin saw Perfection in its power, and it must spit on Perfection's cheeks! The creature, the erring creature, saw its Creator in the mightiness of His condescension, putting Himself into His creature's power—and the creature spit upon Him to show how much He hated, how much He loathed, despised, abhorred, detested the very thought of Godhead—even when it was Godhead veiled in human flesh and come into the world to redeem!

And now, while you blush with me for human nature, thus foaming out its own reeking depravity, do pray remember that *such is your nature, and such is mine*. Let us not talk of things in the general, but bring them home in particular. Just such a base wretch am I, and such a base wretch are you, my dear Hearer, by nature, as were those who thus insulted our Lord. I need not go far for proofs, for if we have not spit into the Savior's face, literally—that dear sorrow-scarred visage—we have, as opportunity offered, been as rude and wanton as they! Do you not remember the poor saint of God who talked to us of the things of the Kingdom—and we laughed him out of countenance? Do we not remember that servant of ours who anxiously longed to serve her God, but we threw every obstacle in her way, and never missed an opportunity of venting

some jest or sneer upon her? And O, most precious Book of God, you legacy of my Redeemer, how often in the days of my unregeneracy have I spit on you and thrust you into a corner, that the novel of the day might have my attention? I have bidden you lie still, that I might read the newspaper, or something more trivial, and it may be, less innocent, might occupy my mind. O, you ministers of Christ! How have our hearts despised you! And you, you lovely ones, the lowly in heart who follow Christ in the midst of an evil generation, how often have we said hard things of you, mocked your piety, despised your humility, laughed at your prayers, and made jokes at those very expressions which showed the sincerity of your hearts! In all this what have we done? Have we not really spit into the face of Christ? Come, let us weep together! Let us sorrow as those who mourn over a first-born son, whose corpse lies unburied before them. I have spit into my Savior's face, but mercy of mercies, He who stands before you tonight, self-convicted, can also add, "But He has not spit in mine. No, He has kissed me with the kisses of His love," and He has said, "Go your way; your sins, which are many, are all forgiven. I have blotted out your iniquities like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions." Melt, then, you eyes, and stream down these cheeks, you briny tears, when I remember that He, whom I once despised, has not despised me! That He whom I abhorred, has not abhorred me! And though we hid, as it were, our faces from Him, He has not hidden His face from us—but here we are, forgiven sinners—though once we assailed Him with indignity as gross as those who spat into His face!

Having propounded that melancholy fact, I pass on. May God the Holy Spirit impress each of these Truths upon our minds while I merely glance at them.

Why was our Master's face full of spit? Sweet thought! Our faces were full of spots, and if the Master would save us, His face must be full of spots, too! He had none of His own—therefore those spots shall be given Him from the lips of scoffers. You know it became Him who saved us, that in everything He should be made like unto us. We were wounded. What then? "He was wounded for our transgressions." We were sick, and He, Himself, "bore our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows." Since we were worms, He must say, "I am a worm, and no man." And we being sinful, He must bear our sin and be numbered with the transgressors—and led away to die. In all things He must become a true Substitute for those whom He came into the world to redeem!

And now, my Soul, come here and look at this wondrous spectacle again. The face of your Lord Jesus Christ is filled with spit! Was ever a sight so loathsome and so disgusting as this? But mark, this is your case. Down your cheeks something worse than spit ran—from your eyes there flowed something worse than came from the lips of soldiers—and from your mouth there has gushed forth a stream which is worse than that which came upon the Savior's face. Come, look at this mirror tonight, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, for the face of Christ is the mirror of your souls! What He endured mirrors forth what we were by na-

ture. Oh, what spots there were in us! What hellish spots that streams of water could not wash away! What evils of every kind—pride, and anger, and lust, and defiance of God! Spots, did I say? Why, surely the sun has looked upon our faces and we have become black all over as the tents of Kedar. 'Tis no more with us, now, a matter of spots—by nature we are as the Ethiopian—black, thoroughly black! But, glory be unto His name, His spots have taken away our spots! This spit has made us clean! We are black no longer! By faith we may feel, tonight, that that spit on the Savior's face has washed away the sin from ours. His shame has taken away our sin! That spitting has taken away our guilt. And now what says your Lord of us? You know what sort of face He has. Listen to Him while He describes ours. You would scarcely think that He could mean it, but certainly He does, for He has seen us often and, therefore, He should know. He says of us, O prince's daughter—"Your head (Song 7:5, 6) upon you is like Carmel, and the hair of your head like purple: the king is held in the galleries." And again He says, "You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in *you*." When I first had that text laid home to my soul, well do I remember how it ravished my heart! I could not understand that my Lord and Master should actually look me in the face and say, "Lo, you are fair; there is no spot in you." Oh, it is a grand and noble Truth of God! Faith grasps it, love dotes over it, our hearts treasure it! There is no spot left in a Believer—

***"Covered is my unrighteousness,
From condemnation I am free."***

One bath in the precious blood takes away all spots, makes us whiter than the driven snow and we stand before God fairest among the fair, accepted in the Beloved! Learn, then, O Church of Christ, this great Truth of God—that the spit and the shame of the Savior's face have delivered you from the odious corruption that disfigured you, and you may, therefore, rejoice in His meekness who bore your reproach!

What Christ suffered by way of shame, we must remember, is *a picture of what we would have suffered forever* if He had not become our Substitute! Ah, my Soul, when you see your Lord mocked, remember that shame and everlasting contempt must otherwise have been forever and ever *your* portion. One of the ingredients of Hell will be shame—to be laughed at for our folly, to be called madmen for our sin, to feel that angels despise us, that God scorns us, that the righteous, themselves, abhor us—this will be one of the flames of the Pit that shall burn the spirits of men. To have no honor anywhere, not even among their base companions, is a bitter prospect, but there is no rank in Hell, no being honored in the Pit that yawns for the souls of men. "Shame shall be the promotion of fools, and everlasting contempt shall be their perpetual inheritance." And think, my Soul! This had been your portion, but your Master bore it for you! And now you shall never be ashamed because your master was ashamed for you! You shall not be confounded, neither shall you be put to shame, for He has taken away your reproach and borne it on His own visage! And as for your rebuke, it has entered into His own heart and He

has taken it away forever—it shall never be brought to your remembrance.

Think, dear Friends, of the honor which awaits the Christian, by-and-by—

***“It does not yet appear
How great we must be made,
But when we see our Savior here,
We shall be like our Head.”***

We shall judge the angels! The fallen spirits shall be dragged up from their infernal dens, and we shall sit as assessors with the Son of God, to say, “Amen” to that solemn sentence which shall perpetuate their fiery doom! We shall reign upon this earth a thousand years with Him, and then, clothed in white robes, our joyous spirits in our risen bodies shall enter triumphant into Heaven’s gates! There we shall be crowned and treated as princes of the blood. There shall angels be our waiting servants and principalities and powers shall assist us in our service of song. Before the mighty Throne of blazing light, where God, Himself, reigns, we shall stand, and sing, and bow, and worship—and we, too, shall have our thrones and our kingdoms, and our crowns, and we shall reign forever and ever and ever! Then we shall look back to that face that was covered with spit and we shall say, “We owe all this to that dear disfigured face! All this glory is the result of His shame, because He hid not His face from shame and spitting.” Therefore we have “washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Therefore stand we in the full blaze of Heaven’s own glory and, therefore, we serve Jehovah day and night in His Temple! Let this sweet thought, then, dwell on your mind. Christ’s shame has taken away your shame! His endurance of the spitting has secured your everlasting honor!

To draw another practical Truth of God from this short but thrilling sentence, “They spit upon *Him*.” *Blessed Master*, “*if I am like You, they well spit on me.*” The less I am like You, the more the world will love me, but if, perhaps, these wayfarers should see something in me that shows I have been with You, they will give me the remnants of that spit which they did not spit into Your face. Oh, my Lord and Master! One prayer I offer, “Give me Grace to bear that spit, thankfully to receive it, and to rejoice because I am counted worthy not only to believe on You, but to suffer for Your sake!” There are many of you, I know, who meet the quiz and hear the laughter of your old companions when you forsake them to follow Christ. In the associations you have formed, and in your family connections, you often encounter a treatment which is not pleasant to flesh and blood. Does not the Evil One sometimes whisper to you, “Follow not with Christ, for this is a sect everywhere spoken against”? “Leave Him and be honored! Go not with Him, when He goes through Vanity Fair. Oh, do not suffer with Him this trial of cruel mocking.” Ah, that is the song of Satan! Stop your ears to it, and listen not for a moment, but listen to this true note from Heaven, “Rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy when they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My name’s sake, for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you.”

Take joyfully not only the spoiling of your goods, but the spoiling of your character! Sing, as our sweet hymn puts it—

***“Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee.
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
You my All from hence shall be.”***

Go forth outside the camp, bearing the reproach. When at any time your heart sinks within you, I would have you consider Him who “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be weary and faint in your mind.” If at any time you would hide your face from the shame and spitting, think you see Him enduring it, and then you will thrust out your face and say, “Let me be a sharer with my Master! Treat me like my Lord! If you spit on Him, spit on me! And rather than spit in His face, spit in mine! I will be glad enough if I can but shelter Him. It is my pride to suffer, my boast to be despised for His sake.”—

***“I nail my glory to His Cross,
And pour contempt on all my shame.”***

Oh, this is a glory which an archangel can never know—the glory of being trampled on by the world for Jesus’ sake! The honor of fellowship in suffering with Christ! And it shall be followed by a greater glory, still, when we shall reign with Him above, because we have suffered with Him below.

To conclude, let me draw one more lesson from the fact that “They spit on Him.” Christian Brothers and Sisters, *you that love your Master, praise Him and extol Him.* How the early Church used to talk of its martyrs! After those good men, who were stretched on the rack, had their flesh torn from their bones with red-hot pincers, they were exposed to the gaze of the multitude! Naked and their limbs cut away joint by joint, they were then burned in the fire, but stood calm and dared without a sigh to declare that though they were cut into a thousand pieces, they would never forsake their Lord and Master! How did the Church ring with their praises—every Christian pulpit talked of them, every Believer had an anecdote concerning them! And shall not our conversation ring with the honor of this Martyr, this glorious Witness, this Redeemer who thus suffered shame, and spitting and death on the Cross for us? Honor Him! Honor Him! Honor Him, you blood-bought ones! Be not content to sing—

***“Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all,”***

but bring it out! Make it not a matter of song, but of deed! Bring it out, and put it on His head! You daughters of Jerusalem, go forth to meet King Solomon and crown Him! Crown Him with heart and hands! Take the palm branches of your praises and go forth to meet Him! Spread your garments in the way, and cry, “Hosannah! Hosannah! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord,” leading captivity captive, and scattering gifts for men! Talk of Him in your houses. Laud Him in your conversation! Praise Him in your songs! Waft you awhile your melodies on earth, till you shall lay aside this clay, and enter into Heaven, there to give Him

the fiery songs of flaming tongues! Then emulate the seraphs, and surround His Throne with everlasting hallelujahs, crying, "Unto Him that loved us, and that washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever!" I think I see Him now! He stands before me! I see that very face that once endured the spitting. Oh, you angels! Bring forth the crown! Bring forth the crown and let it be put upon His head this day! I see the piercings, where thorns penetrated His temple. Bring forth the diadem, I say, and put it on His head! 'Tis done! A shout rises up to Heaven, louder than the voice of many waters. And what now? Bring forth another, and another, and another crown, and yet another, and another! And now I see Him. There He stands—and "on His head are many crowns." It is not enough! You redeemed saints, bring forth more! You blood-bought ones, as you stream into Heaven's gates, each one of you offer Him a new diadem! And you, my Soul, though "less than the least of all saints," and the very chief of sinners, put your crown upon His head! By faith, I do it now. "Unto Him that loved me, and that washed me from my sins in His blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever." From pole to pole let the echoes sound! Yes, let the whole earth, and all that dwell therein, say, "Amen!"

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 8:29-59; MARK 14:1-9; JOHN 12:1-7**

Christ thus spoke to His adversaries.

Verse 29. *And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone: for I always do those things that please Him.* Brothers and Sisters, what Christ could say, I trust many of His servants can also say in a like manner. "He that sent me is with me." What power, what pleasure must the Presence of God give to His servants! "The Father has not left me alone." Oh, how blessed to feel that behind us is the sound of our Master's feet and that in us is the Temple of His Presence! We cannot, however, say as Christ did, "I always do those things that please Him," for, alas, we have the remembrance of sin this morning—and have to confess it in His sight. But let us also remember that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

30, 31. *As He spoke these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If you continue in My word, then are you My disciples, indeed.* It is not a mere profession that makes a man a saint—there must be a continuance of well-doing. We bind lads apprentice for a little time, but no man belongs to Christ unless he belongs to Him forever. There must be an entire giving up of one's self, in life and unto death, to the Lord's cause.

32-34. *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered Him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: why do You say, You shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin.* There is this in the original, "Whoever makes sin." It is not exactly,

“Whoever commits it,” because if so, all would be the servants of sin and God would have no sons at all! But it says in the original “Whoever makes sin,” that is, whoever makes it his choice, and makes it the delight of his soul—whoever does this is the servant of sin and is no son of God.

35. *And the servant abides not in the house forever, but a son abides forever.* He may be in the house and have slender privileges for a time, but these soon go away.

36. *If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed.* And give you the privileges of sons!

37, 38. *I know that you are Abraham’s seed, but you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father: and you do that which you have seen with your father.* Men always act according to their natures. We shall find the polluted fountain sending forth filthy streams. We do not expect to hear sweet singing from a serpent, nor, on the other hand, do we expect hissing from the bird, but every creature is after its own kind. Christ, coming from the Father, reveals God! Ungodly men, coming from the devil, reveal the devil.

39-42. *They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. You do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him. We are not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me.* You should see in Me a brother. You should perceive in Me the attributes of God and, being made like unto God as His sons, you would love the Godhead in Me.

43-44. *Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do.* Christ does not speak very gentle words at all times. A deeply-rooted disease needs a sharp medicine—and He gives it. He uses the knife, sometimes, and if there is a deadly ulcer that must be cut away, He knows how to do it with all the sternness of which His loving heart is capable.

44. *He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there was no truth in him.* The first murder was committed by his suggestion. Cain was guilty of it, but Satan instigated it. He has always been a man-killer and so Christ says that inasmuch as they sought to kill Him, they were worthy sons of their parent. “There is no truth in him.”

44. *When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own.* It is his own idiom. You may always know him by it.

44. *For he is a liar, and the father of it.* The father of all liars and of all lies!

45-46. *And because I tell you the truth, you believe Me not. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe Me?*

Oh, matchless argument! Now were they silent, indeed! His whole life was before them. He had not lived in secret and yet He could appeal to his whole life—from the first day even to this time—and say, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” It is this that weakens our testimony for God—that we are so imperfect and full of sin. Let us seek to imitate the Master, for the more clean we are from these imperfections, the more shall we be able to shut the mouths of our adversaries.

47, 48. *He that is of God, hears God’s words. You, therefore, hear them not, because you are not of God. Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, Say we not well that you are a Samaritan, and have a devil? Always abuse your adversary if you cannot answer him—this is always the devil’s tactic! When he cannot overthrow religion, then he seeks to append opprobrious titles to those who profess it. It is an old and stale trick and has lost much of its force. Our Savior did not answer the accusation of His being a Samaritan, but inasmuch as what they said about His having a devil, would touch His Doctrine—He answered that.*

49-51. *Jesus answered, I have not a devil, but I honor My Father and you do dishonor Me. And I seek not My own glory: there is One that seeks and judges. Verily, verily, I say unto you. If a man keeps My sayings, he shall never see death. The sting of it shall be taken away—he may fall asleep—he will do so, but he shall not see death.*

52-56. *Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that You have a devil! Abraham is dead, and the Prophets, and You say, If a man keeps My sayings, he shall never taste of death. Are You greater than our father, Abraham, who is dead? And the Prophets who are dead? Whom do You make Yourself to be? Jesus answered, If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing: it is My Father who honors Me; of whom you say that He is your God: yet you have not know Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like you: but I know Him and keep His saying. Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.* There is a great force in the original language here, “He was glad.” There was an excessive joy which holy men had in looking forward to the coming of Christ. I do not think that we give ourselves enough room for joy in our religion. There are some persons who think it the right thing to restrain their emotions. They have no bursting forth of joy and seldom a shout of sacred song. But oh, my Brothers and Sisters, if there is anything that deserves the flashing eyes and the leaping feet, and the bounding heart, it is the great Truth of God that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, even the chief! Let us be glad as often as we make mention of His name.

7. *Then said the Jews unto Him, You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham? Why, He was hardly thirty, but sorrow had made him appear older.*

58. *Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am.* Here He claims His Deity to the fullest extent! And those who can read the New Testament and profess to believe it—and yet not see Christ as a claimant of Deity—must be sinfully blind!

59. *Then they took up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the Temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.* This is always the sinner's argument against the right! First, hard words, and then stones!

MARK 14.

Verses 1-3. *After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper.* A well-known person. There were plenty of Simons and so they had to put another name to distinguish him. You remember Simon the Pharisee, in whose house Christ was anointed by a woman who washed His feet with tears. This is another Simon. Not Simon the Pharisee, but Simon the Leper. A healed man, no doubt, or he could not have entertained guests. There can be no question by whom he was healed, for there was nobody else that could heal leprosy except our Divine Lord. "And being at Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper."

3. *As He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she broke the box and poured it on His head.* It does not need any "it," "poured on His head." The liquid nard flowed over His locks and, as it was with Aaron, it went, doubtless, down His beard to the utmost skirts of His garments.

4. *And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?* Matthew says that they were disciples. Shame on them! The ointment was put to its proper use. It was more wasted when it was in the box than when it was out of it, for it was doing nothing inside the alabaster box! But when it came out, it was answering its purpose. It was perfuming all round about. "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" When lives are lost in Christ's honor, or strength is spent in His service, there is no waste. It is what life and strength are made for—that they may be spent for Him.

5, 6. *For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her, And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble her? She has worked a good work on Me. Or "in Me."*

7. *For you have the poor with you always.* If you help them one day, they are poor and they need helping the next. Or if you help them and leave them, leaving them because they go home to God, there are other poor people sure to come, for they will never cease out of the land. "You have the poor with you always."

7. *And whenever you will, you may do them good. But Me you have not always.* "You can only do this for Me during the few days that I shall be with you. Within a week I shall be crucified. Forty more days I shall be gone from you. Me you have not always."

8, 9. *She has done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint My body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wherever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also what she has done*

shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. And it is so to this day! Christ's Gospel is preached, tonight, and this woman's love will be remembered. John also speaks of this in his 12th Chapter.

JOHN 12.

Verses 1, 2. *Then Jesus, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper.* It was in the house of Simon the Leper, a near acquaintance, perhaps, a relative of this beloved family, for we find that Martha served, but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. The two families had joined for this festival, and well they might, for in one case, someone had been healed of leprosy, and in the other case Lazarus had been raised from the dead! It was a holy, happy feast.

2, 3. *And Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus.* The other Evangelist said, "anointed His head." And they are both right. She anointed His head and His feet.

3. *And wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.* Everybody perceived and enjoyed it—and understood what costly ointment it must be which loads the air with so delicate a perfume.

4. *Then said one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which would betray Him.* I wonder whether he was son of that Simon the Leper, and whether a spiritual leprosy did cling to him! That, we know, was the case.

5, 6. *Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the bag, and took what was put therein.* Observe that the sharpest critics of the works of good men are very often no better than they should be. This Judas is indignant with what Mary does, and claims that he cares for the poor, but all the while he is a thief! Whenever a man is very quick condemning gracious men and women, you may be quite as quick in condemning him. He is usually a Judas.

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

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

“LET HIM DELIVER HIM NOW”

NO. 2029

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, JUNE 17, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“He trusted in God. Let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him:
for He said I am the Son of God.”
Matthew 27:43.***

THESE words are a fulfillment of the prophecy contained in the twenty-second Psalm. Read from the seventh verse—“All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.” Thus to the letter does our Lord answer to the ancient prophecy.

It is very painful to the heart to picture our blessed Master in His death-agonies, surrounded by a ribald multitude who watched Him and mocked Him. They made sport of His prayer and insulted His faith. Nothing was sacred to them—they invaded the Holy of Holies, His confidence in God and taunted Him concerning that faith in Jehovah which they were compelled to admit. See, dear Friends, what an evil thing is sin, since the Sin-bearer suffers so bitterly to make atonement for it! See, also, the shame of sin, since even the Prince of Glory, when bearing the consequences of it, is covered with contempt! Behold, also, how He loved us! For our sake He “endured the Cross, despising the shame.” He loved us so much that even scorn of the most cruel sort He deigned to bear, that He might take away our shame and enable us to look up unto God.

Beloved, the treatment of our Lord Jesus Christ by men is the clearest proof of total depravity which can possibly be required or discovered. Those must be stony hearts, indeed, which can laugh at a dying Savior and mock even at His faith in God! Compassion would seem to have deserted humanity while malice sat supreme on the throne. Painful as the picture is, it will do you good to paint it. You will need neither canvas, nor brush, nor palette, nor colors. Let your thoughts draw the outline and your love fill in the detail. I shall not complain if imagination heightens the coloring. The Son of God, whom angels adore with veiled faces, is pointed at with scornful fingers by men who thrust out the tongue and mockingly exclaim, “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.”

While thus we see our Lord in His sorrow and His shame as our Substitute, we must not forget that He also is there as our Representative. That which appears in many a Psalm to relate to David is found in the Gospels to refer to Jesus, our Lord. Often and often the student of the Psalm will say to himself, “Of whom does the Prophet speak?” He will have to disen-

tangle the threads sometimes and mark off that which belongs to David and that which relates to the Son of God. And frequently he will not be able to disentangle the threads at all because they are one and may relate both to David and to David's Lord.

This is meant to show us that the life of Christ is an epitome of the life of His people. He not only suffers for us as our Substitute but He suffers before us as our Pattern. In Him we see what we have in our measure to endure. “As He is, so are we also in this world.” We also must be crucified to the world and we may look for some of those tests of faith and taunts of derision which go with such a crucifixion. “Marvel not if the world hates you.” You, too, must suffer without the gate. Not for the world's redemption but for the accomplishment of Divine purposes in you and through you. To the sons of men you must be made to know the Cross and its shame. Christ is the mirror of the Church. What the Head endured, every member of the body will also have to endure in its measure.

Let us read the text in this light and come to it saying to ourselves, “Here we see what Jesus suffered in our place and we learn hereby to love Him with all our souls. Here, too, we see, as in a prophecy, how great things we are to suffer for His sake at the hands of men.” May the Holy Spirit help us in our meditation so that at the close of it we may more ardently love our Lord, who suffered for us and may we more carefully arm ourselves with the same mind which enabled Him to endure such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

Coming at once to the text, first, observe the acknowledgment with which the text begins—“He trusted in God.” The enemies of Christ admitted His faith in God. Secondly, consider the test which is the essence of the taunt—“Let Him deliver Him, if He will have Him.” When we have taken those two things into our minds, then let us for a while consider the answer to that test and taunt—God does assuredly deliver His people. Those who trust in Him have no reason to be ashamed of their faith.

I. First, then, my Beloved, you who know the Lord by faith and live by trusting in Him, let me invite you to OBSERVE THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT which these mockers made of our Lord's faith—“He trusted in God.” Yet the Savior did not wear any peculiar garb or token by which He let men know that He trusted in God. He was not a recluse, neither did He join some little knot of separatists who boasted their peculiar trust in Jehovah. Although our Savior was separate from sinners, He was eminently a man among men, and He went in and out among the multitude as one of themselves.

His one peculiarity was that “He trusted in God.” He was so perfectly a man that although He was undoubtedly a Jew, there were no Jewish peculiarities about Him. Any nation might claim Him but no nation could monopolize Him. The characteristics of our humanity are so palpably about Him that He belongs to all mankind. I admire the Welch sister who was of opinion that the Lord Jesus must be Welch. When they asked her how she proved it she said that He always spoke to her heart in Welch.

Doubtless it was so and I can, with equal warmth, declare that He always speaks to me in English.

Brethren from Germany, France, Sweden, Italy—you all claim that He speaks to you in your own tongue. This was the one thing which distinguished Him among men—“He trusted in God,” and He lived such a life as naturally grows out of faith in the Eternal Lord. This peculiarity had been visible even to that ungodly multitude who least of all cared to perceive a spiritual point of character. Was ever any other upon a cross thus saluted by the mob who watched his execution? Had these scorners ever mocked anyone before for such a matter as this? I Doubt it. Yet faith had been so manifest in our Lord’s daily life that the crowd cried out aloud, “He trusted in God.”

How did they know? I suppose they could not help seeing that He made much of God in His teaching, in His life and in His miracles. Whenever Jesus spoke it was always godly talk. And if it were not always distinctly about God, it was always about things that related to God, that came from God, that led to God, that magnified God. A man may be fairly judged by that which he makes most of. The ruling passion is a fair gauge of the heart. What a soul-ruler faith is! It sways the man as the rudder guides the ship. When a man once gets to live by faith in God, it tinctures his thoughts, it masters his purposes. It flavors his words, it puts a tone into his actions and it comes out in everything by ways and means most natural and unconstrained—till men perceive that they have to do with a man who makes much of God.

The unbelieving world says outright that there is no God and the less impudent, who admit His existence, put Him down at a very low figure—so low that it does not affect their calculations. But to the true Christian, God is not only much, but ALL. To our Lord Jesus, God was All in All. And when you come to estimate God as He did, then the most careless onlooker will soon begin to say of you, “He trusted in God.” In addition to observing that Jesus made much of God, men came to note that He was a trusting man and not self-confident. Certain persons are very proud because they are self-made men. I will do them the credit to admit that they heartily worship their maker—*Self* made them, and they worship *Self*.

We have among us individuals who are self-sufficient and almost all-sufficient. They sneer at those who do not succeed, for they can succeed anywhere at anything. The world to them is a football which they can kick where they like. If they do not rise to the very highest eminence it is simply out of pity to the rest of us who ought to have a chance. A vat of sufficiency ferments within their ribs! There was nothing of that sort of thing in our Lord. Those who watched Him did not say that He had great self-reliance and a noble spirit of self-confidence. No, no! They said, “He trusted in God.” Indeed it was so. The words that He spoke He spoke not of Himself. The great deeds that He did He never boasted of but said, “the Father that dwells in Me, He does the works.” He trusted in God, not a boaster in self.

Brethren, I desire that you and I may be just of that order. Self-confidence is the death of confidence in God. Reliance upon talent, tact, experience and things of that kind kills faith, Oh that we may know what faith means and so look out of ourselves and quit the evil confidence which looks within!

On the other hand, we may wisely remember that while our Lord Jesus was not self-reliant, He trusted and was by no means despondent—He was never discouraged. He neither questioned His commission nor despaired of fulfilling it. He never said, “I must give it up—I can never succeed.” No—“He trusted in God.” And this is a grand point in the working of faith, that while it keeps us from self-conceit, it equally preserves us from enfeebling fear. Our blessed Lord set His face like a flint when, being baffled, He returned to the conflict. When being betrayed, He still persevered in His love—then men could not help seeing that he trusted in God. His faith was not mere repetition of a creed, or profession of belief but it was childlike reliance upon the Most High. May ours be of the same order!

It is evident that the Lord Jesus trusted in God openly, since even yonder gibing crowd proclaimed it. Some good people try to exercise faith on the sly—they practice it in snug corners and in lonely hours but they are afraid to say much before others for fear their faith should not see the promise fulfilled. They dare not say, with David, “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord—the humble shall hear thereof and be glad.” This secrecy robs God of His honor. Brethren, we do not glorify our God as He ought to be glorified. Let us trust in Him and own it. Why should we be ashamed? Let us throw down the gauge of battle to earth and Hell. God, the true and faithful, deserves to be trusted without limit.

Trust your all with Him and be not ashamed of having done so. Our Savior was not ashamed of trusting in His God. On the Cross He cried, “You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother’s breast.” Jesus lived by faith. We are sure that He did, for in the Epistle to the Hebrews He is quoted as saying, “I will put my trust in Him.” If so glorious a Personage as the only begotten Son of God lived here by faith in God, how are you and I to live except by trust in God? If we live unto God, this is the absolute necessity of our spiritual life—“the just shall live by faith.” Shall we be ashamed of that which brings life to us?

The cruel ones who saw Jesus die did not say, “He now and then trusted in God.” Nor, “He trusted in the Lord years ago.” They admitted that faith in God was the constant tenor of His life—they could not deny it. Even though, with malicious cruelty, they turned it into a taunt, yet they did not cast a question upon the fact that, “He trusted in God.” Oh, I want you to live that those who dislike you most may nevertheless know that you trust in God! When you come to die, may your dear children say of you, “Our dear mother did trust in the Lord”!

May that boy who has gone furthest away from Christ and grieved your heart the most, nevertheless say in his heart, “There may be hypocrites in the world but my dear father does truly trust in God”! Oh, that our faith may be known unmistakably! We do not wish it to be advertised to our

own honor. That is the farthest thing from our minds. But yet we would have it known that others may be encouraged and that God may be glorified. If nobody else trusts in God, let us do so. And thus may we uplift a testimony to the honor of His faithfulness. When we die, may this be our epitaph—“He trusted in God.”

David, in the twenty-second Psalm, represents the enemies as saying of our Lord—“He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him.” This practical faith is sure to be known wherever it is in operation, because it is exceedingly rare. Multitudes of people have a kind of faith in God but it does not come to the practical point of trusting that God will deliver them. I see upon the newspaper placards, Startling News! People in the Planets!” Not a very practical discovery. For many a day there has been a tendency to refer God’s promises and our faith to the planets, or somewhere beyond this present everyday life.

We say to ourselves, “Oh yes, God delivers His people.” We mean that He did so in the days of Moses and possibly He may be doing so now in some obscure island of the sea. Ah me, the glory of faith lies in its being fit for everyday wear. Can it be said of you, “He trusted in God, that He would deliver him”? Have you faith of the kind which will make you lean upon the Lord in poverty, in sickness, in bereavement, in persecution, in slander, in contempt? Have you a trust in God to bear you up in holy living at all costs and in active service even beyond your strength? Can you trust in God definitely about this and that? Can you trust about food and raiment, and home? Can you trust God even about your shoes, that they shall be iron and brass? And about the hairs of your head that they are all numbered? What we need is less theory and more actual trust in God.

The faith of the text was personal—“that He would deliver Him.” Blessed is that faith which can reach its arm of compassion around the world but that faith must begin at home. Of what use were the longest arm if it were not fixed to the man himself at the shoulder? If you have no faith about yourself, what faith can you have about others? “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him.” Come, Beloved, have you such a faith in the living God? Do you trust in God through Christ Jesus that He will save you? Yes, you poor, unworthy One, the Lord will deliver you if you trust Him. Yes, poor Woman, or unknown Man, the Lord can help you in your present trouble and in every other and He will do so if you trust Him to that end. May the Holy Spirit lead you to first trust the Lord Jesus for the pardon of sin, and then to trust in God for all things.

Let us pause a minute. Let a man trust in God. Not in fiction, but in fact, and he will find that he has solid rock under his feet. Let him trust about his own daily needs and trials and rest assured that the Lord will actually appear for him and he will not be disappointed. Such a trust in God is a very reasonable thing. Its absence is most unreasonable. If there is a God, He knows all about my case. If He made my ears He can hear me. If He made my eyes He can see me. And therefore He perceives my condition. If He is my Father, as He says He is, He will certainly care for

me and will help me in my hour of need. Is there anything unreasonable, then, in trusting in God that He will deliver us?

I venture to say that if all the forces in the universe were put together and all the kindly intents of all who are our friends were put together and we were then to rely upon those united forces and intents we should not have a thousandth part so much justification for our confidence as when we depend upon God, whose intents and forces are infinitely greater than those of all the world beside. “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.” If you view things in the white light of pure reason, it is infinitely more reasonable to trust in the living God than in all His creatures put together.

Certainly, dear Friends, it is extremely comfortable to trust in God. I find it so and therefore encourage you to roll your burden upon the Lord since He will sustain you. We know Him to be faithful and as powerful as He is faithful. And our dependence upon Him is the solid foundation of a profound peace. While it is comfortable, it is also uplifting. If you trust in men, the best of men, you are likely to be lowered by your trust. We are apt to cringe before those who patronize us. If your prosperity depends upon a person’s smile you are tempted to pay homage even when it is undeserved. The old saying mentions a certain person as, “knowing on which side his bread is buttered.” Thousands are practically degraded by their trusting in men.

But when our reliance is upon the living God we are raised by it and elevated both morally and spiritually. You may bow in deepest reverence before God and yet there will be no flattery. You may lie in the dust before the Majesty of Heaven and yet not be dishonored by your humility. In fact, it is our *greatness* to be *nothing* in the Presence of the Most High. This confidence in God makes men strong. I should advise the enemy not to oppose the man who trusts in God. In the long run he will be beaten, as Haman found it with Mordecai. He had been warned of this by Zeresh, his wife, and his wise men, who said, “If Mordecai is of the seed of the Jews, before whom you have begun to fall, you shall not prevail against him but shall surely fall before him.”

Contend not with a man who has God at his back. Years ago the Mentonese desired to break away from the dominion of the Prince of Monaco. They, therefore, drove out his agent. The prince came with his army, not a very great one, it is true, but still formidable to the Mentonese. I know not what the high and mighty prince was not going to do. But the news came that the King of Sardinia was coming up in the rear to help the Mentonese and therefore his lordship of Monaco very prudently retired to his own rock. When a Believer stands out against evil he may be sure that the Lord of Hosts will not be far away. The enemy shall hear the dash of His horse and the blast of His trumpet and shall flee before Him. Therefore be of good courage and compel the world to say of *you*, “He trusted in the Lord that He would deliver him.”

II. Secondly, I want you to follow me briefly in considering THE TEST WHICH IS THE ESSENCE OF THE TAUNT which was hurled by the mockers against our Lord—“Let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him.”

Such a test will come to all Believers. It may come as a taunt from enemies. It will certainly come as a trial of your faith. The Archenemy will assuredly hiss out, “Let Him deliver him, seeing he delighted in Him.” This taunt has about it the appearance of being very logical and, indeed, in a measure, so it is. If God has promised to deliver us and we have openly professed to believe the promise it is only natural that others should say, “Let us see whether He does deliver him. This man believes that the Lord will help him. And He must help him, or else the man’s faith is a delusion.”

This is the sort of test to which we ourselves would have put others before our conversion and we cannot object to be proved in the same manner ourselves. Perhaps we incline to run away from the ordeal but this very shrinking should be a solemn call to us to question the genuineness of that faith which we are afraid to test. “He trusted on the Lord,” says the enemy, “that He would deliver him—let Him deliver him.” And surely, however malicious the design, there is no escaping from the logic of the challenge. It is peculiarly painful to have this stern inference driven home to you in the hour of sorrow.

Because one cannot deny the fairness of the appeal, it is all the more trying. In the time of depression of spirit it is hard to have one’s faith questioned, or the ground on which it stands made a matter of dispute. Either to be mistaken in one’s belief, or to have no real faith, or to find the ground of one’s faith fail, is an exceedingly grievous thing. Yet as our Lord was not spared this painful ordeal we must not expect to be kept clear of it and Satan knows well how to work these questions till the poison of them sets the blood on fire. “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him. Let Him deliver him.” He hurls this fiery dart into the soul till the man is sorely wounded and can scarcely hold his ground.

The taunt is specially pointed and personal. It is put thus—“He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him—let Him deliver him.” “Do not come to us with your fiddle-faddle about God’s helping all His chosen. Here is a man who is one of His people, will He help him? Do not talk to us of big things about Jehovah at the Red Sea, or in the Desert of Sinai, or God helping His people in ages past. Here is a living man before us who trusted in God that He would deliver him—let Him deliver him now.” You know how Satan will pick out one of the most afflicted—and pointing his fingers at him will cry—“Let Him deliver HIM.”

Brethren, the test is fair. God will be true to every Believer. If any child of God could be lost it would be quite enough to enable the devil to spoil all the glory of God forever. If one promise of God to one of His people should fail, that one failure would suffice to mar the veracity of the Lord to all eternity. They would publish it in the “Diabolical Gazette,” and in every street of Tophet they would howl it out, “God has failed! God has broken His promise! God has ceased to be faithful to His people!” It would then be

a horrible reproach—“He trusted in God to deliver him but He did not deliver him.”

Much emphasis lies in its being in the present tense—“He trusted in God that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him now.” I see You, O Lord Jesus, You are in the wilderness, where the Fiend is saying, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” No. You are nailed to the tree—Your enemies have hemmed You in. The legionaries of Rome are at the foot of the Cross, the scribes and Pharisees and raging Jews compass about You. There is no escape from death for You! Hence their cry—“Let Him deliver Him now.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters! this is how Satan assails us, using our present and pressing tribulations as the barbs of his arrows. Yet here, also, there is reason and logic in the challenge.

If God does not deliver His servants at one time as well as another, He has not kept His promise. For a man of Truth is always true and a promise once given always stands. A promise cannot be broken now and then, and yet the honor of the person giving it be maintained by his keeping it at other times. The word of a true man stands always good—it is good now. This is logic, bitter logic, cold steel logic—logic which seems to cut right down your backbone and cleave your spine. “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him now.” Yet this hard logic can be turned to comfort. I told you a story the other day of the brother in Guy’s Hospital to whom the doctors said that he must undergo an operation which was extremely dangerous.

They gave him a week to consider whether he would submit to it. He was troubled, for his young wife and children, and for his work for the Lord. A friend left a bunch of flowers for him with this verse as its motto, “He trusted in God. Let Him deliver Him now.” “Yes,” he thought, “now.” In prayer he cast himself upon the Lord and felt in his heart, “Come on, doctors, I am ready for you.” When the next morning came he refused to take chloroform for he desired to go to Heaven in his senses. He bore the operation manfully and he is yet alive. “He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him” then and there—and the Lord did so. In this lies the brunt of the battle.

A Christian man may be beaten in business, he may fail to meet all demands and then Satan yells, “Let Him deliver him now.” The poor man has been out of work for two or three months, tramping the streets of London until he has worn out his boots. He has been brought to his last penny. I think I hear the laugh of the Prince of Darkness as he cries, “Let Him deliver him now.” Or else the Believer is very ill in body and low in spirit and then Satan howls, “Let Him deliver him now.” Some of us have been in very trying positions. We were moved with indignation because of deadly error and we spoke plainly but men refused to hear. Those we relied upon deserted us. Good men sought their own ease and would not march with us and we had to bear testimony for the despised Truth of God alone—until we were ourselves despised.

Then the adversary shouted, “Let Him deliver him now.” Be it so! We do not refuse the test. Our God whom we serve will deliver us. We will not bow down to modern thought nor worship the image which human wisdom has set up. Our God is God both of hills and of valleys. He will not fail His servants albeit that for a while He forbears that He may try their faith. We dare accept the test and say, “Let Him deliver us now.”

Beloved Friends, we need not be afraid of this taunt if it is brought by adversaries. For, after all, the test will come to us apart from any malice—for it is inevitable. All the faith you have will be tried. I can see you heaping it up. How rich you are! What a pile of faith! Friend, you are almost perfect! Open the furnace door and put the heap in. Does it shrink? See how it shrivels! Is there anything left? Bring here a magnifying glass. Is this all that is left? Yes, this is all that remains of the heap. You say, “I trusted in God.” Yes, but you had reason to cry, “Lord, help my unbelief.” Brethren, we have not a tithe of the faith we think we have. But regardless, all our faith must be tested.

God builds no ships but what He sends to sea. In living, in losing, in working, in weeping, in suffering, or in striving, God will find a fitting crucible for every single grain of the precious faith which He has given us. Then He will come to us and say—“You trusted in God that He would deliver you and you shall be delivered now.” How you will open your eyes as you see the Lord’s hand of deliverance! What a man of wonders you will be when you tell in your riper years to the younger people how the Lord delivered you! Why there are some Christians I know of who, like the ancient mariner, could detain even a wedding guest with their stories of God’s wonders on the deep. Yes, the test will come again and again. May the ridicules of adversaries only make us ready for the sterner ordeals of the judgment to come.

O my dear Friends, examine your religion. You have a great deal of it, some of you. But what of its quality? Can your religion stand the test of poverty, and scandal and scorn? Can it stand the test of scientific sarcasm and learned contempt? Will your religion stand the test of long sickness of body and depression of spirit caused by weakness? What are you doing amid the common trials of life? What will you do in the swellings of Jordan? Examine well your faith, since all hangs there. Some of us who have lain for weeks together, peering through the thin veil which parts us from the unseen, have been made to feel that nothing will suffice us but a promise which will answer the taunt, “Let Him deliver us now.”

III. I shall finish, in the third place, dear Friends, by noticing THE ANSWER to the test. God does deliver those who trust in Him. God’s interposition for the faithful is not a dream but a substantial reality. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.”

All history proves the faithfulness of God. Those who trust God have been in all sorts of troubles, but they have always been delivered. They have been bereaved. What a horrible bereavement was that which fell to the lot of Aaron when his two sons were struck dead for their profanity in the Presence of God! “And Aaron held his peace”! What Divine Grace was

there! Thus will the Lord sustain you, also, should He take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke. Grave after grave has the good man visited till it seemed that his whole race was buried and yet his heart has not been broken—he has bowed his soul before the will of the Ever Blessed One.

Thus has the Lord delivered His afflicted one by sustaining him. In other ways the bush has burned and yet has not been consumed. Remember the multiplied and multiform trials of Job. Yet God sustained him to the end so that he did not charge God foolishly but held fast his faith in the Most High. If ever you are called to the afflictions of Job you will also be called to the sustaining Grace of Job. Some of God's servants have been defeated in their testimony. They have borne faithful witness for God but they have been rejected of men. It has been their lot, like Cassandra, to prophesy the truth but not to be believed. Such was Jeremiah, who was born to a heritage of scorn from those whose benefit he sought. Yet he was delivered. He shrank not from being faithful. His courage could not be silenced. By integrity he was delivered.

Godly men have been despised and misrepresented and yet have been delivered. Remember David and his envious brothers, David and the malignant Saul, David when his men spoke of stoning him. Yet he took off the giant's head. Yet he came to the throne. Yet the Lord built him a house. Some of God's servants have been bitterly persecuted but God has delivered them. Daniel came forth from the lions' den and the three holy children from the midst of the burning fiery furnace. These are only one or two out of millions who trusted God and He delivered them. Out of all manner of ill the Lord delivered them. God brought this crowd of witnesses through all their trials unto His Throne where they rest with Jesus and share the triumph of their Master at this very day.

O my timid Brothers and Sisters, nothing has happened to you but what is common to men. Your battle is not different from the warfare of the rest of the saints. And as God has delivered them He will deliver you also, seeing you put your trust in Him. But God's ways of deliverance are His own. He does not deliver according to the translation put upon "deliverance" by the ribald throng. He does not deliver according to the interpretation put upon "deliverance" by our shrinking flesh and blood. He delivers, but it is in His own way. Let me remark that if God delivers you and me in the same way as He delivered His own Son, we can have no cause of complaint. If the deliverance which He vouchsafed to us is of the same kind as that which He vouchsafed to the Only Begotten, we may well be content.

Well, what kind of a deliverance was that? Did the Father tear up the Cross from the earth? Did He proceed to draw out the nails from the sacred hands and feet of His dear Son? Did He set Him down upon that "green hill far away, beyond the city wall" and place in His hand a sword of fire with which to smite His adversaries? Did He bid the earth open and swallow up all His foes? No. Nothing of the kind. Jehovah did not interpose to spare His Son a single pang. He let Him die. He let Him be taken

as a dead man down from the Cross and laid in a tomb. Jesus went through with His suffering to the bitter end. O Brothers and Sisters, this may be God’s way of delivering us! We have trusted in God that He would deliver us. And His rendering of His promise is that He will enable us to go through with it. We shall suffer to the last and triumph in so doing.

Yet God’s way of delivering those who trust in Him is always the best way. If the Father had taken His Son down from the Cross what would have been the result? Redemption unaccomplished, salvation work undone and Jesus returning with His life-work unfinished. This would not have been deliverance but defeat. It was much better for our Lord Jesus to die. Now He has paid the ransom for His elect and having accomplished the great purpose of atonement He has slept a while in the heart of the earth and now has ascended to His Throne in the endless glories of Heaven. It was deliverance of the fullest kind. For from the pangs of His death have come the joys of life to His redeemed. It is not God’s will that every mountain should be leveled, but that we should be the stronger for climbing the Hill Difficulty. God will deliver. He must deliver, but He will do it in our cases, as in the case of our Lord, in the best possible manner.

He will deliver His chosen—the taunt of the Adversary shall not cause our God to forget or forego His people. I know that the Lord will no more fail me than any other of His servants. He will not leave a faithful witness to his adversaries. “I know that my Avenger lives and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself and my eyes shall behold and not another; though my reins be consumed within.”

Is this also your confidence? Then do not sit down in sorrow and act as though you despaired. Quit yourselves like men. Be strong, fear not. Cast yourselves on the love that never changes and never faints and the Lord will answer all the reviling of Rabshakeh and the blustering of Sennacherib.

There are times when we may use this text to our comfort. “Let Him deliver Him now,” says the text, “if He will have Him.” You, dear Friends, who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ before, how I wish you could try Him now! You feel this morning full of sin and full of need. Come, then, and trust the Savior now. See whether He will not save you now. Is there one day in the year in which Jesus cannot save a sinner? Come and see whether the 17th of June is that day. Try whether He will not deliver you now from the guilt, the penalty, the power of sin. Why not come? You have never, perhaps, been in the Tabernacle before and when coming here this morning you did not think of finding the Savior.

Oh, that the Savior may find you! Jesus Christ is a Savior every day, all the year round. Whoever comes to Him shall find eternal life now. “Oh,” you say, “I am in such an unfit state. I am clothed in carelessness and godlessness.” Come along, Man, come along, just as you are. Tarry not for improvement or arrangement—for both of these Jesus will give you. Come

and put your trust in the great Sacrifice for sin and He will deliver you—deliver you now. Lord, save the sinner, now!

Others of you are the children of God but you are in peculiar trouble. Well, what are you going to do? You have always trusted in God before—are you going to doubt Him now? “O my dear Sir, you do not know my distress. I am the most afflicted person in the Tabernacle.” Be it so. But you trusted in the Lord the past twenty years and I do not believe that you have seen any just cause for denying Him your confidence now. Did you say that you have known him from your youth up? What? You are seventy years of age! Then you are too near Home to begin distrusting your heavenly Father. That will never do. You have been to sea and have weathered many a storm in mid-ocean and are you now going to be drowned in a ditch? Think not so. The Lord will deliver you even now.

Do not let us suppose that we have come where boundless love and infinite wisdom cannot reach us. Do not fancy that you have leaped upon a ledge of rock so high as to be out of reach of the everlasting arm. If you had done so I would still cry—Throw yourself down into the arms of God and trust that He will not let you be destroyed. It may be that some of us are in trouble about the Church and the faith. We have defended God’s Truth as well as we could and spoken out against deadly error. But craft and numbers have been against us and at present, things seem to have gone wrong. The good are timid and the evil are false. They say, “He trusted in God: let Him deliver him now.” Sirs, He will deliver us now. We will throw our soul once more into this battle and see if the Lord does not vindicate His Truth. If we have not spoken in God’s name we are content to go back to the dust from where we sprang. But if we have spoken God’s Truth, we defy the whole confederacy to prevail against it.

Perhaps I speak to some missionary who is mourning over a time of great trial in a mission which is dear to his heart. Ah, dear Friend! Christ intended that the Gospel should repeat His own experience and then should triumph like Himself. The Gospel lives by being killed and conquers by defeat. Cast it where you will, it always falls upon its feet. You need not be afraid of it under any trial. Just now the wisdom of man is its worst foe, but the Lord will deliver it now. The Gospel lives and reigns. Tell it among the heathen that the Lord reigns!

The same day in which Jesus died He took with Him into His kingdom and His inmost Paradise a thief who had hung at His side. He lives and reigns forever and ever and calls to Himself whomsoever He has chosen. Let us drown the taunts of the adversary with our shouts of Hallelujah, The Lord shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah. Amen!

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THE THREE HOURS OF DARKNESS

NO. 1896

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 18, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over
all the land unto the ninth hour.”
Matthew 27:45.*

FROM nine till noon the usual degree of light was present, so that there was time enough for our Lord's adversaries to behold and insult His sufferings. There could be no mistake about the fact that He was really nailed to the Cross, for He was crucified in broad daylight. We are fully assured that it was Jesus of Nazareth, for both friends and foes were eye-witnesses of His agonies—for three long hours the Jews sat down and watched Him on the Cross, making jests of His miseries. I feel thankful for those three hours of light, for otherwise the enemies of our faith would have questioned whether, in very deed, the blessed body of our Master was nailed to the tree and would have started false rumors as many as the bats and owls which haunt the darkness! Where would have been the witnesses of this solemn scene if the sun had been hidden from morn till night? As three hours of light gave opportunity for inspection and witness-bearing, we see the wisdom which did not allow it to close too soon.

Never forget that this miracle of the closing of the eye of day at high noon was performed by our Lord in His weakness. He had walked the sea, raised the dead and healed the sick in the days of His strength, but now He has come to His lowest—the fever is on Him—He is faint and thirsty. He hangs on the borders of dissolution. Yet He has power to darken the sun at noon! He is still very God of very God—

***“Behold, a purple torrent runs
Down from His hands and head!
The crimson tide puts out the sun!
His groans awake the dead!”***

If He can do this in His weakness, what is He *not* able to do in His strength? Fail not to remember that this power was displayed in a sphere in which He did not usually put forth His might. The sphere of Christ is that of goodness and benevolence and, consequently, of light. When He enters the sphere of making darkness and of working judgement, He engages in what He calls His strange work. Wonders of terror are His left-handed deeds. It is but now and then that He causes the sun to go down at noon and darkens the earth in the clear day (Amos 8:9). If our Lord can make darkness at will as He *dies*, what Glory may we not expect now that He lives to be the Light of the city of God forever? The Lamb is the Light and what a Light! The heavens bear the impress of His dying power and lose their brightness! Shall not the new heavens and the new earth attest

the power of the risen Lord? The thick darkness around the dying Christ is the robe of the Omnipotent—He lives again! All power is in His hands and all that power He will put forth to bless His chosen!

What a call must that mid-day midnight have been to the careless sons of men! They knew not that the Son of God was among them nor that He was working out human redemption. The grandest hour in all history seemed likely to pass by unheeded, when, suddenly, *night* hastened from her chambers and usurped the day! Everyone asked his companion, "What does this darkness mean?" Business stood still. The plow stayed in mid-furrow and the axe paused uplifted. It was the middle of the day, when men are busiest, but they made a general pause. Not only on Calvary, but on every hill and in every valley, the gloom settled down. There was a halt in the caravan of life! None could move unless they groped their way like the blind. The master of the house called for a light at noon and his servant tremblingly obeyed the unusual summons. Other lights were twinkling and Jerusalem was as a city by night, only men were not in their beds! How startled were mankind!

Around the great deathbed an appropriate quiet was secured. I doubt not that a shuddering awe came over the masses of the people and the thoughtful foresaw terrible things. Those who had stood about the Cross and had dared to insult the majesty of Jesus, were paralyzed with fear. They ceased their ribaldry and, with it, their cruel exultation. They were cowed though not convinced, even the basest of them. While the better sort "smote their breasts and returned," as many as could do so, no doubt, stumbled to their chambers and endeavored to hide themselves for fear of awful judgments which they feared were near. I do not wonder that there should be traditions of strange things that were said during the hush of that darkness. Those whispers of the past may or may not be true—they have been the subject of learned controversy, but the labor of the dispute was energy ill spent. Yet we could not have wondered if one did say, as he is reported to have done, "God is suffering, or the world is perishing." Nor should I drive from my beliefs the poetic legend that an Egyptian pilot passing down the river heard among the reed banks a voice out of the rustling rushes, whispering, "The great Pan is dead." Truly, the God of Nature was expiring and things less tender than the reeds by the river might well tremble at the sound!

We are told that this darkness was over all the land. And Luke puts it, "over all the earth." That portion of our globe which was then veiled in natural night was not affected—but to all men awake and at their employment, it was the advertisement of a great and solemn event. It was strange beyond all experience and all men marveled—for when the light should have been brightest—all things were obscured for the space of three hours!

There must be great teaching in this darkness, for when we come so near the Cross, which is the center of history, every event is full of meaning. Light will come out of this darkness! I love to feel the solemnity of the three hours of death-shade and to sit down in it and meditate with no companion but the august Sufferer, around whom that darkness lowered. I am going to speak of it in four ways, as the Holy Spirit may help me.

First, let us bow our spirits in the presence of a miracle which amazes us. Secondly, let us regard this darkness as a veil which conceals. Thirdly, as a symbol which instructs. And, fourthly, as a display of sympathy which forewarns us by the prophecies which it implies.

I. First, let us view this darkness as A MIRACLE WHICH AMAZES US.

It may seem a trite observation that this darkness was altogether out of the natural course of things. Since the world began, was it ever heard that at high noon there should be darkness over all the land? It was altogether out of the order of Nature. Some deny miracles and, if they also deny God, I will not, at this time, deal with them. But it is very strange that anyone who believes in God should doubt the possibility of miracles. It seems to me that, granted the Being of a God, miracles are to be expected as an occasional declaration of His independent and active will. He may make certain rules for His actions and it may be His wisdom to keep them, but surely He must reserve to Himself the liberty to depart from His own laws, or else He has, in a measure, laid aside His personal Godhead, deified law and set it up above Himself! It would not increase our idea of the Glory of His Godhead if we could be assured that He had made Himself subject to rule and tied His own hands from ever acting except in a certain manner! From the self-existence and freedom of will which enters into our very conception of God, we are led to expect that sometimes He should not keep to the methods which He follows as His general rule. This has led to the universal conviction that miracles are a proof of Godhead.

The general works of Creation and Providence are, to my mind, the best proofs, but the common heart of our race, for some reason or other, looks to *miracles* as surer evidence—thus proving that miracles are expected of God. Although the Lord makes it His order that there shall be day and night, He, in this case, with abundant reason, interposes three hours of night in the center of a day! Behold the reason. The unusual in lower Nature is made to consort with the unusual in the dealings of Nature's Lord. Certainly this miracle was most congruous with that greater miracle which was happening in the death of Christ. Was not the Lord, Himself, departing from all common ways? Was He not doing that which had never been done from the beginning and would never be done again? That man should die is so common a thing as to be deemed inevitable? We are not startled at the sound of a funeral knell—we have become familiar with the grave. As the companions of our youth die at our side, we are not seized with amazement, for death is everywhere about us and within us. But that the Son of God should die, this is beyond all expectation and not only above Nature, but contrary to it! He who is equal with God deigns to hang upon the Cross and die! I know of nothing that seems more out of rule and beyond expectation than this. The sun darkening at noon is a fit accompaniment of the death of Jesus. Is it not so?

Further, this miracle was not only out of the order of Nature, but it was one which *would have been pronounced impossible*. It is not possible that there should be an eclipse of the sun at the time of the full moon. The moon, at the time when she is in her full, is not in a position in which she could possibly cast her shadow upon the earth. The Passover was at the time of the full moon and, therefore, it was not possible that the *sun*

should then undergo an eclipse. This darkening of the sun was not strictly an astronomical eclipse—the darkness was doubtless produced in some other way—yet to those who were present, it did seem to be a total eclipse of the sun—a thing impossible. Ah, Brothers and Sisters, when we come to deal with man and the Fall, and sin, and God, and Christ, and the Atonement, we are at home with impossibilities! We have now reached a region where prodigies, marvels and surprises are the order of the day—sublimities become commonplace when we come within the circle of Eternal Love! Yes, more—we have now left the solid land of the possible and have put out to sea—where we see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. When we think of impossibilities in other spheres, we start back. But the way of the Cross is ablaze with the Divine and we soon perceive that “with God, all things are possible.”

See, then, in the death of Jesus, the possibility of the impossible! Behold, here, how the Son of God can die! We sometimes pause when we meet with an expression in a hymn which implies that God can suffer or die. We think that the poet has used too great a license, yet it behooves us to refrain from hypercriticism since, in Holy Writ, there are words like it. We even read (Acts 20:28) of “the Church of God which He has purchased with His own blood”—the blood of God! Ah well! I am not careful to defend the language of the Holy Spirit, but in its presence I take liberty to justify the words which we sang just now—

**“Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature’s sin.”**

I will not venture to explain the death of the Incarnate God. I am content to believe it and to rest my hope upon it.

How should the Holy One have sin laid upon Him? That, also, I do not know. A wise man has told us, as if it were an axiom, that the imputation or the non-imputation of sin is an impossibility. Be it so—we have become familiar with such things since we have beheld the Cross. Things which men call absurdities have become foundational Truths of God to us! The Doctrine of the Cross is, to them that perish, foolishness. We know that in our Lord was no sin and yet He bore our sins in His own body on the Cross. We do not know how the innocent Son of God could be permitted to suffer for sins that were not His own. It amazes us that Justice should permit one so perfectly Holy to be forsaken of His God and to cry out, “Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?” But it was so and it was so by the decree of the highest Justice—and we rejoice in it! As it was so, that the sun was eclipsed when it was impossible that it should be eclipsed, so has Jesus performed, on our behalf, in the agonies of His death, things which, in the ordinary judgment of men, must be set down as utterly impossible! Our faith is at home in wonderland where the Lord’s thoughts are seen to be as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth!

Concerning this miracle, I have also further to remark that *this darkening of the sun surpassed all ordinary and natural eclipses*. It lasted longer than an ordinary eclipse and it came in a different manner. According to Luke, the darkness all over the land came first and the sun was darkened afterwards—the darkness did not *begin* with the sun, but *mastered* the

sun! It was unique and supernatural. Now, among all grief, no grief is comparable to the grief of Jesus—of all woes, none can parallel the woes of our great Substitute! As strongest light casts deepest shade, so has the surprising love of Jesus cost Him a death such as falls not to the common lot of men. Others die, but this Man is “obedient unto death.” Others drink the fatal draught, yet reckon not of its wormwood and gall—but my Master “tasted death.” “He poured out His soul unto death.” Every part of His Being was darkened with that extraordinary death-shade—and the natural darkness outside of Him did but shroud a special death which was entirely by itself.

And now, when I come to think of it, *this darkness appears to have been most natural and fitting*. If we had to write out the story of our Lord’s death, we could not omit the darkness without neglecting a most important item. The darkness seems a part of the natural furniture of that great transaction. Read the story through and you are not at all startled with the darkness. After once familiarizing your mind with the thought that this is the Son of God and that He stretches His hands to the cruel death of the Cross, you do not wonder at the rending of the veil of the Temple! You are not astonished at the earthquake or at the rising of certain of the dead. These are proper attendants of our Lord’s passion—and so is the darkness. It drops into its place, it seems as if it could not have been otherwise—

**“That Sacrifice!—the death of Him—
The high and ever Holy One!
Well may the conscious Heaven grow dim,
And blacken the beholding sun.”**

For a moment think again. Has it not appeared as if the death which that darkness shrouded was also a natural part of the great whole? We have grown, at last, to feel as if the death of the Christ of God were an integral part of human history. You cannot take it out of man’s chronicles, can you? Introduce the Fall and see Paradise Lost—and you cannot make the poem complete till you have introduced that greater Man who did redeem us—and by His death gave us our Paradise Regained. It is a singular characteristic of all true miracles, that though your wonder never ceases, they never appear to be unnatural—they are marvelous, but never monstrous! The miracles of Christ dovetail into the general run of human history. We cannot see how the Lord could be on earth and Lazarus not be raised from the dead when the grief of Martha and Mary had told its tale. We cannot see how the disciples could have been tempest-tossed on the Lake of Galilee and the Christ not walk on the water to deliver them! Wonders of power are expected parts of the narrative where Jesus is! Everything fits into its place with surrounding facts.

A Romish miracle is always monstrous and devoid of harmony with all beside it. What if St. Winifred’s head did come up from the well and speak from the coping to the astonished peasant who was about to draw water? I do not care whether it did or did not—it does not alter history a bit, nor even color it—it is tagged on to the record and is no part of it! But the miracles of *Jesus*, this of the darkness among them, are essential to human history and especially is this so in the case of His death and this great darkness which shrouded it! All things in human story converge to

the Cross which seems not to be an afterthought nor an expedient, but the fit and foreordained channel through which Love should run to guilty men!

I cannot say more from lack of voice, though I had many more things to say. Sit down and let the thick darkness cover you till you cannot even see the Cross and only know that out of reach of mortal eyes your Lord worked out the redemption of His people. He worked in silence, a miracle of patience and of love by which the Light of God has come to those who sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death.

II. Secondly, I desire you to regard this darkness as A VEIL WHICH CONCEALS. The Christ is hanging on yonder tree. I see the dreadful Cross. I can see the thieves on either side. I look around and I sorrowfully mark that motley group of citizens from Jerusalem—along with scribes, priests and strangers from different countries—mingled with Roman soldiers. They turn their eyes on Him and, for the most part, gaze with cruel scorn upon the Holy One who is in the center. In truth it is an awful sight. Mark those dogs of the common sort and those bulls of Bashan of more notable rank who all unite to dishonor the Meek and Lowly One. I must confess I never read the story of the Master's death, knowing what I do of the pain of crucifixion, without deep anguish—crucifixion was a death worthy to have been invented by devils! The pain which it involved was immeasurable! I will not torture you by describing it. I know dear hearts that cannot read of it without tears and without lying awake for nights afterwards.

But there was more than anguish upon Calvary—ridicule and contempt embittered all. Those jests, those cruel gibes, those mockeries, those thrusting out of the tongues—what shall we say of these? At times I have felt some little sympathy with the French Prince who cried, "If I had been there with my guards, I would soon have swept those wretches away!" It was too terrible a sight—the pain of the Victim was grievous enough—but the abominable wickedness of the mockers, who could bear it? Let us thank God that in the middle of the crime there came down a darkness which rendered it impossible for them to go further with it! Jesus must die. For His pains there must be no alleviation and from death there must be for Him no deliverance—but the scoffers must be silenced. Most effectually their mouths were closed by the dense darkness which shut them in.

What I see in that veil is, first of all, that it was *a concealment for those guilty enemies*. Did you ever think of that? It is as if God, Himself, said, "I cannot bear it. I will not see this infamy! Descend, O veil!" Down fell the heavy shades—

***"I asked the heavens,
What foe to God has done
This unexampled deed?" The heavens exclaim,
'Twas man! And we, in horror, snatched the sun
From such a spectacle of guilt and shame."***

Thank God, the Cross is a hiding place. It furnishes for guilty men a shelter from the all-seeing eyes, so that justice need not see and strike. When God lifts up His Son and makes Him visible, He hides the sin of men. He says that "the times of their ignorance He winks at." Even the greatness of

their sin He casts behind His back, so that He need not see it, but may indulge His long-suffering and permit His pity to endure their provocations. It must have grieved the heart of the Eternal God to see such wanton cruelty of men towards Him who went about doing good and healing all manner of diseases. It was horrible to see the teachers of the people rejecting Him with scorn—the seed of Israel, who ought to have accepted Him as their Messiah—casting Him out as a thing despised and abhorred! I therefore feel gratitude to God for bidding that darkness cover all the land and end that shameful scene! I would say to any guilty ones here—Thank God that the Lord Jesus has made it possible for your sins to be hidden more completely than by thick darkness! Thank God that in Christ He does not see you with that stern eye of Justice which would involve your destruction! Had not Jesus interposed, whose death you have despised, you had worked out in your own death the result of your own sin long ago! But for your Lord's sake you are allowed to live as if God did not see you. This long-suffering is meant to bring you to repentance. Will you not come?

But, further, that darkness was *a sacred concealment for the blessed Person of our Divine Lord*. So to speak, the angels found for their King a pavilion of thick clouds in which His Majesty might be sheltered in its hour of misery. It was too much for wicked eyes to gaze so rudely on that Immaculate Person! Had not His enemies stripped Him naked and cast lots for His garments? Therefore it was meet that the holy Manhood should, at length, find suitable concealment. It was not fit that brutal eyes should see the lines made upon that blessed form by the engraving tool of sorrow. It was not meet that revelers should see the contortions of that sacred frame, indwelt with Deity, while He was being broken beneath the iron rod of Divine Wrath on our behalf! It was meet that God should cover Him so that none should see all He did and all He bore when He was made sin for us. I devoutly bless God for thus hiding my Lord away—thus was He screened from eyes which were not fit to see the sun much less to look upon the Sun of Righteousness! This darkness also warns *us*, even we who are most reverent.

This darkness tells us all that *the Passion is a great mystery into which we cannot pry*. I try to explain it as substitution and I feel that where the language of Scripture is explicit, I may and must be explicit, too. But yet I feel that the idea of substitution does not cover the whole of the matter and that no human conception can completely grasp the whole of the dread mystery. It was worked in darkness because the full, far-reaching meaning and result cannot be beheld of finite mind. Tell me the death of the Lord Jesus was a grand example of self-sacrifice—I can see *that* and much more. Tell me it was a wondrous obedience to the will of God—I can see *that* and much more. Tell me it was the bearing of what ought to have been borne by myriads of sinners of the human race, as the chastisement of their sin—I can see *that* and found my best hope upon it. But do not tell me that this is all that is in the Cross! No, great as this would be, there is much more in our Redeemer's death. God only knows the love of God—Christ only knows all that He accomplished when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. There are common mysteries of Nature into

which it were irreverence to pry, but this is a Divine mystery before which we take our shoes off, for the place called Calvary is holy ground! God veiled the Cross in darkness—and in darkness much of its deeper meaning lies—not because God would not reveal it, but because we have not capacity enough to discern it all! God was manifest in the flesh and in that human flesh He put away sin by His own Sacrifice—this we all know. But “without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.”

Once again, this veil of darkness also pictures to me the way in which *the powers of darkness will always endeavor to conceal the Cross of Christ*. We fight with darkness when we try to preach the Cross. “This is your hour and the power of darkness,” said Christ, and I doubt not that the infernal hosts made, in that hour, a fierce assault upon the spirit of our Lord. Thus much we also know, that if the Prince of Darkness is anywhere in force, it is sure to be where Christ is lifted up! To becloud the Cross is the grand objective of the enemy of souls! Did you ever notice it? These fellows who hate the Gospel will let every other doctrine pass muster—but if the Atonement is preached and the Truths of God which grow out of it, straightaway they are awakened! Nothing provokes the devil like the Cross. Modern theology has for its main goal the obscuration of the Doctrine of the Atonement. These modern cuttlefish make the water of life black with their ink! They make out sin to be a trifle and the punishment of it to be a temporary business—and thus they degrade the remedy by underrating the disease. We are not ignorant of their devices. Expect, my Brothers, that the clouds of darkness will gather as to a center around the Cross, that they may hide it from the sinner’s view. But expect this, also, that there darkness shall meet its end. Light springs out of that darkness—the eternal Light of the undying Son of God, who, having risen from the dead, lives forever to scatter the darkness of evil!

III. Now we pass on to speak of this darkness as A SYMBOL WHICH INSTRUCTS. The veil falls down and conceals, but at the same time, as an emblem, it reveals. It seems to say, “Attempt not to search within, but learn from the veil, itself—it has cherub work upon it.” This darkness teaches us what Jesus suffered. It aids us to guess at the griefs which we may not actually see.

The darkness is the symbol of the *wrath of God which fell on those who slew His only begotten Son*. God was angry and His frown removed the light of day. Well might He be angry, when sin was murdering His only Son—when the Jewish farmers were saying, “This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize o His inheritance.” This is God’s wrath towards all mankind, for practically all men concurred in the death of Jesus. That wrath has brought men into darkness—they are ignorant, blinded, bewildered. They have come to love darkness better than light because their deeds are evil. In that darkness they do not repent, but go on to reject the Christ of God. Into this darkness God cannot look upon them in complacency, but He views them as children of darkness and heirs of wrath, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!

The symbol also tells us *what our Lord Jesus Christ endured*. The darkness outside of Him was the figure of the darkness that was within Him. In Gethsemane a thick darkness fell upon our Lord’s spirit. He was “ex-

ceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.” His joy was communion with God—that joy was gone and He was in the dark. His day was the light of His Father’s face—that face was hidden and a terrible night gathered around Him. Brothers, I should sin against that veil if I were to pretend that I could tell you what the sorrow was which oppressed the Savior’s soul—only so far can I speak as it has been given me to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Have you ever felt a deep and overwhelming horror of sin—your own sin and the sins of others? Have you ever seen sin in the light of God’s love? Has it ever darkly hovered over your sensitive conscience? Has an unknown sense of wrath crept over you like midnight gloom and has it been about you, around you, above you, and within you? Have you felt shut up in your feebleness and yet shut out from God? Have you looked around and found no help, no comfort, even, in God—no hope, no peace? In all this you have sipped a little of that salt sea into which our Lord was cast. If, like Abraham, you have felt a horror of great darkness creep over you, then you have had a taste of what your Divine Lord suffered when it pleased the Father to bruise Him and to put Him to grief.

This it was that made Him sweat great drops of blood falling to the ground—and this it was which, on the Cross, made Him utter that appalling cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It was not the crown of thorns, or the scourge, or the Cross which made Him cry—it was the darkness, the awful darkness of desertion which oppressed His mind and made Him feel like one distraught. All that could comfort Him was withdrawn and all that could distress Him was piled upon Him. “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?” Our Savior’s spirit was wounded and He cried, “My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of My heart.” He was bereft of all natural and spiritual comfort and His distress was utter and entire. The darkness of Calvary did not, like an ordinary night, reveal the stars, but it darkened every lamp of Heaven. His strong crying and tears denoted the deep sorrow of His soul. He bore all it was possible for His capacious mind to bear, though enlarged and invigorated by union with the Godhead! He bore the equivalent of Hell—no, not that, only—but He bore that which stood instead of 10,000 Hells, so far as the vindication of the Law is concerned! Our Lord rendered, in His death agony, a homage to Justice far greater than if a world had been doomed to destruction! When I have said that, what more can I say? Well may I tell you that this unutterable darkness, this hiding of the Divine Face, expresses more of the woes of Jesus than words can ever tell.

Again, I think I see in that darkness, also, *what it was that Jesus was battling*, for we must never forget that the Cross was a battlefield to Him, wherein He triumphed gloriously. He was fighting, then, with darkness—with the *powers of darkness* of which Satan is the head—with the darkness of human ignorance, depravity and falsehood. The battle thus apparent at Golgotha has been raging ever since. Then was the conflict at its height, for the chiefs of the two great armies met in personal conflict. The present battle in which you and I take our little share is as nothing compared with that wherein all the powers of darkness in their dense battalions hurled themselves against the Almighty Son of God! He bore their on-

set, endured the tremendous shock of their assault and, in the end, with shout of victory, He led captivity captive! He, by His power and Godhead, turned midnight into day, again, and brought back to this world a reign of light which, blessed be God, shall never come to a close! Come to battle again, you hosts of darkness, if you dare! The Cross *has* defeated you—the Cross *shall* defeat you! Hallelujah! The Cross is the ensign of victory—its light is the death of darkness! The Cross is the lighthouse which guides poor weather-beaten humanity into the harbor of peace—this is the lamp which shines over the door of the great Father's house to lead His prodigals home.

Let us not be afraid of all the darkness which besets us on our way Home, since Jesus is the light which conquers it all!

The darkness never came to an end till the Lord Jesus broke the silence. All had been still and the darkness had grown terrible. At last He spoke and His voice uttered a Psalm. It was the 22nd Psalm. "My God," He said, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Each repeated, "Eloi," flashed morning upon the scene! By the time He had uttered the cry, "Why have you forsaken Me?" men had begun to see, again, and some even ventured to misinterpret His words—more in terror than in ignorance. They said, "He calls Elijah!" They may have meant to mock, but I think not. At any rate, there was no heart in what they said, nor in the reply of their companions. Yet the light had come by which they could see to dip the sponge in vinegar. Brothers and Sisters, no light will ever come to dark hearts unless Jesus shall speak and the light will not be clear until we hear the voice of His sorrows on our behalf as He cries, "Why have you forsaken Me?" His voice of grief must be the end of our grief! His cry out of the darkness must cheer away our gloom and bring the heavenly morning to our minds!

You see how much there is in my text. It is a joy to speak on such a theme when one is in good health and full of vigor—then are we as Naph-tali, a hind let loose—then we give goodly words! But this day I am in pain as to my body and my mind seems frozen. Nevertheless, the Lord can bless my feeble words and make you see that in this darkness there is a deep and wide meaning which none of us should neglect. If God shall help your meditations, this darkness will be light about you.

IV. I come to my fourth point and my closing words will deal with THE SYMPATHY WHICH PROPHESES. Do you see the sympathy of Nature with her Lord—the sympathy of the sun in the heavens with the Sun of Righteousness? It was not possible for Him by whom all things were made to be in darkness and for Nature to remain in the light.

The first sympathetic fact I see is this—all lights are dim when Christ shines not. All is dark when He does not shine. In the Church, if Jesus is not there, what is there? The sun, itself, could not yield us light if Jesus were withdrawn. The seven golden lamps are ready to go out unless He walks among them and trims them with the holy oil. Brothers, you soon grow heavy, your spirits faint and your hands are weary if the Christ is not with you! If Jesus Christ is not fully preached. If He is not with us by His Spirit, then everything is in darkness. Obscure the Cross and you have obscured all spiritual teachings! You cannot say, "We will be clear in

every other point and clear upon every other doctrine, but we will shun the Atonement since so many quibble with it. No, Sirs! If that candle is put under a bushel, the whole house is dark! All theology sympathizes with the Cross and is colored and tintured by it! Your pious service, your books, your public worship must all be in sympathy with the Cross, one way or another. If the Cross is in the dark, so will all your work be—

***“What do you think of Christ? is the test
To try both your work and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him.”***

Conjure up your doubts; fabricate your philosophies and compose your theories—there will be no Light of God in them if the Cross is left out. Vain are the sparks of your own making—you shall lie down in sorrow! All our work and travail shall end in vanity unless the work and travail of Christ is our first and only hope! If you are dark upon that point, which alone is Light, how great is your darkness!

Next, see the dependence of all creation upon Christ, as evidenced by its darkness when He withdraws. It was not meet that He who made all worlds should die and yet all worlds should go on just as they had done. If He suffers eclipse, they must suffer eclipse, too. If the Sun of Righteousness is made to set in blood, the natural sun must keep touch with Him. I believe, my Friends, that there is a much more wonderful sympathy between Christ and the world of Nature than any of us have ever dreamed. The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now because Christ, in the Church, is in His travail pangs. Christ in His mystical body is in travail and so the whole creation must wait for the manifestation of the Son of God.

We are waiting for the coming of the Lord from Heaven and there is no hill or dale—there is no mountain or sea but what is in perfect harmony with the waiting Church! Wonder not that there should be earthquakes in many places, blazing volcanoes, terrible tempests, and sore spreading of deadly disease! Marvel not when you hear of dire portents and things that make one’s heart to quail, for such things must be till the end shall come! Until the Great Shepherd shall make His crook into a scepter and shall begin His unsuffering reign, this poor earth must bleed at every vein! There must be darkness till these days of delay are ended. You that expect placid history till Christ shall come expect you know not what! You that think that generous politics shall create order and contentment and that the extension of free-trade shall breathe universal peace over the nations, look for the living among the dead! Till the Lord shall come, the word has gone out, “Overturn, overturn, overturn,” and overturned all things must be—not only in other kingdoms, but in this also, till Jesus comes! All that can be shaken shall be shaken and only His immovable Throne and Truth shall abide. Now is the time of the Lord’s battle with darkness and we may not hope, as yet, for unbroken light.

Dear Friends, the sin which darkened Christ and made Him die in the dark, darkens the whole world. The sin that darkened Christ and made Him hang upon the Cross in the dark is darkening you who do not believe in Him—and you will live in the dark and die in the dark unless you get to Him, only, who is the Light of the World and can give light to you. There is

no light for any man except in Christ! And until you believe in Him, thick darkness shall blind you and you shall stumble in it and perish! That is the lesson I would have you learn.

Another practical lesson is this—if we are in the dark at this time; if our spirits are sunk in gloom, let us not despair, for the Lord Christ, Himself, was there. If I have fallen into misery on account of sin, let me not give up all hope, for the Father's Well-Beloved passed through denser darkness than mine. O believing Soul, if you are in the dark, you are near the King's cellars and there are wines on the lees well refined lying there! You have gotten into the pavilion of the Lord and now may you speak with Him! You will not find Christ in the gaudy tents of pride, nor in the foul haunts of wickedness! You will not find Him where the viol and the dance and the flowing bowl inflame the lusts of men! But in the house of mourning you will meet the Man of Sorrows! He is not where Herodias dances, nor where Bernice displays her charms. He is where the woman of a sorrowful spirit moves her lips in prayer. He is never absent where penitence sits in darkness and bewails her faults—

***“Yes, Lord, in hours of gloom,
When shadows fill my room
When pain breathes forth its groans,
And grief its sighs and moans,
Then You are near.”***

If you are under a cloud, feel for your Lord, if haply you may find Him. Stand still in your black sorrow and say, “O Lord, the preacher tells me that Your Cross once stood in such darkness as this—O Jesus hear me!” He will respond to you—the Lord will look out of the pillar of cloud and shed a light upon you. “I know their sorrows,” He says. He is no stranger to heart-break. Christ also once suffered for sin. Trust Him and He will cause His light to shine upon you! Lean upon Him and He will bring you up out of the gloomy wilderness into the land of rest. God help you to do so!

Last Monday I was cheered beyond all I can tell you by a letter from a Brother who had been restored to life, light, and liberty by the discourse of last Sabbath morning [Sermon No. 1895, Volume 32—*Love Abounding, Love Complaining, Love Abiding*]. I know no greater joy than to be useful to your souls. For this reason I have tried to preach, this morning, though I am physically quite unfit for it. Oh, I do pray I may hear more news from saved ones! Oh that some spirit that has wandered out into the dark moorland may spy the candle in my window and find its way home! If you have found my Lord, I charge you, never let Him go, but cleave to Him till the day breaks and the shadows flee away! God help you so to do for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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THE THREE HOURS' DARKNESS

NO. 3471

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Now from the sixth hour there was darkness
over all the land until the ninth hour.”
Matthew 27:45.*

THIS darkness was not occasioned by any of the natural causes which generally produce darkness. It was in the middle of the day, precisely at noon, that the darkness came. It could not have been caused by an eclipse, for, it being the time of the Passover, we know that the moon was just then at its fullest—at which period no such thing as an eclipse of the sun could possibly occur. It could not, then, have been produced from that cause. And from the way in which Luke describes it, it does not seem to have been occasioned by the sun being eclipsed by any other body, for if you look to his narrative you will find he seems to say that the darkness came first, and that afterwards the sun became dark. Whether this was through some dense vapor coming over the face of the earth, an intensification of some of these fogs to which we are so accustomed, or whether it was through a miraculous action upon the atmosphere, so that while the sun shone its light was no longer able to reach the eye, we cannot tell, but in some way or other darkness prevailed over all the land from twelve o'clock till three in the afternoon. We suppose that this darkness came on suddenly and, if so, it must have been most striking. Just in the midst of their ribald mirth, while they were staring at the naked body of their Victim and insulting Him with their jests and jeers, wagging their heads, and thrusting out their tongues—just at that very moment total darkness came on! We suppose it to have been total, or, at any rate, such a gloom as to be a “darkness” which “was over all the land.” We suppose, too, that just as suddenly this darkness was withdrawn. As soon as the Savior expired, just at the moment when He gave His last triumphant shout, “It is finished,” the sun gleamed forth again and the earth laughed once more in the sunlight—for the great trial of Christ, the great struggle for man’s salvation—was then all over! Such a phenomenon must have been most striking. The sudden darkening and the sudden lighting up of the world must have been a thing to be remembered and to be talked of by all who saw it!

As for ourselves at this time, we have not so much to do with the physical causes or with the appearance, itself, as with the *spiritual*

meaning of this darkness. There is light in this darkness, if not to the natural, yet to the spiritual eye, if we have Grace to discern it.

There is something to be learned, even from the darkness—something to be learned from the light, and something to be learned from both the darkness and the light together. In the first place, there is, we believe—

I. SOMETHING TO BE LEARNED IN THIS REMARKABLE DARKNESS which covered all the land during the sharpest and severest part of our Savior's agony.

We learn, first, *the sympathy of Creation with her Lord*. There is a singular sympathy in Creation between God's vicegerent on earth, namely, man, and the world. When man was in his integrity, then the earth was fruitful, but when man fell, the curse fell upon the ground as well as upon man. "Cursed is the ground for your sake." Then the thorn and the thistle sprang up, being sent by God as a token of His displeasure with man. We believe, Brothers and Sisters, that "the creature was made subject to vanity not willingly," and that in due time, when sin has been cleansed away, this earth of ours will be redeemed from the curse. We are looking for the happy and halcyon time when the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God, and then this poor darkened planet shall be washed from her night garments of mist, and shall shine out like her sister stars, the unfallen worlds, praising and magnifying the God who created her! Now if there is this sympathy, as we are sure there is, between the earth and man, much more is there a sympathy between the earth and God—and still more between the earth and that Man who was God as well as Man! Observe that when He was born, midnight turned to midday, and when He died mid-day turned to midnight. When He was born, Heaven was lit up with splendor and from angelic choirs the Bethlehem song was heard, while men also rejoiced, because unto them a Child was born, unto them a Son was given. But when he died, Heaven put out her brightest light! "You sun, of this great world, both eye and soul," you did—

"Acknowledge Him your greater,"

and, perceiving it in midday—midnight, with your face all wrapped as in a mantle for very shame, you did lament Him whom men scoffed and mocked, for you were the chief mourner at the death of the King of Kings. The earth, then, thus showed her sympathy with the Lord Jesus Christ by her darkness. Remember, too, that she also trembled through her ribs of stone, for there was an earthquake and the veil of the Temple was split in two—and even Death acknowledged its defeat, for many of the saints that slept, arose. There is a wondrous sympathy, then, between the world and He who made and redeemed the world—and this was manifested by the darkening of the world at the time of His death!

But, secondly, there was in great deal more in the darkness than this. *It was surely a rebuke and a check to the insulting cruelty of man!* What louder rebuke, though without a sound! What stronger check, though without a voice, could have been offered to that assembled throng? The

Roman in his pride, the Jew in his bigotry and the Gentile in his hatred of all that was sacred, were all there—and all did their utmost to pour contempt on Christ! And just in the midst of it they were like the men who sought after a light in Sodom—as if they were all smitten with blindness—they could not find their way! It was all dark round about Him. Now they could no longer scoff at Him. They dared not now say, “Let Him come down from the Cross!” I suppose that during those three hours there must have been an intense silence, or if men ventured to use their lips, they whispered to one another, “What is this that has come upon us? Is this the judgment, and is that Man, after all, the King of the Jews, and is this darkness, this darkness which may be felt, the taking away of the light of mercy from our eyes that we may perish in everlasting darkness?” I think I can hear them muttering thus, as some of them found their way to their homes, stumbling and falling to the ground, and others of them coming together for the sake of company to keep up their courage—but all of them sitting astonished in the thick darkness and wondering what it could mean—when a tremor went through all the earth and the veil of the Temple was split and even the heathen centurion, astonished by all these surprising concomitants of the death of this crucified Man, said, “Surely this must be the Son of God!” It was an amazing rebuke, then, to the wickedness of man which then came to its climax round about the Cross.

Was it not also, in the third place, *the furnishing of our Savior with a retiring room*, not that He might get a shelter, but that He might now be able to do His great work—bear the full weight of our sins and endure the extremities of the Divine Wrath? I must not say it, but I do think it would have been impossible for human eyes to have looked upon the Savior when He was in the full vortex of the storm of wrath which fell upon Him—and that God, even in mercy to man, shut the door that man’s eyes might not see the Savior in that fearful extremity of misery! It was not meet, when He trod the winepress, that He should be gazed upon. He must tread the winepress alone in all the fullest meaning of that word, with not even an eye to gaze upon Him! It must be in the thick that He must press those grapes of wrath and stain His garments with His blood. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you can have no thought—it is impossible you should—of the depth of the Savior’s sufferings! The Greek liturgy, when it speaks of Christ’s sufferings as “Your unknown sufferings,” has just hit the mark. They were unknown—unknown to us and unknown, also, perhaps, to lost souls in Hell, so dire and so extreme were they! He was shut up in the darkness that He might there alone bear the whole of it.

And was not this darkness, too, *intended to be to us a sort of emblem of His state*? It is as much as if God had said to us, “You want to know what Christ had to suffer? You cannot know, but that black darkness is the emblem of it.” The darkness seems to say to us, “Oh, mortal, you cannot understand me—those poor optics of yours are meant for another element, namely, for light—you lose yourself in me! You cannot find a

pathway in the thick black darkness.” So Christ on the Cross seems to say to us, “My people, you can follow Me to some extent. In some of My paths you *must* follow Me, but here, as your atoning Surety and as the vicarious Sacrifice for your sins—*here you cannot follow Me*. This is not your element—you will lose yourselves here. You cannot comprehend it! It is only I, only I who have endured the Wrath of God, and know what it means, who can travel on this road.” Christian, when you are must oppressed in soul with fellowship with Christ, and when you feel that when asked the question, with James and John, “Are you able to drink of this cup, and to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?” you could answer, “Yes, we are able”—mind, there is a point where you are *not* able—there is something in that cup which you cannot drink. There is a depth in that Baptism which you cannot know. Thank God that you cannot know it! Bless the Master that those paths of horrid gloom, where Hell’s blackest nights thicken into the most intense infinitude of darkness, you can never know! “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” was not a cry for you, but for the Savior! To be cast out of God’s Presence and to bear the weight of sin, is not for you, but for Christ. He has done it for you, and so the darkness becomes a fit emblem to you because you cannot understand it, neither can you fathom nor understand the depths of the Savior’s sufferings.

Once more. Does not the darkness, inasmuch as it is an emblem of Christ’s sufferings, also set forth to us our own condition? I suppose the Savior was, by force of His Suretyship, compelled to take the very place which the sinner should have occupied. The plan of salvation is just this, that Christ shall take the sinner’s place and suffer in the sinner’s stead, what the sinner ought to have suffered. The very pith and marrow of the Gospel lies in that word—“Substitution.” Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We take Christ’s place because Christ took our place! He stood in the place of lost sinners. Well now, the place of a lost sinner is the place of darkness. Outer darkness will be his eternal place, and darkness is his present state—his natural condition—as the Apostle said, “We were sometimes darkness.” So the Savior is made to be in darkness and as man would have had to abide forever in darkness, misery, despair, and hopelessness, so the Savior is, for three hours, denied the light of the sun! He is denied all comfort, denied all mercies—He is left without a glimpse of His Father, or a ray from the light of the sun because He then stood in the place of His people! Ah, Christian, ought not this to make you hate sin, to think that sin thus put you in the dark and would have kept you there, and continued you in the bleakness of darkness forever? Ought it not, too, to make you hate it when you remember that it put your Lord in the dark, and made Him hang bleeding from His wounds without a light to cheer Him or a glimpse to comfort Him? If, Christian, you do not hate sin when you think of this darkness, surely you must be still in the dark! We gather, then, these few lessons from the darkness,

though we are persuaded that there are many more in it. But now we come to—

II. GATHER SOME LESSONS FROM THE LIGHT.

It is fair to say that the darkness continued till just about the time when the Savior died, and that the light came as the Savior expired. The light broke upon Him a few minutes, or perhaps less, after He had cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabacthani," and after He had received the vinegar, and with a loud voice had given up the ghost. It is fair to say, then, that the darkness lasted till the Savior died. *A dying Savior lights up the world.* His expiring groan bids the sun come back. He raises His triumphant shout and, "It is finished" kindles, like a torch, the lamp of day once more, and earth is glad, for salvation's work is accomplished!

What do we learn, then, from the fact of the light returning as soon as the Savior died? Why, in the first place, we learn *that the darkness was gone forever from Himself—that the wrath of God no longer continues to bind or threaten Him!* Sometimes, when speaking of our justification, we have compared ourselves to a woman in debt. Now this woman, though immersed in debt and unable to pay, becomes the object of affection and is married. No sooner is the nuptial knot tied and the ring placed upon her finger than she is free from debt. No sheriff's officer can arrest her—whatever her debts may have been, she is not in debt any longer, because her debts are all transferred to her husband and are no longer hers! Now this may be some sort of comfort to her, but if she is of a loving and tender heart, she still feels that she is in bondage because he whom she loves is in bondage. "My husband," she says, "has the debt and I feel that as heavily as if I had it myself." But as soon as ever he has discharged the debt, she then has this as a double ground for confidence and joy—she is free twice—free, first, by the debt being laid on her husband. Free, secondly, by his discharging the debt. Now look here, Christian—you are clear, for your sin was laid on Christ! It is a law that a thing cannot be in two places at one time—if my sin was on Christ, it cannot be on me! If it was laid on Him according to God's Word, "He has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"—then it cannot lie on me and on Christ, too, and, therefore, I am clear!

But supposing it still laid on Him? There would still be cause for grief and sorrow of heart. But it does not, for Christ has discharged the debt and, in token thereof, the black darkness which brooded over Him during the three hours of His passion suddenly turned to the bright light of day! Now He no more stands before God as an outcast, but He, Himself, is justified and has risen again for our justification! This clearing of the sky was, as it were, a declaration on the part of Heaven that the debt which Christ had taken had been paid! The Surety had smarted and now those for whom He had been Surety might go free. In this returning light, my cheerful eyes see the fact that Christ is free as well as those for whom He stood!

Again, we see something else, namely, *that the curse has also gone from the world*. The darkness was on Christ and the darkness was also over all the land. Now when the darkness went away from Christ, it also went away from the land. I have already said that there is a sympathy between Nature and its Maker. When the curse fell upon Him, “without whom was not anything made that was made,” it was on Nature, too. Now Christ has put that away. I do not know whether you ever indulge in the sweet thought, but one likes, sometimes, to revel in it. “The creature itself also shall be delivered from bondage.” There is a day coming in which this world shall not bring forth thorns and thistles, in which it shall not be a wilderness—a howling and a barren place—but it shall be literally true that, “the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” And though the prophecy bears a spiritual meaning, yet it shall also bear a literal one, that “instead of the thorn shall come up the myrtle, and instead of the briar shall come up the fir tree and the box tree together,” for the Lord God, who cleared His Son from the curse, will also clear the world from the curse and revoke the sentence, “Cursed shall the ground be for your sake,” for earth shall yet again be blessed! Is it not written that Christ was revealed to destroy the works of the devil? And as it was one of the works of the devil to pollute and defile this world, so shall it be one of the works of Christ to cleanse and purify it! This world has been the theater of sin, but it will be cleansed and purged, and made the theater of holiness! “I looked,” says John, “and I saw a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” Perhaps there will be purifying fires, according to the word of Peter, “The elements shall melt with a fervent heat, and the earth, also, and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up.” And then afterwards, once again refitted, freed from the last relic of man’s evil doings, there shall be heard the shout, “The Tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell among them! Hallelujah! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” May such happy days soon come! We expect them because the darkness was rolled away when Jesus died! This, however, is but speculative. We will, therefore, turn to something that is more solid.

It seems to me that the moving off of this darkness when the Master died *was a picture of the lifting of the veil of despair from the face of the whole human family*. Brothers and Sisters, did you ever feel yourselves forced to read a description of heathenism in India? I remember to have listened with extreme pain to a description given of the idolatries of India by one who knew them thoroughly and had seen them. One could hardly bear a recapitulation of the sacred rites of the Hindus without feeling that one’s mind was polluted, quite polluted by knowing what their religion was! It was so debasing and degrading to the mind that one felt it was a dangerous experiment even to know about it. Now those Christian people who have lived in such a country as India, and have marked how the people are set upon their idols, though, even according to their own description of them, those idols are monsters of filth—those who have

lived there, I say, might well say, "It is of no use! The Light of God will never come here." But the Christian is forbidden to say this, for Christ has taken the darkness from off all the face of the land! So, as far as this is concerned, we must never despair of any cases! Christ's death took the veil away and there is no reason now why India's teeming millions should not stretch out their hands to Christ!

Cast your eye to China. A million souls a month die unsaved in China, never having heard of Christ! It is an awful thought, and one that might break one's heart if one indulged in it. Now what is there to be done for such teeming multitudes? The whole world still lies in the Wicked One, what with Mohammedanism, idolatry, Romanism and all the other forms of self-worship. What is to be done? Christian, do what you can and then leave it with Christ! He took away the darkness by His dying, and rest assured that the proclamation of His death will take away all the darkness of despair from the face of the world! Now the next time you look upon some person who has been a very gross sinner, if there is a temptation in your mind to say, "It is no use trying after *him*—he must be given up—that man cannot be saved," check that thought! Even if the man is a drunk, or swearer, or thief, or all these things in one, remember that Christ took away the darkness of despair from off all the land and so He has taken away despair even from that soul! You have no right to say that that soul cannot be saved—your business is to pray for it and labor for it, if haply it may find the Light of God! If this darkness had not all been removed. If there had been but one spot left, I might have said, "There is no hope for me," but if the dying Christ lights the whole world over, then why, oh why should I lie down in despair? Why not say, "Who can tell, perhaps He will have mercy upon me? Who can tell, perhaps even my sin may be forgiven? Who, knows, the black darkness may yet be swept away from me and even I may rejoice in the light of His Countenance?" Christ, in taking away the darkness, then, removed the despair which was the black Egyptian night that covered the world!

Yet, farther, there was another darkness which covered the earth in Christ's day, namely, *the darkness of soul-ignorance*. This darkness, also, Christ, by dying, took away. Up till the death of Christ, if man had desired salvation, he could not have found the way. He was in total darkness. No man could ever, by his own scheming, have found out the plan of Substitution. Socrates and Plato were two men of masterminds—if any of woman born could have found out the way of salvation, they would have done it—but their discoveries were of very little worth to mankind. It was only when Christ bowed His head in the agonies of death that man knew there was a gate to Paradise! I mean not that the saints did not know it, but they only knew that this was the gate, that it was the dying Savior who was the road to Heaven. It was the fact of Christ coming in human flesh and suffering for man which was the answer to the world's great riddle. The world's riddle was, "How can God be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly?" Man tried to spell it out, but never could. But

when Jesus died, the darkness was taken away, and man then understood the way to God. Now, beloved Friends, the business we have to do is to tell to those who are still in the dark the story of Christ. If you know any people in the world who are ignorant about soul-matters, do not begin to talk to them about the existence of a God. Do not commence with the Doctrine of Election—begin with the story of a dying Savior—that is the way to teach! When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland there were many who tried to teach the Greenlanders about God. They thought they were not in a prepared state to know about Christ till, by accident, one of them happened to read the Chapter containing the words, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.” “Oh,” said the Greenlanders, “why did you not tell us this before? This is the one thing we need to know.” So it is. It is not merely that there is a God, for Nature teaches that, but that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. This, this is the great lesson! And if you want to take away darkness from the soul, you must teach this!

A great deal is said about the usefulness of education and I suppose that no intelligent person would say a word against it. The more education the better, but it is outrageous to suppose that education, even carried to the highest degree, will necessarily better a man! A man may be all the worse for education unless the spiritual part of his nature is educated. He may be a profound philosopher and yet he may justify the butchery of innocent men and women! He may be one of the finest art critics in the world, and yet he may back up a monster who could allow men to whip pregnant women and to shoot down poor creatures who were fugitives in cold-blood! The highest education does not keep a man from justifying inhumanity! A man needs to have his *heart* right, or everything else will go wrong, let him learn whatever he may. But when a man has the story of Christ in his heart and sees that Jesus died, then soul-ignorance flies away. He sees true light in seeing Christ as the Substitute for human guilt. His soul clings to God, understands Him, lays hold upon Him, rejoices in Him—and this is the point where education must begin. It must begin at the Cross. Teach men all else you please, but if you leave out the *scientia scientiarum*—the science of sciences, the knowledge of knowledge—you have done but little. You have only helped the man to a greater responsibility and to a direr ruin.

Again, the moving away of the darkness when the Savior died was not merely the taking away of soul-ignorance, but also of *moral guilt*. There was the darkness of sin over the world—a thick darkness covered all mankind, even as it does now. The only place of light in the world is where the Cross beams. All other systems have tried, but they have only increased the darkness. Mohammedanism was, for a time, a great improvement on anything that went before it, but what is it now? What is its teaching and what is its influence upon man now? It is “evil, only evil, and that continually.” But the Doctrine that Christ was crucified for

man, that God has punished sin in Christ and that God is ready to forgive the sinner—the Doctrine that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is not condemned—this makes men holy! They hate sin in the light of this! They love God in the light of the Cross! They seek after virtue and holiness when they come to know the Savior, but they never come to any perfection until they first know Him. It seems to me, then, that the chief business of every Christian should be the telling out of the death of Christ, for this is the lamp that is needed!

Oh, dear Brothers and Sisters, when I think about the mischief that is being done in England by Popery, and by all sorts of darkness, I am inclined to say, “Let us give up preaching anything except the Cross of Christ!” It does seem as if we might merge some other matters. We dare not neglect any Truth of God, but it does sometimes seem a strong temptation to forget everything else and keep on teaching, “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” and to make it—

**“All our business here below,
To cry ‘Behold the Lamb.’”**

The one thing that England needs is Christ preached and Christ believed in! The great thing that the whole earth needs is the Crucified Savior. It would be in vain for Aaron to bring out the smoking incense when men are dying, being bitten of the serpent—the smoke of incense is of no use, then. It would be in vain for Moses to bring down the Ten Commandments when men are dying, being bitten—the Ten Commandments cannot heal them. Oh, for the uplifting of the bronze serpent! That is the one thing that Israel’s camp needs and that is the one need of London now—Christ on the Cross uplifted before the sinner’s gaze and the continual cry, “Look, look, look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth!” If any Christian minister here present has been backward in preaching Christ. If he has been for the last few Sundays preaching mere Doctrine, preaching only experience, preaching metaphysics, but not preaching Christ, let him repent of the sin and never commit it again! And if any one of us in our conversation shall have been all this week talking about politics, or matters of taste and so on, without talking about Christ, let us ask for mercy in this respect! Oh, come back to Jesus that you may kindle your torches! You may kindle your beams of light by your camp fires and hope to remove the darkness in your own poor way, but you will do nothing! But if you bring out a dying Savior, He will take away the midday—midnight of the world at once—and light shall come streaming even through the darkness! God grant us to live more to Christ, to think more of Christ, to speak more about Him and to breathe more of His Spirit.

I would ask Brothers and Sisters who are present to join with us in earnest prayer that there may be a thorough revival throughout England of the preaching of the Doctrine of the Cross, and that God would put power into the ministry in order to the conversion of many. I told you last Sunday [September 23, 1866] that some of us would meet on Tuesday for prayer all day long. We have never had such a day as that before! I have

thought since that I shall never see such another day, when some hundred or more of us met together to fast and pray during the day. We continued in prayer from about ten till six o'clock, unwearied, unexhausted. If any soul ever went to the gates of Heaven, I did last Tuesday! I feel now like a reed that is broken, the strength gone out of me through the excessive excitement, the sort of sacred delirium, of wrestling with God in prayer, in company with the Brothers present, for the conversion of sinners. There were times during last Tuesday when we could not, any of us, pray, and strong men as we were, we were but just able to cry aloud as if our hearts would break because we could not let the Lord go till He had looked down on His poor Church and returned again in mercy to visit His ministers! We feel as if we need a revival of religion now—not such revivals as there were a few years ago—some of us think but little of them. We believe there were many gathered in, but where are many of them now? Scattered, to a very great extent, to the winds of Heaven! We need the true revival work of the Holy Spirit, without fanaticism and without excitement, but the genuine stirring of the soul of the people, the turning of them to God as on the Day of Pentecost! And we shall have it, Brothers! We shall have it, for we have sought it in believing prayer! We shall have it, for it must come through every Christian resolving that the Cross of Christ, the blood of the Savior, shall be the theme of his life and the objective of his desires—telling of it wherever he goes and so taking the darkness from off the face of the land. And now, putting the two together—

III. THE DARKNESS AND THE LIGHT ARE EMBLEMATIC OF THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Christ had hours of darkness and then there came the Light. The Church has her hours of darkness, too. She has struggled by her martyrs. She has even died in the persons of her confessors. Then comes her Light. She has her "Dark Ages" and she has her "Reformation." She must struggle on through the darkness, expecting the Light to come. Perhaps the Light will come in a way in which we have not expected it. Perhaps the Master, Himself, will come before long—the Light of Lights, the Beginner of Days. May it be so! Meanwhile, we must, like He, struggle through the darkness.

Then, again, is not this *the experience of every Christian*? It is darkness, first, and the Light of God afterwards—yes, hours of darkness, weeks of darkness, months of darkness—with some of us *years of darkness*. Well, feel your nothingness to be a preparation for laying hold of Christ! To be broken is the way to be bound up! To be killed is the way to be made alive! And we must have this darkness to a greater or less extent. Child of God, if you happen to be in the dark just now, do not think that some strange thing has happened to you! Your Master went through the darkness. He fought upon the Cross and triumphed, but remember that the Savior's triumph was *on the Cross*, and yours will be there too! You will suffer, and your triumph will be in suffering. You must expect to earn the victory in death. It shall be when you bow the head and give up

the ghost that you shall have your, "It is finished!" on your lips, and enter into Glory won! Expect the darkness if you have it, wonder not at it, but cheerfully wait until the Light of God shall come!

Now, are there some hearts in the Tabernacle, tonight, who need to find the Light? I am glad to see so many of you come on week-nights to listen to the simple preaching of the Gospel. Surely you must have some desires after Christ! Are there none of you in the dark who are unhappy and miserable? Do you want to get at the Light? You will never get it by looking into your own hearts. You will never find it by any outward performance, by any outward rites and ceremonies. The only Light for a poor miserable sinner is that which Christ struck on the Cross. You must look to Him, trust Him, and then you shall have the Light of God and shall turn your misery into joy, take away your sackcloth and gird you with scarlet and make you dance for joy of heart! Oh, seeking Sinner, look nowhere but to the Cross! Let not Satan deceive you by saying that you must *feel* such-and-such, or *do* such-and-such. Your feelings and doings are nothing! Only what Christ felt and what Christ did can save you! Look out of self to the Savior! Shake your hands clear of everything of your own and look to what Christ did when He hung upon the Cross, and when in the gloom of His death He worked with the shuttle of His pangs and His sorrows a garment to cover poor naked souls with! Your light, poor weary Sinner, is not the candle of Popish error, nor yet the candle of your own dark heart, but the sunlight of the Cross! Look there, and you shall be of good comfort, for to him who looks to Christ, the Light of God shall arise out of the darkness!

May the Master give every one of you a blessing through this plain but truly earnest attempt to lead you to Himself and so secure your eternal salvation! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ISAIAH 55:1-4.**

It is the language of Infinite Mercy, speaking to the abject condition of mankind. We have become naked, and poor, and miserable through sin—but God, instead of driving us from His Presence, comes loaded with mercy—and thus He speaks to us.

Verse 1. *Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.* See the freeness of Divine Love! See how God who knows the needs of souls, provides all things necessary for them—water—the Water of Life. And as if that were not enough, the wine of joy, the milk of satisfaction—and He offers these freely. But, mark you, there is no gain for Him—the gain is for us, for He says, "He that has no money, buy wine and milk without money and without price." All that you need, dear Friend, God is ready to *give* you. Do you need these good things Then come and welcome! It is God who bids you come.

2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your labor for that which satisfies not? Why do you seek to get comfort for your souls where you will never get it? Why do you try to content your immortal nature upon things that will die? There is nothing here below that can satisfy you! Why spend your money, then, for these things, and your labor for nothing?*

2. *Listen diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. God has real food for your soul—something that will make you truly happy! He will satisfy you, not with the name of goodness, but with the reality of it, if you will but come and have it. You shall have fullness—you shall have delight—if you are but willing to come and receive it!*

3. *Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live. Then who would not hear—who would not give the attention—if by that attention immortal life may be received?*

3. *And I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Will God enter into covenant with sinful men—with thirsty men—with hungry men—with needy men—with guilty men? Ah, that He will. “I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.”*

4. *Behold, I have given Him. That is the Son of David—Jesus the Christ—“I have given Him.”*

4. *For a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. If you want anyone to tell you what God is, Jesus Christ is the Witness to the Character of God. Do you need a leader to lead you back to peace and happiness—a commander by whose power you may be able to fight Satan and all the powers of darkness that hold you in bondage? God has all in Jesus Christ that I can need for time and eternity, and this can all be mine for the asking and receiving. Shall we not ask and receive?*

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

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

“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

NO. 2133

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 2, 1890,
C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, crying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
Matthew 27:46.*

“THERE was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour”—this cry came out of that darkness! Expect not to see through its every word, as though it came from on high as a beam from the unclouded Sun of Righteousness. There is light in it—bright, flashing light—but there is a center of impenetrable gloom where the soul is ready to faint because of the terrible darkness. Our Lord was then in the darkest part of His way. He had trodden the winepress now for hours and the work was almost finished. He had reached the culminating point of His anguish. This is His dolorous lament from the lowest pit of misery—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

I do not think that the records of time, or even of eternity, contain a sentence more full of anguish. Here the wormwood, the gall and all the other bitterness are outdone. Here you may look as into a vast abyss—and though you strain your eyes and gaze till sight fails you, yet you perceive no bottom—it is measureless, unfathomable, inconceivable. This anguish of the Savior on your behalf and mine is no more to be measured and weighed than the sin which needed it, or the love which endured it. We will adore where we cannot comprehend.

I have chosen this subject that it may help the children of God to understand a little of their infinite obligations to their redeeming Lord. You shall measure the height of His love, if it can be measured, by the depth of His grief, if that can ever be known. See with what a price He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law! As you see this, say to yourselves—What manner of people ought we to be? What measure of love ought we to return to One who bore the utmost penalty that we might be delivered from the wrath to come? I do not profess that I can dive *into* this deep—I will only venture to the edge of the precipice and bid you look down and pray the Spirit of God to concentrate your mind upon this lamentation of our dying Lord as it rises up through the thick darkness—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Our first subject of thought will be *the fact*, or what He suffered—God had forsaken Him. Secondly, we will note *the enquiry*, or why He suffered—this word, “why,” is the edge of the text. “Why have You forsaken Me?” Then, thirdly, we will consider *the answer*, or what came of His suf-

fering. The answer flowed softly into the soul of the Lord Jesus without the need of words, for He ceased from His anguish with the triumphant shout of, “It is finished.” His work was finished and His bearing of desertion was a chief part of the work He had undertaken for our sake.

I. By the help of the Holy Spirit let us first dwell upon THE FACT, or what our Lord suffered. God had forsaken Him. Grief of mind is harder to bear than pain of body. You can pluck up courage and endure the pang of sickness and pain so long as the spirit is hale and brave. But if the soul itself is touched and the mind becomes diseased with anguish, then every pain is increased in severity and there is nothing with which to sustain it. Spiritual sorrows are the worst of mental miseries.

A man may bear great depression of spirit about worldly matters if he feels that he has his God to go to. He is cast down, but not in despair. Like David he dialogues with himself and he enquires, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God: for I shall yet praise Him.” But if the Lord is once withdrawn—if the comfortable light of His Presence is shadowed even for an *hour*—there is a torment within the breast which I can only liken to the prelude of Hell. This is the greatest of all weights that can press upon the heart. This made the Psalmist plead, “Hide not Your face from me! Put not Your servant away in anger.”

We can bear a bleeding body and even a wounded spirit—but a soul conscious of desertion by God is beyond conception unendurable! When He holds back the face of His Throne and spreads His cloud upon it, who can endure the darkness? This voice out of “the belly of Hell” marks the lowest depth of the Savior’s grief. *The desertion was real.* Though under some aspects our Lord could say, “The Father is with Me,” yet was it solemnly true that God did forsake Him. It was not a failure of faith on His part which led Him to imagine what was not actual fact. Our faith fails us and then we think that God has forsaken us—but our Lord’s faith did not, for a moment, falter, for He says twice, “*My God, My God.*”

Oh, the mighty double grip of His unhesitating faith! He seems to say, “Even if You have forsaken Me, I have not forsaken You.” Faith triumphs and there is no sign of any faintness of heart towards the living God. Yet, strong as is His faith, He feels that God has withdrawn His comfortable fellowship and He shivers under the terrible deprivation. It was no fancy or delirium of mind caused by His weakness of body, the heat of the fever, the depression of His spirit or the near approach of death. He was clear of mind even to this last. He bore up under pain, loss of blood, scorn, thirst and desolation—making no complaint of the Cross, the nails or the scoffing.

We read not in the Gospels of anything more than the natural cry of weakness, “I thirst.” All the tortures of His body He endured in silence. But when it came to being forsaken of God, *then* His great heart burst out into its “Lama Sabachthani?” His one moan is concerning His God! It is not, “Why has Peter forsaken Me? Why has Judas betrayed Me?” These

were sharp griefs, but this is the sharpest. This stroke has cut Him to the quick—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

It was no phantom of the gloom—it was a real absence which He mourned. This was *a very remarkable desertion*. It is not the way of God to leave either His sons or His servants. His saints, when they come to die in their great weakness and pain, find Him near. They are made to sing because of the Presence of God—“Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me.” Dying saints have clear visions of the living God! Our observation has taught us that if the Lord is away at other times, He is *never* absent from His people in the article of death or in the furnace of affliction.

Concerning the three holy children we do not read that the Lord was ever visibly with them till they walked the fires of Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace—but then and there the Lord met with them. Yes, Beloved, it is God’s way and habit to keep company with His afflicted people. And yet He forsook His Son in the hour of His tribulation! How usual it is to see the Lord with His faithful witnesses when resisting even unto blood! Read the Book of Martyrs and I care not whether you study the former or the later persecutions, you will find them all lit up with the evident Presence of the Lord with His witnesses.

Did the Lord ever fail to support a martyr at the stake? Did He ever forsake one of His testifiers upon the scaffold? The testimony of the Church has always been that while the Lord has permitted His saints to suffer in body He has so divinely sustained their spirits that they have been more than conquerors and have treated their sufferings as light afflictions! The fire has not been a “bed of roses,” but it has been a chariot of victory! The sword is sharp and death is bitter—but the love of Christ is sweet and to die for Him has been turned into glory! No, it is not God’s way to forsake His champions nor to leave even the least of His children in their hour of trial.

As to our Lord, this forsaking was *singular*. Did His Father ever leave Him before? Will you read the four Evangelists through and find any previous instance in which He complains of His Father for having forsaken Him? No. He said, “I know that you hear Me always.” He lived in constant touch with God. His fellowship with the Father was always near and dear and clear. But now, for the first time, He cries, “Why have You forsaken Me?” It was very remarkable! It was a riddle only to be solved by the fact that He loved us and gave Himself for us and in the execution of His loving purpose came even unto this sorrow of mourning the absence of His God.

This forsaking was *very terrible*. Who can fully tell what it is to be forsaken of God? We can only form a guess by what we have ourselves felt under temporary and partial desertion. God has never left us altogether, for He has expressly said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Yet we have sometimes felt as if He had cast us off. We have cried, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” The clear shining rays of His love have

been withdrawn. Thus we are able to form some little idea of how the Savior felt when His God had forsaken Him.

The mind of Jesus was left to dwell upon one dark subject and no cheering theme consoled Him. It was the hour in which He was made to stand before God as consciously the Sin-Bearer according to that ancient prophecy, “He shall bear their iniquities.” Then was it true, “He has made Him to be sin for us.” Peter puts it, “He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” Sin, sin—sin was everywhere around and about Christ. He had no sin of His own but the Lord had “laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” He had no strength given Him from on high, no secret oil and wine poured into His wounds—He was made to appear in the lone Character of the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world—and therefore He must feel the weight of sin and the turning away of that sacred face which cannot look thereon.

His Father, at that time, gave Him no open acknowledgment. On certain other occasions a voice had been heard, saying, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” But now, when such a testimony seemed most of all required, the oracle was not there! He was hung up as an accursed Thing upon the Cross, for He was “made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.”

And the Lord His God did not own Him before men. If it had pleased the Father He might have sent Him 12 legions of angels—but not an angel came after Christ had left Gethsemane. His despisers might spit in His face but no swift seraph came to avenge the indignity. They might bind Him and scourge Him, but none of all the heavenly host would interpose to screen His shoulders from the lash. They might fasten him to the tree with nails and lift Him up and scoff at Him—but no cohort of ministering spirits hastened to drive back the rabble and release the Prince of Life. No, He appeared to be forsaken, “smitten of God and afflicted,” delivered into the hands of cruel men whose wicked hands worked Him misery without stint. Well might He ask, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

But this was not all. His Father now dried up that sacred stream of peaceful communion and loving fellowship which had flowed, up to now, throughout His whole earthly life. He said, Himself, as you remember, “You shall be scattered, every man to His own, and shall leave Me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.” Here was His constant comfort—but all comfort from this Source was to be withdrawn. The Divine Spirit did not minister to His human spirit. No communications with His Father’s love poured into His heart. It was not possible that the Judge should smile upon One who represented the prisoner at the bar.

Our Lord’s *faith* did not fail Him, as I have already shown you, for He said, “My God, My God,” yet no sensible supports were given to His heart and no comforts were poured into His mind. One writer declares that Jesus did not taste of Divine wrath but only suffered a withdrawal of Divine fellowship. What is the difference? Whether God withdraws heat or creates cold is all the same! He was not smiled upon, nor allowed to feel that He

was near to God—and this, to His tender spirit, was grief of the keenest order!

A certain saint once said that in his sorrow he had from God, “that which was meet, but not that which was sweet.” Our Lord suffered to the extreme point of deprivation. He had not the light which makes existence to be life and life to be a blessing. You who know, in your degree, what it is to lose the conscious Presence and love of God—you can faintly guess what the sorrow of the Savior was now that He felt He had been forsaken of His God. “If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do?” To our Lord, the Father’s love was the foundation of *everything*—and when that was gone, all was gone. Nothing remained, within, without, above, when His own God, the God of His entire confidence, turned from Him.

Yes, God in very deed forsook our Savior. To be forsaken of God was *much more a source of anguish to Jesus than it would be to us*. “Oh,” you say, “how is that?” I answer because He was perfectly holy. A rupture between a perfectly holy Being and the thrice holy God must be in the highest degree strange, abnormal, perplexing and painful. If any man here who is not at peace with God could only know His true condition, he would swoon with fright! If you unforgiven ones only knew where you are and what you are at this moment, in the sight of God, you would never smile again till you were reconciled to Him. Alas, we are insensible—hardened by the deceitfulness of sin—and therefore we do not feel our true condition!

His perfect holiness made it to our Lord a dreadful calamity to be forsaken of the thrice holy God. I remember, also, that our blessed Lord had lived in unbroken fellowship with God and to be forsaken was a new grief to Him. He had never known what the dark was till then—His life had been lived in the light of God. Think, dear child of God, if you had always dwelt in full communion with God, your days would have been as the days of Heaven upon earth! And how cold it would strike your heart to find yourself in the darkness of desertion. If you can conceive such a thing as happening to a *perfect* man, you can see why, to our Well-Beloved, it was a special trial.

Remember, He had enjoyed fellowship with God more richly, as well as more constantly, than any of us. His fellowship with the Father was of the highest, deepest, fullest order—and what must the loss of it have been? We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship, and yet the loss is killing! But to our Lord Jesus Christ the sea was dried up—I mean His sea of fellowship with the Infinite God. Do not forget that He was such a One that to Him to be without God must have been an overwhelming calamity. In every part He was perfect and in every part fitted for communion with God to a supreme degree.

A sinful man has an awful need of God but he does not know it and therefore he does not feel that hunger and thirst after God which would come upon a perfect man could he be deprived of God. The very perfection of his nature renders it inevitable that the holy man must either be in communion with God or be desolate. Imagine a stray angel—a seraph who

has lost His God! Conceive him to be perfect in holiness and yet to have fallen into a condition in which he cannot find His God! I cannot picture him! Perhaps Milton might have done so. He is sinless and trustful and yet he has an overpowering feeling that God is absent from him.

He has drifted into the nowhere—the unimaginable region behind the back of God. I think I hear the wailing of the cherub, “My God, my God, my God, where are You?” What a sorrow for one of the sons of the morning! But here we have the lament of a Being far more capable of fellowship with the Godhead! In proportion as He is more fitted to receive the love of the great Father, in that proportion is His pining after it the more intense. As a Son, He is more able to commune with God than ever a servant angel could be—and now that He is forsaken of God, the void within is greater and the anguish more bitter.

Our Lord’s heart and all His Nature were, morally and spiritually, so delicately formed, so sensitive, so tender, that to be without God was to Him a grief which could not be weighed. I see Him in the text bearing desertion and yet I perceive that He cannot bear it. I know not how to express my meaning except by such a paradox. He cannot endure to be without God. He had surrendered Himself to be left of God, as the representative of sinners must be, but His pure and holy Nature, after three hours of silence, finds the position unendurable to love and purity! And breaking forth from it, now that the hour was over, He exclaims, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

He quarrels not with the suffering, but He cannot abide in the position which caused it. He seems as if He must end the ordeal—not because of the pain—but because of the moral shock! We have here the repetition after His passion of that loathing which He felt before it, when He cried, “If it is possible let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will.” “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” is the holiness of Christ amazed at the position of Substitute for guilty men!

There, Friends. I have done my best, but I seem to myself to have been prattling like a little child talking about something infinitely above me. So I leave the solemn fact that our Lord Jesus was on the Cross forsaken of His God.

II. This brings us to consider THE ENQUIRY, or *why* He suffered. Note carefully this cry—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” It is pure anguish, undiluted agony, which cries like this—but it is the agony of a godly soul—for only a man of that order would have used such an expression.

Let us learn from it useful lessons. This cry is taken from “the Book.” Does it not show our Lord’s love of the sacred volume, that when He felt His sharpest grief, He turned to the Scripture to find a fit utterance for it? Here we have the opening sentence of the 22nd Psalm. Oh that we may so love the inspired Word that we may not only sing to its score but even weep to its music! Note, again, that our Lord’s lament is an address to *God*. The godly, in their anguish, turn to the hand which smites them.

The Savior's outcry is not *against* God, but *to* God. “My God, My God”—He makes a double effort to draw near. True Sonship is here! The child in the dark is crying after His Father—“My God, My God.” Both the Bible and prayer were dear to Jesus in His agony. Still, observe it is a faith-cry, for though it asks, “Why have You forsaken Me?” it first says, twice, “My God, My God.” The grip of appropriation is in the word “My.” But the reverence of humility is in the word, “God.” It is, “My *God*, My *God*, You are ever God to Me, and I a poor creature. I do not quarrel with You. Your rights are unquestioned, for You are My God. You can do as You will and I yield to Your sacred sovereignty. I kiss the hand that smites Me, and with all My heart I cry, ‘My God, My God.’”

When you are delirious with pain, think of your Bible—when your mind wonders, let it roam towards the Mercy Seat—and when your heart and your flesh fail, still live by faith and still cry, “My God, my God.” Let us come close to the enquiry. It looked to me, at first sight, like a question as of one distraught, driven from the balance of His mind—not unreasonable, but too much reasoning and therefore tossed about. “Why have You forsaken Me?” Did not Jesus know? Did He not know why He was forsaken? He knew it most distinctly and yet His *Manhood*, while it was being crushed, pounded and dissolved, seemed as though it could not understand the reason for so great a grief.

He must be forsaken—but could there be a sufficient cause for so sickening a sorrow? The cup must be bitter—but why this most nauseous of ingredients? I tremble lest I say what I ought not to say. I have said it and I think there is truth—the Man of Sorrows was overborne with horror! At that moment the finite soul of the Man Christ Jesus came into awful contact with the infinite Justice of God! The one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, beheld the holiness of God in arms against the sin of man whose nature He had espoused.

God was for Him and with Him in a certain unquestionable sense—but for the time, so far as His feelings went—God was against Him and necessarily withdrawn from Him. It is not surprising that the holy Soul of Christ should shudder at finding itself brought into painful contact with the infinite Justice of God, even though its design was only to vindicate that Justice and glorify the Law-Giver. Our Lord could now say, “All Your waves and Your billows are gone over Me,” and therefore He uses language which is all too hot with anguish to be dissected by the cold hand of a logical criticism.

Grief has small regard for the laws of the grammarian. Even the holiest, when in extreme agony, though they cannot speak otherwise than according to purity and truth, yet use a language of their own which only the ear of sympathy can fully receive. I see not all that is here, but what I can see I am not able to put in words for you. *I think I see in the expression, submission and resolve.* Our Lord does not draw back. There is a forward movement in the question—they who quit a business ask no more questions about it. He does not ask that the forsaking may end prematurely—He would only understand anew its meaning. He does not shrink, but

dedicates Himself anew to God by the words, “My God, My God,” and by seeking to review the ground and reason of that anguish which He is resolute to bear even to the bitter end.

He would gladly feel anew the motive which has sustained Him and must sustain Him to the end. The cry sounds to me like deep submission and strong resolve, pleading with God. Do you not think that *the amazement of our Lord, when He was “made sin for us”* (2 Cor. 5:21), led Him thus to cry out? For such a sacred and pure Being to be made a Sin-Offering was an amazing experience! Sin was laid on Him and He was treated as if He had been guilty, though He had personally *never sinned*.

And now the infinite horror of rebellion against the most holy God fills His holy Soul, the unrighteousness of sin breaks His heart and He starts back from it, crying, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken *Me*?” Why must I bear the dread result of conduct I so much abhor? Do you not see, moreover, *there was here a glance at His eternal purpose and at His secret Source of joy?* That “why” is the silver lining of the dark cloud and our Lord looked wishfully at it. He knew that the desertion was necessary in order that He might save the guilty and He had an eye to that salvation as His comfort.

He is not forsaken needlessly, nor without a worthy design. The design is in itself so dear to His heart that He yields to the passing evil, even though that evil is like death to Him. He looks at that “why,” and through that narrow window the light of Heaven comes streaming into His darkened life! “My God, My God, why have You forsaken *Me*?” Surely our Lord dwelt on that, “why,” *that we might also turn our eyes that way*. He would have us see the why and the why of His grief. He would have us mark the gracious motive for its endurance. Think much of all your Lord suffered, but do not overlook the *reason* for it. If you cannot always understand how this or that grief worked toward the great end of the whole passion, yet believe that it has its share in the grand, “why.” Make a life-study of that bitter but blessed question, “Why have You forsaken *Me*?”

Thus the Savior raises an inquiry not so much for Himself as for *us*—and not so much because of any despair within *His* heart as because of a hope and a joy set before Him which were wells of comfort to Him in His wilderness of woe. Think, for a moment, that the Lord God, in the broadest and most unreserved sense, could never, in very deed, have forsaken His most obedient Son. He was ever with Him in the grand design of salvation. Towards the Lord Jesus, personally, God Himself, personally, must ever have stood on terms of infinite love. Truly the Only Begotten was never more lovely to the Father than when He was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross!

But we must look upon God here as the Judge of all the earth and we must look upon the Lord Jesus in His official capacity as the Surety of the Covenant and the Sacrifice for sin. The great Judge of all cannot smile upon Him who has become the Substitute for the guilty. Sin is loathed of God and if, in order to its removal, His own Son is made to bear it, yet, as sin, it is still loathsome and He who bears it cannot be in happy commun-

ion with God! This was the dread necessity of expiation—but in the *essence* of things the love of the great Father to His Son never ceased, nor ever knew a diminution. Restrained in its flow it must be, but lessened at its fountainhead it could not be. Therefore, wonder not at the question, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

III. Hoping to be guided by the Holy Spirit, I am coming to THE ANSWER concerning which I can only use the few minutes which remain to me. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” What is the outcome of this suffering? What was the reason for it? Our Savior could answer His own question. If for a moment His Manhood was perplexed, yet His mind soon came to clear apprehension for He said, “It is finished.” And as I have already said, He then referred to the work which in His lonely agony He had been performing.

Why, then, did God forsake His Son? I cannot conceive any other answer than this—*He stood in our place*. There was no reason in Christ why the Father should forsake Him—He was *perfect* and His life was without spot. God never acts without reason and since there were no reasons in the Character and Person of the Lord Jesus why His Father should forsake Him, we must look elsewhere. I do not know how others answer the question. I can only answer it in this one way—

***“All the griefs He felt were ours,
Ours were the woes He bore.
Pang not His own,
His spotless soul
With bitter anguish bore.
We held Him as condemned of Heaven
An outcast from His God
While for our sins He groaned, He bled,
Beneath His Father’s rod.”***

He bore the sinner’s sin and He had to be treated, therefore, as though He were a sinner, though sinner He could never be! With His own full consent He suffered as though He had committed the transgressions which were laid on Him. Our sin and His taking it upon Himself is the answer to the question, “Why have You forsaken Me?”

In this case we now see that *His obedience was perfect*. He came into the world to obey the Father and He rendered that obedience to the very uttermost. The spirit of obedience could go no farther than for one who feels forsaken of God still to cling to Him in solemn, avowed allegiance—still declaring before a mocking multitude His confidence in the afflicting God! It is noble to cry, “My God, My God,” when One is asking, “Why have You forsaken He?” How much farther can obedience go? I see nothing beyond it. The soldier at the gate of Pompeii, remaining at his post as sentry when the shower of burning ashes was falling, was not more true to his trust than He who adheres to a forsaking God with loyalty of hope.

Our Lord’s suffering in this particular form was appropriate and necessary. It would not have sufficed for our Lord merely to have been pained in body, nor even to have been grieved in mind in other ways—He must suffer in this particular way. He must feel forsaken of God because *this* is

the necessary consequence of sin. For a man to be forsaken of God is the penalty which naturally and inevitably follows upon his breaking his relationship with God. What is death? What was the death that was threatened to Adam? “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.” Is death annihilation? Was Adam annihilated that day?

Assuredly not! He lived many a year afterwards. But in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit he died by being *separated* from God. The separation of the soul from God is *spiritual* death, just as the separation of the soul from the body is *natural* death. The sacrifice for sin must be put in the place of separation and must bow to the penalty of death. By this placing of the Great Sacrifice under forsaking and death, it would be seen by all creatures throughout the universe that God cannot have fellowship with sin. If even the Holy One, who stood the Just for the unjust, found God forsaking Him—what must the doom of the actual sinner be? Sin is evidently always, in every case, a dividing influence, putting even the Christ Himself, as a Sin-Bearer, in the place of distance.

This was necessary for another reason—there could have been no laying on of suffering for sin without the forsaking of the vicarious Sacrifice by the Lord God. So long as the smile of God rests on the man, the Law is not afflicting him. The approving look of the great Judge cannot fall upon a man who is viewed as standing in the place of the guilty. Christ not only suffered *from* sin, but *for* sin. If God will cheer and sustain Him, He is not suffering for sin. The Judge is not inflicting suffering for sin if He is manifestly encouraging the smitten One. There could have been no vicarious suffering on the part of Christ for human guilt if He had continued, consciously, to enjoy the full sunshine of the Father’s Presence. It was essential to being a Victim in our place that He should cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Beloved, see how marvelously, in the Person of Christ, the Lord our God has vindicated His Law? If to make His Law glorious He had said, “These multitudes of men have broken My Law and therefore they shall perish,” the Law would have been terribly magnified. But, instead, He says, “Here is My Only Begotten Son, My other Self—He takes on Himself the Nature of these rebellious creatures and He consents that I should lay on Him the load of their iniquity and visit in His Person the offenses which might have been punished in the persons of all these multitudes of men—and I will have it so.”

When Jesus bows His head to the stroke of the Law—when He submissively consents that His Father shall turn away His face from Him—then myriads of worlds are astonished at the perfect holiness and stern justice of the Lawgiver! There are, probably, worlds innumerable throughout the boundless creation of God and all these will see, in the death of God’s dear Son, a declaration of His determination never to allow sin to be trifled with! If His own Son is brought before Him, bearing the sin of others upon Him, He will hide His face from Him as well as from the actually guilty. In God infinite Love shines over all—but it does not eclipse His absolute Justice any more than His Justice is permitted to destroy His Love. God has

all perfections in Perfection and in Christ Jesus we see the reflection of them.

Beloved, this is a wonderful theme! Oh, that I had a tongue worthy of this subject! But who could ever reach the height of this great argument? Once more, when enquiring, “Why did Jesus suffer to be forsaken of the Father?” we see the fact that *the Captain of our salvation was thus made perfect through suffering*. Every part of the road has been traversed by our Lord’s own feet. Suppose, Beloved, the Lord Jesus had never been thus forsaken? Then one of His disciples might have been called to that sharp endurance and the Lord Jesus could not have sympathized with him in it.

He would turn to His Leader and Captain and say to Him, “Did You, my Lord, ever feel this darkness?” Then the Lord Jesus would answer, “No. This is a descent such as I never made.” What a dreadful lack would the tried one have felt! For the servant to bear a grief his Master never knew would be sad, indeed. There would have been a wound for which there was no ointment—a pain for which there was no balm. But it is not so now. “In all their affliction He was afflicted.” “He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Whereas we greatly rejoice at this time and as often as we are cast down, underneath us is the deep experience of our forsaken Lord.

I have done when I have said three things. The first is, you and I that are Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and are resting in Him alone for salvation, *let us lean hard*. Let us bear all our weight on our Lord. He will bear the full weight of all our sin and care. As to my sin, I hear its harsh accusations no more when I hear Jesus cry, “Why have You forsaken Me?” I know that I deserve the deepest Hell at the hand of God’s vengeance but I am not afraid! He will never forsake *me*, for He *forsook His Son on my behalf*. I shall not suffer for my sin, for Jesus has suffered to the full in my place—yes, suffered so far as to cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Behind this brazen wall of Substitution a sinner is safe! These “munitions of rock” guard all Believers and they may rest secure. The rock is cleft for me—I hide in its rifts and no harm can reach me. You have a full Atonement, a great Sacrifice, a glorious vindication of the Law—you can rest at peace, all you that put your trust in Jesus.

Next, if ever, from now on, in our lives we should think that God has deserted us, *let us learn from our Lord’s example how to behave ourselves*. If God has left you, do not shut up your Bible—no, open it as your Lord did—and find a text that will suit you. If God has left you, or you think so, do not give up prayer! No, pray as your Lord did and be more earnest than ever. If you think God has forsaken you, do not give up your faith in Him, but, like your Lord, cry, “My God, my God,” again and again! If you have had one anchor before, cast out two anchors now and double the hold of your faith. If you cannot call Jehovah, “Father,” as was Christ’s habit, yet call Him your “God.”

Let the personal pronouns take their hold—“My God, my God.” Let nothing drive you from your faith. Still hold on Jesus, sink or swim. As for me, if ever I am lost it shall be at the foot of the Cross! To this pass have I

come, that if I never see the face of God with acceptance, yet I will believe that He will be faithful to His Son and true to the Covenant sealed by oaths and blood. He that believes in Jesus has everlasting life—there I cling, like the limpet to the rock. There is but one gate of Heaven and even if I may not enter it, I will cling to the posts of its door! What am I saying? I shall enter in for that gate was never shut against a soul that accepted Jesus! And Jesus says, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

The last of the three points is this, *let us abhor the sin which brought such agony upon our Beloved Lord*. What an accursed thing is sin which crucified the Lord Jesus! Do you laugh at it? Will you go and spend an evening to see a mimic performance of it? Do you roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel and then come to God’s house on the Lord’s-Day morning and think to worship Him? Worship Him? Worship Him with sin indulged in your breast? Worship Him with sin loved and pampered in your life? O Sirs, if I had a dear brother who had been murdered, what would you think of me if I valued the knife which had been crimsoned with his blood—if I made a friend of the murderer and daily consorted with the assassin who drove the dagger into my brother’s heart?

Surely I, too, must be an accomplice in the crime! Sin murdered Christ—will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God—can you love it? Oh that there was an abyss as deep as Christ’s misery, that I might at once hurl this dagger of sin into its depths—where it might never be brought to light again! Begone, O Sin! You are banished from the heart where Jesus reigns! Begone, for you have crucified my Lord and made Him cry, “Why have You forsaken Me?”!

O my Hearers, if you did but know yourselves and know the love of Christ, you would each one vow that you would harbor sin no longer! You would be indignant at sin and cry—

***“The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol is, Lord,
I will tear it from its throne,
And worship only You.”***

May that be the issue of my morning’s discourse and then I shall be well content. The Lord bless you! May the Christ who suffered for you bless you, and out of His darkness may your light arise! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 22.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—313, 299, 22 (PART II).**

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THE SADDEST CRY FROM THE CROSS NO. 2803

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1902.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 7, 1877.*

*“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me.”
Matthew 27:46.*

DURING the time that “Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law,” he, “came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb,” and there he saw a strange sight—a bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed! Then Moses, apparently overtaken by curiosity, was drawing near in order to examine this phenomenon when he heard God’s voice say to him, “Draw not near here: take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where on you stand is holy ground.” We also may well feel, as we think of our Lord Jesus in His agony, that the voice of God speaks to us from the Cross and says, “Curiosity—bold, daring, prying intellect—draw not near here! Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place where on you stand is the very Holy of Holies unto which no man may come except as the Spirit of God shall conduct him.”

I think I can understand the words, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” as they are written by David in the 22nd Psalm, but the same words, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” when uttered by Jesus on the Cross, I cannot comprehend, so I shall not pretend to be able to explain them. There is no plummet that can fathom this deep! There is no eagle’s eye that can penetrate the mystery that surrounds this strange question! I have read that once upon a time Martin Luther sat down in his study to consider this text. Hour after hour, that mighty man of God sat still—and those who waited on him came into the room, again and again, and he was so absorbed in his meditation that they almost thought he was a corpse. He moved neither hand nor foot, and neither ate nor drank, but sat with his eyes wide open, like one in a trance, thinking over these wondrous words, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” And when, after many long hours, in which he seemed to be utterly lost to everything that went on around him, he rose from his chair, someone heard him say, “God forsaking God! No man can understand that!” And so he went his way. Though that is hardly the correct expression to use—I should hesitate to endorse it—yet I do not marvel that our text presented itself to the mind of Luther in that light. It is

said that he looked like a man who had been down a deep mine and who had come up again to the light. I feel more like one who has not been down the mine, but who has looked into it—or like one who has been part of the way down and shuddered as he passed through the murky darkness but who would not dare to go much lower, for this cry, “Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?” is a tremendous deep; no man will ever be able to fathom it.

So I am not going to try to explain it, but, first, *to utter some thoughts about it*. And then, secondly, *to draw some lessons from it*. We may find many practical uses for things which are beyond the grasp of our minds—and this saying of our Lord may be of great service to us even though we cannot comprehend it.

I. First, then, let me utter SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THIS STRANGE QUESTION—“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Jesus was accustomed to address God as His Father. If you turn to His many prayers, you will find Him almost invariably—if not invariably—speaking to God as His Father. And, truly, He stands in that relationship both as God and as Man. Yet, in this instance, He does not say, “Father,” but, “My God, My God.” Was it that He had any doubt about His Sonship? Assuredly not! Satan had assailed Him in the wilderness with the insinuation, “If You are the Son of God,” but Christ had put him to the rout—and I feel persuaded that Satan had not gained any advantage over Him, even on the Cross, which could have made Him doubt whether He was the Son of God or not.

I think that our Savior was then speaking as Man and that this is the reason why He cried, “My God, My God,” rather than, “My Father.” I think He must have been speaking as Man, as I can scarcely bring my mind to the point of conceiving that God the Son could say to God the Father, “My God, My God.” There is such a wonderful blending of the Human and the Divine in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ that, though it may not be absolutely accurate to ascribe to the Deity some things in the life of Christ, yet is He so completely God and Man that, often, Scripture does speak of things that must belong to the Humanity only as if they belonged to the Godhead. For instance, in his charge to the Ephesian elders, the Apostle Paul said, “Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood”—an incorrect expression, if judged according to the rule of the logician—but accurate enough according to the Scriptural method of using words in their proper sense. Yet I do think that we must draw a distinction between the Divinity and the Humanity here. As the Lord Jesus said, “My God, My God,” it was because it was His Humanity that was mainly to be considered just then.

And O my Brothers and Sisters, does it not show us *what a real Man the Christ of God was, that He could be forsaken of His God?* We might have supposed that Christ being Emmanuel—God With Us—the Godhead and the Manhood being indissolubly united in one Person, it would have been impossible for Him to be forsaken of God. We might also have inferred, for the same reason, that it would have been impossible for Him to have been scourged, spit upon and especially that it would not have

been possible for Him to die! Yet all these things were made not only possible, but also sacredly certain! In order to complete the redemption of His chosen people, it was necessary for Him to be both God's well-beloved Son and to be forsaken of His Father. He could truly say, as His saints also have sometimes had to say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Persecuted and forsaken Believer, behold your Brother in adversity! Behold the One who has gone wherever you may have to go, who has suffered more than you can ever suffer and who has taken His part in the direst calamity that ever happened to human nature so that He had to cry out, in the agony of His soul, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

What was this forsaking? We are trying to come a little closer to this burning yet unconsumed bush—with our shoes off our feet, I hope, all the while—and in this spirit we ask, "What was this forsaking?" A devout writer says that it was *horror at the sight of human misery*. He affirms what is quite true, that our Lord Jesus Christ saw all that man had to suffer because of sin—that He perceived the total sum of the miseries brought by sin upon all the past, present and future generations of the human race—and that He must have had a holy horror as He thought of all the woes of man, caused by sin, in this life and in that which is to come—and being completely one with man, He spoke in the name of man and said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That is all true, yet that explanation will not suffice, my Brothers and Sisters because our Savior did not say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken MAN?" but, "Why have You forsaken Me?" This forsaking was something *personal* to Himself.

Others have said that it was *a dreadful shrinking in His soul on account of human sin*. I have read of a child who had done wrong and whose father had faithfully rebuked and punished him. But the boy remained callous and sullen. He sat in the same room with his father, yet he refused to confess that he had done wrong. At last the father, under a sense of his child's great wickedness, burst into tears and sobbed and sighed. Then the boy came to his father and asked him why he sorrowed so, and he answered, "Because of my child's hardness of heart." It is true that our Lord Jesus Christ did feel as that father felt—only far more acutely—but our text cannot be fully explained by any such illustration as that. That would be only explaining it away, for Christ did not say, "My God, My God, why has man forsaken You, and why have You so completely left men in their sin?" No, His cry was, "Why have You forsaken Me?" It was not so much the God of man to whom He appealed, but, "*My God, My God.*" It was a *personal* grief that wrung from Him the *personal* cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" For this forsaking, by His Father in whom He trusted, related peculiarly to Himself.

What was this forsaking? *Was it physical weakness?* Some of you may know that when the body is in a low condition, the soul also sinks. Quite involuntarily, unhappiness of mind, depression of spirit and sorrow of heart will come upon you. You may be without any real reason for grief and yet may be among the most unhappy of men because, for the time,

your body has conquered your soul. But, my Brothers and Sisters, this explanation is not supposable in the case of Christ, for it was not many moments after this that He shouted, “with a loud voice,” His conquering cry, “It is finished,” and so passed from the conflict to His coronation! His brave spirit overcame His physical weakness and though He was brought into the dust of death,” and plunged into the deepest depths of depression of spirit, yet, still, the cry, “My God, My God,” which also was uttered, “with a loud voice,” proves that there was still a considerable amount of mental strength, notwithstanding His physical weakness, so that mere depression of spirit caused by physical reasons could not account for this agonizing cry.

And, certainly, my Brothers and Sisters, *this cry was not occasioned by unbelief*. You know that, sometimes, a child of God in sore trial and with many inward struggles, cries out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” when, all the while, the Lord has been remembering the tried soul and dealing graciously with it. As long ago as Isaiah’s day, “Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me.” But the Lord’s reply was, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hand.” Unbelief often makes us talk about God forgetting us when He does nothing of the kind, but our Lord Jesus Christ was a stranger to unbelief. It was impossible for Him to cherish any doubt about the faithfulness and loving kindness of His Father—so His cry did not arise from that cause.

And, another thing, *it did not arise from a mistake*. I have known Believers, in sore trouble, make great blunders concerning what God was doing with them. They have thought that He had forsaken them, for they misinterpreted certain signs and dealings of God, and they said, “All these things are against us. The hand of God has gone out against us to destroy us.” But Christ made no mistake about this matter, for God *had* forsaken Him. It was really so! When He said, “Why have You forsaken Me?” He spoke Infallible Truth of God and His mind was under no cloud whatever! He knew what He was saying and He was right in what He said, for His Father had forsaken Him for the time.

What, then, can this expression mean? *Does it mean that God did not love His Son?* O Beloved, let us, with the utmost detestation, fling away any suspicion of the kind that we may have harbored! God did forsake His Son but He loved Him as much when He forsook Him as at any other period. I even venture to say that if it had been possible for God’s love towards His Son to be increased, He would have delighted in Him more when He was standing as the suffering Representative of His chosen people than He had ever delighted in Him before. We do not indulge, for a single moment, the thought that God was angry with Him personally, or looked upon Him as unworthy of His love, or regarded Him as one upon whom He could not smile because of anything displeasing in Himself. Yet the fact remains that God had forsaken Him, for Christ was under no mistake about that matter. He rightly felt that His Father had withdrawn

the comfortable Light of His Countenance, that He had, for the time being, lost the sense of His Father's favor—not the favor, itself, but the consciousness of that Divine aid and succor which He had formerly enjoyed—so He felt Himself like a Man left all alone—and He was not only left all alone by His friends, but also by His God.

Can we at all imagine the state of mind in which our Lord was when He cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” No, that is not possible, yet I will try to help you to understand it. Can you imagine the misery of a lost soul in Hell—one who is forsaken of God and who cries, in bitterest agony, “God will never look upon me in mercy, or delight, or favor”—can you picture that sad state? Well, if you can, you will not, even then, have got anywhere near the position of Christ—because that soul in Hell does not want God's favor and does not seek it, or ask for it. That lost soul is so hardened in sin that it never troubles about whether God would receive it if it repented—the truth is that it does not want to repent! The misery that men will suffer in the world to come will be self-created misery arising out of the fact that they loved sin so much that they brought eternal sorrow upon themselves. It must be an awful thing for a soul, in the next world, to be without God, but, as far as its own consciousness is concerned, it will be so hardened that it will abide without God, yet not realizing all that it has lost because it is, itself, incapable of knowing the beauty of holiness and the perfection of the God from whom it is separated forever. Yet how different was the case of our Lord Jesus Christ when upon the Cross! He knew, as no mere man could ever know, what separation from God meant!

Think of a case of another kind. King Saul, when the witch of Endor brought up the spirit of Samuel, said to him, “God is departed from me, and answers me no more.” You recollect the state of mind that he was in when the evil spirit was upon him and he needed David's harp to charm it away. But at last, even *that* failed, and I know of no more unhappy character than Saul when God had departed from him. But, somehow, there was not the anguish in the soul of Saul that there would have been if he had ever really known the Lord. I do not think that he ever really did, in his inmost soul, know the Lord. After Samuel anointed him, he was “turned into another man,” but He never became a *new* man and the sense of God's Presence that he had was not, for a moment, comparable to that Presence of God which a true saint enjoys and which Christ always enjoyed, except when He was on the Cross. So, when Saul lost the consciousness of that Presence, he did not suffer so great a loss and, consequently, so great an anguish as afterwards happened to our Lord.

Coming nearer to our own circumstances, I remind you that there are some of God's people who do really love Him and who have walked in the Light of His Countenance, yet, for some reason or other, they have lost the comfortable enjoyment of God's love. If any of you, dear Friends, know what that sad experience is, you are getting a faint impression of the meaning of this cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!” Oh, what an anguish it is—what heart-break—to think that one is forsaken of God! I have heard of people dying of broken hearts, but I believe

that the man who has been made to utter this cry has gone as near to dying of a broken heart as anyone might well do without actually dying. To be without God is to be without life. And we who love Him, can say with Dr. Watts—

***“My God, my Life, my Love,
To You, to You I call!
I cannot live, if You remove,
For You are my All-in-All.”***

But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, you have not got the whole truth yet, *for no saint knows the Presence of God as Christ knew it.* No saint has, to the fullest, enjoyed the love of God as Christ enjoyed it and, consequently, if he does lose it, he only seems to lose the moonlight whereas Christ lost the sunlight when, for a time, the face of His Father was withdrawn from Him! Only think what must have been the anguish of the Savior, especially as contrasted with His former enjoyment. Never did any mere human being know so much and enjoy so much of the love of God as Christ had done. He had lived in it, basked in it—there had never been any interruption to it. “I do always those things that please Him,” He said, concerning His Father. And His Father twice said, concerning Him, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Now, as our Lord Jesus Christ had enjoyed the love of God to the very fullest, think what it must have been for Him to lose the conscious enjoyment of it. You know that you may go into a room and blow out the candle, but the blind people will not miss it. They miss the light most who have enjoyed it most—and Christ missed the Light of God’s Countenance most because He had enjoyed it most! Then, reflect upon His intense love to God. Jesus Christ—the Man Christ Jesus—loved God with all His heart, mind, soul and strength, as you and I have never yet been able to do. The love of Christ towards His Father was boundless. Well, then, for a frown to be upon His Father’s face, or for the Light of that Father’s face to be taken away from Him must have made it correspondingly dark and terrible to Him.

Remember, too, the absolute purity of Christ’s Nature. In Him there was no taint of sin, nor anything approaching to it. Now, holiness delights in God. God is the very sea in which holiness swims—the air which holiness breathes! Only think, then, of the perfectly Holy One, fully agreed with His Father in everything, finding out that the Father had, for good and sufficient reasons, turned His face away from Him! O Brothers and Sisters, in proportion as you are holy, the absence of the Light of God’s Countenance will be grief to you! And as Jesus was perfectly holy, it was the utmost anguish to Him to have to cry to His Father, “Why have You forsaken Me!”

After all, Beloved, the only solution of the mystery is this—*Jesus Christ was forsaken of God because we deserved to be forsaken of God.* He was there, on the Cross, in our place! And as the sinner, by reason of his sin deserves not to enjoy the favor of God, so Jesus Christ, standing in the place of the sinner and enduring that which would vindicate the justice of God, had to come under the cloud—as the sinner must have come if Christ had not taken his place. But, then, since He has come under it,

let us recollect that He was thus left of God that you and I, who believe in Him, might never be left of God. Since He, for a little while, was separated from His Father, we may boldly cry, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" And, with the Apostle Paul, we may confidently affirm that nothing in the whole universe "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Before I leave this point, let me say that *the Doctrine of Substitution is the key to all the sufferings of Christ*. I do not know how many theories have been invented to explain away the death of Christ. The modern doctrine of the apostles of "culture" is that Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in some way or other, was, in some degree or other, connected with our salvation. But it is my firm belief that every theory concerning the death of Christ which can only be understood by the highly-cultured, must be false. "That is strong language," says someone. Perhaps it is, but it is true. I am quite sure that the religion of Jesus Christ was never intended only for the highly-cultured, or even for them in particular. Christ's testimony concerning His own ministry was, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them," so if you bring me a Gospel which can only be understood by gentlemen who have passed through Oxford or Cambridge University, I know that it cannot be the Gospel of Christ! He meant the good news of salvation to be proclaimed to the poorest of the poor. In fact, the Gospel is intended for humanity in general, so, if you cannot make me understand it, or if, when I do understand it, it does not tell me how to deliver its message in such plain language that the poorest man can comprehend it, I tell you, Sirs, that your newfangled gospel is a lie! I will stick to the old one, which a man, only a little above an idiot in intellect, can understand! I cling to the old Gospel for this, among many other reasons, that all the modern gospels that leave out the great central Truth of Substitution, prevent the message from being of any use to the great mass of mankind.

If those other gospels which are not really gospels, please your taste and fancy, and suit the readers of Quarterly Reviews, and eloquent orators and lecturers, there are still the poor people in our streets and the millions of working men—the vast multitudes who cannot comprehend anything that is highly metaphysical—and you cannot convince me that our Lord Jesus Christ sent, as His message to the whole world, a metaphysical mystery that would need volume upon volume before it could even be stated! I am persuaded that He gave us a rough and ready Gospel like this—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Or this, "With His stripes we are healed." Or this, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." Or this, "He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." Do not try to go beyond this Gospel, Brothers and Sisters—you will get into the mud if you do! But it is safe standing here! And standing here, I can comprehend how our Lord Jesus took the sinner's place and, passing under the sentence which the sinner deserved, or under a sentence which was tantamount thereto, could cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

II. Now, in closing, I am going to draw A FEW LESSONS FROM THIS UTTERANCE OF CHRIST.

The first lesson is, *Behold how He loved us!* When Christ stood and wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews said, “Behold how He loved him!” But on the Cross He did not weep, He bled. And He not merely bled, He died and, before He died, His spirit sank within Him, for He was forsaken of His God. Was there ever any other love like this—that the Prince of Life and Glory should condescend to this shame and death?

Then, next, Brothers and Sisters, as He suffered so much for us, *let us be ready to suffer anything for His sake.* Let us be willing even to lose all the joy of religion if that would glorify God. I do not know that it would, but I think the Spirit of Christ ought to carry us even as far as Moses went when he pleaded for the guilty nation of Israel and was willing to have his own name blotted out of the Book of Life rather than that God’s name should be dishonored. We have never had to go as far as that and we never shall—yet let us be *willing* to part with our last penny, for Christ’s name’s sake, if He requires it. Let us be willing to lose our reputation. Ah, it is a difficult timing to give that up! Some of us, when we first came into public notice and found our words picked to pieces—and our character slandered—felt it rather difficult. We have got used to it, now, but it was very trying at first. But, oh, if one had to be called a devil—if one had to go through this world and to be spat upon by every passer-by—still, if it were endured for Christ’s sake, remembering how He was forsaken of God for us, we ought to take up even that cross with thankfulness that we were permitted to bear it!

Another lesson is that if ever you and I should feel that we are forsaken of God—if *we should get into this state in any way, remember that we are only where Christ has been before us.* If ever, in our direst extremity, we should be compelled to cry, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” we shall have gone down no deeper than Christ Himself went! He knows that feeling and that state of heart, for He has felt the same. This fact should tend greatly to cheer you. Your deep depression is not a proof of reprobation—that is evident, for Christ Himself endured even more! A man may say, “I cannot be a child of God, or else I should not feel as I do.” Ah, you do not know what true children of God may feel! Strange thoughts pass through their minds in times of storm and doubt. A Puritan preacher was standing by the deathbed of one of his members who had been for 30 years in gloom of soul. The good old minister expected that the man would get peace at last, for he had been an eminent Christian and had greatly rejoiced in his Savior—but, for 30 years or more, he had fallen into deep gloom. The minister was trying to speak a word of comfort to him, but the man said, “Ah, Sir! What can you say to a man who is dying and yet who feels that God has forsaken him?” The pastor replied, “But what became of that Man who died, whom God really did forsake? Where is HE now?” The dying man caught at that, and said, “He is in Glory and I shall be with Him! I shall be with Him where He is!”

And so the Light of God came to the dying man who had been so long in the dark! He saw that Christ had been just where he was and that he

should be where Christ was, even at the right hand of the Father! I hope, Brothers and Sisters, that you will never get down so low as that, but I beseech you, if you ever meet with any others who are there, do not be rough with them. Some strong-minded people are very apt to be hard upon nervous folk and to say, "They should not get into that state." And we are liable to speak harshly to people who are very depressed in spirit and say to them, "Really, you ought to rouse yourself out of such a state." I hope none of you will ever have such an experience of this depression of spirit as I have had—yet I have learned from it to be very tender with all fellow sufferers. The Lord have mercy on them and help them out of the Slough of Despond, for, if He does not, they will sink in deep mire where there is no standing.

I pray God specially to bless this inference from our text. *There is hope for you, Brother, or Sister, if you are in this condition.* Christ came through it and He will be with you in it! And, after all, you are not forsaken as He was, you can be sure of that. With you, the forsaking is only in the apprehension—that is bad enough—but it is not a matter of *fact*, for, "the Lord will not forsake His people," nor cast away even one of those whom He has chosen!

I will tell you what is a much more awful thing even than crying out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" If you are afraid that God has left you and the sweat stands on your brow in very terror—and if your soul seems to long for death rather than life—even in such a state as that, you are not in the worst possible condition! "Really," you ask, "is there anything worse than *that*?" Yes, I will tell you what is much worse than that—that is to be without God *and not to care about it*—to be living, like some whom I am now addressing, without God and without hope, yet that never concerns them at all! I can pity the agony of the man who cannot bear to be without his God, but, at the same time, I can bless the Lord that he feels such agony as that, for that proves to me that his soul will never perish!

But those, whom I look upon with fear and trembling are the men who make a profession of religion, yet who never have any communion with God and, all the while are quite happy about it. Or backsliders who have gone away from God and yet seem perfectly at ease. You worldlings who are quite satisfied with the things of this world and have no longings for the world that is to come—I wish you had got as far as to be unhappy. I wish you had got as far as to be in an agony, for that is the road to heavenly joy! It was thus that Christ won it for us and it is by such a path as this that many a soul is first led into the experience of His saving power. Brothers and Sisters, weep not for those of us who sometimes have to cry out in anguish of soul! Mourn not for us who are cast down because we cannot live without Christ. You see, our Lord has made us covet the highest blessings! Our heads have been so often on His bosom that if they are not always there, we keep on crying till we get back to that blessed position again! This is a sweet sorrow—may we have more and more of it! But, oh, I pray you, pity those who never ate the Bread of Heaven—never drank of the Water of Life—never knew the sweetness of

the kisses of Christ's mouth—and never knew what it was to have a Heaven begun below in the enjoyment of fellowship with Him! In such cases, your pity is indeed required.

I have finished when I have just said this—as you come to the Table of your Lord, come, Brothers and Sisters, with this cry of Christ ringing in your ears to make you love Him more than ever and, as you eat the bread and drink the wine, do it all out of fervent love to Him! And the Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 27:27-54.**

Verses 27-30. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall and gathered unto Him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand, and they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head.* These soldiers were men to whom the taking of human life was mere amusement, or, at best, a duty to be performed. If the ordinary Roman citizen found his greatest delight in the amphitheater where men fiercely fought with each other, and shed each other's blood, or were devoured by wild beasts, you may imagine what Roman soldiers—the roughest part of the whole population—would be like! And now that One was given up into their hands, charged with making Himself a king, you can conceive what a subject for jest it was to them and how they determined to make all the mockery they could of this pretended king! They were not touched by the gentleness of His demeanor, nor by His sorrowful Countenance, but they proceeded to pour all possible scorn and insult upon His devoted head. Surely the world never saw a more horrible scene than this—the King of Kings derided and made nothing of—treated as a mimic monarch by the very vilest and most brutal of men!

31. *And after that they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.* Their action, in restoring to Him His own seamless robe, was ordained by God—whatever their motive may have been—so that nobody might say that some other person had been substituted for the Savior. He went forth wearing that well-known garment which was woven from the top throughout, which He had always worn. And all who looked upon Him said, "It is He—the Nazarene. We know His face, His dress, His Person." There was no possibility of mistaking Him for anybody else.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear His Cross.* It was too heavy for Him to carry alone, so they bade Simon help Him and, truly, I think that Simon was thereby highly honored. If this was Simon, who is called Niger, then there may be some truth in the common belief that he was a black man and, assuredly, the Black race has long had to carry a very heavy Cross,

yet there may be a great destiny before it. All Christ's followers are called to be Cross-bearers—

***“Shall Simon bear the Cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone,
And there's a cross for me.”***

If we belong to Christ, we must be as willing to take up His Cross as He was to carry ours and die upon it.

33, 34. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say a place of a skull, they gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.* It was not because of its bitterness that our Lord refused it, for He did not decline to endure anything that would add to His grief. But this was a stupefying draught, a death potion, which was given to those who were executed, in order to somewhat mitigate their pains. But the Savior did not intend that His senses should be beclouded by any such draught as that, so, “when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink.”

35. *And they crucified Him.* A short sentence, but what an awful depth of meaning there is in it! “They crucified Him”—driving their iron bolts through His hands and feet, and lifting Him up to hang upon the gallows which was reserved for felons and for slaves. “They crucified Him.”

35. *And parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did you cast lots.* It was the executioners' perquisite to have the garments of the man they put to death, so, in order that no single portion of the shame of the Cross might be spared to the Savior, these soldiers divided His garments among them and raffled for His seamless robe. It must have taken a hard heart to gamble at the foot of the Cross, but I suppose that, of all sins under Heaven, there is none that does so harden the heart as gambling. Beware of it!

36. *And sitting down they watched Him there.* Some to gloat, in their fiendish malice, over His sufferings. Others to make sure that He did really die and, possibly, some few to pity Him in His agony. “Sitting down they watched Him there.”

37-44. *And set up over His head the accusation written against Him, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with Him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, You that destroy the Temple, and build it in three days, save Yourself. If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross. Likewise also the chief priest's mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth. So that, as He looked all around, He met with nothing but ribaldry, jest and scorn. His disciples had all forsaken Him. One or two of them afterwards rallied a little and came and stood by the Cross, but, just then, He looked and*

there was none to pity, and none to help Him, even as it had been foretold.

45. *Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.* From twelve o'clock at noon, according to the Roman and Jewish time, till three in the afternoon, there was a thick darkness—whether over all the world, or only over the land of Palestine, we cannot very well say. It was not an eclipse of the sun, it was a miracle especially worked by God. Some have supposed that dense clouds came rolling up obscuring everything, but, whatever it was, deep darkness came over all the land. Dore has, in his wonderful imagination, given us a sketch of Jerusalem during that darkness. The inhabitants are all trembling at what they had done and, as Judas goes down the street, they point at him as the man who sold his Master and brought all this evil upon the city. I should think that such darkness at mid-day must have made them fear that the last day had come, or that some great judgment would overtake them for their wicked slaughter of the innocent Jesus of Nazareth. Even the sun could no longer look upon its Maker surrounded by those who mocked Him—so it traveled on in tenfold night, as if in very shame that the great Sun of Righteousness should Himself be in such awful darkness.

46-48. *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani, that is to say, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This Man calls for Elijah. And straightway one of them ran and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. For He had also said, "I thirst," which John records, specially mentioning that He said this, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled."*

49-51. *The rest said, Let Him be, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him. Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. That rending of the great veil of the Temple was intended to symbolize the end of Judaism. The horror of the sanctuary that its Lord was put to death. The opening of the mysteries of Heaven. The clearing of the way of access between man and God.*

51. *And the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. Well says our poet—*
***"Of feeling, all things show some sign
 But this unfeeling heart of mine."***

52-54. *And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His Resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with Him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

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

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OUR LORD'S SOLEMN ENQUIRY NO. 3507

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 13, 1916.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 7, 1872.*

*"Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani? That is to say, My God,
My God, why have You forsaken Me?"
Matthew 27:46.*

IF any one of us, lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ, had been anywhere near the Cross when He uttered those words, I am sure our hearts would have burst with anguish—and one thing is certain—we would have heard the tones of that dying cry as long as we ever lived. There is no doubt that at certain times they would come to us again, ringing shrill and clear through the thick darkness. We would remember just how they were uttered and where the emphasis was placed. And I have no doubt we would turn that text over, and over, and over in our minds. But there is one thing, I think, we would never have done if we had heard it—therefore, I am not going to do it—we would never preach from it. It would have been too painful a recollection for us to ever have used it as a text. No, we would have said, "It is enough to hear it." Fully understand it, who can? And to expound it, since some measure of understanding might be necessary to the exposition—that surely were a futile attempt! We would have laid that by. We would have put those words away as too sacred, too solemn, except for silent reflection and quiet, reverent adoration. I felt when I read these words again, as I have often read them, that they seemed to say to me, "You cannot preach from us," and, on the other hand, felt as Moses did when he took off his shoes in the Presence of the burning bush, because the place where he stood was holy ground. Beloved, there is another reason why we should not venture to preach from this text, namely, that it is probably an expression out of the lowest depths of our Savior's sufferings. With Him into the seas of grief we can descend some part of the way, but when He comes where all God's waves and billows go over Him, we cannot go there! We may, indeed, drink of His cup and be baptized with His Baptism, but never to the full extent and, therefore, where our fellowship with Christ cannot conduct us to the full, though it may in a measure—we shall not venture—not beyond where our fellowship with Him would lead us aright, lest we blunder by speculation and "darken counsel by words without knowledge."

Moreover, it comes forcibly upon my mind that though every word here is emphatic, we would be pretty sure to put the emphasis somewhere or other, too little. I do not suppose we would be likely to put it anywhere too much. It has been well said that every word in this memorable cry deserves to have an emphasis laid upon it. If you read it, "My God, My God, why have *You* forsaken Me? I marvel not that My disciples should, but why have *You* gone, My Father God? How could *You* leave Me?" There is a wondrous meaning there. Then take it thus, "My God, My God, why have *You* forsaken Me? I know why *You* have smitten Me. I can understand why *You* chasten Me, but why have *You* forsaken Me? Will *You* allow Me no ray of love from the brightness of *Your* eyes—no sense of *Your* Presence whatever?" This was the wormwood and the gall of all the Savior's bitter cup. Then God forsook Him in His direst need. Or if you take it thus, "My God, My God, why have *You* forsaken *Me*?" there comes another meaning. "*Me*, Your Well-Beloved, Your eternal Well-Beloved, Your innocent, Your harmless, Your afflicted Son—why have *You* forsaken *Me*?" Then, indeed, it is a marvel of marvels not that God should forsake His saints, or appear to do so, or that He should utterly forsake sinners, but that He should forsake His only Son! Then, again, we might with great propriety throw the whole force of the verse upon the particle of interrogation, "Why." "My God, My God, *why*, ah, *why* have *You* forsaken *Me*? What is *Your* reason? What *Your* motive? What compels *You* to this, *You* Lord of Love? The sun is eclipsed, but why is the Son of *Your* love eclipsed? *You* have taken away the lives of men for sin, but why do *You* take away *Your* love, which is *My* life, from *Me* who has no sin? Why, oh why, do *You* act thus?"

Now, as I have said, every word requires more emphasis than I can throw into it, and some part of the text would be quite sure to be left and not dealt with as it should be. Therefore, we will not think of preaching upon it, but instead, thereof, we will sit down and commune with it.

You must know that the words of our text are not only the language of Christ, but they are the language of David. You who are acquainted with the Psalms know that the 22nd Psalm begins with just these words, so that David said what Jesus said—and I gather from this that many a child of God has had to say precisely what the Lord Jesus, the First-Born of the family, uttered upon the Cross. Now as God's children are brought into the same circumstances as Christ, and Christ is considered the Exemplar, my objective tonight will be simply this—not to expound the words, but to say to Believers who come into a similar plight—Do as Jesus did! If you come into His condition, lift up your hearts to God, that you may act as He did in that condition! So we shall make the Savior now not a study for our learning, but an example for reproduction! The first one of these points in which, I think, we should imitate Him is this—

I. UNDER DESERTION OF SOUL, THE LORD JESUS STILL TURNS TO GOD.

At that time when He uttered these words, God had left Him to His enemies. No angel appeared to interpose and destroy the power of Roman or Jew. He seemed utterly given up. The people might mock Him and they might put Him to what pain they pleased. At the same time, a sense of God's love to Him as Man was taken from Him. The comfortable Presence of God, which had all His life long sustained Him, began to withdraw from Him in the garden and appeared to be quite gone when He was just in the article of death upon the Cross! And meanwhile the waves of God's wrath on account of sin began to break over His spirit and He was in the condition of a soul deserted by God. Now sometimes Believers come into the same condition, not to the same extent, but in a measure. Yesterday they were full of joy, for the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, but today that sense of love is gone. They droop. They feel heavy. Now the temptation will be at such times for them to sit down and look into their own hearts. And if they do, they will grow more wretched every moment, until they will come well near to despair, for there is no comfort to be found within, when there is no light from above! Our signs and tokens within are like sundials. We can tell what time it is by the sundial when the sun shines, but if it does not, what is the use of the sundial? And so, marks of evidence may help us when God's love is shed abroad in the soul, but when that is done, marks of evidence stand us in very little stead. Now observe our Lord. He is deserted of God, but instead of looking in, and saying, "My Soul, why are You this? Why are You that? Why are You cast down? Why do You mourn?" He looks straight away from that dried-up well that is within, to those eternal waters that never can be stayed, and which are always full of refreshment. He cries, "My God." He knows which way to look, and I say to every Christian here, it is a temptation of the devil, when you are desponding and when you are not enjoying your religion as you did, to begin peering and searching about in the dunghill of your own corruptions and stirring over all that you are feeling, and all you ought to feel, and all you do not feel, and all that. Instead of that look from within, look above! Look to your God, again, for the light will come from Him!

And you will notice that *our Lord did not at this time look to any of His friends*. In the beginning of His sufferings He appeared to seek consolation from His disciples, but He found them sleeping for sorrow. Therefore, on this occasion He did not look to them in any measure. He had lost the Light of God's Countenance, but He does not look down in the darkness and say, "John, dear faithful John, are you there? Have you not a word for Him whose bosom was a pillow for your head? Mother Mary, are you there? Can you not say one soft word to your dying Son to let Him know there is still a heart that does not forget Him?" No, Beloved,

our Lord did not look to the *creature*. Man as He was, and we must regard Him as such in uttering this cry, yet He does not look to friend or brother, helper or human arm. But though God is angry, as it were, yet He cries, "My God." Oh, it is the only cry that befits a Believer's lips! Even if God seems to forsake you, keep on crying to Him! Do not begin to look in a pet and a jealous humor to creatures, but look to your God! Depend upon it, He will come to you sooner or later. He cannot fail you. He must help you. Like a child, if its mother strikes it, still, if it is in pain, it cries for its mother—it knows her love, it knows its deep need of her—and that she, alone, can supply its need. Oh, Beloved, do the same! Is there one in this house who has lately lost his comforts and Satan has said, "Don't pray"? Beloved, pray more than ever you did! If the devil says, "God is angry—what is the use of praying to Him?" He might have said the same to Christ—"Why do You pray to One who forsakes You?" But Christ did pray, "My God" still, though He says, "Why do You forsake Me?" Perhaps Satan tells you not to read the Bible again. It has not comforted you of late—the promises have not come to your soul. Dear Brother, Sister, read and read more—read twice as much as you ever did! Do not think that, because there is no light coming to you, the wisest way is to get away from the light! No, stay where the light is! And perhaps Satan even says to you, "Don't attend the House of God, again. Don't go to the Communion Table. Why, surely you won't wish to commune with God when He hides His face from you!" I say the words of wisdom, for I speak according to the example of Christ—come still to your God in private and in public worship, and come still, dear Brothers and Sisters, to the Table of fellowship with Jesus, saying, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him, for I have none else to trust. And though He hides His face from me, yet will I cry after Him, and my cry shall not be, "My friends," but, "My God!" And my eyes shall not look to my soul, my friends, or my feelings, but I will look to my God and to Him, alone! That is the first lesson, not an easy one to learn, mark you—easier to *hear* than you will find it to *practice*, but "the Spirit helps our infirmities." The second lesson is this—observe that—

II. THOUGH UNDER A SENSE OF DESERTION, OUR MASTER DOES NOT RELAX HIS HOLD OF HIS GOD.

Observe it, "*My God*"—it is one hand He grips Him with. "*My God*"—it is the other hand He grasps Him with. Both united in the cry, "My God." He believes that God is still His God! He uses the possessive particle twice, "*My God, My God.*"

Now it is easy to believe that God is ours when He smiles upon us and when we have the sweet fellowship of His love in our hearts—but the point for faith to attend to is to hold to God when He gives hard words, when His Providence frowns upon you—and when even His Spirit seems to be withdrawn from you! Oh, let go of everything, but do not let go of

your God! If the ship is tossed and ready to sink, and the tempest rages exceedingly, cast out the ingots, let the gold go! Throw out the wheat, as Paul's companions did! Let even necessities go, but oh, always hold to your God! Give not up your God! Still say, notwithstanding all, "In the teeth of all my feelings, doubts and suspicions, I hold Him yet. He is my God—by His Grace I will not let Him go."

You know that in the text our Lord calls God in the original, His "Strong One"—"Eli, Eli"—"My Strong One, My Mighty One." So let the Christian, when God turns away the brightness of His Presence, still believe that all his strength lies in God and that, moreover, God's power is on his side! Though it seems to crush him, yet faith says, "It is a power that will not crush me! If he smites me, what will I do? I will lay hold upon His arm and He will put strength in me! I will deal with God as Jacob did with the angel. If He wrestles with me, I will borrow strength from Him and I will wrestle with Him until I get the blessing from Him." Beloved, we must neither let go of God, nor let go of our sense of His power to save us! We must hold to our possession of Him and hold to the belief that He is worth possessing, that He is God, All-Sufficient, and that He is still our God.

Now I would like to put this personally to any tried child of God here. Are you going to let go of your God because you have lost His smile? Then I ask you, Did you base your faith upon His smile? For if you did, you mistook the true ground of faith! The ground of a Believer's confidence is not God's smile, but God's promises! It is not His temporary sunshine of His love, but His deep eternal love, itself, as it reveals itself in the Covenant and in the promises. Now the present smile of God may leave you, but God's promises do not—and if you believe upon God's promises, they are just as true when God frowns as when He smiles! If you are resting upon the Covenant, that Covenant is as true in the dark as in the light. It stands as good when your soul is without a single gleam of consolation as when your heart is flooded with sacred bliss. Oh, come, then, to this—the promises are as good as ever! Christ is the same as ever! His blood is as great a plea as ever and the oath of God is as Immutable as ever! We must get away from all building upon our apprehensions of God's love. It is the love, itself, we must build on—not on our enjoyment of His Presence, but on His faithfulness and on His truth. Therefore, be not cast down, but still call Him, "My God."

Moreover, I may put it to you, if, because God frowns, you give Him up, what else do you mean to do? Why, is it not better to trust in an angry God than not to trust in God at all? Suppose you leave off the walk of faith, what will you do? The carnal man never knew what faith was and, therefore, gets on pretty fairly in his own blind, dead way. But you have been quickened and made alive—enlightened! And if you give up your faith, what is to become of you? Oh, hold to Him then—

***“For if your eye of faith is dim,
Still hold on to Jesus, sink or swim!
Still at His footstool bow the knee
And Israel’s God your strength shall be.”***

Don't give Him up!

Moreover, if your faith gives up her God because He frowns, what sort of a faith was it? Can you not believe in a frowning God? What? Have you a friend who did, the other day, but give you a rough word, and you said, “At one time I could die for that man!” But because he gives you one rough word, are you going to give him up? Is this your kindness to your friends? Is this your confidence in your God? But how Job played the man! Did he turn against his God when He took away his comforts? No! He said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.” And do you not remember how he put it best of all when he said, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him”? Yes, if your faith is only a fair weather faith. If you can only walk with God when He sandals you in silver, and smoothes the path beneath your feet, what faith is this? Where did you get it? The faith that can foot it with the Lord through Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace of fire and that can go walking with Him through the valley of the shadow of death—this is the faith to be had and sought after! May God grant it to us, for that was the faith that was in the heart of Christ when forsaken of God. He yet says, “My God.”

We have learned two lessons. Now that we have learned them—(we have gone over them, but have we learned them?)—may we practice them and turn to God in ill times, and not relinquish our hold. The third lesson is this—

III. ALTHOUGH OUR LORD UTTERED THIS DEEP AND BITTER CRY OF PAIN, YET LEARN FROM HIS SILENCE.

He never uttered a single syllable of murmuring, or brought any accusation against His God. “My God, why have You forsaken Me?” There! Look at those words. Can you see any blots in them? I cannot. They are crystallized sorrow, but there is no defilement of sin. It was just (I was about to say) what an angel could have said, if he could have suffered. It is what the Son of God did say when He was suffering—He who was purer than angels! Listen to Job, and we must not condemn Job, for we could not have been half as good as he, I daresay, but he does let his spirit utter itself, sometimes, in bitterness. He curses the day of his birth and so on. But the Lord Jesus does not do that. There is not a syllable about “cursed be the day in which I was born in Bethlehem, and in which I came among such a rebellious race as this”—no, not a word, not a word! And even the best of men, when in sorrow, have at least wished that things were not just so. David, when he had lost Absalom, wished that he had died instead of Absalom. But Christ does not appear to want things altered. He does not say, “Lord, this is a mistake. Would God I had died by the hands of Herod when He sought My life, or had perished

when they tried to throw Me down the hill of Capernaum!" No! Nothing of the kind. There is grief, but there is no complaining. There is sorrow, but there is no rebellion. Now this is the point, Beloved, I want to bring to you. If you should extremely suffer and it should ever come to that terrible pinch that even God's Love and the enjoyment of it appears to be gone, put your finger to your lips and keep it there! "I was dumb with silence. I opened not My mouth because You did it." Believe that He is still a good God! Know that assuredly He is working for your good, even now, and let not a syllable escape you by way of murmuring, or if it does, repent of it and recall it! You have a right to speak to God, but not to murmur against Him, and if you would be like your Lord, you would say just this, "Why have you forsaken me?" But you will say no more and there you will leave it. And if there comes no answer to your question, you will be content to be without an answer!

Now again, I say, this is a lesson I can teach, but I do not know if I can practice it—and I do not know that you can. Only, again, "the Spirit helps our infirmities," and He will enable us when we come to, "lama Sabachthani," to come so far, but not to go farther—to stop there with our Lord! The fourth lesson which, I think, we should learn is this—

IV. OUR LORD, WHEN HE DOES CRY, CRIES WITH THE INQUIRING VOICE OF A LOVING CHILD.

"My God, *why*, ah, why have You forsaken Me?" He asks a question not in curiosity, but in love. Loving, sorrowful complaints He brings. "*Why*, My God? Why? Why?" Now this is a lesson to us, because we ought to endeavor to find out why it is that God hides Himself from us. No Christian ought to be content to live without full assurance of faith. No Believer ought to be satisfied to live a moment without knowing to a certainty that Christ is His! And if he does not know it, and assurance is gone, what ought he to do? Why, he should never be content until he has gone to God with the question, "Why have I not this assurance? Why have I not Your Presence? Why is it that I cannot live once as I did in the light of Your Countenance?" And, Beloved, the answer to this question in our case will sometimes be, "I have forsaken you, My child, because you have forsaken Me. You have grown cold of heart by slow degrees. Gray hairs have come upon you, and you did not know. And I have made you know it to make you see your backsliding and sorrowfully repent of it." Sometimes the answer will be, "My child, I have forsaken you because you have set up an idol in your heart. You love your child too much, your gold too much, your trade too much. And I will not come into your soul unless I am your Lord, your Love, your Bridegroom and your All." Oh, we shall be glad to know these answers, because the moment we know them our heart will say—

***"The dearest idol I have known,
Whatever that idol be,
Help me to tear it from its throne,***

And worship only Thee.

Sometimes the Lord's answer will be, "My child, I have gone from you for a little to try you, to see if you love Me." A true lover will love on under frowns. It is only the superficial professor that needs sweetmeats every day, and only loves his God for what he gets out of Him! But the genuine Believer loves Him when He smites him, when He bruises him with the bruises of a cruel one! Why then, we will say, "O God, if this is why You forsake us, we will love You still, and prove to You that Your Grace has made our souls to hunger and thirst for You." Depend upon it, the best way to get away from trouble, or to get great help under it, is to run close in to God! In one of Quarles's poems, he has the picture of a man striking another with a great flail. Now the further off the other is, the heavier it strikes him. So the man whom God is smiting runs close in and he cannot be hurt at all! O my God, my God, when away from You, affliction stuns me, but I will close with You, and then even my affliction I will take to be a cause of glory, and glory in tribulations, also, so that Your blast shall not sorely wound my spirit!

Well, I leave this point with the very same remark I made before. To cry to God with the enquiry of a child is the fourth lesson of the text. Oh, learn it well! Practice it when you are in much trouble. If you are in such a condition at this time, practice it now, and in the pew say, "Show me why You contend with me. Search me and try me, and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Now the fifth observation is one to be treasured up—

V. THAT OUR LORD, THOUGH HE WAS FORSAKEN OF GOD, STILL PURSUED HIS FATHER'S WORK—the work He came to do. "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But, mark you, He does not leave the Cross! He does not unloose the nails as He might have done with His will. He did not leap down amidst the assembled mockers and scorn them in return, and chase them far away! He kept on bleeding, suffering, even until He could say, "It is finished," and He did not give up the ghost till it was finished.

Now, Beloved, I find it, and I daresay you do, a very easy and pleasant thing to go on serving God when I have got a full sense of His love and Christ shining in my face—when every text brings joy to my heart and when I see souls converted—and know that God is going with the Word to bless it. That is very easy! But to keep on serving God when you get nothing for it but blows—when there is no success and when your own heart is in deep darkness of spirit—I know the temptation! Perhaps you are under it. Because you have not the joy you once had. You say, "I must give up preaching. I must give up that Sunday school. If I have not the light of God's Countenance, how can I do it? I must give it up." Beloved, you must do no such thing! Suppose there were a loyal subject in a nation and he had done something or other which grieved the king,

and the king, on a certain day, turned his face from him? Do you think that loyal subject would go away and neglect his duty because the king frowned? No, I think he would say to himself, "I do not know why the king seems to deal harshly with me. He is a good king and I know he is good. If he does not see any good in me, I will work for him more than ever! I will prove to him that my loyalty does not depend upon his smiles. I am his loyal subject, and will still stand to him." What would you say to your child if you had to chasten him for doing wrong and if he were to go away and say, "I shall not attend to the errand that Father has sent me upon, and I shall do no more in the house that Father has commanded me to do because Father has beaten me this morning"? Ah, what a disobedient child! If the scourging had its fit effect upon him, he would say, "I will wrong you no more, Father, lest you smite me again." So let it be with us!

Besides, should not our gratitude compel us to go on working for God? Has not He saved us from Hell? Then we may say, with the old heathen, "Strike, so long as You forgive!" Yes, if God forgives, He may strike if He will! Suppose a judge should forgive a malefactor condemned to die, but he should say to him, "Though you are not to be executed as you deserve, yet, for all that, you must be put in prison for some years"? He would say, "Ah, my Lord, I will take this lesser chastisement, so long as my life is saved." And oh, if our God has saved us from going down to the Pit by putting His own Son to death on our behalf, we will love Him for that if we never have anything more! If, between here and Heaven, we should have to say, like the elder brother, "You never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends," we will love Him, still! And if He never does anything to us between here and Glory but lay us on a sick bed, and torture us there, yet we will still praise and bless Him, for He has saved us from going down to the Pit! Therefore we will love Him as long as we live! Oh, if you think of God as you ought to, you will not be at ups and downs with Him, but you will serve Him with all your heart, soul and might, whether you are enjoying the light of His Countenance or not! Now to close. Our Lord is an Example for us in one other matter. He is to us our type of what shall happen to us, for whereas He said, "Why have You forsaken Me?"—

VI. HE HAS RECEIVED A GLORIOUS ANSWER!

And so shall every man that, in the same spirit in the hour of darkness, asks the same question! Our Lord died. No answer had He to the question, but the question went on ringing through earth, and Heaven, and Hell! Three days He slept in the grave and after a while He went into Heaven, and my imagination, I think, may be allowed if I say that as He entered there the echo of His words, "Why have You forsaken Me?" just died away, and then the Father gave Him the practical answer to the question—for there, all along the golden streets, stood white-robed

bands, all of them singing their Redeemer's praise! All of them chanting the name of Jehovah and the Lamb—and this was a part of the answer to His question! God had forsaken Christ that these chosen spirits might live through Him! They were the reward for the travail of His soul! They were the answer to His question! And ever since then, between Heaven and earth, there has been constant commerce. If your eyes were opened that you could see, you would perceive in the sky not falling stars, shooting downwards, but stars rising upward from England, many every hour from America, from all countries where the Gospel is believed and from heathen lands where the Truth of God is preached and God is acknowledged, for you would see every now and then down on earth a dying bed, but upwards through the skies, mounting among the stars, another spirit shot upward to complete the constellations of the glorified! And as these bright ones, all redeemed by His sufferings, enter Heaven, they bring to Christ fresh answers to that question, "Why have You forsaken Me?" And if stooping from His Throne in Glory, the Prince of Life takes view of the sons of men who are lingering here, even in this present assembly, He will see tonight a vast number of us met together around this Table—I hope the most, if not all of us, are redeemed by His blood and rejoicing in His salvation! And the Father points down tonight to this Tabernacle, and to thousands of similar scenes where Believers cluster around the Table of fellowship with their Lord, and He seems to say to the Savior, "There is My answer to Your question, 'Why have You forsaken Me?'"

Now, Beloved, we shall have an answer to our question something like that. When we get to Heaven, perhaps not until then, God will tell us why He forsook us. When I tossed upon my bed three months ago in weary pain that robbed me of my night's rest and my day's rest, too, I asked why it was I was there, but I have realized since the reason, for God helped me afterwards so to preach that many souls were gathered in. Often you will find that God deserts you that He may be with you after a nobler sort—hides the light, that afterwards the light of seven suns at once may break in upon your spirit—and there you shall learn that it was for His Glory that He left you, for His Glory that He tried your faith! Only mind you stand to that! Still cry to Him, and still call Him God, and never complain, but ask Him why, and still pursue His work under all difficulties—and so being like Christ on earth, you shall be like Christ above, as to the answer!

I cannot sit down without saying just this word. God will never forsake His people forever. But as many of you as are not His people, if you have not believed in Him, He will forsake you forever, and forever, and forever! And if you ask, "Why have You forsaken me?" you will get your answer in the echo of *your words*, "You have forsaken Me." "How shall you escape if

you neglect so great a salvation?" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."—

***“But if your ears refuse
The language of His Grace,
And hearts grow hard like stubborn Jews,
That unbelieving race.
The Lord in vengeance
Shall lift His hand and swear,
‘You that despised My promised rest
Shall have no portion there.’”***

God grant it may never be so with you, for Christ's sake. Amen

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
LUKE 23:1-16.**

Verse 1. *And the whole multitude of them arose, and led Him to Pilate.* Our Lord had been taken to the tribunal of Annas and of Caiaphas, and now the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. The first two tribunals were ecclesiastical and religious. There they charged Him with crimes against the Law of God. Now they take Him to Pilate and bring accusations against Him concerning Caesar and the Roman Government. “The whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate.”

2. *And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this Fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He, Himself is Christ, a King.* A wily charge. It was the duty of the ruler of the province to protect the province from any rebellion against Caesar, so they put it, “He perverts the nation, forbids to give tribute to Caesar.”

3. *And Pilate asked Him, saying, Are you the King of the Jews?* It must have seemed a strange question to himself, as he saw the poor emaciated form of Jesus of Nazareth standing before him. “Are You the King of the Jews?”

3. *And He answered him and said, You say—“It is even so.”*

4. *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this Man.* He took Him aside and conversed with Him, and perceived that His Kingdom was not of a kind that would interfere with Caesar. As he looked at Him, he found that it was not a matter which really could concern the great Roman Empire! It was in no danger from Him. Pilate said to the chief priests and the people, “I find no fault in this Man.”

5. *But they were the more fierce, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.* He caught at that.

6, 7. *When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction—For Herod was ruler of Galilee.*

7. *He sent Him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.* By which he answered two purposes. First, he would get out of the scrape, himself, and secondly, he would compliment Herod by acknowledging that, as the Man was a Galilean, He was under Herod's jurisdiction. What devices men have to escape from responsibility! This vacillating Pilate knew the right, and did it not. He would be very glad to avoid coming to any decision about it at all.

8, 9. *And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he was desirous to see Him for a long time because he had heard many things of Him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him in many words; but He answered him nothing.* Now was Christ the Lamb—the sheep before her shearers who is dumb. He did answer Pilate a little. There was a little that was good about Pilate, vacillating as he was, but Herod had not a trace of anything upon him upon which the good seed could possibly take root—so Jesus answered him nothing.

10, 11. *And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. And Herod, with his men of war, set Him at nothing, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate.* This robe was probably white, sparkling, splendid. It tended to mock Him. It set the example to Pilate and his men to clothe Him in a scarlet robe, and mock Him yet more. There is a contagiousness about an evil example!

12. *And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.* Behold how sinners will agree when Christ is to be slaughtered! They shake hands together when He is to die!

13-16. *And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, You have brought this Man to me, as one who perverts the people and, behold, I having examined Him before you, and have found no fault in this Man touching those things of which you accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him.* What duplicity! If He is innocent, release Him, but do not scourge Him! If He is guilty, crucify Him, but do not talk about releasing Him! When men are wrong at heart, when they come to a resolution, it is self-contradictory. There is nothing more inconsistent than sin. It is an image whose head may be of gold, but the feet are always of clay. You cannot make sin hang together, and the verdict of one who is undecided and has two minds is always a very vicious one. "I will chastise Him and release Him."

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

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

THE RENT VEIL

NO. 2015

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 25, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***“Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom.”
Matthew 27:50-51.***

***“Having therefore, Brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.”
Hebrews 10:19-20.***

THE DEATH of our Lord Jesus Christ was fitly surrounded by miracles. Yet it is itself so much greater a wonder than all besides that it as far exceeds them as the sun outshines the planets which surround it. It seems natural enough that the earth should quake, that tombs should be opened and that the veil of the temple should be rent, when who He only has immortality gives up the ghost. The more you think of the death of the Son of God, the more will you be amazed at it. As much as a miracle excels a common fact, so does this wonders of wonders rise above all miracles of power. That the Divine Lord, even though veiled in mortal flesh, should condescend to be subject to the power of death so as to bow His head on the Cross and submit to be laid in the tomb is among mysteries the greatest. The death of Jesus is the marvel of time and eternity, which, as Aaron's rod swallowed up all the rest, takes up into itself all lesser marvels.

Yet the rending of the veil of the temple is not a miracle to be lightly passed over. It was made of “fine twined linen, with Cherubims of cunning work.” This gives the idea of a substantial fabric, a piece of lasting tapestry, which would have endured the severest strain. No human hands could have torn that sacred covering. And it could not have been divided in the midst by any accidental cause. Yet, strange to say, on the instant when the holy Person of Jesus was rent by death, the great veil which concealed the holiest of all was “rent in two from the top to the bottom.” What did it mean? It meant much more than I can tell you now.

It is not fanciful to regard it as a solemn act of mourning on the part of the House of the Lord. In the East, men express their sorrow by rending their garments. And the temple, when it beheld its Master die, seemed struck with horror and rent its veil. Shocked at the sin of man, indignant at the murder of its Lord, in its sympathy with Him who is the true Temple of God, the outward symbol tore its holy vestment from the top to the bottom. Did not the miracle also mean that from that hour the whole system of types and shadows and ceremonies had come to an end? The ordinances of an earthly priesthood were rent with that veil.

In token of the death of the ceremonial Law, the soul of it quit its sacred shrine and left its bodily tabernacle as a dead thing. The legal dispensation is over. The rent of the veil seemed to say—"Henceforth God dwells no longer in the thick darkness of the Holy of Holies and shines forth no longer from between the cherubim. The special enclosure is broken up and there is no inner sanctuary for the earthly high priest to enter—typical atonements and sacrifices are at an end."

According to the explanation given in our second text, the rending of the veil chiefly meant that the way into the holiest, which was not before made manifest, was now laid open to all Believers. Once in the year the high priest solemnly lifted a corner of this veil with fear and trembling and with blood and holy incense he passed into the immediate Presence of Jehovah. But the tearing of the veil laid open the secret place. The rent from top to bottom gives ample space for all to enter who are called of God's Divine Grace, to approach the Throne and to commune with the Eternal One. Upon that subject I shall try to speak this morning, praying in my inmost soul that you and I, with all other Believers, may have boldness actually to enter into that which is within the veil at this time of our assembling for worship. Oh, that the Spirit of God would lead us into the nearest fellowship which mortal men can have with the Infinite Jehovah!

First, this morning, I shall ask you to consider what has been done. The veil has been rent. Secondly, we will remember what we therefore have—we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Then, thirdly, we will consider how we exercise this Divine Grace—we "enter by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh."

I. First, think of WHAT HAS BEEN DONE. In actual historical fact, the glorious veil of the temple has been rent in two from the top to the bottom. As a matter of *spiritual* fact, which is far more important to us, the separating legal ordinance is abolished. There was under the Law this ordinance—that no man should ever go into the holiest of all, with the one exception of the high priest and he but once in the year and not without blood. If any man had attempted to enter there he must have died—guilty of great presumption and of profane intrusion into the secret place of the Most High. Who could stand in the presence of Him who is a consuming fire?

This ordinance of distance runs all through the Law. For even the holy place, which was the vestibule of the Holy of Holies, was for the priests, alone. The place of the people was one of distance. At the very first institution of the Law—when God descended upon Sinai, the ordinance was—"You shall set bounds unto the people round about." There was no invitation to draw near. Not that they desired to do so, for the mountain was together on a smoke and "even Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." "The Lord said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze and many of them perish."

If so much as a beast touch the mountain it must be stoned or thrust through with a dart. The spirit of the old Law was reverent distance. Moses, and here and there a man chosen by God, might come near to Je-

hovah. But as for the bulk of the people, the command was, "Draw not near here." When the Lord revealed His glory at the giving of the Law, we read—"When the people saw it, they removed and stood afar off." All this is ended. The precept to keep back is abrogated and the invitation is, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden." "Let us draw near" is now the filial spirit of the Gospel. How thankful I am for this! What a joy it is to my soul! Some of God's people have not yet realized this gracious fact, for still they worship afar off.

Very much of prayer is to be highly commended for its reverence—but it has in it a lack of childlike confidence. I can admire the solemn and stately language of worship which recognizes the greatness of God. But it will not warm my heart nor express my soul until it has also blended with the joyful nearness of that perfect love which casts out fear and ventures to speak with our Father in Heaven as a child speaks with its father on earth. My Brothers and Sisters, no veil remains. Why do you stand afar off, and tremble like a slave? Draw near with full assurance of faith. The veil is rent—access is free.

Come boldly to the Throne of Grace. Jesus has made you near, as near to God as even He Himself is. Though we speak of the holiest of all, even the secret place of the Most High, yet it is of this place of awe, even of this sanctuary of Jehovah, that the veil is rent. Therefore, let nothing hinder your entrance. Assuredly no Law forbids you. But infinite love invites you to draw near to God.

This rending of the veil signified, also, the removal of the separating sin. Sin is, after all, the great divider between God and man. That veil of blue and purple and fine twined linen could not really separate man from God—for He is, as to His omnipresence—not far from any of us. Sin is a far more effectual wall of separation—it opens an abyss between the sinner and his Judge. Sin shuts out prayer and praise and every form of religious exercise. Sin makes God walk contrary to us because we walk contrary to Him. Sin, by separating the soul from God, causes spiritual death which is both the effect and the penalty of transgression. How can two walk together except they be agreed? How can a holy God have fellowship with unholy creatures? Shall justice dwell with injustice? Shall perfect purity abide with the abominations of evil? No, it cannot be.

Our Lord Jesus Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He takes away the sin of the world and so the veil is rent. By the shedding of His most precious blood we are cleansed from all sin and that most gracious promise of the New Covenant is fulfilled—"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." When sin is gone, the barrier is broken down, the unfathomable gulf is filled. Pardon, which removes sin and justification, which brings righteousness, makes up a deed of clearance so real and so complete that nothing now divides the sinner from his reconciled God. The Judge is now the Father—He who once must necessarily have condemned, is found justly absolving and accepting. In this double sense the veil is rent—the separating ordinance is abrogated and the separating sin is forgiven.

Next, be it remembered that the separating sinfulness is also taken away through our Lord Jesus. It is not only what we have done, but what we *are*, that keeps us apart from God. We have sin engrained in us—even those who have Divine Grace dwelling in them have to complain, “When I would do good, evil is present with me.” How can we commune with God with our eyes blinded, our ears stopped, our hearts hardened and our senses deadened by sin? Our whole nature is tainted, poisoned, perverted by evil—how can we know the Lord? Beloved, through the death of our Lord Jesus the Covenant of Grace is established with us and its gracious provisions are on this wise—“This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put My laws into their mind and write them in their hearts.”

When this is the case, when the will of God is inscribed on the heart and the nature is entirely changed, then is the dividing veil which hides us from God taken away—“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Blessed are all they that love righteousness and follow after it, for they are in a way in which the Righteous One can walk in fellowship with them. Spirits that are like God are not divided from God. Difference of nature hangs up a veil. But the new birth and the sanctification which follows upon it, through the precious death of Jesus, remove that veil. He that hates sin strives after holiness, and labors to perfect it in the fear of God is in fellowship with God.

It is a blessed thing when we love what God loves, when we seek what God seeks, when we are in sympathy with Divine aims and are obedient to Divine commands—for with such persons will the Lord dwell. When Divine Grace makes us partakers of the Divine nature then are we at one with the Lord and the veil is taken away.

“Yes,” says one, “I see, now, how the veil is taken away in three different fashions. But still God is God and we are but poor puny men—between God and man there must of necessity be a separating veil caused by the great disparity between the Creator and the creature. How can the finite and the Infinite commune? God is All in All and more than all. We are nothing and less than nothing—how can we meet?” When the Lord does come near to His favored ones, they own how incapable they are of enduring the excessive glory. Even the Beloved John said, “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.”

When we have been especially conscious of the Presence and working of our Lord, we have felt our flesh creep and our blood chill. And then we have understood what Jacob meant when he said, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven.” All this is true. For the Lord says, “You cannot see My face and live.” Although this is a much thinner veil than those I have already mentioned, yet it is a veil. And it is hard for man to be at home with God. But the Lord Jesus bridges the separating distance. Behold, the blessed Son of God has come into the world and taken upon Himself our nature! “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of the flesh and blood, He also, Himself, likewise took part of the same.”

Though He is God as God is God, yet is He as surely Man as man is man. Mark well how in the Person of the Lord Jesus we see God and man in the closest conceivable alliance. For they are united in one Person forever. The gulf is completely filled by the fact that Jesus has gone through with us even to the bitter end, to death, even to the death of the Cross. He has followed out the career of manhood even to the tomb. And thus we see that the veil which hung between the nature of God and the nature of man is rent in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. We enter into the holiest of all through *His* flesh, which links manhood to Godhead.

Now you see what it is to have the veil taken away. Solemnly note that this avails only for Believers—those who refuse Jesus refuse the only way of access to God. God is not approachable except through the rending of the veil by the death of Jesus. There was one typical way to the Mercy Seat of old and that was through the turning aside of the veil. There was no other. And there is now no other way for any of you to come into fellowship with God except through the rent veil—the death of Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. Come this way and you may come freely. Refuse to come this way and there hangs between you and God an impassable veil. Without Christ you are without God and without hope. Jesus Himself assures you, “If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” God grant that this may not happen to any of you!

For Believers the veil is not rolled up but rent. The veil was not unhooked and carefully folded up and put away so that it might be put in its place at some future time. Oh, no! The Divine hand took it and rent it from top to bottom. It can never be hung up again. That is impossible. Between those who are in Christ Jesus and the great God there will never be another separation. “Who shall separate us from the love of God?” Only one veil was made and as that is rent, the one and only separator is destroyed. I delight to think of this. The devil himself can never divide me from God now. He may, and will attempt to shut me out from God—but the worst he could do would be to hang up a rent veil.

What would that avail but to exhibit his impotence? God has rent the veil and the devil cannot mend it. There is access between a Believer and his God. And there must be such free access forever, since the veil is not rolled up and put on one side to be hung up again in days to come. It is rent and rendered useless. The rent is not in one corner but in the midst, as Luke tells us. It is not a slight rent through which we may see a little. But it is rent from the top to the bottom. There is an entrance made for the greatest sinners. If there had only been a small hole cut through it, the lesser offenders might have crept through. But what an act of abounding mercy is this—that the veil is rent in the midst and rent from top to bottom—so that the chief of sinners may find ample passage! This also shows that for Believers there is no hindrance to the fullest and freest access to God. Oh, for much boldness this morning, to come where God has not only set open the door but has lifted the door from its hinges—yes, removed it, post and bar and all!

I want you to notice that this veil, when it was rent, was rent by God—not by man. It was not the act of an irreverent mob. It was not the midnight outrage of a set of profane priests—it was the act of God, alone. Nobody stood within the veil. And on the outer side of it stood the priests only fulfilling their ordinary vocation of offering sacrifice. It must have astounded them when they saw that holy place laid bare in a moment. How they fled, as they saw that massive veil divided without human hand in a second of time! Who rent it? Who, but God Himself? If another had done it, there might have been a mistake about it and the mistake might need to be remedied by replacing the curtain.

But if the Lord has done it, it is done rightly, it is done finally, it is done irreversibly. It is God Himself who has laid sin on Christ and in Christ has put that sin away. God Himself has opened the gate of Heaven to Believers and cast up a highway along which the souls of men may travel to Himself. God Himself has set the ladder between earth and Heaven. Come to Him now, you humble ones. Behold, He sets before you an open door!

II. And now I ask you to follow me, dear Friends, in the second place, to an experimental realization of my subject. We now notice WHAT WE HAVE—“Having therefore, Brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest.” Observe the threefold “having” in the paragraph now before us and be not content without the whole three. We have “boldness to enter in.” There are degrees in boldness. But this is one of the highest. When the veil was rent it required some boldness to look within. I wonder whether the priests at the altar did have the courage to gaze upon the Mercy Seat. I suspect that they were so struck with amazement that they fled from the altar, fearing sudden death.

It requires a measure of boldness steadily to look upon the mystery of God—“Which things the angels desire to look into.” It is well not to look with a merely curious eye into the deep things of God. I question whether any man is able to pry into the mystery of the Trinity without great risk. Some, thinking to look there with the eyes of their natural intellect, have been blinded by the light of that sun and have henceforth wandered in darkness. It needs boldness to look into the splendors of redeeming and electing love. If any did look into the holiest when the veil was rent, they were among the boldest of men. For others must have feared, lest the fate of the men of Bethshemesh would be theirs.

Beloved, the Holy Spirit invites you to look into the holy place and view it all with reverent eye for it is full of teaching to you. Understand the mystery of the Mercy Seat and of the Ark of the Covenant overlaid with gold and of the pot of manna and of the tables of stone and of Aaron’s rod that budded. Look, look boldly through Jesus Christ—but do not content yourself with looking! Hear what the text says—“Having boldness to *enter in.*” Blessed be God if He has taught us this sweet way of no longer looking from afar but of *entering* into the inmost shrine with confidence! “Boldness to enter in” is what we ought to have.

Let us follow the example of the high priest and, having entered, let us perform the functions of one who enters in. “Boldness to enter in” suggests that we act as men who are in their proper places. To stand within

the veil filled the servant of God with an overpowering sense of the Divine Presence. If ever in his life he was near to God, he was certainly near to God then, when quite alone. Shut in and excluded from all the world, he had no one with him except the glorious Jehovah. O my Beloved, may we this morning enter into the holiest in this sense! Shut out from the world—both wicked and Christian—let us know that the Lord is here, most near and manifest. Oh that we may now cry out with Hagar, “Have I also here looked after Him that sees me?”

Oh, how sweet to realize by personal enjoyment the presence of Jehovah, How cheering to feel that the Lord of Hosts is with us! We know our God to be a very present help in trouble. It is one of the greatest joys out of Heaven to be able to sing—Jehovah Shammah—the Lord is here. At first we tremble in the Divine Presence, but as we feel more of the spirit of adoption, we draw near with sacred delight and feel so fully at home with our God that we sing with Moses, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Do not live as if God were as far off from you as the east is from the west. Live not far below on the earth. But live on high, as if you were in Heaven. In Heaven you will be with God. But on earth He will be with you—is there much difference?

He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Jesus has made us near by His precious blood. Try daily to live in as great nearness to God as the high priest felt when he stood for awhile within the secret of Jehovah’s tabernacle. The high priest had a sense of communion with God. He was not only near but he spoke with God. I cannot tell what he said but I should think that on the special day the high priest unburdened himself of the load of Israel’s sin and sorrow and made known his requests unto the Lord. Aaron, standing there alone, must have been filled with memories of his own faultiness and of the idolatries and backslidings of the people.

God shone upon him and he bowed before God. He may have heard things which it was not lawful for him to utter and other things which he could not have uttered if they had been lawful. Beloved, do you know what it is to commune with God? Words are poor vehicles for this fellowship. But what a blessed thing it is! Proofs of the existence of God are altogether here superfluous to those of us who are in the habit of conversing with the Eternal One. If anybody were to write an essay to prove the existence of my wife, or my son, I certainly should not read it, except for the amusement of the thing. And proofs of the existence of God to the man who communes with God are much the same.

Many of you walk with God—what bliss! Fellowship with the Most High is elevating, purifying, strengthening. Enter into it boldly. Enter into His revealed thoughts, even as He graciously enters into yours—rise to His plans, as He condescends to yours. Ask to be uplifted to Him, even as He deigns to dwell with you. This is what the rent of the veil brings us when we have boldness to enter in. But, mark you, the rent veil brings us nothing until we have boldness to enter in. Why stand without? Jesus brings us near and truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Je-

sus Christ. Let us not be slow to take up our freedom and come boldly to the Throne.

The high priest entered within the veil of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen with blood and with incense, that he might pray for Israel—and there he stood before the Most High, pleading with Him to bless the people. O Beloved, prayer is a Divine institution and it belongs to us. But there are many sorts of prayers. There is the prayer of one who seems shut out from God's holy temple. There is the prayer of another who stands in the court of the Gentiles afar off, looking towards the temple. There is the prayer of one who gets where Israel stands and pleads with the God of the chosen. There is the prayer in the court of the priests when the sanctified man of God makes intercession.

But the best prayer of all is offered in the holiest of all. There is no fear about prayer being heard when it is offered in the holiest. The very position of the man proves that he is accepted with God. He is standing on the surest ground of acceptance and he is so near to God that his every desire is heard. There the man is seen through and through. For he is very near to God. His thoughts are read, his tears are seen, his sighs are heard. He has boldness to enter in. He may ask what he will and it shall be done unto him. As the altar sanctifies the gift, so the most holy place, entered by the blood of Jesus, secures a certain answer to the prayer that is offered therein.

God give us such power in prayer! It is a wonderful thing that the Lord should hearken to the voice of a man. Yet are there such men? Luther came out of his closet and cried, Vici—"I have conquered." He had not yet met his adversaries. But as he had prevailed with God for men he felt that he should prevail with men for God. But the high priest, if you recollect, after he had communed and prayed with God, came out and blessed the people. He put on his garments of glory and beauty which he had laid aside when he went into the holy place, for there he stood in simple white and nothing else. And now he came out wearing the breast-plate and all his precious ornaments and he blessed the people. That is what you will do if you have the boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus—you will bless the people that surround you.

The Lord has blessed you and He will make you a blessing. Your ordinary conduct and conversation will be a blessed example. The words you speak for Jesus will be like a dew from the Lord—the sick will be comforted by your words. The despondent will be encouraged by your faith. The lukewarm will be recovered by your love. You will be, practically, saying to each one who knows you, "The Lord bless you and keep you—the Lord make His face shine upon you and give you peace." You will become a channel of blessing—"Out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water." May we each one have boldness to enter in that we may come forth laden with benedictions!

If you will kindly look at the text, you will notice what I shall merely hint at—that this boldness is well grounded. I always like to see the Apostle using a "therefore"—"Having therefore boldness." Paul is often a true poet but he is always a correct logician. He is as logical as if he were deal-

ing with mathematics rather than theology. Here he writes one of his “therefores.” Why is it that we have boldness? Is it not because of our relationship to Christ which makes us “Brethren”? “Having therefore, Brethren, boldness.” The feeblest Believer has as much right to enter into the holy place as Paul had. Because he is one of the brotherhood. I remember a rhyme by John Ryland, in which he says of Heaven—

***“They shall all be there, the great and the small;
Poor I shall shake hands with the blessed St. Paul.”***

I have no doubt we shall have such a position and such fellowship. Meanwhile, we do shake hands with him this morning as he calls us Brethren. We are Brethren to one another because we are Brethren to Jesus. Where we see the Apostle go, we will go—yes, rather, where we see the Great Apostle and High Priest of our profession enter, we will follow. “Having therefore, boldness.”

Beloved, we have now no fear of death in the most holy place. The high priest, whoever he might be, must always have dreaded that solemn day of atonement when he had to pass into the silent and secluded place. I cannot tell whether it is true, but I have read that there is a tradition among the Jews that a rope was fastened to the high priest’s foot that they might draw out his corpse in case he died before the Lord. I should not wonder if their superstition devised such a thing, for it is an awful position for a man to enter into the secret dwelling of Jehovah. But we cannot die in the holy place now, since Jesus has died for us. The death of Jesus is the guarantee of the eternal life of all for whom He died. We have boldness to enter, for we shall not perish.

Our boldness arises from the perfection of His sacrifice. Read the fourteenth verse—“He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.” We rely upon the sacrifice of Christ believing that He was such a perfect Substitute for us that it is not possible for us to die after our Substitute has died. And we must be accepted because He is accepted. We believe that the precious blood has so effectually and eternally put away sin from us that we are no longer obnoxious to the wrath of God. We may safely stand where sin must be smitten, if there is any sin upon us. For we are so washed, so cleaned and so fully justified that we are accepted in the Beloved. Sin is so completely lifted from us by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ that we have boldness to enter where Jehovah, Himself, dwells.

Moreover, we have this for certain—that as a priest had a right to dwell near to God—we have that privilege. For Jesus has made us kings and priests unto God and all the privileges of the office come to us with the office itself. We have a mission within the holy place. We are called to enter there upon holy business and so we have no fear of being intruders. A burglar may enter a house but he does not enter with boldness. He is always afraid lest he should be surprised. You might enter a stranger’s house without an invitation but you would feel no boldness there. We do not enter the holiest as housebreakers, nor as strangers. We come in *obedience* to a call, to fulfill our office. When once we accept the sacrifice of Christ, we are at home with God. Where should a child be bold but in his father’s house? Where should a priest stand but in the temple of his God

for whose service he is set apart? Where should a blood-washed sinner live but with his God, to whom he is reconciled?

It is a heavenly joy to feel this boldness! We have now such a love for God and such a delight in Him that it never crosses our minds that we are trespassers when we draw near to Him. We never say, "God, my dread," but "God, my exceeding joy." His name is the music to which our lives are set—though God is a consuming fire we love Him as such—for He will only consume our dross and that we desire to lose. Under no aspect is God now distasteful to us. We delight in Him, be He what He may. So you see, Beloved, we have good grounds for boldness when we enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

I cannot leave this point until I have reminded you that we may have this boldness of entering in at *all times* because the veil is always rent and is never restored to its old place. "The Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron your brother, that he come not at all times into the Holy Place within the veil before the Mercy Seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not." But the Lord says not so to us. Dear child of God, you may at all times have "boldness to enter in." The veil is rent both day and night. Yes, let me say it—even when your eye of faith is dim—you may still enter in. When evidences are dark, still have "boldness to enter in." And even if you have unhappily sinned, remember that access is open to your penitent prayer.

Come still through the rent veil, Sinner, as you are. Though you have backslidden, though you are grieved with the sense of your wanderings—come even now! "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart," but enter at once. For the veil is not there to exclude you though doubt and unbelief may make you think it is so. The veil cannot be there, for it was rent in two from the top to the bottom.

III. My time has fled and I shall not have space to speak as I meant to do upon the last point—HOW WE EXERCISE THIS GRACE. Let me give you the notes of what I would have said.

Let us at this hour enter into the holiest. Behold the way! We come by the way of atonement—"Having therefore, Brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." I have been made to feel really ill through the fierce and blasphemous words that have been used of late by gentlemen of the modern school concerning the precious blood. I will not defile my lips by a repetition of the thrice-accursed things which they have dared to utter while trampling on the blood of Jesus. Everywhere throughout this Divine Book you meet with the precious blood. How can he call himself a Christian who speaks in flippant and profane language of the blood of atonement?

My Brothers and Sisters, there is no way into the holiest, even though the veil is rent, without blood. You might suppose that the high priest of old brought the blood because the veil was there. But you have to bring it with you though the veil is gone. The way is open and you have boldness to enter. But not without the blood of Jesus. It would be an unholy boldness which would think of drawing near to God without the blood of the great Sacrifice. We have always to plead the atonement. As without shed-

ding of blood there is no remission of sin, so without that blood there is no access to God.

Next, the way by which we come is an unfailing way. Please notice that word—"by a new way." This means by a way which is always fresh. The original Greek suggests the idea of "newly slain." Jesus died long ago but His death is the same now as at the moment of its occurrence. We come to God, dear Friends, by a way which is always effectual with God. It never, never loses one whit of its power freshness—

**"Dear dying lamb, Your precious blood
Shall never lose its power."**

The way is not worn away by long traffic—it is always new. If Jesus Christ had died yesterday, would you not feel that you could plead His merit today? Very well, you can plead that merit after these 19 centuries with as much confidence as at the first hour. The way to God is always newly laid. In effect, the wounds of Jesus incessantly bleed our expiation. The Cross is as glorious as though He were still upon it. So far as the freshness, vigor, and force of the atoning death is concerned, we come by a new way. Let it be always new to our hearts. Let the doctrine of atonement never grow stale but let it have dew upon your souls.

Then the Apostle adds, it is a "living way." A wonderful word! The way by which the high priest went into the Holy Place was, of course, a material way and so a dead way. We come by a *spiritual* way, suitable to our spirits. The way could not help the high priest but our way helps us abundantly. Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." When we come to God by this Way, the Way itself leads, guides, bears, brings us near. This way gives us life with which to come.

It is a dedicated way. "Which He has consecrated for us." When a new road is opened it is set apart and dedicated for the public use. Sometimes a public building is opened by a king or a prince and so is dedicated to its purpose. Beloved, the way to God through Jesus Christ is dedicated by Christ and ordained by Christ for the use of poor believing sinners such as we are. He has consecrated the way towards God and dedicated it for us, that we may freely use it. Surely, if there is a road set apart for me, I may use it without fear. And the way to God and Heaven, through Jesus Christ, is dedicated by the Savior for sinners. It is the King's highway for wayfaring men, who are bound for the City of God. "Consecrated for us!" Blessed word! Therefore, let us use it.

Lastly, it is a Christly way. When we come to God, we still come through His flesh. There is no coming to Jehovah except by the incarnate God. God in human flesh is our way to God. The substitutionary death of the Word made flesh is also the way to the Father. There is no coming to God except by representation. Jesus represents us before God and we come to God through Him who is our Covenant Head, our representative and forerunner before the Throne of the Most High. Let us never try to pray without Christ—never try to sing without Christ—never try to preach without Christ. Let us perform no holy function, nor attempt to have fellowship with God in any shape or form, except through that rent which He

has made in the veil by His flesh, sanctified for us and offered upon the Cross on our behalf.

Beloved, I have done when I have just remarked upon the next two verses, which are necessary to complete the sense, but which I was obliged to omit this morning since there would be no time to handle them. We are called to take holy freedoms with God. “Let us draw near,” at once, “with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” Let us do so boldly, for we have a great High Priest. The twenty-first verse reminds us of this. Jesus is the great Priest and we are the sub-priests under Him and since He bids us come near to God and Himself leads the way, let us follow Him into the inner sanctuary. Because He lives, we shall live also. We shall not die in the holy place unless He dies. God will not smite us unless He smites Him. So, “having a High Priest over the House of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.”

And then the Apostle tells us that we may not only come with boldness because our High Priest leads the way but because we ourselves are prepared for entrance. Two things the high priest had to do before he might enter. One was to be sprinkled with blood and this we have. For “our hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience.” The other requisite for the priests was to have their “bodies washed with pure water.” This we have received in symbol in our Baptism and in reality in the spiritual cleansing of regeneration. To us has been fulfilled the prayer—

***“Let the water and the blood,
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”***

We have known the washing of water by the Word and we have been sanctified by the Spirit of His Divine Grace. Therefore let us enter into the holiest. Why should we stay away? Hearts sprinkled with blood, bodies washed with pure water—these are the ordained preparations for acceptable entrance. Come near, Beloved! May the Holy Spirit be the spirit of access to you now. Come to your God and then abide with Him! He is your Father, your All in All. Sit down and rejoice in Him. Take your fill of love. Let not your communion be broken between here and Heaven. Why should it be? Why not begin today that sweet enjoyment of perfect reconciliation and delight in God which shall go on increasing in intensity until you behold the Lord in open vision and go no more out?

Heaven will bring a great change in condition but not in our standing, if even now we stand within the veil. It will be only such a change as there is between the perfect day and the daybreak. For we have the same sun and the same light from the sun and the same privilege of walking in the light. “Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn, My Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” Amen and Amen.

***Portion of Scripture Read Before Sermon—HEBREWS 10.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—318, 296, 395.***

THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD'S DEATH

NO. 2059

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 30, 1888,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 1, 1888.

“Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. And the earth did quake and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened. And many bodies of the saints which slept, arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared unto many.”
Matthew 27:50-53.

OUR Lord's death is a marvel set in a surrounding of marvels. It reminds one of a Kohinoor surrounded with a circle of gems. As the sun, in the midst of the planets which surround it, far outshines them all, so the death of Christ is more wonderful than the miracles which happened at the time. Yet, after having seen the sun, we take pleasure in studying the planets, and so, after believing in the unique death of Christ and putting our trust in Him as the Crucified One, we find it a great pleasure to examine in detail those four planetary wonders mentioned in the text, which circle round the great sun of the death of our Lord Himself.

Here they are—the veil of the temple was rent in two. The earth did quake. The rocks rent. The graves were opened.

I. To begin with the first of these wonders. I cannot, tonight, enlarge. I have not the strength. I wish merely to suggest thoughts. Consider THE RENT VEIL, or mysteries laid open. By the death of Christ the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom and the mysteries which had been concealed in the most holy place throughout many generations were laid open to the gaze of all Believers. Beginning, as it were, at the top in the Deity of Christ, down to the lowest part of Christ's manhood, the veil was rent and everything was shown to every spiritual eye.

1. This was the first miracle of Christ after *death*. The first miracle of Christ in *life* was significant and taught us much. He turned the water into wine, as if to show that He raised all common life to a higher grade and put into all Truth a power and a sweetness which could not have been there apart from Him. But this first miracle of His after death stands above the first miracle of His life, because, if you will remember, that miracle was worked in His Presence. He was there and turned the water into wine. But Jesus, as man, was not in the temple. That miracle was worked in His absence and it enhances its wonder. They are both equally

miraculous but there is a touch more striking about this second miracle—that He was not there to speak and make the veil rend in two.

His soul had gone from His body and neither His body nor His soul were in that secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. And yet, at a distance, His will sufficed to rend that thick veil of fine twined linen and cunning work.

The miracle of turning water into wine was worked in a private house, amidst the family and such disciples as were friends of the family. But this marvel was worked in the Temple of God. There is a singular sacredness about it because it was a deed of wonder done in that most awful and mysterious place which was the center of hallowed worship and the abode of God. Look! He dies and at the very door of God's high sanctuary He rends the veil in two. There is a solemnity about this miracle, as worked before Jehovah, which I can hardly convey in speech but which you will feel in your own souls.

Do not forget, also, that this was done by the Savior after His death and this sets the miracle in a very remarkable light. He rends the veil at the very instant of death. Jesus yielded up the ghost and, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two. For thirty years He seems to have prepared himself for the first miracle of His life. He works His first miracle after death in the moment of expiring. As His soul departed from His body our blessed Lord at that same moment laid hold upon the great veil of His Father's symbolical house and rent it in two.

2. This first miracle after death stands in such a place that we cannot pass it by without grave thought. It was very significant, as standing at the head of what many call a new dispensation. The miracle of turning water into wine begins His public life and sets the key of it. This begins His work after death and marks the tone of it. What does it mean?

Does it not mean that the death of Christ is the Revelation and explanation of secrets? Vanish all the types and shadows of the ceremonial Law—vanish, because fulfilled, and explained in the death of Christ. The death of the Lord Jesus is the key of all true philosophy—God made flesh, dying for man—if that does not explain a mystery, it cannot be explained. If with this thread in your hand you cannot follow the labyrinth of human affairs and learn the great purpose of God, then you cannot follow it at all. The death of Christ is the great veil-render, the great revealer of secrets.

It is also the great opener of entrances. There was no way into the holy place till Jesus, dying, rent the veil. The way into the most holy of all was not made manifest till He died. If you desire to approach God, the death of Christ is the way to Him. If you want the nearest access and the closest communion that a creature can have with his God, behold, the sacrifice of Christ reveals the way to you. Jesus not only says, "I am the Way," but, rending the veil, He makes the way. The veil of His flesh being rent, the way to God is made most clear to every believing soul.

Moreover, the Cross is the clearing of all obstacles. Christ by death rent the veil. Then between His people and Heaven there remains no obstruction, or if there is any—if your fears invent an obstruction—the Christ

who rent the veil continues still to rend it. He breaks the gates of brass and cuts the bars of iron in sunder. Behold, in His death "the breaker is come up before them, and the Lord on the head of them." He has broken up and cleared the way and all His chosen people may follow Him up to the glorious Throne of God. This is significant of the spirit of the dispensation under which we now live. Obstacles are cleared. Difficulties are solved. Heaven is opened to all Believers.

3. It was a miracle worthy of Christ. Stop a minute and adore your dying Lord. Does He with such a miracle signalize His death? Does it not prove His immortality? It is true He has bowed His head in death. Obedient to His Father's will, when He knows that the time has come for Him to die, He bows His head in willing acquiescence. But at that moment when you call Him dead, He rends the veil of the temple. Is there not immortality in Him though He died?

And see what power He possessed. His hands are nailed—His side is about to be pierced. As He hangs there He cannot protect Himself from the insults of the soldiery but in His utmost weakness He is so strong that he rends the heavy veil of the temple from the top to the bottom.

Behold His wisdom, for in this moment, viewing the deed spiritually, He opens up to us all wisdom and lays bare the secrets of God. The veil which Moses put upon his face, Christ takes away in the moment of His death. The true Wisdom in His dying preaches His grandest sermon by tearing away that which hid the most supreme Truth from the gaze of all believing eyes. Beloved, if Jesus does this for us in His death, surely, we shall be saved by His life. Jesus who died is yet alive and we trust in Him to lead us into "the holy places made without hands."

Before I pass on to the second wonder, I invite everyone here, who as yet does not know the Savior, seriously to think upon the miracles which attended His death and judge what sort of man He was who, for our sins, thus laid down His life. He was not suffered by the Father to die without a miracle to show that He had made a way for sinners to draw near to God.

II. Pass on now to the second wonder—"THE EARTH DID QUAKE." The immovable was stirred by the death of Christ. Christ did not touch the earth—He was uplifted from it on the tree. He was dying, but in the laying aside of His power, in the act of death, He made the earth beneath Him, which we call "the solid globe," itself to quake. What did it teach? Did it not mean, first, the physical universe fore-feeling the last terrible shake of its doom? The day will come when the Christ will appear upon the earth and in due time all things that are shall be rolled up, like garments worn out and put away.

Once more will He speak and then will He shake not only the earth but also Heaven. The things which cannot be shaken will remain but this earth is not one of them—it will be shaken out of its place. "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Nothing shall stand before Him. He alone is. These other things do but seem to be—and before the terror of His face all men shall tremble and Heaven and earth shall flee away. So, when He died, earth seemed to anticipate its doom and

quaked in His Presence. How will it quake when He that lives again shall come with all the glory of God! How will you quake, my Hearer, if you should wake up in the next world without a Savior? How you will tremble in that day when He shall come to judge the world in righteousness and you shall have to face the Savior whom you have despised! Think of it, I pray you.

Did not that miracle also mean this—that the spiritual world is to be moved by the Cross of Christ? He dies upon the Cross and shakes the material world as a prediction that that death of His would shake the world that lies in the Wicked One and cause convulsions in the moral kingdom. Brothers and Sisters, think of it. We say of ourselves, “How shall we ever move the world?” The Apostles did not ask that question. They had confidence in the Gospel which they preached. Those who heard them saw that confidence. When they opened their mouths they said, “The men that have turned the world upside down have come here unto us.”

The Apostles believed in shaking the world with the simple preaching of the Gospel. I entreat you to believe the same. It is a vast city this—this London. How can we ever affect it? China, Hindustan, Africa—these are immense regions. Will the Cross of Christ tell upon them? Yes, my Brethren, for it shook the earth and it will yet shake the great masses of mankind. If we have but faith in it and perseverance to keep on with the preaching of the Word, it is but a matter of time when the name of Jesus shall be known of all men and when every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue confess that He is Christ to the glory of God the Father. The earth did quake beneath the Cross. And it shall again. The Lord God be praised for it.

That old world—how many years it had existed I cannot tell. The age of the world, from that beginning which is mentioned in the first verse of the Book of Genesis, I am not able to compute. However old it was, it had to shake when the Redeemer died. This carries us over to another of our difficulties. The system of evil we have to deal with is so long-established, hoary and reverent with antiquity, that we say to ourselves, “We cannot do much against old prejudices.” But it was the old, old earth that quivered and quaked beneath the dying Christ and it shall do so again. Magnificent systems, sustained by philosophy and poetry, will yet yield before what is called the comparatively new doctrine of the Cross.

Assuredly it is not new, but older than the earth itself. It is God's own Gospel, everlasting and eternal. It will shake down the antique and the venerable, as surely as the Lord lives. And I see the prophecy of this in the quaking of the earth beneath the Cross.

It does seem impossible, does it not, that the mere preaching of Christ can do this? And hence certain men must link to the preaching of Christ all the aids of music and architecture and I know not what beside, till the Cross of Christ is overlaid with human inventions, crushed and buried beneath the wisdom of man. But what was it that made the earth quake? Simply our Lord's death and no addition of human power or wisdom. It seemed a very inadequate means to produce so great a result. But it was

sufficient, for the “weakness of God is stronger than men and the foolishness of God is wiser than men.”

And Christ, in His very death, suffices to make the earth quake beneath His Cross. Come, let us be well content in the battle in which we are engaged, to use no weapon but the Gospel, no battle-ax but the Cross. Could we but believe it, the old, old story is the only story that is needed to be told to reconcile man to God. Jesus died in the sinner's place, the Just for the unjust, a magnificent display of God's Grace and justice in one single act. Could we but keep to this only, we should see the victory coming speedily to our conquering Lord. I leave that second miracle—wherein you see the immovable stirred in the quaking of the earth.

III. Only a hint or two upon the third miracle—THE ROCKS RENT. I have been informed that, to this very day, there are at Jerusalem certain marks of rock-rending of the most unusual kind. Travelers have said that they are not such as are usually produced by earthquake, or any other cause. Upon that I will say but little. But it is a wonderful thing that, as Jesus died, as His soul was rent from His body, as the veil of the temple was rent in two, so the earth, the rocky part of it, the most solid structure of all, was rent in gulfs and chasms in a single moment.

What does this miracle show us but this—the insensible startled. What? Could rocks feel? Yet they rent at the sight of Christ's death. Men's hearts did not respond to the agonizing cries of the dying Redeemer but the rocks responded—the rocks were rent. He did not die for rocks. Yet rocks were more tender than the hearts of men, for whom He shed His blood—

***“Of reason all things show some sign,
But this unfeeling heart of mine,”***

said the poet. And he spoke the truth. Rocks could rend but yet some men's hearts are not rent by the sight of the Cross. However, Beloved, here is the point that I seem to see here—that obstinacy and obduracy will be conquered by the death of Christ.

You may preach to a man about death and he will not tremble at its certainty or solemnity. Yet try him with it. You may preach to a man about Hell but he will harden his heart, like Pharaoh, against the judgment of the Lord. Yet try him with it. All things that can move man should be used. But that which does affect the most obdurate and obstinate is the great love of God, so strangely seen in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will not stay to show you how it is but I will remind you that it is so. It was this, which, in the case of many of us, brought tears of repentance to our eyes and led us to submit to the will of God. I know that it was so with me.

I looked at a thousand things and I did not relent. But when “I saw One hanging on a tree—

“In agonies and blood,”

and dying there for me, then did I smite upon my breast and I was in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. I am sure your own hearts confess that the great Rock-render is the dying Savior.

Well, now, as it is with you, so shall you find it with other men. When you have done your best and have not succeeded, bring out this last hammer—the Cross of Christ. I have often seen on pieces of cannon, in Latin words, this inscription, “The last argument of kings.” That is to say, cannons are the last argument of kings. But the Cross is the last argument of God. If a dying Savior does not convert you, what will? If His bleeding wounds do not attract you to God, what will? If Jesus bears our sin in His own body on the tree and puts it away and if this does not bring you to God, with confession of your sin and hatred of it, then there remains nothing more for you.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” The Cross is the rock-render. Brothers and Sisters, go on teaching the love of the dying Son of God. Go on preaching Christ. You will tunnel the Alps of pride and the granite hills of prejudice with this. You shall find an entrance for Christ into the inmost hearts of men, though they are hard as adamant. And this will be by the preaching of the Cross in the power of the Spirit.

IV. But now I close with the last miracle. These wonders accumulate and they depend upon each other. The quaking earth produced, no doubt, the rending of the rocks. And the rending of the rocks aided in the fourth wonder—“THE GRAVES WERE OPENED.”

The graves opened and the dead revived. That is our fourth head. It is the great consequence of the death of Christ. The graves were opened. Man is the only animal that cares about a sepulcher. Some persons fret about how they shall be buried. That is the last concern that ever would cross my mind. I feel persuaded that people will bury me out of hatred, or out of love and especially out of love to themselves. We need not trouble about that. But man has often shown his pride by his tomb. That is a strange thing. To garland the gallows is a novelty, I think, not yet perpetrated. But to pile marble and choice statuary upon a tomb—what is it but to adorn a gallows, or to show man's great grandeur where his littleness is alone apparent.

Dust, ashes, rottenness, putridity and then a statue and all manner of fine things to make you think that the creature that goes back to dust is, after all, a great one. Now, when Jesus died, sepulchers were laid bare and the dead were exposed—what does this mean? I think we have in this last miracle “the history of a man.” There he lies dead—corrupt, dead in trespasses and sins. But what a beautiful sepulcher he lies in! He is a Church-goer. He is a Dissenter—whichever you please of the two. He is a very moral person. He is a gentleman. He is a citizen. He is master of his company. He will be Lord Mayor one day. He is so good—oh, he is so good!

Yet he has no Divine Grace in his heart, no Christ in his faith, no love to God. You see what a sepulcher he lies in—a dead soul in a gilded tomb? By His Cross our Lord splits this sepulcher and destroys it. What are our merits worth in the presence of the Cross? The death of Christ is the death of self-righteousness. Jesus' death is a superfluity if we can save ourselves. If we are so good that we do not want the Savior, why, then, did Jesus bleed His life away upon the tree? The Cross breaks up the sepul-

chers of hypocrisy, formalism, and self-righteousness, in which the spiritually dead are hidden away.

What next? It opens the graves. The earth springs apart. There lies the dead man—he is revealed to the light. The Cross of Christ does that! The man is not yet made alive by Divine Grace but he is shown to himself. He knows that he lies in the grave of his sin. He has sufficient power of God upon him to make him lie, not like a corpse covered up with marble, but like a corpse from which the grave digger has flung away the sod and left it naked to the light of day. Oh, it is a grand thing when the Cross thus opens the graves! You cannot convince men of sin except by the preaching of a crucified Savior. The lance with which we reach the hearts of men is that same lance which pierced the Savior's heart. We have to use the crucifixion as the means of crucifying self-righteousness and making the man confess that he is dead in sin.

After the sepulchers had been broken up and the graves had been opened, what followed next? Life was imparted. "Many of the bodies of the saints which slept arose." They had turned to dust. But when you have a miracle you may as well have a great one. I wonder that people, when they can believe one miracle, make any difficulty of another. Once introduces Omnipotence and difficulties have ceased. So in this miracle. The bodies came together on a sudden and there they were, complete and ready for the rising. What a wonderful thing is the implantation of life! I will not speak of it in a dead man but I would speak of it in a dead heart.

O God, send Your life into some dead heart at this moment while I speak! That which brings life into dead souls is the death of Jesus. While we behold the Atonement and view our Lord bleeding in our place, the Divine Spirit works upon the man and life is breathed into him. He takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh that palpitates with a new life. This is the wondrous work of the Cross—it is by the death of our Lord that regeneration comes to men. There were no new births if it were not for that one death. If Jesus had not died, we had remained dead. If He had not bowed His head, none of us could have lifted up our heads. If He had not there, on the Cross, passed from among the living, we must have remained among the dead forever and forever.

Now pass on and you will see that those persons who received life, in due time left their graves. It is written that they came out of their graves. Of course they did. What living man would wish to stay in his grave? And you, my dear Hearers, if the Lord quickens you, will not stay in your graves. If you have been accustomed to strong drink, or to any other besetting sin, you will quit it. You will not feel any attachment to your sepulcher. If you have lived in ungodly company and found amusement in questionable places, you will not stay in your graves.

We shall not have need to come after you to lead you away from your old associations. You will be eager to get out of them. If any person here should be buried alive and if he should be discovered in his coffin before he had breathed his last, I am sure that if the sod were lifted and the lid were taken off he would not need prayerful entreaties to come out of his

grave. Far from it. Life loves not the prison of death. So may God grant that the dying Savior may fetch you out of the graves in which you are still living. And, if He now quickens you, I am sure that the death of our Lord will make you reckon that if one died for all, then all died. And He died for all that they which live should not live henceforth unto themselves but unto Him that died for them and rose again.

Which way did these people go after they had come out of their graves? We are told that "they went into the holy city." Exactly so. And he that has felt the power of the Cross may well make the best of his way to holiness. He will long to join himself with God's people. He will wish to go up to God's house and to have fellowship with the thrice-holy God. I should not expect that quickened ones would go anywhere else. Every creature goes to its own company, the beast to its lair and the bird to its nest. And the restored and regenerated man makes his way to the holy city.

Does not the Cross draw us to the Church of God? I would not wish one to join the Church from any motive that is not fetched from the five wounds and bleeding side of Jesus. We give ourselves first to Christ and then to His people for His dear sake. It is the Cross that does it—

***"Jesus dead upon the tree
Achieves this wondrous victory."***

We are told—to close this marvelous story—that they went into the holy city "and appeared unto many." That is, some of them who had been raised from the dead, I do not doubt, appeared unto their wives. What rapture as they saw again the beloved husband! It may be that some of them appeared to father and mother. And I doubt not that many a quickened mother or father would make the first appearance to their children. What does this teach us but that if the Lord's Grace should raise us from the dead, we must take care to show it? Let us appear unto many. Let the life that God has given us be manifest. Let us not hide it but let us go to our former friends and make our epiphanies as Christ made His. For His Glory's sake let us have our manifestation and appearance unto others. Glory be to the dying Savior! All praise to the great Sacrifice!

Oh, that these poor, feeble words of mine would excite some interest in you about my dying Master! Be ready to die for Him. And you that do not know Him—think of this great mystery—that God should take your nature and become a man and die, that you might not die—and bear your sin that you should be free from it. Come and trust my Lord tonight, I pray you. While the people of God gather at the table to the breaking of bread, let your spirits hasten, not to the table and the sacrament but to Christ Himself and His sacrifice. Amen.

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

OVER AGAINST THE SEPULCHER

NO. 1404

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 24, 1878,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Sitting over against the sepulcher.”
Matthew 27:61.

MARY MAGDALENE and the other Mary were last at the Savior's grave. They had associated themselves with Joseph and Nicodemus in the sad but loving task of placing the body of their Lord in the silent tomb. After the holy men had gone home they lingered near the grave. Sitting down, perhaps upon some seat in the garden, or on some projection of the rock, they waited in mournful solitude. They had seen where and how the body was laid and so had done their utmost, but yet they still sat watching—love has never done enough, it is hungry to render service. They could scarcely take their eyes away from the spot which held their most precious Treasure, nor leave, till they were compelled to do so, the sacred relics of their Best Beloved.

The Virgin Mary had been taken by John to his home. She had sustained too great a shock to remain at the tomb, for in her were fulfilled the words, “Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own heart also.” She was wise to leave to others those sorrowful offices which were beyond her own power—exceedingly wise, also, from that hour to her life's end, to remain in the shade, modestly bearing the honor which made her blessed among women. The mother of Zebedee's children, who also lingered late at the tomb, was gone home, too, for as she was the mother of John it is exceedingly probable that John resided with her and had taken the Virgin to her home. She was needed at home to act as hostess and assist her son and thus she would be obeying the last wish of her dying Lord when He said, “Son, behold your mother,” and explained His meaning by a look.

All having thus departed, the two Marys were the sole watchers at the tomb of Christ at the time of the going down of the sun. They had work yet to do for His burial and this called them away. But they stayed as long as they could—last to go and first to return. This morning we shall, with the women, take up the somewhat unusual post of “sitting over against the sepulcher.” I call it unusual, for as none remained except these two women, few have preached upon our Redeemer's burial. Thousands of sermons have been delivered upon His death and Resurrection and in this I greatly rejoice, only wishing that there were thousands more. But still, the burial of our Lord deserves a larger share of consideration than it generally obtains.

“He was crucified, dead, and buried,” says the creed and, therefore those who wrote that summary must have thought His burial an important Truth of God and so, indeed, it is. It was the natural sequence and seal of His death and so was related to that which went before. It was the

fit and suitable preparation for His rising again and so stood in connection with that which followed after. Come, then, let us take our seat with the holy women “over against the sepulcher” and sing—

**“Rest, glorious Son of God:
Your work is done,
And all your burdens borne.
Rest on that stone
Till the third sun has brought
Your everlasting morn.
How calmly in that tomb You lie now,
Your rest how still and deep!
O'er You in love the Father rests:
He gives to His Beloved sleep.
On Bethel pillow now Your head is laid,
In Joseph's rock-hewn cell;
Your watchers are the angels of Your God
They guard Your slumbers well.”**

I. Supposing ourselves to be sitting in the garden with our eyes fixed upon the great stone which formed the door of the tomb, we first of all ADMIRE THAT HE HAD A GRAVE AT ALL. We wonder how that stone could hide Him who is the brightness of His Father's Glory—how the Life of all could lie among the dead—how He who holds creation in His strong right hand could even, for an hour, be entombed! Admiring this, we would calmly reflect, first, upon the testimony of His grave that He was really dead. Those tender women could not have been mistaken, their eyes were too quick to suffer Him to be buried alive, even if anyone had wished to do so.

Of our Lord's actual death we have many proofs connected with His burial. When Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and begged for the body, the Roman ruler would not give it up till he was certain of His death. The centurion, a man under authority, careful in all that he did, certified that Jesus was dead. The soldier who served under the centurion had by a very conclusive test established the fact of His death beyond all doubt, for with a spear he pierced His side and there came out forthwith blood and water. Pilate, who would not have given up the body of a condemned person unless he was sure that execution had taken place, registered the death and commanded the body to be delivered to Joseph.

Both Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and all the friends who aided in the interment were beyond all question convinced that He was dead. They handled the lifeless frame. They wrapped it in the bands of fine linen. They placed the spices about the sacred flesh which they loved so well—they were sadly assured that their Lord was dead. Even His enemies were quite certain that they had slain Him. They never had a suspicion that possibly a little life remained in Him and that it could be revived, for their stern hate allowed no doubt to remain upon that point—they knew even to the satisfaction of their mistrustful malice that Jesus of Nazareth had died.

Even when in their anxiety they went to Pilate, it was not that they might obtain stronger proofs of death, but to prevent the disciples from stealing His dead body and saying that He had risen from the dead! Yes,

Jesus died, literally and actually died, and His body of flesh and bones was really laid in Joseph's grave. It was no phantom that was crucified, as certain heretics dreamed of old. We have not to look to a spectral atonement or to a visionary sacrifice, though some in our own times would reduce redemption to something shadowy and unsubstantial. Jesus was a real Man and truly tasted the bitter pangs of death. And, therefore, He in very deed lay in the sepulcher, motionless as the rock out of which it was hewn, shrouded in His winding-sheet.

Remember, as you think of your Lord's death, that the day will come, unless the Second Advent should intervene, in which you and I shall lie low among the dead as once our Master did. Soon, to this heart there will be left no pulsing life. To these eyes no glance of observation, to this tongue no voice, to these ears no sensibility of sound. We naturally start from this, yet must it be. We shall certainly mingle with the dust we tread upon and feed the worms. But as we gaze on Jesus' tomb and assure ourselves that our great Lord and Master died, each thought of dread is gone and we no longer shudder—we feel that we can safely go where Christ has gone before!

Sitting down over against the sepulcher, after one has pondered upon the wondrous fact that He who is only *immortality* was numbered with the *dead*, the next subject which suggests itself is the testimony of the grave to His union with us. He had His grave hard by the city and not on some lone mountain peak where foot of man could never tread. His grave was where it could be seen! It was a family grave which Joseph had, no doubt, prepared for himself and his household. Jesus was laid in a *family* vault where another had expected to lie. Where was Moses buried? No man knows of his sepulcher to this day. But where Jesus was buried was well known to His friends. He was not caught away in a chariot of fire, nor was it said of Him that God took Him, but He was laid in the grave, "as the manner of the Jews is to bury."

Jesus found His grave among the men He had redeemed! Hard by the common place of execution there was a garden and in that garden they laid Him in a tomb which was meant for others. So that our Lord's sepulcher stands, as it were, among our homes and gardens and is one tomb among many. Before me rises a picture. I see the cemetery, or sleeping place, of the saints, where each one rests on his lowly bed. They lie not alone, but like soldiers sleeping around their captain's pavilion where he, also, spent the night, though he is up before them. The sepulcher of Jesus is the central grave of God's acre. It is empty now, but His saints lie buried all around that cave in the rock, gathered in ranks around their dear Redeemer's resting place. Surely it robs the grave of its ancient terror when we think that Jesus slept in one of the chambers of the great dormitory of the sons of men!

Very much might be said about the tomb in which Jesus lay. It was a new tomb wherein no remains had been previously laid. And thus if He came forth from it there would be no suspicion that another had arisen, nor could it be imagined that He rose through touching some old Prophet's bones, as he did who was laid in Elisha's grave. As He was born

of a virgin mother, so was He buried in a virgin tomb wherein never man had lain. It was a rocky tomb and, therefore, nobody could dig into it by night, or tunnel through the earth. It was a borrowed tomb—so poor was Jesus that He owed a grave to charity. But that tomb was spontaneously offered, so rich was He in the love of hearts which He had won.

That tomb He returned to Joseph, honored unspeakably by His temporary sojourn therein. I know not whether Joseph ever used it for any of his house, but I see no reason why he should not have done so. Certainly, our Lord, when He borrows, always makes prompt repayment and gives a bonus! He filled Simon's boat with fish when He used it for a pulpit! And He sanctified the rocky cell wherein He had lodged and left it perfumed for the next who should sleep there. We, too, expect, unless special circumstances should intervene, that these bodies of ours will lie in their narrow beds beneath the greensward and slumber till the resurrection. Nor need we be afraid of the tomb, for Jesus has been there. Sitting over against His sepulcher we grow brave and are ready, like knights of the holy sepulcher, to hurl defiance at death! At times we almost long for evening to undress that we may rest with God in the chamber where He gives sleep to His Beloved.

Now, note that our Lord's tomb was in a garden, for this is typically the testimony of His grave to the hope of better things. Just a little beyond the garden wall you would see a little knoll of grim name and character—the Tyburn of Jerusalem. Golgotha, the place of a skull. And there stood the Cross. That rising ground was given up to horror and barrenness—but around the actual tomb of our Savior there grew herbs and plants and flowers. A spiritual garden still blooms around His tomb. The wilderness and the solitary place are glad for Him and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. He has made another Paradise for us and He Himself is the sweetest flower there! The first Adam sinned in a garden and spoiled our nature—the Second Adam slept in a garden and restored our loss!

The Savior buried in the earth has removed the curse from the soil—from now on blessed is the ground for His sake. He died for us that we, ourselves, might become in heart and life fruitful gardens of the Lord! Let but His tomb and all the facts which surround it have due influence upon the minds of men and this poor blighted earth shall again yield her increase! Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree—and it shall be to the Lord for a name.

Sitting over against the sepulcher, perhaps the best thought of all is that now it is empty and so bears testimony to *our* resurrection! It must have made the two Marys weep, when before they left the grave they saw it filled with so beloved a Treasure, so surely dead. They ought to have rejoiced to find it empty when they returned, but they knew not, as yet, the angel's message—"He is not here, for He is risen." Our Christ is not dead! He lives forever to make intercession for us! He could not be held by the bands of death! There was nothing corruptible about Him and, therefore, His body has left the abode of decay to live in newness of life! The sepul-

cher is spoiled and the Spoiler has gone up to Glory, leading captivity captive!

As you sit over against the sepulcher let your hearts be comforted concerning death, whose sting is gone forever. There shall be a resurrection! You can be sure of this, for if the dead rise not, then is Christ not risen! But the Lord is risen, indeed, and His rising necessitates that all who are in Him should rise as He has done! Yet another thought comes to me—Can I follow Christ as fully as these two women did? That is to say, can I still cling to Him though to sense and reason His cause should seem dead and laid in a rocky sepulcher? Can I, like Joseph and Magdalene, be a disciple of a dead Christ? Could I follow Him even at His lowest point?

I want to apply this practically. Times have come upon the Christian Church when the Truth of God seems to be fallen in the streets and the kingdom of Christ is in apparent peril. Just now the Lord Jesus is betrayed by not a few of His professed ministers. He is being crucified afresh in the perpetual attacks of skepticism against His blessed Gospel—and it may be that things may wax worse and worse. This is not the first occasion when it has been so, for at various times in the history of the Church of God His enemies have exulted and cried out that the Gospel of past ages was exploded and might be reckoned as dead and buried.

For one, I mean to sit over against the very sepulcher of Truth. I am a disciple of the old-fashioned doctrine as much when it is covered with disgrace and rebuke as when it shall again display its power, as it surely shall. Skeptics may seem to take the Truth of God and bind it, scourge it, crucify it and say that it is dead. And they may endeavor to bury it in scorn, but the Lord has many a Joseph and a Nicodemus who will see honor done even to the body of Truth and will wrap the despised creed in sweet spices and hide it away in their hearts. They may, perhaps, be half afraid that it is really dead, as the wise men assert, yet it is precious to their souls and they will come forth right gladly to espouse its cause and to confess that they are its disciples.

We will sit down in sorrow but not in despair and watch until the stone is rolled away and Christ in His Truth shall live again and be openly triumphant! We shall see a Divine interposition and shall cease to fear—while they who stand armed to prevent the resurrection of the grand old doctrines shall quake and become as dead men—because the Gospel's everlasting life has been vindicated! And they will be made to quail before the brightness of its glory! This, then, is our first meditation—we admire that Jesus ever had a grave and we sit in wonder over against the sepulcher.

II. Secondly, sitting here, WE REJOICE IN THE HONORS OF HIS BURIAL. The burial of Christ was, under some aspects of it, the lowest step of His humiliation—He must not merely, for a moment die, but He must be *buried* awhile in the heart of the earth. On the other hand, under other aspects our Lord's burial was the first step of His Glory—it was a turning point in His great career as we shall hope to show you. Our Lord's body was given up by Pilate to Joseph who went with authority to receive it from those who were appointed to see him take it down.

Yesterday I had a glimpse at a work of art by one of our own Lembeth neighbors, exhibited by Mr. Doulton. It is a fine piece of work in terra-cotta, representing the taking down of Christ from the Cross. I could have wished to have studied it more at leisure, but a mere glimpse has charmed me. The artist represents a Roman soldier at the top of the Cross taking down the parchment upon which the accusation was written. He is rolling it up to put it away forever. I thought of the taking away of the handwriting which was against Him, even as He had taken away that which was against us. The Roman soldier, by authority, is thus represented as removing the charge which was once nailed over the ever blessed head. There is no accusation against Him now—He died and the Law is satisfied—it can no longer accuse the man who has endured its penalty.

Another soldier is represented with a pair of pincers drawing out one of the big nails from the hands. The sacred body is now free. Law has no further claims upon it and withdraws its nails. A disciple, not a soldier, has mounted a ladder on the other side and, with a pair of scissors, is cutting away the crown of thorns. I think the artist did well to represent his doing so, for from now on it is our delight to remove all shame from the name of Jesus and to crown Him in another fashion. Then the artist has represented certain of His disciples as gently taking hold of the body as it is gradually being unloosed by the soldiers. And Joseph of Arimathea stands there with his long linen sheet ready to receive Him.

Jars of precious myrrh and spices are standing there and the women ready to open the lids and to place the spices around the holy flesh. Every part of the design is significant and instructive—and the artist deserves great praise for it. It brought before my mind the descent from the Cross with greater vividness than any painting I have ever seen. The nails are all extracted. He is held no longer to the Cross. The body is taken down, no longer to be spit upon, despised and rejected, but tenderly handled by His friends. All and everything that has to do with shame, suffering and paying of penalty is ended once and for all.

What became of the Cross? You find in Scripture no further mention of it. The legends concerning it are all false upon the face of them. The Cross is gone forever—neither it, nor nail, nor spear, nor crown of thorns can be found—there is no further use for them. Jesus our Lord has gone to His Glory! By His one Sacrifice He has secured the salvation of His own.

But now as to His burial. Beloved, there were many honorable circumstances about it. Its first effect was the development of timid minds. Joseph of Arimathea occupied a high post as an honorable counselor, but he was a *secret* disciple. Nicodemus, too, was a ruler of the Jews, and though he had spoken a word for the Master now and then, as probably Joseph had done (for we are told that he had not consented to their counsel and deed), yet he had never come out boldly till now. He came to Jesus by *night*, before, but he now came by daylight! At the worst estate of the Savior's cause we should have thought that these two men would remain concealed, but they did not. Now that the case seemed desperate, they show

their faith in Jesus and pluck up courage to honor their Lord. Lambs become lions when the Lamb is slain.

Joseph went boldly to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. For a dead Christ he risks his position and even his life, for he is asking for the body of a reputed traitor and may, himself, be put to death by Pilate. Or the members of the Sanhedrin may be enraged at him and bind themselves with an oath that they will slay him for paying honor to the Nazarene, whom they called, "that deceiver." Joseph ventures everything for Jesus, even though he knows Him to be dead. Equally brave is Nicodemus, for publicly, at the foot of the Cross, he stands with his hundred pounds of spices, caring nothing for any who may report the deed.

I cheerfully hope, dear Brothers and Sisters, that one result of the ferocious attacks made upon the Gospel at this time will be that a great number of quiet and retiring spirits will be awakened to energy and courage. Such works of evil might move the very stones to cry out. I pray while, perhaps, some who have spoken well in other days and have usually done the battling may be downcast and quiet, those who have kept in the rear rank and have, only in secret, followed Jesus, will be brought to the front and we shall see men of substance and of position acknowledging their Lord.

Joseph and Nicodemus both illustrate the dreadful Truth of God that it is hard for them that have riches to enter into the kingdom of God. But they also show us that when they do enter they frequently excel. If they come last, they remain to the last. If cowards when others are heroes, they can also be heroes when even Apostles are cowards. Each man has his turn and, so, while the fishermen-Apostles were hiding, the wealthy non-committal Brethren came to the front! Though bred in luxury, they bore the brunt of the storm and avowed the cause whose Leader lay dead. Brave are the hearts which stand up for Jesus in His burial.

"Sitting over against the sepulcher," we draw comfort from the sight of the friends who honored the Lord in His death. I like to remember that the burial of the Lord displayed the union of loving hearts. The tomb became the meeting place of the old disciples and the new—of those who had long followed the Master and those who had but newly acknowledged Him. Magdalene and Mary had been with the Lord for years and had ministered to Him of their substance. But Joseph of Arimathea, as far as his public avowal of Christ is concerned, was, like Nicodemus, a new disciple. Old and new followers *united* in the deed of love and laid their Master in the tomb.

A common sorrow and a common love unite us wondrously. When our great Master's cause is under a cloud and His name blasphemed it is pleasant to see the young men battling with the foe and aiding their fathers in the stern struggle. Magdalene, with her penitent love and Mary, with her deep attachment to her Lord, join with the rabbi and the counselor who now begin to prove that they intensely love the Man of Nazareth. That small society, that little working meeting which gathered around our Master's body, was a type of the whole Christian Church. When once

awakened, Believers forget all differences and degrees of spiritual condition and each one is eager to do his part to honor his Lord.

Mark, too, that the Savior's death brought out abundant liberality. The spices, one hundred pounds in weight, and the fine linen were furnished by the men. And then the holy women prepared the liquid spices with which to carry out what they might have called His great funeral when they would more completely wrap the body in odoriferous spices as was the manner of the Jews to bury. There was much of honor intended by all that they brought. A very thoughtful writer observes that the clothes in which our Lord was wrapped are not called grave clothes, but *linen* clothes and that the emphasis would seem to be put upon their being *linen*. And he reminds us that when we read of the garments of the priests in the Book of the Law we find that every garment must be of linen.

Our Lord's Priesthood is, therefore, suggested by the use of linen for His death robes. The Apostle and High Priest of our profession in His tomb slept in pure white linen, even as today He represents Himself to His servants as clothed with a garment down to His feet. Even after death He acted as a priest and poured out a libation of blood and water—and it was, therefore, right that in the grave He should still wear priestly garments. "He made His grave with the wicked"—there was His shame. "But with the rich in His death"—there was His honor. He was put to death by rough soldiers, but He was laid in His grave by tender women.

Persons of honorable estate helped gently to receive and reverentially to place in its position His dear and sacred frame. And then, as if to do Him honor, though they meant it not, His tomb must not be left unguarded—and Caesar lends his guards to watch the couch of the Prince of Peace! Like a king He slumbers until, as the King of kings, He wakes at day-break. To my mind it is very pleasant to see all this honor come to our Lord when He is in His worst estate—dead and buried. Will we not, also, honor our Lord when others despise Him? Will we not cleave to Him come what may?

If the Church were all but destroyed. If every voice should go over to the enemy. If a great stone of philosophic reasoning were rolled at the door of Truth and it should seem no longer possible for argument to remove it—yet would we wait till the Gospel should rise again to confuse its foes! We will not be afraid, but keep our position! We will stand still and see the salvation of God, or "sitting over against the sepulcher," we will watch for the Lord's coming! Let the worst come to the worst we would sooner serve Christ while He is conceived to be dead than all the philosophers that ever lived when in their prime! Even if fools should dance over the grave of Christianity, there shall remain at least a few who will weep over it—and brushing away their tears from their eyes expect to see it revive and put forth all its ancient strength!

III. I must now pass to a third point. While sitting over against the sepulcher WE OBSERVE THAT HIS ENEMIES WERE NOT AT REST. They had their way, but they were not content. They had taken the Savior and with wicked hands they had crucified and slain Him, but they were not satisfied. They were the most uneasy people in the world, though they had

gained their point. It was their Sabbath and it was a high day, that Sabbath of Sabbaths, the Sabbath of the Passover. They kept a preparation for it and had been very careful not to go into the place called The Pavement, lest they should defile themselves—sweet creatures!

And now have they not gained all they wanted? They have killed Jesus and buried Him—are they not happy? No. And what is more, their humiliation had begun—they were doomed to belie their own favorite profession. What was that profession? Their boast of rigid Sabbath-keeping was its chief point and they were perpetually charging our blessed Lord with Sabbath-breaking for healing the sick and even because His disciples rubbed a few ears of wheat between their hands when they were hungry on the Sabbath.

Brothers and Sisters, look at these men and laugh at their hypocrisy! It is the Sabbath and they come to Pilate—they are holding counsel on the Sabbath with a heathen! They tell him that they are afraid that Jesus' body will be spirited away and he says, "You have a watch. Go your way, make it as secure as you can." And they go and seal the stone on the Sabbath! O you hypocritical Pharisees, here was an awful breaking of your Sabbath! According to their superstitious tradition, the rubbing ears of wheat between the hands was a kind of threshing and, therefore, it was a breach of the Law!

Surely, by the same reasoning, the burning of a candle to melt the wax must have been similar to the lighting of a furnace! And the melting of wax must have been a kind of foundry work, like that of the blacksmith who pours metal into a mold, for in such a ridiculous fashion their rabbis interpreted the smallest acts. But they had to seal the stone and break their own absurd laws to satisfy their restless malice! One is pleased to see either Pharisees or Sadducees made to overturn their own professions and lay bare their hypocrisy! Modern-thought gentlemen will, before long, be forced to the same humiliation.

Next, they had to retract their own accusation against our Lord. They charged Jesus with having said, "Destroy this temple and I will build it in three days," pretending that He referred to the temple upon Zion. Now they come to Pilate and tell him, "This deceiver said after three days I will rise again." Oh, you knaves, that is your new version, is it? You put the man to death for quite another rendering! Now you understand the dark saying? Yes, you deceivers, and you understood it before! But now you must eat your leek and swallow your own words! Truly, He scorns the scorners and pours contempt upon His enemies!

And now see how these killers of Christ betray their own fears! He is dead, but they are afraid of Him! He is dead, but they cannot shake off the dread that He will yet vanquish them! They are full of agitation and alarm. Nor was this all, they were to be made witnesses for God—to sign certificates of the death and Resurrection of His Anointed. In order that there might be no doubt about the Resurrection at all, there must be a seal—and they must go and set it. There must be a guard—and they must see it mustered. The disciples need not trouble about certifying that Jesus is in the grave—these Jews will do it and set their own great seal to the evi-

dence! These proud ones are sent to do the work of drudges in Christ's kitchen—to wait upon a dead Christ and to protect the body which they had slain!

The lie which they told afterwards crowned their shame—they bribed the soldiers to say that His disciples stole Him away while they slept! This was a transparent lie, for if the soldiers were asleep, how could they know what was done? We cannot conceive of an instance in which men were more completely made to contradict and convict themselves! That Sabbath was a high day, but it was no Sabbath to them, nor would the overthrow of the Gospel be any rest of soul to its opponents. If ever we should live to see the Truth of God pushed into a corner and the blessed cause of Christ fastened up as with rationalistic nails. If we should live to see its very heart pierced by a critic's spear, yet, mark you, even in the darkest night that can ever try our faith, the adversaries of the Gospel will still be in alarm lest it should rise again! The old Truth has a wonderful habit of leaping up from every fall as strong as ever!

In Dr. Doddridge's days men had pretty nearly buried the Gospel. Socinianism was taught in many, if not most dissenting pulpits, and the same was true of the Church of England. The liberal thinkers dreamed that they had won the victory and extinguished evangelical teaching. But their shouts came a little too soon. They said, "We shall hear no more of this miserable justification by faith and regeneration by the Holy Spirit." They laid the Gospel in a tomb cut out in the cold rock of Unitarianism and they set the seal of their learning upon the great stone of doubt which shut in the Gospel. There it was to lie forever—but God meant otherwise.

But there was a pot-boy over in Gloucester called George Whitefield, And there was a young student who had lately gone to Oxford called John Wesley. And these two passed by the grave of the Gospel and beheld a strange sight, which they began to tell. And as they told it, the sods of unbelief and the stones of learned criticism began to move—and the Truth of God, which had been buried, started up with Pentecostal power! Aha, you adversaries, how greatly had you deceived yourselves! Within a few months, all over England the work of the devil and his ministers was broken to pieces, as when a tower is split by lightning, or the thick darkness scattered by the rising sun! The weight of ignorance and unbelief fled before the bright day of the Gospel, though that Gospel was, for the most part, proclaimed by unlettered men!

The thing which has been is the thing which shall be. History repeats itself. O generation of modern thinkers, you will have to eat your own words and disprove your own assertions! You will have to confute each other and yourselves, even as the Moabites and Elamites slew each other. It may even happen that your infidelities will work themselves out into practical evil of which you will be the victims. You may bring about a repetition of the French Revolution of 1789, with more than all its bloodshed—and who will wonder?

You, some of you, calling yourselves ministers of God with your insinuations of doubt, your denials of future punishment, your insults of the Gospel, your ingenious speeches against the Bible—are shaking the

very foundation of society! I impeach you as the worst enemies of mankind! In effect, you proclaim to men that they may sin as they like, for there is no Hell, or if there is, it is but a little one. Thus you publish a Gospel of licentiousness and you may, one day, rue the result. You may live to see a reign of terror of your own creating, but even if you do, the Gospel of Jesus will come forth from all the filth you have heaped upon it, for the holy Gospel will live as Christ lives and its enemies shall never cease to be in fear!

Your harsh speeches against those who preach the Gospel, your bitterness and your sneers of contempt, all show that you know better than you say and are afraid of the very Christ whom you wish to kill! We who cleave to the glorious Gospel will abide in peace, come what may, but you will not!

IV. And now our last thought is that while these enemies of Christ were in fear and trembling **WE NOTE THAT HIS FOLLOWERS WERE RESTING.** It was the seventh day and, therefore, they ceased from labor. The Marys waited and Joseph and Nicodemus refrained from visiting the tomb. They obediently observed the Sabbath rest. I am not sure that they had faith enough to feel very happy, but they evidently did expect *something* and anxiously awaited the third day. They had enough of the comfort of hope to remain quiet on the seventh day.

Now, Beloved, sitting over against the sepulcher while Christ lies in it, my first thought about it is, I will rest, for He rests. What a wonderful stillness there was about our Lord in that rocky grave. He had been daily thronged by thousands—even when He ate bread they disturbed Him. He scarcely could have a moment's stillness in life. But now, how quiet is His bed! Not a sound is heard. The great stone shuts out all noise and the body is at peace. Well, if He rests, I may! If for a while the Lord seems to suspend His energies, His servants may cry unto Him but they may not fret. He knows best when to sleep and when to wake.

As I see the Christ resting in the grave, my next thought is, He has the power to come forth again. Some few months ago I tried to show you that when the disciples were alarmed because Jesus was asleep, they were in error, for His sleep was the token of their security. When I see a captain on board ship pacing anxiously up and down the deck, I may fear that danger is suspected—but when the captain turns into his cabin, then I may be sure that all is right and there is no reason why I should not turn in, too. So if our blessed Lord should ever suffer His cause to droop and if He should give no marvelous manifestations of His power, we need not doubt His power—let us keep our Sabbath, pray to Him and work for Him, for these are duties of the holy day of rest. But do not let us fret and worry, for His time to work will come.

The rest of the Christian lies in believing in Christ under all circumstances. Go in for this, Beloved. Believe in Him in the manger, when His cause is young and weak. Believe in Him in the streets, when the populace applaud Him, for He deserves their loudest acclamations. Believe in Him when they take Him to the brow of the hill to cast Him headlong—He is just as worthy as when they cry, “Hosanna.” Believe in Him when He is

in an agony and believe in Him when He is on the Cross. And if ever it should seem to you that His cause might die out, still believe in Him! Christ's Gospel in any circumstances deserves our fullest trust. That Gospel which has saved your souls—that Gospel which you have received and which has been sealed upon your hearts by the Holy Spirit—stand fast in it, come what may—and through faith peace and quiet shall pervade your souls.

Once more, it will be well if we can obtain peace by having fellowship with our Lord in His burial. Die with Him and be buried with Him! There is nothing like it. I desire for my soul, while she lives in the Lord, that as to the world and all its wisdom, I may be as a dead man. When accused of having no power of thought and no originality of teaching, I am content to accept the charge, for my soul desires to be dead to all but that which is revealed and taught by the Lord Jesus. I would lie in the rocky tomb of the everlasting Truth of God, not creating thought, but giving myself up to God's thoughts.

But, Brothers and Sisters, if we are always to lie in that tomb, we must be wrapped about with the fine linen of holiness—these are the shrouds of a man who is dead to sin. All about us must be the spices, the myrrh and aloes of preserving Grace, that being dead with Christ we may see no corruption, but may show that death to be only another form of the new life which we have received in Him. When the world goes by, let it know, concerning our heart's desire and ambition, that they are all buried with Christ! And let it be written on the memorial of our spiritual grave, "Here he lies." As far as this world's sin, pleasure, self-seeking and wisdom are concerned, "Here he lies buried with his Master."

Know, you who are not converted, that the way of salvation is by believing in Christ, or trusting in Him! And if you so trust, you shall never be confounded, world without end, for he that trusts Christ and believes in Him even as a little child, the same shall enter into His kingdom. And he that will follow Him, even down to His grave, shall be with Him in His Glory—and shall see His triumphs forever and ever. Amen.

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THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

NO. 863

**DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 28, 1869,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

*“The angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and came and rolled
back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.”
Matthew 28:2.*

As the holy women went towards the sepulcher in the twilight of the morning, desirous to embalm the body of Jesus, they recollected that the huge stone at the door of the tomb would be a great impediment in their way and they said one to another, “Who shall roll away the stone?” That question gathers up the mournful enquiry of the whole universe. They seem to have put into language the great sigh of universal manhood, “Who shall roll away the stone?” In man’s path of happiness lies a huge rock which completely blocks up the road. Who among the mighty shall remove the barrier? Philosophy attempted the task, but miserably failed. In the ascent to immortality the stone of doubt, uncertainty and unbelief stopped all progress. Who could remove the awful mass and bring life and immortality to light?

Men, generation after generation, buried their fellows—the all-devouring sepulcher swallowed its myriads. Who could stop the daily slaughter, or give a hope beyond the grave? There was a whisper of resurrection, but men could not believe in it. Some dreamed of a future state and talked of it in mysterious poetry, as though it were all imagination and nothing more. In darkness and in twilight, with many fears and few guesses at the truth, men continued to enquire, “Who shall roll away the stone?”

Men had an indistinct feeling that this worm could not be all—that there must be another life—that intelligent creatures could not all have come into this world that they might perish. It was hoped, at any rate, that there was something beyond the fatal river. It scarcely could be that none returned from Avernus—there surely must be a way out of the sepulcher. Difficult as the pathway might be, men hoped that surely there must be some return from the land of death shade, and the question was, therefore, ever rising to the heart, if not to the lips, “Where is the coming man? Where is the predestinated deliverer? Where is he and who is he that shall roll away the stone?”

To the women there were three difficulties. The stone of itself was huge. It was stamped with the seal of the Law. It was guarded by the representatives of power. To mankind there were the same three difficulties. Death

itself was a huge stone not to be moved by any strength known to mortals. That death was evidently sent of God as a penalty for offenses against His Law—how could it, therefore, be averted, how could it be removed? The red seal of God’s vengeance was set upon that sepulcher’s mouth—how should that seal be broken? Who could roll the stone away?

Moreover, demon forces and powers of Hell were watching the sepulcher to prevent escape—who could encounter these and bear departed souls like a prey from between the lion’s teeth? It was a dreary question, “Who shall roll away the stone from the sepulcher?” “Can these dry bones live? Shall our departed ones be restored to us? Can the multitudes of our race who have gone down to Hades ever return from the land of midnight and confusion?” So asked all heathendom, “Who?” And Echo answered, “Who?”

No answer was given to sages and kings, but the women who loved the Savior found an answer! They came to the tomb of Christ, but it was empty, for Jesus had risen! Here is the answer to the world’s enquiry—there is another life! Bodies will live again, for Jesus lives! O mourning Rachel, refusing to be comforted, “Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears: for your work shall be rewarded and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.” Sorrow no longer, you mourners, around the grave, as those that are without hope—for since Jesus Christ is risen, the dead in Christ shall rise also!

Wipe away those tears, for the Believer’s grave is no longer the place for lamentations—it is but the passage to immortality! It is but the dressing room in which the spirit shall put aside, for awhile, her travel-worn garments of her earthly journey—to put them on again on a brighter morrow—when they shall be fair and white as no fuller on earth could make them!

I purpose, this morning, to talk a little concerning the resurrection of our exalted Lord Jesus, and that the subject may the more readily interest you, I shall, first of all, *bid this stone which was rolled away, preach to you.* And then I shall invite you *to hear the angel’s homily from his pulpit of stone.*

I. First, LET THE STONE PREACH. It is not at all an uncommon thing to find in Scripture stones bid to speak. Great stones have been rolled as witnesses against the people. Stones and beams out of the wall have been called upon to testify to sin. I shall call this stone as a witness to valuable Truths of God of which it was the symbol. The river of our thought divides into six streams.

1. First, the stone rolled must evidently be regarded *as the door of the sepulcher removed.* Death’s house was firmly secured by a huge stone. The angel removed it and the living Christ came forth. The massive door, you will observe, was taken away from the grave—not merely opened—but unhinged, flung aside, rolled away! And now Death’s ancient prison is

without a door! The saints shall pass in, but they shall not be *shut* in. They shall tarry there as in an open cavern, but there is nothing to prevent their coming forth from it in due time.

As Samson, when he slept in Gaza and was beset by foes, arose early in the morning and took upon his shoulders the gates of Gaza—posts and bars and all—and carried all away and left the Philistine stronghold open and exposed, so has it been done unto the grave by our Master, who, having slept out His three days and nights, according to the Divine decree, arose in the greatness of His strength and bore away the iron gates of the sepulcher, tearing every bar from its place. The removal of the imprisoning stone was the outward type of our Lord's having plucked up the gates of the grave—posts, bars and all—thus exposing that old fortress of Death and Hell and leaving it as a city stormed and taken and bereft of power.

Remember that our Lord was committed to the grave as a Hostage. "He died for our sins." Like a debt they were imputed to Him. He discharged the debt of obligation due from us to God on the Cross—He suffered to the full the great substitutionary equivalent for our suffering and then He was confined in the tomb as a Hostage until His work should be fully accepted. That acceptance would be notified by His coming forth from vile durance. And that coming forth would become our justification! "He rose again for our justification." If He had not fully paid the debt He would have remained in the grave. If Jesus had not made effectual, total, final Atonement, He would have continued a captive.

But He had done it all. The, "It is finished," which came from His own lips, was established by the verdict of Jehovah, and Jesus was set free. Mark Him as He rises—not breaking out of prison like a felon who escapes from justice—but coming leisurely forth like one whose time of release from jail is come. Rising, it is true, by His own power, but not leaving the tomb without a sacred permit—the heavenly officer from the court of Heaven is deputized to open the door for Him by rolling away the stone. And Jesus Christ, completely justified, rises to prove that all His people are, in Him, completely justified and the work of salvation is forever perfect!

The stone is rolled from the door of the sepulcher as if to show that Jesus has so effectually done the work that nothing can shut us up in the grave again. The grave has changed its character. It has been altogether annihilated and put away as a prison, so that death to the saints is no longer a punishment for sin, but an entrance into rest! Come, Brethren, let us rejoice in this! In the empty tomb of Christ we see sin forever put away—we see, therefore, death most effectually destroyed! Our sins were the great stone which shut the mouth of the sepulcher and held us captives in death and darkness and despair. Our sins are now forever rolled away and therefore death is no longer a dungeon, dark and drear, the an-

techamber of Hell, but rather it is a perfumed bed chamber, a withdrawing room, the vestibule of Heaven!

As surely as Jesus rose, so must His people leave the dead—there is nothing to prevent the resurrection of the saints. The stone which could keep us in the prison has been rolled away! Who can bar us in when the door itself is gone? Who can confine us when every barricade is taken away?—

***“Who shall rebuild for the tyrant his prison?
The scepter lies broken that fell from his hands!
The stone is removed. The Lord is risen!
The helpless shall soon be released from their bands.”***

2. In the second place, regard the stone *as a trophy, set up*. As men of old set up memorial stones and as at this day we erect columns to tell of great deeds of prowess, so that stone rolled away was, as it were, before the eyes of our faith consecrated that day as a memorial of Christ’s eternal victory over the powers of Death and Hell. They thought that they had vanquished Him. They deemed that the Crucified was overcome. Grimly did they smile as they saw His motionless body wrapped in the winding-sheet and put away in Joseph’s new tomb. But their joy was fleeting! Their boasting was but brief, for at the appointed moment He who could not see corruption rose and came forth from beneath their power! His heel was bruised by the old serpent, but on the Resurrection Morning He crushed the dragon’s head—

***“Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,
Christ has burst the gates of Hell!
Death in vain forbids His rise,
Christ has opened Paradise!
Lives again our glorious King!
‘Where, O Death, is now your sting?’
Once He died our souls to save—
‘Where’s your victory, boasting grave?’”***

Brethren beloved in Christ, as we look at yonder stone, with the angel seated upon it, it rises before us as a monument of Christ’s victory over Death and Hell and it becomes us to remember that His victory was achieved for us and the fruits of it are all ours! We have to fight with sin, but Christ has overcome it! We are tempted by Satan—Christ has given Satan a defeat. We by-and-by shall leave this body unless the Lord comes speedily. We may expect to gather up our feet like our fathers and go to meet our God. But Death is vanquished for us and we can have no cause to fear! Courage, Christian soldiers, you are encountering a vanquished enemy!

Remember that the Lord’s victory is a guarantee for yours! If the Head conquers, the members shall not be defeated. Let not sorrow dim your eyes—let no fears trouble your spirit—you must conquer, for Christ has conquered! Awaken all your powers to the conflict and nerve them with the hope of victory. Had you seen your Master defeated, you might expect

yourself to be blown like chaff before the wind. But the power by which He overcame He lends to you! The Holy Spirit is in you! Jesus Himself has promised to be with you always, even to the end of the world and the mighty God is your Refuge. You shall surely overcome through the blood of the Lamb! Set up that stone before your faith's eye this morning and say, "Here my Master conquered Hell and Death and in His name and by His strength I shall be crowned, too, when the last enemy is destroyed."

3. For a third use of this stone, observe that here is a *foundation laid*. That stone rolled away from the sepulcher, typifying and certifying, as it does, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is a foundation stone for Christian faith. The fact of the resurrection is the keystone of Christianity. Disprove the resurrection of our Lord and our holy faith would be a mere fable! There would be nothing for faith to rest upon if He who died upon the Cross did not also rise again from the tomb! Then "your faith is in vain," said the Apostle, "you are yet in your sins," while, "they, also, which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

All the great doctrines of our Divine religion fall asunder like the stones of an arch when the keystone is dislodged—in a common ruin they are all overthrown—for all our hope hinges upon that great fact. If Jesus rose, then is this Gospel what it professes to be! If He rose *not* from the dead, then is it all deceit and delusion! But, Brothers and Sisters, that Jesus rose from the dead is a fact better established than almost any other in history. The witnesses were many—they were men of all classes and conditions. None of them ever confessed himself mistaken or deceived. They were so persuaded that it was a fact, that the most of them suffered death for bearing witness to it!

They had nothing to gain by such a witness! They did not rise in power, nor gain honor or wealth. They were truthful, simple-minded men who testified what they had seen and bore witness to that which they had beheld. The Resurrection is a fact better attested than any event recorded in history whether ancient or modern. Here is the confidence of the saints—our Lord Jesus Christ who witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate and was crucified, dead and buried, rose again from the dead and after 40 days ascended to the Throne of God.

We rest in Him! We believe in Him! If He had not risen, we had been of all men most miserable to have been His followers. If He had not risen, His Atonement would not have been proved sufficient. If He had not risen, His blood would not have been proven to us to be efficacious for the taking away of sin! But as He *has* risen, we build upon this Truth of God—all our confidence we rest upon it and we are persuaded that—

***"Raised from the dead, He goes before;
He opens Heaven's eternal door;
To give His saints a blest abode,
Near their Redeemer and their God."***

My dear Hearers, are you resting your everlasting hopes upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? Do you trust in Him, believing that He both died and rose again for you? Do you place your entire dependence upon the merit of His blood certified by the fact of His rising again? If so, you have a foundation of fact and truth—a foundation against which the gates of Hell shall not prevail! But if you are building upon anything that *you* have done, or anything that *priestly* hands can do for you—you are building upon the sands which shall be swept away by the all-devouring flood and you and your hopes, too, shall go down into the fathomless abyss wrapped in the darkness of despair! Oh, to build upon the living Stone of Christ Jesus! Oh, to rest on Him who is a tried Cornerstone, elect, precious! This is to build safely, eternally and blessedly!

4. A fourth voice from the stone is this—here is *rest provided*. The angel seemed to teach us that as he sat down upon the stone. How leisurely the whole Resurrection was effected! How noiselessly, too! What an absence of pomp and parade! The angel descended. The stone was rolled away. Christ rose and then the angel sat down on the stone—he sat there silently and gracefully—breathing defiance to the Jews and to their seal, to the Roman legionaries and their spears, to Death, to earth, to Hell. He did as good as say, “Come and roll that stone back again, you enemies of the Risen One! All you infernal powers who thought to prevail against our ever-living Prince, roll back that stone again, if you dare or can!”

The angel said not this in words, but his stately and quiet sitting upon the stone meant all that and more. The Master’s work is done and done forever and this stone, no more to be used, this unhinged door, no more employed to shut in the tomb, is the type that, “it is finished”—finished so as never to be undone—finished so as to last eternally! Yon resting angel softly whispers to us, “Come here and rest also.” There is no fuller, better, surer, safer rest for the soul than in the fact that the Savior in whom we trust has risen from the dead! Do you mourn departed friends today? O come and sit upon this stone which tells you they shall rise again!

Do you expect to die soon? Is the worm at the root? Have you the flush of consumption on your cheek? O come and sit down upon this stone and remember that Death has lost its terror, now, for Jesus has risen from the tomb! Come, too, you feeble and trembling ones and breathe defiance to Death and Hell. The angel will vacate his seat for you and let you sit down in the face of the enemy. Though you are but a humble woman, or a man broken down and pale and languid with long years of weary sickness, yet may you well defy all the hosts of Hell while resting upon this precious Truth of God, “He is not here, but He is risen! He has left the dead, no more to die.”

I was reminded, as I thought over this passage of my discourse, of that time when Jacob journeyed to the house of Laban. It is said he came to a

place where there was a well and a great stone lay upon it and the flocks and herds were gathered round it, but they had no water till one came and rolled away the great stone from the well's mouth and then they watered the flocks. Even so the tomb of Jesus is like a great well springing up with the purest and most Divine refreshment—but until this stone was rolled away none of the flocks redeemed by blood could be watered there! But now, every Sunday, on the Resurrection Morning, the first day of the week, we gather round our Lord's open sepulcher and draw living waters from that sacred well!

O you weary sheep of the fold, O you who are faint and ready to die, come here! Here is sweet refreshment! Jesus Christ is risen! Let your comforts be multiplied!—

***“Every note with wonders swell,
Sin overthrown and captive Hell;
Where is Hell's once dreaded king?
Where, O Death, your mortal sting?
Hallelujah.”***

5. In the fifth place, that stone was a *boundary appointed*. Do you not see it so? Behold it, then—there it lies and the angel sits upon it. On that side what do you see? The guards frightened, stiffened with fear, like dead men. On this side what do you see? The timid trembling women, to whom the angel softly speaks, “Fear not: for I know that you seek Jesus.” You see, then, that stone became the boundary between the living and the dead—between the seekers and the haters—between the friends and the foes of Christ. To His enemies His Resurrection is “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” As of old on Mar's Hill, when the sages heard of the Resurrection, they mocked. But to His own people, the Resurrection is the headstone of the corner.

Our Lord's Resurrection is our triumph and delight! The Resurrection acts much in the same manner as the pillar which Jehovah placed between Israel and Egypt—it was darkness to Egypt, but it gave light to Israel! All was dark amidst Egypt's hosts, but all was brightness and comfort among Israel's tribes! So the Resurrection is a doctrine full of horror to those who know not Christ and trust Him not. What have they to gain by resurrection? Happy were they could they sleep in everlasting annihilation!

What have they to gain by Christ's Resurrection? Shall He come whom they have despised? Is He living whom they have hated and abhorred? Will He bid them rise? Will they have to meet Him as a Judge upon the Throne? The very thought of this is enough to strike through the loins of kings! But what will the fact of it be when the clarion trumpet startles all the sons of Adam from their last beds of dust? Oh, the horrors of that tremendous morning, when every sinner shall rise and the risen Savior shall come in the clouds of Heaven and all the holy angels with Him! Truly

there is nothing but dismay for those who are on the evil side of that Resurrection stone!

But how great the joy which the Resurrection brings to those who are on the right side of that stone! How they look for His appearing with daily growing transport! How they build upon the sweet Truth of God that they shall arise and with these eyes see their Savior! I would have you ask yourselves, this morning, on which side you are of that boundary stone. Have you life in Christ? Are you risen with Christ? Do you trust alone in Him who rose from the dead? If so, fear not! The angel comforts you and Jesus cheers you! But oh, if you have no life in Christ, but are dead while you live, let the very thought that Jesus is risen strike you with fear and make you tremble—for tremble well you may at that which awaits you.

6. Sixthly, I conceive that this stone may be used and properly, too, as *foreshadowing ruin*. Our Lord came into this world to destroy all the works of Satan. Behold before you the works of the devil pictured as a grim and horrible castle, massive and terrible, overgrown with the moss of ages, colossal, stupendous, cemented with blood of men, ramparted by mischief and craft, surrounded with deep trenches and garrisoned with fiends! A structure dread enough to cause despair to everyone who goes round about it to count its towers and mark its bulwarks.

In the fullness of time our Champion came into the world to destroy the works of the devil. During His life He sounded an alarm at the great castle and dislodged here and there a stone—for the sick were healed, the dead were raised and the poor had the Gospel preached to them! But on the Resurrection morning the huge fortress trembled from top to bottom! Huge rifts were in its walls—and tottering were all its strongholds! A stronger than the master of that citadel had evidently entered it and was beginning to overturn, overturn, overturn, from pinnacle to basement! One huge stone, upon which the building much depended—a cornerstone which knit the whole fabric together—was lifted bodily from its bed and hurled to the ground. Jesus tore the huge granite stone of Death from its position and so gave a sure token that every other would follow!

When that stone was rolled away from Jesus' sepulcher, it was a prophecy that every stone of Satan's building should come down and not one should rest upon another of all that the powers of darkness had ever piled up—from the days of their first apostasy even unto the end! Brothers and Sisters, that stone rolled away from the door of the sepulcher gives me glorious hope! Evil is still mighty, but evil will come down! Spiritual wickedness reigns in high places—the multitude still clamor after evil—the nations still sit in thick darkness. Many worship the scarlet woman of Babylon. Others bow before the crescent of Mohammed and millions bend themselves before blocks of wood and stone. The dark places and habitations of the earth are still full of cruelty.

But Christ has given such a shiver to the whole fabric of evil that, depend upon it, every stone will be certain to fall. We have but to work on—use the battering ram of the Gospel, continue each one to keep in his place, and like the hosts around Jericho, to sound the trumpet—and the day must come when every hoary evil, every colossal superstition shall be laid low! And the prophecy shall be fulfilled, “Overturn, overturn, overturn it! And it shall be no more, until He comes whose right it is. And I will give it to Him.”

That loosened stone on which the angel sits is the assurance of the coming doom of everything that is base and vile! Rejoice, you sons of God, for Babylon’s fall draws near! Sing, O heavens and rejoice, O earth, for there shall not an evil be spared. Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be one stone left upon another which shall not be cast down. Thus has the stone preached to us—we will pause awhile and hear what the angel has to say.

II. THE ANGEL PREACHED two ways—he preached in symbol and he preached in words. Preaching *in symbol* is very popular with a certain party nowadays. The Gospel is to be seen by the eyes, they tell us, and the people are to learn from the change of colors, at various seasons, such as blue and green and violet—exhibited on the priest and the altar and by lace and by candles and by banners and by cruets and shells full of water! They are even to be taught or led by the *nose*, which is to be indulged with smoke of incense—and drawn by the *ears*—which are to listen to hideous chants or to dainty canticles.

Now, mark well that the angel was a symbolical preacher with his brow of lightning and his robe of snow! But you will please to notice for *whom* the symbols were reserved. He did not say a word to the keepers—not a word. He gave them the symbolic Gospel, that is to say, he looked upon them—and his glance was lightning! He revealed himself to them in his snow-white garments and no more. Mark how they quake and tremble! That is the Gospel of symbols, and wherever it comes it *condemns*.

It can do no other. Why, the old Mosaic law of symbols, where did it end? How few ever reached its inner meaning! The mass of Israel fell into idolatry and the symbolic system became death to them. You who delight in symbols. You who think it is Christian to make the whole year a kind of practical charade upon the life of Christ. You who think that all Christianity is to be taught in semi-dramas, as men perform in theaters and puppet shows, go your way, for you shall meet no Heaven on that road—no Christ, no life! You shall meet with priests and formalists and hypocrites and into the thick woods and among the dark mountains of destruction shall you stumble to your utter ruin!

The Gospel message is, “*Hear* and your soul shall live.” “*Incline your ear* and come unto Me.” This is the life-giving message, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But, O perverse generation! If

you look for symbols and signs, you shall be deluded with the devil's Gospel and fall a prey to the Destroyer! Now we will listen to the angel's sermon *in words*. Thus only is a true Gospel to be delivered. Christ is the Word and the Gospel is a Gospel of words and thoughts. It does not appeal to the *eyes*—it appeals to the *ears* and to the intellect and to the heart. It is a *spiritual* thing and can only be learned by those whose spirits are awakened to grasp at the spiritual Truths of God.

The first thing the angel said was, "Fear not." Oh, this is the very genius of our risen Savior's Gospel—"Fear not." You who would be saved. You who would follow Christ, you need not fear! Did the earth quake? Fear not! God can preserve you though the earth is burned with fire! Did the angel descend in terrors? Fear not! There are no terrors in Heaven for the child of God who comes to Jesus' Cross and trusts his soul to Him who bled there. Poor women, is it the dark that alarms you? Fear not! God sees and loves you in the dark and there is nothing in the dark or in the light beyond His control.

Are you afraid to come to a tomb? Does a sepulcher alarm you? Fear not! You cannot die. Since Christ has risen, though you were dead yet should you live. Oh, the comfort of the Gospel! Permit me to say there is nothing in the Bible to make any man fear who puts his trust in Jesus. Nothing in the Bible, did I say? There is nothing in *Heaven*, nothing on *earth*, nothing in *Hell* that need make you fear who trust in Jesus. "Fear not." The *past* you need not fear—it is forgiven you. The *present* you need not fear—it is provided for. The *future*, also, is secured by the living power of Jesus. "Because I live," says He, "you shall live also."

Fear! Why that were comely and seemly when Christ was dead, but now that He lives there remains no space for it! Do you fear your sins? They are all gone, for Christ had not risen if He had not put them all away! What is it you fear? If an angel bids you, "Fear not," why will you fear? If every wound of the risen Savior and every act of your reigning Lord consoles you, why are you still dismayed? To be doubting and fearing and trembling, now that Jesus has risen, is an inconsistent thing in any Believer! Jesus is able to succor you in all your temptations, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for you, He is able to save you to the uttermost—therefore, do not fear!

Notice the next word, "Fear not: for I know." What? Does an angel know the women's hearts? Did the angel know what Magdalene was about! Do spirits read our spirits? 'Tis well. But oh, 'tis better to remember that our heavenly Father knows. Fear not, for God knows what is in your heart. You have never made an avowal of anxiety about your soul, you are too bashful even for that—you have not even proceeded so far as to dare to say that you hope you love Jesus—but God knows your desires.

Poor Heart, you feel as if you could not trust and could not do anything that is good! But you do at least desire, you do at least seek. All this God

knows. With pleasure He spies out your desires. Does not this comfort you—this great fact of the knowledge of God? I could not read what is in your spirit and perhaps you could not tell me what is there. If you tried, you would say after you had done, “Well, I did not tell him exactly what I felt. I have missed the comfort I might have had, for I did not explain my case.” But there is One who deals with you and knows exactly where your difficulty is and what is the cause of your present sorrow. “Fear not,” for your heavenly Father knows! Lie still, poor Patient, for the surgeon knows where the wound is and what it is that ails you. Hush, my Child, be still upon your great Parent’s bosom, for He knows all. And ought not that content you—that His care is as infinite as His knowledge?

Then the angel went on to say, “Fear not: for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified.” There was room for comfort here. They were seeking Jesus, though the world had crucified Him. Though the many had turned aside and left Him, they were clinging to Him in loving loyalty. Now, is there anyone here who can say, “Though I am unworthy to be a follower of Christ and often think that He will reject me, yet there is one thing I am sure of—I would not be afraid of the fear of man for His sake. My *sins* make me fear, but no *man* could do it. I would stand at His side if all the world were against Him.

“I would count it my highest honor that the Crucified One of the world should be the adored One of my heart. Let all the world cast Him out, if He would but take me in, poor unworthy worm as I am, I would never be ashamed to own His blessed and gracious name”? Ah, then, do not fear, for if that is how you feel towards Christ, He will own you in the Last Great Day. If you are willing to own Him now, “Fear not.” I am sure I sometimes feel, when I am looking into my own heart, as if I had neither part nor lot in the matter and could claim no interest in the Beloved at all. But, then, I do know this—I am not ashamed to be put to shame for Him—and if I should be charged with being a fanatic and an enthusiast in His cause, I would count it the highest honor to plead guilty to so blessed an impeachment for His dear sake.

If this is truly the language of our hearts, we may take courage. “Fear not: for I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified.” Then he adds, “He is not here: for He is risen.” Here is the instruction which the angel gives. After giving comfort, he gives instruction. Your great ground and reason for consolation, Seeker, is that you do not seek a dead Christ and you do not pray to a buried Savior! He is really alive! Today He is as able to relieve you, if you go to your closet and pray to Him, as He was to help the poor blind man when He was on earth. He is as willing today to accept and bless you as He was to bless the leper, or to heal the paralytic. Go to Him, then, at once, poor Seeker!

Go to Him with holy confidence, for He is not in the tomb—He would be dead if He were—He is risen, living and reigning, to answer your request!

The angel bade the holy women investigate the empty tomb, but, almost immediately after, he gave them a commission to perform on their Lord's behalf. Now, if any seeker here has been comforted by the thought that Christ lives to save, let him do as the angel said—let him go and tell others of the good news that he has heard. It is the great means for propagating our holy faith, that all who have learned it should teach it. We have not some ministers set apart to whom is reserved the sole right of teaching in the Christian Church! We have no belief in a clergy and a laity!

Believers, you are all God's clerics—all of you! As many of you as believe in Christ are God's clergy and bound to serve Him according to your abilities. Many members there are in the body, but every member has its office—and there is no member in the body of Christ which is to be idle, because, indeed, it cannot do what the Head can do. The foot has its place and the hand its duty, as well as the tongue and the eyes. O you who have learned of Jesus, keep not the blessed secret to yourselves! Today, in some way or other, I pray you make known that Jesus Christ is risen! Pass the watchword round, as the ancient Christians did! On the first day of the week they said to one another, "The Lord is risen, indeed."

If any ask you what you mean by it, you will then be able to tell them the whole of the Gospel, for this is the essence of the Gospel—that Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. He died the Substitute for us criminals! He rose the Representative of us pardoned sinners! He died that our sins might die and lives again that our souls may live! Diligently invite others to come and trust Jesus. Tell them that there is life for the dead in a look at Jesus crucified! Tell them that that look is a matter of the soul! Tell them it is a simple confidence! Tell them that none ever did confide in Christ and were cast away! Tell them what you have felt as the result of your trusting Jesus and who can tell, many disciples may be added to His Church, a risen Savior will be glorified and you will be comforted by what you have seen!

The Lord follow these feeble words with His own blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 28.

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FOR OR AGAINST? NO. 2773

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 6, 1902.

*DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING MARCH 24, 1878.*

*“And the guards shook for fear of him, and became as dead men.
And the angel answered and said unto the women, Do not be
afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified.
He is not here, for He is risen, as He said.”
Matthew 28:4-6.*

THIS twofold incident, the trembling of the guards and the comforting of the women, seems to me to have a great deal about it in the form of a type. I think it may be looked upon as an illustration of what has often occurred and will probably occur again and again. And it teaches us how Divine and angelic manifestations have their dark and threatening side for the ungodly, and their bright and cheering side for the people of God. Just as the pillar of cloud which came between the Israelites and the Egyptians, was dark to the Egyptians but gave light to the children of Israel, so, in this case, the appearance of the angel of the Lord made the Roman soldiers shake and swoon away while it brought comfort and encouragement to the humble women who were the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be thus all through the history of the world—the most cheering subjects to saints will be the most gloomy subjects to sinners and, at the last, “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” “He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.” When He shall be welcomed by the joyful acclamations of all His faithful followers, the wicked shall say to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.” That face, which will be to His own people as the rising of the sun which will usher in the everlasting day, will be to the wicked as the flaming sword of certain vengeance smiting them to their eternal overthrow!

I bring this incident, therefore, before your notice for the purpose of showing you that the swooning men, on the one side, in the presence of the angel, represent the terrifying effect of many a glorious Truth of God

upon the ungodly. While the women, comforted by the cheering words of the angelic messenger, set forth the way in which many a Truth of God, terrible to the wicked, has, nevertheless, its sweet and cheering side to seeking souls.

My first division will be this, *all things have a black look for ungodly men*. And the second will, naturally, be that *all things have a smile for seekers after Christ*.

I. First, I have a stern duty to perform in reminding everyone who is not reconciled to God by Jesus Christ and who, therefore, is still living in sin, that ALL THINGS HAVE A BLACK LOOK FOR HIM.

Whether you know it or not, you who are enemies to God are out of gear with the entire universe. If God did not hold His creatures in with a strong leash, they would turn upon you and tear you in pieces. The very earth groans under the burden of having to bear you up and the bread you eat is unwilling to feed an enemy of God. The wind, air, sun, moon, stars would, if they could, decline to be of service to you as long as you remain at enmity against Him whom they so gladly serve. The Believer in God is informed that he shall be in league with the stones of the field and that the beasts of the field shall be at peace with him. All things work together for good unto him—but to you who are a rebel against your God, nothing is working for good! The great wheels of Divine Providence are continually revolving and the day is coming in which they will grind you to powder! Whatever little discomfort or inconvenience you may have suffered in the past—and, perhaps, you have fretted and fumed, and even blasphemed against God because of it—it is nothing compared with what you will have to suffer in that day when God shall permit the forces of Nature to work their just and righteous will upon you—and to inflict upon you the due penalty for your evil deeds.

If an unconverted man were really in his right senses, so that he could accurately understand the position in which he stands, he would be alarmed to the last degree. Though he may not have outwardly transgressed the Law of God by enormous crimes against the law of man, yet it is guilt enough for him to have lived in rebellion against his God—guilt enough to have forgotten God—guilt enough to have no love for Him! I think I see you now, O ungodly man! You are standing above the pit of everlasting wrath upon a single plank and that plank is snapping beneath your feet—you are hanging over the awful precipice by a single rope and each moment the strands of that rope are breaking—and the last one of them will snap before long! And if you are then unsaved, you will learn what eternal destruction from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of His power will mean. O God, save us all from being any longer opposed to You! Deliver us from the guilt of the past and the sin of the present, and reconcile us unto Yourself through the death of Your Son. This is the one great need of each unsaved soul in the whole world!

Every unconverted person ought to learn, from the connection of our text, *that the great throes of Nature are always against the ungodly*. These

Roman soldiers who were on guard at the door of the sepulcher, were probably not any worse than most other men of their time. Possibly they were better than a good many others but they were not Christians, so they were opposed to God and they were doing the devil's work. While they were at their post, the earth suddenly began to rock under their feet. They may have had some experience with earthquakes before, for they had lived in regions where earthquakes were not uncommon, but this was "a great earthquake" and, as they felt the ground moving beneath them, as though they were on the sea rather than on the land, they were full of fear. There is, in most men, a consciousness of the power of that which is supernatural. You may hear them swear, or talk in atheistic fashion until there comes a sudden flash of lightning so vivid that they start—and as it is followed by a tremendous thunderclap, they are alarmed and they cry out, "O God!" If they happen to witness such a violent phenomenon as a tropical tornado or an earthquake, they are so alarmed and distressed that they know not what to do.

Men on board ship, in times of terrible storm and peril, who never thought of praying before, believe in God straight away and cry to Him for mercy when the yawning wave threatens to swallow up the vessel in which they are sailing. I think that there are few sailors who really remain atheists. At any rate, I cannot imagine that they will continue to be so if, on some lonely night, when the ship is gently moving over the sea, there should happen to be one of those strange lights that will sometimes come and which I have seen, lighting up every spar and sail with wonderful magnificence for a moment, and then all sinking into darkness again. The man who witnesses such a sight as that, stands aghast and all his doubts concerning the existence of God are driven away by the inward conviction that, somehow or other, the great and terrible forces of Nature are ranged against the man who is living in opposition to his God!

Another thing is also very clear from this narrative and we may state it as a fact, that *all mysterious beings are against the ungodly*. These Roman soldiers evidently thought so, or they would not have trembled and become as dead men. They had never seen an angel before, though they may have had some sort of belief that there were such mysterious beings. But, on this occasion there appeared to them the angel of the Lord—"his countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow"—and they were so astonished and alarmed at the sight of him that they quaked and became as dead men! It has become a custom, in this evil age, for certain persons to attempt to communicate with familiar spirits. If it can be done, it is strictly forbidden in this Book, yet there are some who try to have dealings with those who are in the land of spirits. Well, if they will trespass on that forbidden ground, it is possible that, one of these days, somebody will appear to them. I should not greatly wonder if their father, the devil, came up and ran away with them! They go so near his door and do their utmost to enter that they ought not to be surprised if he should appear and claim his own!

But let every unconverted person be sure that whatever spirits there may be in the unseen world—and there are good angels and bad ones—they will, none of them, work for the good of the ungodly! The evil angels may tempt and mislead, and help to destroy, but they can do no good, even if they wished to do so, to the ungodly. And as for the pure and holy spirits that behold the Father's face in Glory, I think that their flaming swords must often be ready to start from their scabbards as they hear God's holy name profaned and see how mortal men, puny creatures as they are, dare to provoke the majesty of Heaven! If angels are capable of experiencing horror, I think they must often be horrified into burning indignation at the transgressions which they behold among the sons and daughters of men! Ah, you who try to pierce the veil which hides these mysterious beings from view, be sure of this, that whatever of mystery there is in the world of spirits, it is all arrayed against you! Even if you can see the hand that is writing on the wall, you cannot see the body of the writer who is inscribing the letters of fire upon the wall, and though those letters are a mystery to you, you need not think twice as to the purport and meaning of the message, for you may be sure that it is against you. Whenever there is a manifestation from the spirit world at all, God cannot have sent it in your favor as long as you remain His adversaries. There is a black and threatening side of every angelic face towards everyone who will not be reconciled to God.

The same is true concerning *the Resurrection of Christ*. These Roman legionaries saw the Savior rise from the dead, or, at least, they witnessed as much of that great act as could be beheld by men. And it made them tremble as they saw the dead man, whose corpse they were guarding, suddenly emerge from the grave in life and resurrection beauty! Well might they be alarmed at the Resurrection of Christ—and there will be another resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust—and that great Truth of God has a dark side to everyone who is the adversary of God! You might be glad to get rid of that body of yours and to suffer only in your spirit, but you cannot do so and, therefore, I charge you to “fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.”

“Those are hard words,” someone says. I know they are, but they are not mine—they are the words of the tenderhearted Christ who never said anything more harshly than it was necessary to. You cannot get rid of that body of yours—you will have to wear it in another world and it will have to smart if you die unsaved. The members of your body that you have made members of unrighteousness and servants of sin, will have to bear the fury of Divine Wrath even as the spirit which now inhabits that body will have to bear it! Yes, the truth of the resurrection has a dark side to the ungodly. If you could creep into your beds of dust and be there and rot—if there were some dens and caves where you could hide yourselves from the face of God—or if there were for you the annihilation which some false teachers promise you, then you might continue in sin without fear of consequences. But now you have but one way of hope

and that is repent and be reconciled to God, for if you will not, neither Heaven, nor earth, nor Hell can hide you from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, nor can either time or eternity find you a place of shelter from the wrath of the Lamb!

Rest assured that you must rise again and that you must appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and receive from His lips the righteous sentence for the things which you have done in your body. I beseech you to give heed to this message and to be warned by it, all you who are living ungodly lives! The Second Coming of Christ will be a time of terror to you, whatever of bliss there may be about it for His own people. I am not going to enter into any details of the great conflagration, when the heavens and the earth shall pass away in flaming fire, or of the wondrous renovation in which there shall be new heavens and a new earth. I will not attempt to describe what the coming of Christ will be like, but I will just remind you that the Day of the Lord will be one of darkness—not light—to everyone who remains out of Christ!

To those who bow the knee and kiss the Son, and accept God's Grace in His Son, Jesus Christ, everything about Christ's coming will be joyous. But to those who reject the Mediator and trample on His precious blood, everything about His coming will be black as a sackcloth of hair. Their sun shall be turned into darkness and their moon into blood! Their stars shall wither like unripe figs and their sky shall pass away like a scroll. There shall be no hope, or light, or comfort left for them in that tremendous day of Christ's appearing! Everything—and I make no exception—from God's all-piercing eyes that shall burn with holy indignation against those who have rejected His Son, even to the glaring eyes of devils in Hell—all shall shed baleful beams of blackness upon those who have refused to believe in Jesus and who have remained the enemies of God!

I have no doubt that these men who kept watch at the Savior's tomb, were strong men—Caesar did not pick dwarfs and weaklings for his armies. I have no doubt that they were also cruel men. Soldiers often are and Roman soldiers certainly were of that character. They were brave men, too. No men who have ever lived have been braver than were the soldiers of old Rome. They were also hardy, I do not doubt. Many of them had passed through arduous campaigns and they were probably all familiar with bloodshed and the sad sights and sounds of the field of battle. They had stood firm amid the shock of arms in deadly combat, but now, just as the morning dawned, they were witnesses of the wondrous spectacle of the Resurrection of Christ and the descent of the angel of the Lord—"and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Well, now, if it was so with the bravest of the brave when they saw only one angel, what will be the condition of any of us who remain unsaved, when we shall see the heavens all aglow with myriads of bright spirits? And when we shall not merely see Christ in the Glory of His Resurrection, but in the Glory of His Father and of His holy angels? When the archangel's trumpet shall ring out o'er land and sea and there shall

peal forth that soul-piercing message, “Awake, you dead, and come to judgment”? When the earth shall rock and reel to and fro, and the sea shall give up her dead? Ah, what dismay will seize the unsaved sinner then!

How will he put his hands upon his loins in the bitter anguish of his spirit! How will he wish—all in vain—that he had never been born! But I must stop, for the subject is too great and too terrible for human language. God grant that you may be born-again! Then you will not have to wish that you had never been born! May you, by faith, see Christ on His Cross, or else the sight of Christ on His Throne will overwhelm you with eternal despair!

II. Now, in the second place, I have to speak of something more pleasing. The second part of my discourse is to be upon this theme—ALL THINGS SMILE UPON SEEKERS AFTER CHRIST.

The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified.” From these words, I gather that true seekers after Christ *are those who seek Jesus, “who was crucified.”* They are those who understand that Christ died upon the Cross as a Sacrifice for sin, and they seek Him in order that He may put away their sin. They have heard that He has made an atonement for sin by the shedding of His precious blood and they want to have blessings bestowed upon themselves, so they seek to have Him as their Substitute and Representative, to stand forever before God on their behalf and to put away their guilt by His great Sacrifice. Now, dear Friends, you know whether you are seeking Christ in that way or in some other fashion. To seek Christ simply as your Example, or as a sort of make weight for your own goodness and merit is no good whatever! That is no better than not seeking Him at all. But to seek Christ as the Crucified One, to recognize Him as the appointed Victim offered up for His people’s guilt, and to want to have Him to be a Substitute for you—that is the right sort of seeking and you have no need to fear if you are so seeking Jesus.

I learn, also, from this narrative, that *there are some seeking Jesus, who was crucified, who have known Him long.* Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Joses, were old familiar friends of Jesus, but they had lost Him for a little while. He had been hidden away from them in the sepulcher, so they were seeking Him. So, dear Friends, are you seeking Christ, not for the first time, but because you have known Him for many years and you need again to enjoy the light of His Countenance? Then I say to you, as the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, but He still lives and loves you, and will graciously appear unto you.”

Possibly, some whom I am now addressing are seeking the Lord for the first time. Happy are the people who are led truly to seek Him! How good He is to those who seek Him rightly! I am speaking now of what I know, for I know how good He was to me when I first sought Him. There was nothing in me that could have won His heart—it was because He was so

good in Himself that He had pity upon such an unworthy one as I was when I began to seek Him. But, oh, He was so tender, so gracious and so good to me that I cannot help telling you about Him, and trying especially to cheer you who are seeking His face! He is not hard to find, for He is not far from any of us. He is not One with whom it is difficult to plead, for He is full of compassion and mercy. He has a great heart and there is an easy way to get at it, for the soldier's spear opened a road right up to it! And any sigh, or tear, or cry, from a heart that truly longs for Him will touch His heart and His soul will go forth in pity towards you who are seeking Him! I am so glad that you have begun to seek Him, for everything will smile upon you, now, if you are really, heartily and earnestly seeking the Savior.

This, then, is the kind of seekers to whom all things look fair. So, Beloved, if you are a seeker of this sort, if you are really seeking the crucified Savior, then every *mysterious being is on your side*. I do not suppose that you ever saw an angel. You need not wish to do so, but if you did, the angel would say to you, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified." The angels know a great deal about us. I have no doubt they can read our hearts in the way in which one spirit can read another spirit. They certainly rejoice when you begin to pray, and to repent, and to believe in Jesus. Do not be afraid of them, for they will not hurt you. Get rid of all fears concerning mysterious beings, for, in the first place, they do not appear to men, now, unless under very exceptional circumstances, so you need not be at all afraid that they will appear to you. But if they did, would it matter in the least to me or to you if we are in Christ Jesus?

If there were a thousand devils in my way, and I had to go where they were, I would drive them all away. They would fly, like chaff before the wind, from the face of any man who did but mention the name of Jesus! And if all the angels of Heaven stood in serried squadrons in front of you, you must just say to them, "Ah, blessed servitors! I am glad to see you, now go about your business," and they would soon be gone. There is nothing, in angel or devil, for a man to fear who is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. He shall have the angels to smile upon him and, whatever mysterious beings or things there may be in the heavens above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, they are all on the side of the man who is on the side of God!

This is also true concerning *all the mysterious doctrines of Scripture*. "Well," says someone, "there are many doctrines in the Bible that I cannot understand." That is quite likely, for there are a good many things, out of the Bible, that I cannot understand—in fact, to tell the truth, I do not know that I really understand *anything* completely, and I have, a long while ago, given up trying to do so. I can see a great many things and I can believe a great many Truths of God, but *understanding* is another thing altogether from either seeing or believing! And it is my conviction that the most of things that exist in the world are beyond all understand-

ing. I think you must have heard the simple story of the two young men who said that they would never believe what they could not understand. "Well," someone said to them, "let me tell you what I saw as I came here. I passed by a field and I saw some geese there, and they were eating grass. I also saw some sheep, and they were eating grass. And I saw some oxen and they, too, were eating grass! Do you believe that?" "Yes," the young men said, they believed that. "Well," said the other, "but I noticed that on the geese, there grew feathers. And on the sheep, there grew wool. And on the oxen, there grew hair! Do you believe that?" "Yes," said the young men. "Well," replied the other, "seeing that they all eat grass, do you understand how it is that, in one case, it turns to feathers, in another, to wool and in the other, to hair? Of course, you do not, so that, after all, you do believe a great deal that you cannot understand."

It is perfectly clear that every man must believe a great deal which it will remain forever impossible for him to be able fully to comprehend, but, whatever there is in the Bible that you do not understand, you can be sure that if you truly seek Jesus, who was crucified, there is no dark, mysterious decree of reprobation which shuts you out from finding Him! And, on the other hand, there is no bright, lustrous decree of election which blocks your way in coming to Christ! There are many grand and sublime Truths in the Word of God, and among them is the Doctrine of Election, which is most certainly true, but it is not a barrier against any sincere seeker of the Savior. The Lord said, as long ago as the days of Isaiah, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me in vain." Nor will He say so to you if you seek Him with all your heart. Whatever secret decree there may be, or may not be, it cannot be contrary to the plain words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but He that believes not shall be damned." That is the all-important question for you to consider and, if you have believed in Jesus, you may rest assured that all the decrees that are unknown to you must be on your side.

Is there anything else that is mysterious in the world? There are many *mysterious Providences*. Possibly some of you have been the subjects of very remarkable Providences. Ever since you began to seek the Lord, you have had more trouble than you ever had before. You say, "When I was altogether ungodly, I seemed to get on better than I have done since I became a hearer of the Word, and a seeker after Christ." That is one of the mysterious Providences which have puzzled many people, but you may depend upon it that it is wholly on your side. It may be that the Lord sees that there is no way of saving you except by making you pass through what seems like a sea of trouble. The day will probably come when you will thank God that things did not go smoothly and pleasantly with you. You see, as long as you are going downstream, your boat glides along easily enough with the current—but now that you are beginning to pull upstream, it is not a cause of wonder that you find the current to be contrary and the spray breaks over you—and now you have to pull with

all your might to escape from the waterfall, the roaring of which you can distinctly hear! But you will be helped, depend upon it. Do not marvel, however, if the dispensations of Providence should appear to you to be very mysterious. Just say in your soul, "It is all right, for every Providence says to me, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus.'" Every Doctrine of Scripture says to you, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus." And every angel in Heaven says, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus." So all must be well with you!

Yet once more, beloved Friends, *the truth that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead* is altogether on your side if you are seeking Him. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." I would like to speak to anybody here who is really seeking the Savior, just as I would have liked to have been spoken to when I was seeking Him. Dear Friend, let me assure you that there is still a living Savior. It is true that Jesus died upon the Cross, but He is not dead now. If you really want a Savior, He is to be found. He has not given up His office, He is still living and working. He is as full of power as He ever was and, by His Spirit, He is still working effectually upon all who seek Him. There is a living Savior! The Lord Jesus Christ still lives and there is great meaning in His Resurrection. You see, He died to pay our debts and He would never have risen again if those debts had not been paid! He died because of our transgressions and He has risen again to declare that we are fully and forever justified! Now that the crucified Christ lives again, the greatest sinners who come to Him will most certainly be justified in the sight of God, since Jesus Christ was not only, "delivered for our offenses," but He was also "raised again for our justification."

Do you seekers know what it is for which Jesus now lives? Paul tells us that "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." The chief thing that He does up there in Heaven is to plead for poor souls such as you are! If you are really seeking Him with all your heart, seeking Him as your crucified Savior, listen, and by faith you will hear Him pleading for you, "Father, forgive him. Accept him. Save him. He is seeking Me—O My Father, bless him!" Such are His pleas before the Throne of God, and you may rest assured that they will prevail for you! So, be of good courage, and be not afraid. "He is not here." Be thankful that He is not! "He is risen." He has gone into Glory where He can serve your turn far better than He could if He were still down here. He said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away," and He must say the same to you. If you are really seeking Him—if you will come, now, and trust Him—if you will just cast yourself upon Him—then, fear not, for His Resurrection is full of comfort to you.

I think I hear someone say, "My fear is that I shall never find Him." Perhaps you would not if it were left with you, but He will find you! If you are seeking Him and cannot find Him, remember that He is also seeking

you and that He will find you. I hope He will find you this very hour. I wish He would bring you to this pass—that you would say, “I will not rest until I do find Him.” I do not think He would let another night go over your head without your discovering that He is very near you. Only trust Him! Only trust Him and you have already found Him! May His mighty mercy bring you to that blessed position! Do not be afraid, for you shall surely find Him if you sincerely seek Him and diligently search for Him with all your heart.

“But I am afraid,” says another timid one, “that He is not for me.” Do not indulge such foolish fears! Do not say, “He is not for me,” until He tells you so Himself. If there is any text of Scripture that declares that your name is left out of the Lamb’s Book of Life, then believe it. But there is no such text in the whole Bible. On the other hand, there are many passages that should encourage you to trust in Jesus, like that one I quoted a little while ago—I cannot help repeating it—“Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And this one, “Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Therefore, there is no justification for you to say, “Christ is not for me,” if you truly trust in Him.

“But,” says another friend, “I am afraid that He would not receive me now. He may be changed from what He was on earth.” If Jesus Christ stood on this platform tonight, poor troubled Soul, would you not come and cast yourself at His feet, and say, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on me”? Well, now, He is the same Christ that He was when He was upon the earth and He is just as really here as if your eyes could behold Him. I do not ask you to do with your body what you would do if His body were here, but do with your *soul* what you would do if you felt that Jesus were here. Will you not say in your heart, knowing that He can hear you even if you do not utter the words audibly, “Jesus, have mercy on me. I believe that You can and that You will save me, and I trust You to save me”? You are saved as soon as you have thus trusted Him—you are saved now! All your transgressions are forgiven you. If you can truly say that this is the utterance of your soul. If you do really cast yourself upon Him, He says to you, “Son, daughter, your sins are forgiven you. Go in peace.” “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.”

What is your fear, my Friend? “O Sir, my fear is that if I did find Jesus, I would soon lose Him!” Well, if I were in your place, I would find Him, first, before I began worrying about losing Him! The very best thing in the world, when you are nervous and troubled, is to live by very short periods. “What do you mean by that expression?” asks someone. Why, just this—some people try to live a year ahead, so they always have a heap of trouble. And they often worry themselves about things that never come to pass—

***“Day by day the manna fell,
Oh, to learn that lesson well!”***

Live by the day, or, better still, live moment by moment. Remember this, if you once find Christ, or, rather, if He finds you, He is not accustomed to lose His people and He will never let you go! He had a strange lot of disciples when He was here, but concerning them all, He said to His Father, "Those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled." And as He did not lose one of them, so He will not lose one of you who truly trust Him.

I know that some of you who have come to Christ will have many troubles, but you need not have any fears. You have those fears because you do not think carefully enough upon the matter and examine it in the light of Scripture. The writer of *The Recreations of a Country Parson* tells us of a man who was in great trouble and who very nearly brought himself into a lunatic asylum. He had £500 a year. He was obliged to live in a certain house and in a certain style. He could not increase his income and his expenditure could not very well be cut down. I suppose neither he nor his wife had been much accustomed to economize. He felt bound to have a certain number of servants, everything to match, and he had the fear upon him that he should "overrun the constable," as people say, and that he would die in a debtor's prison, for there was such a thing in those days.

So he put down all his payments in a book and at the end of three months he found that he had actually spent £125. "Now," he said to himself, "four times £125 is £600. I shall be a hundred pounds in debt at the end of the year, and I shall go to prison." And that man, for a long time, troubled, worried and fretted himself, and could not tell what to do, till it struck him, all of a sudden, that four times £125 was not £600, but £500, and that, therefore, he did not owe anybody anything! But although he recovered from his former state of melancholy, the effects of that unhappy experience remained upon him for years all through his not calculating correctly—and I believe that there is many a person who is in distress for reasons quite as absurd as that!

Now, dear Friend, will you try to calculate and do it correctly? Set down your sins. "Oh, that is a long task!" says one— "I have not a roll of paper long enough." Well, use up all you have and then we will give you some more, but be sure to put them all down. Have you anymore? Put them all down. "Oh, there are so many, I cannot put them all down!" Well, then, put them down in a lump—say that they are infinite if you like. Put them down, in some way or other that will be final. "Oh, the list is too dreadful! It is too black!" I know it is, but I am not going to read it, so do not alarm yourself about that. I am no father confessor! I would not like to make my ear into a common sewer! Well, now, have you written them all down? If not, take the pencil again and complete the list—put down something that will comprehend it all. Have you put it all down? Then, lend me the pencil, for I want to write something, or I shall be very glad if you will write this sentence at the end of the list of all your sins—

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” It does not matter what the total of your sin was, for it is now all gone!

If I should owe any person here £5, and he will kindly write at the bottom, “Received with thanks,” and put his name and the date across the stamp, the debt is paid. Supposing I owed him £500? Well, if he will write the same words, that debt is cancelled. Supposing I owe Him £5,000? If he will write the same, that debt is gone. Supposing I owe Him £50,000—£500,000—£1,000,000—£50,000,000—if he will only put, “Received,” that debt is all done with, it is all gone!

That is what our Lord Jesus Christ has done by His precious blood—He has put this receipt at the bottom of the whole list of our transgressions, and they are all gone, and gone forever—“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.” What cause, then, can there be for fear if you will but trust in Jesus? You will be damned if you will not! You are “condemned already” if you have not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God—but if you do come to Jesus—if you believe in Jesus and are baptized on confession of your faith in Him, you are saved! God grant that each one of you may so come and believe and be baptized, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—427, 550, 599.

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

A VISIT TO THE TOMB

NO. 1081

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

***“He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come,
see the place where the Lord lay.”
Matthew 28:6.***

THE holy women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, came to the sepulcher hoping to find there the body of their Lord which they intended to embalm. Their intention was good and their will was accepted before God, but, for all that, their desire was not gratified for the simple reason that it was contrary to God’s design. It was at variance with even what Christ had foretold and plainly declared to them. “He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.”

I gather from this that there may be good desires in our hearts as Believers and we may earnestly try to carry them out, yet we may never succeed in them because through our ignorance we have not understood, or through our obliviousness we have happened to forget some Word of Christ that stands in our way. I have known this to be the case in prayer. We have prayed and we have not received because we had no warrant in the Word of God to ask for the thing we did.

Perhaps there was some prohibition in the Scriptures which ought to have restrained us from offering the prayer. We have thought in our daily life, amidst the pursuits of business, that if we could gain such-and-such a position, then we should honor God—and though we have sought it vigorously and prayed about it earnestly, we have never gained it. God had never intended that we should and, had we succeeded in compassing our own project, it might have been evil rather than advantageous—an entail of trouble instead of a heritage of joy. We were seeking great things for *ourselves*! We forgot that exhortation of the Lord, “Do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not.” Do not, therefore, expect to realize all those desires which seem to you to be pure and proper. They may not happen to run in the right channel. It may be that there is a Word from the Lord that forbids your ever seeing them brought to pass.

These good women found that they had lost the Presence of Him who had been their greatest delight. “He is not here,” must have sounded like a funeral knell to them. They expected to find Him but He was gone. But then the grief must have been taken out of their hearts when it was added, “He is risen.” I gather from this that if God takes away from me any one good thing, He will be sure to justify Himself in having done so

and that very frequently He will magnify His Grace by giving me something infinitely better.

Did Mary think it would be a good thing to find the dead body of her Lord? Perhaps it would have given her a kind of melancholy satisfaction—or so she thought according to her poor judgment. The Lord took that good thing away. But then Christ was risen and now to hear of Him, then presently to see Him—was not that an infinitely better thing? Have you lost anything of late around which your heart had intertwisted all its tendrils? You shall find that there is good cause for the loss! The Lord never takes away a silver blessing without intending to confer on us a golden gain! Depend upon it—for wood He will give iron and for iron He will give brass—and for brass He will give silver and for silver He will give gold!

All His taking is but preliminary to a larger *giving*. Have you lost your child? What if you find your Lord more dear than ever? One smile of your Lord will be better to you than all the cheerful frolics of your child. Is He not better to you than 10 sons? Have you lost the familiar companion who once cheered you along the valley of life? You shall now, by that loss, be driven closer to your Savior! His promises shall be more sweet to you and the Blessed Spirit shall reveal His Truth more clearly to you. You shall be a gainer by your loss.

There is many a plant that has been protected by a great tree whose spreading branches covered it from the drenching rain and the downfall of hail. But the tree has been cut down by the cruel woodman's axe. At the fall of that tree the little plant has been ready to cry out for fear. Henceforth it will remain unprotected. Not so—these sad bodings quickly vanish—for now the sun has come upon it as it never came before and the dews have fallen more plenteously, and the rain has penetrated to its roots! And the little tender plant springs up to a stature it could never otherwise have known, seeing it was dwarfed by the comfort it enjoyed.

You shall find that full many of the comforts taken from you were drawbacks to your high culture and in the absence of them you shall get an abundant compensation, a tenfold blessing. "He is not here"—that is sorrowful. But, "He is risen"—this is gladsome! Christ, the dead One, you cannot see. You cannot tenderly embalm that blessed body. But Christ, the living One, you shall see! And at His feet you shall be able to prostrate yourself! And from His lips you shall hear the gladsome words, "Go, tell My Brethren that I am risen from the dead"! That lesson may be worth your remembering! If God applies it to your soul it may yield you rich comfort.

Should the Lord take away one joy from you, He will give you another and a better one. "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." You never deny your children any pure gratification, I am sure, without intending their real good. How many of you have a way, when you

put your child into a little self-denial, of making it up to him again so that he is no loser by it? And your heavenly Father will deal quite as gently and tenderly with you, *His* children.

With these two preliminary remarks, we proceed to our text itself. And it may be well to say that some of us have been, this afternoon, to the funeral of a dear friend and deacon of this Church—and as such, the thoughts that stir in our breasts and the words that will flow from our lips this evening would be more appropriate if the open grave were before us. Let us stand there in imagination and conceive, if you will, even yonder bell—though it often hinders our devotions so that I wonder why any Christian people need annoy other Christian people with it—to be a funeral knell for us.

Let it help to bear us on the wings of sound to the grave so that we may the better realize the position in which these meditations will be congruous to the occasion. The text contains, first of all, an assurance! And secondly, an invitation. First, an assurance—“He is not here, for He is risen.” Secondly, an invitation—“Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

I. The assurance—“He is not here, for He is risen.” Jesus Christ has really **RISEN FROM THE DEAD**. Though superficial scholars have tried to prove that this well-attested fact is but a fabulous myth, there is not one doctrine of Holy Writ which has not been, in like manner, spirited away. At first they denied out and out that such things ever happened and said that they were a pure invention. But afterwards, when abundant evidence was brought to prove a resurrection, this gross incredulity gave place to a more refined skepticism.

Yet beyond a doubt it can be shown that there is as much evidence for the resurrection of Christ as for any fact in history. There is probably no fact in history which is so fully proven and corroborated as the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, who was nailed to the Cross and died and was buried, did rise again! As we believe the histories of Julius Caesar—as we accept the statements of Tacitus—we are bound on the same grounds, even as historical documents, to accept the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—and of those persons who were eye-witnesses of His death and who saw Him after He had risen from the dead.

That Jesus Christ rose from the dead is not an allegory and a symbol but a reality! There He lay dead—friend or foe to witness—a corpse fit to be committed to the grave. Handle Him and see. It is the very Christ you knew in life. It is the very same! Look into those eyes. Were there ever such eyes in any other human form? Behold Him! You can see the impress of sorrow on His face. Was there ever any visage so marred as His, any sorrow so real in its effects? That is the Emperor of Misery, the Prince of all mourners, the King of Sorrow! There He lies, unmistakably the same.

Now, mark the nail prints. There went the iron through those blessed hands and there His feet were pierced. And there is the gash that found out the pericardium and divided the heart—and brought forth the marvelous blood and water from His side! It is He, the same Christ! And the holy women lifted limb by limb and wrapped Him in linen and put the spices about Him, such as they had brought in their haste. And they lay Him down in that place—in that new tomb.

Now, let it be known and understood that our faith is that those very limbs that lay stiff and cold in death became warm with life again—that the very body with its bones and blood and flesh which lay there became again instinct with life and came forth into a glorious existence! Those hands broke the piece of honeycomb and the fish in the presence of the disciples—and those lips partook of the same. And He held out those wounds and said, “Reach here your finger and put it into the print of the nails.” And He bared His side, the same side, and said, “Reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side and be not faithless, but believing.”

He was no phantom, no spectra! As He Himself said, “A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see I have.” He was a real Man as much *after* the resurrection as He had been before! And He is real Man in Glory now even as He was when here below. He has gone up—the cloud has received Him out of our sight. The same Christ who asked Peter, “Do you love Me?”—the same Jesus who said to all His disciples, “Come and dine”—a real Man has really risen from a real death into a real life!

Now we always need to have that doctrine stated to us plainly, for though we believe it, we do not always *realize* it and even if we *have* realized it, it is good to hear it again so as to let our minds be confirmed about it. The Resurrection is as literal a fact as any other fact stated in history and is so to be believed among us. “He is not here: for He has risen.” Pursue the narrative, Beloved, and you will see that when our Lord Jesus Christ had risen on that occasion, being quickened from the slumbers of death, it was not only true that He had *really* risen from the sepulcher, but He had risen in order to His being further raised up in His ascension into the Glory which He now possesses at the right hand of the Father.

When He had burst the iron bonds of the grave, the disciples had this for their consolation—that He was now beyond the reach of His enemies. During the few days that our Lord lingered, none of His enemies attempted to do Him hurt. Against Him not a dog dare move his tongue. We can scarcely tell why, but so it was. There seemed to be a remarkable acquiescence in the minds of all His foes during the time in which He sojourned among His people below. He was beyond the reach of His enemies. They could hurt Him no more. And it is so now!

He is not here, in another sense, and He is now beyond the reach of all His malignant adversaries. Does not this cheer you? It does me. No Judas

can betray the Master now to be seized by Roman guards. No Pilate can now take Him and bribe justice and give Him over to be crucified though he knows Him to be innocent. No Herod can now mock Him with his men of war. No soldiers can now spit in His dear face. Now none can buffet Him, or blindfold Him and say to Him, "Prophecy who it is that struck You."

The head, the dear majestic head of Jesus can never be crowned with thorns again and the busy feet that ran on errands of mercy can never be pierced by the nails any more! Men shall no longer strip Him naked and stand and exult over His agonies. He is gone beyond their reach. Now they may rail and seek to spite Him through His *people* who are the members of His body. Now they may rage, but God has set Him at His own right hand and He is inaccessible to their malice! It comforts me, just as I think it would comfort the soldier in the day of battle when he saw the fight going very hard, to feel that the commander whom he loved was out of bullets' range.

"There," he would say, "You may strike us as you will. The bullets may rain red death through our ranks but our commander-in-chief, upon whom all the conflict hangs, is safe." Oh, blessed are those words and blessed was the pen that wrote them—and blessed was the Spirit who dictated them—"Wherefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father"!

It matters not, dear Brothers and Sisters, what becomes of us poor common soldiers. We feel as if our being slandered, our being disgraced, our being persecuted, our being put to death would not matter the turn of a straw in view of the momentous issues, so long as our beloved Master that once was crowned with thorns is crowned now with glory! And so long as He who stood at Pilate's bar to be condemned now sits on His Father's Throne, waiting till He shall come to judge the princes and kings of the earth, it matters not what we suffer for Him! With regard to our Lord's not being here, but having risen, it should console us to think that He is now beyond all pain as well as beyond all personal attack.

I comforted myself in thus reflecting of our friend who is lately deceased. He was struck, as many of you know, with sudden paralysis and he had lain so some six weeks. If it had pleased God, he might have lain six years or 16 years and it would have been a very painful thing to see him with life still in the body but with a mind sorely darkened. We are thankful—I feel personally grateful to God—that our friend has fallen asleep—that he has escaped from the miseries of this present evil life.

But how much more grateful ought we to be concerning our dear Lord, whom our soul loves! Oh, can you bear to think of Him, that He had not where to lay His head? Who among us would not have left his couch to give Him a night's rest? Yes, and have forsworn the bed forever if we might have given Him soft repose. Would we not, ourselves, have fallen to the hillside and been there all night till our head was wet with dew, if we might have gained rest for Him? He is worth 10,000 of us—and did it not seem as if it were too much for Him to have to suffer—to be homeless and houseless? He was hungry, Brothers and Sisters! He was thirsty! He was weary! He was faint!

He suffered our sicknesses—we are told that He took them upon Himself. Often had He heartache. He knew what “cold mountains and the midnight air” were to chill the body. And He knew what the bleak atmosphere and bitter privation were to freeze the soul. He passed through innumerable griefs and woes. From the first blood-shedding at His birth, down to the last blood-shedding at His death, it seemed as if sorrow had marked Him as her peculiar child. Always was He troubled, tempted, vexed, assailed, assaulted, molested by Satan, by wicked men and by the evils that are without!

Now there is no more of that for Him—and we are glad that He is not here for that reason. He is no child of poverty now! There is no carpenter's shop for Him now! No longer for Him is the smock frock of the peasant, woven from the top throughout. No longer the mountainside and heather for His resting place. No more jeering crowds around Him, now! No stones to stone Him, now! No sitting on the well, weary and saying, “Give Me a drink.” There is no longer a need that He should be supplied with food when He is hungry.

No more, Brothers and Sisters, scourging and flagellations. No more will He give “His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.” No piercing His hands and His feet, now! No burning thirst upon the bloody tree—no cry of, “Eloi, Eloi, lame Sabachthani.” God's waves and billows went over Him once, but no more can they assail Him! He was brought into the dust of death and His Soul was once exceedingly sorrowful—He is beyond all that. The sea is passed and He has come to the Fair Havens where no storms can beat upon Him. He has reached His joy! He has entered into His rest and He has received His reward!

Brothers and Sisters, let us be glad about this! Let us enter into the joy of our Lord! Let us be glad because He is glad—happy because He is happy! Oh that we might feel our hearts leaping within us though we, for a little while longer are on the field of battle, because He is clean gone from it and now is acknowledged and adored King of kings and Lord of lords! The fact that our Lord has risen has not only these consoling ele-

ments about it with reference to Him, but we must remember that it is the guarantee to every one of us who believe in Him, of our own resurrection!

The Apostle, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, makes the whole argument for the resurrection of the body hinge upon this one question—did Christ rise from the dead? If He did then all His people must rise with Him! He was a *representative* Man, and as the Lord our Savior rose, so all His followers must. Settle the question that Christ rose and you have settled the question that all who are in Him and conformed to His image must rise, too! As for ourselves, it is certain that we, as believers in Jesus, if we shall die and be put into the grave, will be fed upon by the worms—will go back to mother earth and mold.

For my part, I would never wrap the body in lead or do it up in any way that would keep it from melting back speedily to the earth from which it came. It seems fittest and holiest to let it speedily mold back to its native dust. But here is the appointed issue—no matter what becomes of that dust and through what transitions it may pass—the roots of trees may drink it up in this form. It is true it may turn to grass and flowers to be fed upon by beasts! The winds may waft it thousands of miles away, atom from atom—bone may be scattered from its bone. But, as surely as the Savior rose, we shall rise, too!

We say not that each actual particle of this flesh shall rise—it is not necessary for the identity of the body that it should be so—but still, the body shall be identical and the same body that is sown in the earth shall rise again from the earth in a beauty and a glory of which we know but little as yet—be assured of it! That body of the dear child of God to which you bade farewell some years ago shall rise again! Those eyes that you closed—those very eyes—shall see the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. Those ears that could not hear you when you spoke the last tender word—those ears shall hear the eternal melodies! That heart that grew stone cold and still when Death laid his cold hand upon the bosom shall beat again with newness of life and leap with joy amidst the festivities of the home-bringing, when Christ the Bridegroom shall be married to His Church, the bride!

That same body!—Was it not the temple of the Holy Spirit? Was it not redeemed with blood? Surely it shall rise at the trumpet of the archangel and at the voice of God! Be you sure of this! Be you sure of it—sure for your friend and sure for yourself! And fear not death! What is it? The grave is but a bath wherein our body, like Esther, buries itself in spices to make it sweet and fresh for the embrace of the glorious King in immortality! It is but the wardrobe where we lay aside the garment for a while. It shall come forth cleansed and purified with many a golden spangle on it which was not there before. It was a work garment when we put it off—it

will be a Sabbath robe when we put it on and it will be fit for Sabbath wear! We may even long for evening to undress, if there is to be such a waking and such a putting on of garments in the Presence of the King.

Further—not to linger too long on any one thought—let us remember that our Lord’s not being here, but having risen, has in it this consolatory thought that He has gone where He can best protect our interests. He is an Advocate for us. Where should the Advocate be but in the King’s court? He is preparing a place for us. Where should He be who is preparing a place but there—making it ready? We have a very active adversary who is busy accusing us. Is it not well that we have One who can meet him face to face and put the accuser of the Brethren to silence?

I think, if Christ were here at this very moment in proper Person, we should be inclined to say to Him, “Good Master, You can serve us well here. Your going about to heal the sick and teach the ignorant is very blessed. And we love to see You. The vision of Your face makes earth Heaven to us. But still, our great interests demand Your absence, for, good Lord, our prayers need someone to present them at the Throne. As one by one our prayers go up to Heaven, we would not have You here and send them away to a place where You are not. Besides, where the enemy goes to accuse, we need You there to defend—and since our best heritage is up above we need a Keeper who shall preserve it for us. Good Master, it is expedient that You go away.”

We have not to say that to Him, for He is gone and if ever the one Christ was of double value if ever the advantage of His position enhanced the value of His services—it is now that He is in Heaven. He would be precious here, but He is more precious there! He is doing more for us in Heaven than it could have been possible for Him to do for us here below, as far as our finite intelligence can judge and as truly as His infinite wisdom can pronounce. Meanwhile His absence is well-compensated by the Presence of His own Spirit. And His Presence there is well consecrated by His personal administration of sacred service for our sake.

All is well in Heaven, for Jesus is there! The crown is safe and the harp is secure and the blessed heritage of each tribe of Israel all secure, for Christ is keeping it. He is, to the Glory of God, the Representative and Preserver of His saints. And does not this Truth of God, that Christ is not here, but is gone, fall upon our ears with a sweet force as it constrains us to feel that this is the reason why our *heart* should not be here? “He is not here.” Then our heart should not be here! When this text, “He is not here,” was first spoken, it meant that He was not in the grave. He was somewhere on earth. But now He is not here at all. Suppose you are very rich and Satan whispers to you, “These are delightful gardens. This is a noble mansion, take your ease”? Reply to him, “But He is not here. He is not here. He is risen, therefore I dare not put my heart where my Lord is not.”

Or, suppose your family makes you very happy and, as the little ones cluster around you and sit around the fireside, your heart is very glad—and though you have not much of this world's goods, yet you have enough—and you have a contented mind. Well, if Satan should say to you, "Be well content and make your rest here." Say to him, "No, He is not here and I cannot feel that this is to be my abiding place. Only where Jesus is can my spirit rest." And have you lately begun in life? Has the marriage day scarcely passed over? Are you just now beginning the merry days of youth, the sweet enchantment of this life's purest joy?

Well, delight yourself, but still remember that He is not here and therefore you have no right to say, "Soul, take your ease!" Nowhere on earth is Christ and therefore nowhere on earth may our heart build her nest. Nowhere—no, not in the high places or in the quiet resting places! Not in the garden of nuts, or in the beds of spices. Not in the tents of Kedar or between Solomon's curtains. Not even at His sacramental table, nor yet among the means of Grace is Christ bodily, actually, present.

So we will take the sweetness of all and the spiritual good there may be in all outward means—but still they shall all point us *upward*—they shall all draw us away. As the sun exhales the dew and attracts it upward towards Heaven, so shall Christ magnetize and draw our hearts away and our thoughts up—and our longings up and our whole spirits up—towards Himself! "He is not here." Then why should *I* be here? Oh, get up, my Soul! Get up and let all your sweetest incense go towards Him who "is not here, for He is risen."

II. I must leave that point and come, with a few words, to speak upon the second point which is AN INVITATION. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Not, Beloved, that I am going to take you to Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. About that I shall not speak much. But I think *any* tomb might suffice to point the same sacred moral. I felt this afternoon, while I stood by the open grave in Norwood Cemetery, as though I heard a voice saying, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." It does not matter much to us about the precise spot. He lay in the grave—that is the prominent fact that preaches to us a pithy sermon.

Any grave may well suit our purpose. In the little town of Campodolcino I once realized the tomb of Christ very vividly in an affair which had been built for Catholic pilgrims. I was upon the hillside and I saw written upon a wall, these words, "And there was a garden." It was written in Latin. I pushed open the door of this garden. It was like any other garden, but the moment I entered, there was a sign with the words, "And in the garden there was a new tomb." Then I saw a tomb which had been newly painted and when I came up to it I read on it, "A new tomb wherein never man lay."

I then stooped down to look inside the tomb and I read in Latin the inscription, “Stooping down, he looked, yet went he not in.” But there were the words written, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” I went in and I saw there, engraved in stone, the napkin and the linen clothes laid by themselves. I was all alone and I read the words, “He is not here, for He is risen,” engraved on the floor of the tomb. Though I dread anything scenic and histrionic and popish, yet certainly I realized very much the reality of the scene—as I have this afternoon in standing before the open tomb.

I felt that Jesus Christ was really buried, really laid in the earth and has really gone out of it. And it is good for us to come and see the place where Jesus lay. Why should we see it? Well, first, that we may see how condescending He was that ever *He* should lay in the *grave*. He that made Heaven and earth lay in the grave! He who gave light to angels’ eyes lay in the darkness three days! He slept in the darkness there. He, without whom was not anything made that was made, was given up to death and lay a Victim of death there! Oh, wonder of wonders! Marvel of marvels! He who had immortality and life within Himself, yields Himself up to the place of death!

“Come, see the place where the Lord lay,” in the next place, to see how we ought to weep over the sin that laid Him there. Did I make the Savior lie in the grave? Was it necessary that before my sin could be put away, my sweet Prince, whose beauties enchant all Heaven, must be chill and cold in death and actually be laid in the tomb? Must it be so? O you murderous sins! You murderous sins! You cruel and cursed sins! Did you slay my Savior? Did you tear apart that tender heart? Could you never be content until you had led Him to His death and laid Him there? Oh, come and weep as you see the place where the Lord lay!

“Come, see the place where the Lord lay,” that you may see where *you* will have to lie unless the Lord should come on a sudden. You may take the measure of that tomb, for that is where you will have to repose. It does us good to remember, if we have great estates, that six feet of earth is all that will ever be our permanent freehold. We shall have to come to it—that solitary mound with two spears’ length of level ground—

**“Princes, this clay must be your bed,
In spite of all your towers.
The tall, the wise, the reverent head
Must lie as low as ours.”**

There is no discharge in this war. To the dust we must return. So, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay” to see that *you* must lie there, too.

But then, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay,” to see what good company you will have there! That is where Jesus lay—doesn’t that comfort you?—

**“Why should the Christian fear the day
That lands him in the tomb?”**

***There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume.”***

What more appropriate chamber for a Prince's son to go to sleep in than the Prince's own tomb? There slept Emmanuel! There, my Body, you may be well content to sleep, too! What more royal couch can you desire than the bosom of that same mother earth where the Savior was laid to rest awhile? Think, Beloved, of the ten thousands of saints that have gone that way to Heaven! Who shall dread to go where all the flock have gone?

You one poor timid sheep, if you, alone, had to go through this dark valley, you might well be afraid! But, oh, in addition to your Shepherd who marches at the head of all the flock, listen to the footsteps of the innumerable sheep that follow Him! And some were very dear to you and fed in the same pasture with you. Do you dread to go where they have gone? No, see the place where Jesus lay to see what good company is to be had though it may seem to be in a dark chamber.

“Come, see the place where the Lord lay,” to see that you cannot lie there long. It is not the place where Jesus *is*. He is gone and you are to be with Him where He is! Come and look at this tomb. There is no door to it. There was one—it was a huge rock, a monstrous stone—and none could move it. It was sealed. Can you see how they have set the stamp of the Sanhedrim, the stamp of the Law, upon the seal to make it sure that none should move it? But now, if you will go to the place where Jesus lay, the seal is broken, the guards are fled, the stone is gone! Such will your tomb be. It is true they will cover you up and lay on the sods of green turf. If you are wise you will prefer these things to the heavy slabs of stone they sometimes lay upon the dead.

That sweet mound, with here and there a daisy like the eye of earth looking up to Heaven asking mercy, or smiling in joy of expectation—there, there will you sleep! But just as in the morning you do but open your eyes and the curtains are opened and you come forth, none standing in your way, to do the labor of the day, so, when the trumpet of the Resurrection sounds, you will rise out of your bed in perfect liberty, none hindering you, to see the light of the day that shall go no down more forever! You have nothing to confine you! Bolt and bar there are none! Guard and watchman none! Stone and seal none! “Come, see the place where Jesus lay.”

I would not care to go to bed in a prison where there stood a turnkey with his iron key to fasten me in. But I am not afraid to go to sleep in the chamber out of which I can come at the morning's call a perfectly free man! And such are you, Beloved, if you be a Believer. You come to lie in a place that is open and free—a fit slumbering place for the Lord's free men!

“Come, see the place where the Lord lay,” in order to celebrate the triumph over death. If Miriam sang at the Red Sea, we also may sing at Je-

sus' tomb. If she said, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," shall not we say the same? If all the hosts of Israel went out with her—the women with dances—and the strong men with their voices in the song, so let all Israel go forth this day and bless and praise the Lord, saying, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory?" The place where Jesus lay has told us that—

***"Vain the watch, the stone, the seal!
Christ has burst the gates of Hell."***

Now let us sing unto Him and give Him all the praise.

I was thinking to say to you, Beloved, let us come and see the place where Jesus lay to weep there *for* our sins. Let us come and see the place where Jesus lay to die there *to* our sins. Let us come and see the place where Jesus lay to be buried there with Him. Let us come and see the place where Jesus lay to rise from that place to newness of life and find our way through resurrection-life into the ascension-life in which we shall sit in the heavenly places and look down upon the things of earth with joyous contempt, knowing that He has lifted us up far above them and made us to be partakers of brighter bliss than this earth can ever know.

But I will forbear. I have done. I would to God that all here present had some share in this! You all have a share in *dying*. There is a tree growing out of which your coffin will be made, or perhaps it is already cut down and seasoning against the time when it shall make you a timber suit—the last suit that you shall ever need. There is a spot of earth that must be shoveled out for you to be laid into to fill up the vacuum. But your *soul* shall *live*—your soul shall never die! Let not those who tell you of annihilation be believed for a moment! It must exist. Put it to yourself whether it shall be with the worm that never dies and the fire that never shall be quenched or with Christ who lives in His Glory and who shall come a second time to give Glory to His people and raise their *bodies* like His own!

Oh, it will all hinge on this—"Do you believe in Jesus?" If you do, you may welcome life and welcome death and welcome resurrection and welcome immortality! But if you believe not, then a blast has come upon you and to you it is terrible to die! It is terrible, even, to live—but more terrible to die! It will be terrible to rise again! It will be terrible to be damned and that forever! God save you from it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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THE TOMB OF JESUS

NO. 18

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, EASTER MORNING—
APRIL 8, 1855,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT EXETER HALL STRAND.**

***“Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”
Matthew 28:6.***

EVERY circumstance connected with the life of Christ is deeply interesting to the Christian mind. Wherever we behold our Savior, He is well worthy of our notice—

***“His Cross, His manger and His crown,
Are big with glories yet unknown.”***

All His weary pilgrimage, from Bethlehem’s manger to Calvary’s Cross, is in my eyes, paved with glory. Each spot upon which He trod is to our souls consecrated at once, simply because there the foot of earth’s Savior and our own Redeemer once was placed. When He comes to Calvary the interest thickens—then our best thoughts are centered on Him in the agonies of crucifixion! Nor does our deep affection permit us to leave Him, even when, the struggle being over, He yields up the ghost. His body, when it is taken down from the Cross, still is lovely in our eyes—we fondly linger around the motionless clay. By faith we discern Joseph of Arimathea and the timid Nicodemus, assisted by those holy women, drawing out the nails and taking down the mangled body. We behold them wrapping Him in clean white linen, hastily girding Him round with belts of spices, then putting Him in His tomb and departing for the Sabbath rest. We shall on this occasion go where Mary went on the morning of the first day of the week, when waking from her couch before the dawn, she aroused herself to be early at the sepulcher of Jesus. We will try, if it is possible, by the help of God’s Spirit, to go as she did—not in body, but in soul—we will stand at that tomb. We will examine it and we trust we shall hear some truth-speaking voice coming from its hollow bosom which will comfort and instruct us, so that we may say of the grave of Jesus when we go away, “It was none other than the gate of Heaven”—a sacred place, deeply solemn and sanctified by the slain body of our precious Savior!

I. AN INVITATION GIVEN. I shall commence my remarks this morning by inviting all Christians to come with me to the tomb of Jesus. “Come,

see the place where the Lord lay.” We will labor to render the place attractive. We will gently take your hand to guide you to it and may it please our Master to make our hearts burn within us while we talk by the way.

Away, you profane—you souls whose life is laughter, folly and mirth! Away, you sordid and carnal minds who have no taste for the spiritual, no delight in the celestial. We ask not your company. We speak to God’s Beloved, to the heirs of Heaven, to the sanctified, the redeemed, the pure in heart—and we say to them—“Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” Surely you need no argument to move your feet in the direction of the holy sepulcher. But still we will use the utmost power to draw your spirit there. Come then, for ‘tis the *shrine of greatness*, ‘tis the resting place of *the Man*, the Restorer of our race, the Conqueror of death and Hell! Men will travel hundreds of miles to behold the place where a poet first breathed the air of earth. They will journey to the ancient tombs of mighty heroes, or the graves of men renowned by fame. But where shall the Christian go to find the grave of one so famous as was Jesus? Ask me the greatest man who ever lived—I tell you the Man, Christ Jesus, was “anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows.” If you seek a chamber honored as the resting place of genius, turn in here. If you would worship at the grave of holiness, come here. If you would see the hallowed spot where the choicest bones that ever were fashioned lay for awhile, come with me, Christian, to that quiet garden, hard by the walls of Jerusalem!

Come with me, moreover, because it is the *tomb of your best Friend*. The Jews said of Mary, “She goes unto His grave to weep there.” You have lost your friends, some of you—you have planted flowers upon their graves—you go and sit at eventide upon the green sward, bedewing the grass with your tears, for there your mother lies and there your father, or your wife. Oh, in pensive sorrow come with me to this dark garden of our Savior’s burial. Come to the grave of your best Friend—your Brother—yes, one who “sticks closer than a brother.” Come, then, to the grave of your dearest relative, O Christian, for Jesus is your Husband, “your Maker is your Husband, the Lord of Hosts is His name.” Does not affection draw you? Do not the sweet lips of love woo you? Is not the place sanctified where one so well-beloved slept, although but for a moment? Surely you need no eloquence. If it were needed I have none. I have but the power in simple, but earnest accents, to repeat the words, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” On this Easter morning pay a visit to His grave, for it is the grave of your best Friend!

Yes, more, I will further urge you to this pious pilgrimage. *Come, for angels bid you.* Angels said, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” The Syrian version reads, “Come, see the place where *our* Lord lay.” Yes, angels put themselves with those poor women and used one common pronoun—*our*. Jesus is the Lord of angels as well as of men! You feeble women—you have called Him, Lord, you have washed His feet, you have provided for His needs, you have hung upon His lips to catch His honeyed sentences, you have sat entranced beneath His mighty eloquence. You call Him Master and Lord and you do well. “But,” said the seraph, “He is my Lord, too.” Bowing his head, he sweetly said, “Come, see the place where *our* Lord lay.” Do not fear, then, Christian, to step into that tomb! Do not dread to enter there, when the angel points with his finger and says, “Come, we will go together—angels and men—and see the royal bedchamber.” You know that angels did go into His tomb, for they sat one at His head and the other at His foot in holy meditation. I picture to myself those bright cherubs sitting there talking to one another. One of them said, “It was there His feet lay.” And the other replied, “And there His hands and there His head.” And in celestial language did they talk concerning the deep things of God. Then they stooped and kissed the rocky floor, made sacred to the angels themselves, not because there they were redeemed, but because there their Master and their Monarch, whose high behests they were obeying, did, for a while, become the slave of death and the captive of destruction! Come, then, Christian, for angels are the porters to unbar the door. Come, for a cherub is your messenger to usher you to the death-place of Death, Himself. No, start not from the entrance! Let not the darkness frighten you—the vault is not damp with the vapors of death, nor does the air contain anything of contagion. Come, for *it is a pure and healthy place.* Fear not to enter that tomb! I will admit that catacombs are not the places where we, who are full of joy, would love to go. There is something gloomy and noisome about a vault. There are noxious smells of corruption. Oftentimes pestilence is born where a dead body has lain. But fear it not, Christian, for Christ was not left in Hell—in Hades—neither did His body see corruption!

Come, there is no scent—yes, rather a perfume. Step in here and if you did ever breathe the gales of Ceylon, or winds from the groves of Araby, you shall find them far excelled by that sweet holy fragrance left by the blessed body of Jesus, that alabaster vase which once held Divinity and was rendered sweet and precious thereby. Think not you shall find anything obnoxious to your senses. Jesus never saw corruption. No worms ever devoured His flesh. No rottenness ever entered into His bones. He saw no corruption. Three days He slumbered, but not long

enough to putrefy. He soon arose, perfect as when He entered. Uninjured as when His limbs were composed for their slumber. Come then, Christian, summon up your thoughts, gather all your powers—here is a sweet invitation—let me press it again. Let me lead you by the hand of meditation, my Brothers and Sisters. Let me take you by the arm of your fancy and let me again say to you, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

There is yet one reason more why I would have you visit this Royal sepulcher—*because it is a quiet spot*. Oh, I have longed for rest, for I have heard this world’s rumors in my ears so long, that I have begged for—

**“A lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade”**

where I might hide myself forever! I am sick of this tiring and trying life. My frame is weary, my soul is mad to repose herself awhile. I wish I could lie myself down a little by the edge of some pebbly brook, with no companion save the fair flowers or the nodding willows. I would I could recline in stillness, where the air brings balm to the tormented brain, where there is no murmur save the hum of the summer bee—no whisper except that of the zephyrs and no song except the caroling of the lark. I wish I could be at ease for a moment. I have become a man of the world—my brain is racked, my soul is tired. Oh, would you be quiet, Christian? Merchant, would you rest from your toils? Would you be calm for once? Then come here! It is in a pleasant garden, far from the hum of Jerusalem. The noise and din of business will not reach you here. “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” It is a sweet resting spot, a withdrawing room for your soul where you may brush your garments from the dust of earth and muse awhile in peace.

II. ATTENTION REQUESTED. Thus I have pressed the invitation—now we will enter the tomb. Let us examine it with deep attention, noticing every circumstance connected with it.

And first, mark that it is a *costly tomb*. It is no common grave. It is not an excavation dug out by the spade for a pauper in which to hide the last remains of his miserable and over-wearied bones. It is a princely tomb. It was made of marble, cut in the side of a hill. Stand here, Believer, and ask why Jesus had such a costly sepulcher. He had no elegant garments. He wore a coat without seam, woven from the top throughout, without an atom of embroidery. He owned no sumptuous palace, for He had not where to lay His head. His sandals were not rich with gold, or studded with brilliants. He was poor. Why, then, does He lie in a noble grave? We answer, for this reason—Christ was unhonored till He had finished His sufferings. Christ’s body suffered contumely, shame, spitting, buffeting and reproach until He had completed His great work. He was trampled

under foot, He was “despised and rejected of men. A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” But the moment He had finished His undertaking, God said, “No more shall that body be disgraced. If it is to sleep, let it slumber in an honorable grave. If it is to rest, let nobles bury it. Let Joseph, the councilor and Nicodemus, the man of Sanhedrim, be present at the funeral. “Let the body be embalmed with precious spices, let it have honor. It has had enough of contumely, shame, reproach and buffeting. Let it now be treated with respect.” Christian, do you discern the meaning? Jesus, after He had finished His work, slept in a costly grave—for now His Father loved and honored Him, since His work was done!

But though it is a costly grave, *it is a borrowed one*. I see over the top of it, “Sacred to the memory of the family of Joseph of Arimathea.” Yet Jesus slept there. Yes, He was buried in another’s sepulcher. He who had no house of His own and rested in the habitation of other men. He who had no table, but lived upon the hospitality of His disciples. He who borrowed boats in which to preach and had not anything in the wide world, was obliged to have a tomb from charity! Oh, should not the poor take courage? They dread to be buried at the expense of their neighbors. But if their poverty is unavoidable, why should they blush, since Jesus Christ, Himself, was interred in another’s grave? Ah, I wish I might have had Joseph’s grave, to let Jesus be buried in it. Good Joseph thought he had cut it out for himself. He thought that he would lay his bones there. He had it excavated as a family vault and lo, the Son of David makes it one of the tombs of the kings! But he did not lose it by lending it to the Lord—rather, he had it back with precious interest. He only lent it three days—then Christ resigned it—He had not injured but perfumed and sanctified it and made it far more holy! So that it would be an honor in future to be buried there. It was a borrowed tomb—and why? I take it not to dishonor Christ, but in order to show that as His sins were borrowed sins so His burial was in a borrowed grave. Christ had no transgressions of His own. He took ours upon His head. He never committed a wrong but He took all my sin—and all yours—if you are Believers. Concerning all His people, it is true, He bore their griefs and carried their sorrows in His own body on the tree. Therefore, as they were others’ sins, so He rested in another’s grave. As they were sins imputed, so that grave was only imputably His. It was not His sepulcher—it was the tomb of Joseph.

Let us not weary in this pious investigation, but with fixed attention observe everything connected with this holy spot. The grave, we observe, *was cut in a rock*. Why was this? The Rock of Ages was buried in a rock—a Rock within a rock. But why? Most persons suggest that it was so ordained that it might be clear that there was no covert way by which the

disciples or others could enter and steal the body away. Very possibly it was the reason, but oh, my Soul, can you not find a *spiritual* reason? Christ's sepulcher was cut in a rock. It was not cut in mold that might be worn away by water, or might crumble and fall into decay.

The sepulcher stands, I believe, entire to this day. If it does not naturally, it does spiritually. The same sepulcher which took the sins of Paul shall take my iniquities into its bosom. For if I ever lose my guilt, it must roll off my shoulders into the sepulcher. It was cut in a rock so that if a sinner were saved a thousand years ago, I, too, can be delivered, for it is a rocky sepulcher where sin was buried. It was a rocky sepulcher of marble where my crimes were laid forever—buried never to have a resurrection. You will mark, moreover, that tomb was one *wherein no other man had ever lain*. Christopher Ness says, "When Christ was born, He lay in a virgin's womb and when He died He was placed in a virgin tomb. He slept where never man had slept before." The reason was that none might say that another person rose, for there never had been any other body there, thus a mistake of persons was impossible. Nor could it be said that some old Prophet was interred in the place and that Christ rose because He had touched his bones. You remember when Elisha was buried and as they were burying a man, behold he touched the Prophet's bones and arose. Christ touched no Prophet's bones, for none had ever slept there. It was a new chamber, where the Monarch of the earth did take His rest for three days and three nights.

We have learned a little, then, with attention. But let us stoop down once more before we leave the grave and notice something else. We see the grave, but do you *notice the grave clothes*, all folded neatly and laid in their places, the napkin being folded up by itself? Why are the grave clothes folded? The Jews said robbers had abstracted the body. But if so, surely they would have stolen the clothes! They would never have thought of folding them up and laying them down so carefully—they would be too much in haste to think of it. Why was it, then? To manifest to us that Christ did not come out in a hurried manner. He slept till the last moment. Then He awoke—He came not in haste. They shall not come out in haste—neither by flight—but at the appointed moment shall His people come to Him. So at the precise hour, the decreed instant, Jesus Christ leisurely awoke, took off His cerements, left them all behind Him and came forth in His pure and naked innocence, perhaps to show us that as clothes are the offspring of sin—when sin was atoned for by Christ, He left all raiment behind Him—for garments are the badges of guilt. If we had not been guilty we would never have needed them.

Then, the napkin, mark you, was laid by itself. The grave clothes were left behind for every departed Christian to wear. The bed of death is well sheeted with the garments of Jesus, but the napkin was laid by itself, because the Christian, when He dies, does not need that. It is used by the mourners and the mourners only. We shall all wear grave-clothes but we shall not need the napkin. When our friends die, the napkin is laid aside for us to use, but do our ascended Brothers and Sisters use it? No, the Lord God has wiped away all tears from their eyes! We stand and view the corpses of the dear departed, we moisten their faces with our tears, letting whole showers of grief fall on their heads, but do *they* weep? Oh, no. Could they speak to us from the upper spheres, they would say, “weep not for me, for I am glorified. Sorrow not for me. I have left a bad world behind me and have entered into a far better.” They have no napkin—they weep not. Strange it is that those who endure death weep not. But those who see them die are weepers. When the child is born it weeps when others smile (say the Arabs) and when it dies, it smiles while others weep. It is so with the Christian. O blessed thing! The napkin is laid by itself, because Christians will never need to use it when they die.

III. EMOTION EXCITED, We have thus surveyed the grave with deep attention, and, I hope, with some profit to ourselves. But that is not all. I love a religion which consists, in a great measure, of emotion. Now, if I had power, like a master, I would touch the strings of your hearts and fetch a glorious tune of solemn music from them! For this is a deeply solemn place, into which I have conducted you.

First, I would bid you stand and see the place where the Lord lay with *emotions of deep sorrow*. O come, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, your Jesus once lay there! He was a murdered man, my Soul, and *you* the murderer—

**“Ah, you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were!
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.
Alas, and did my Savior bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?”**

I slew Him—this right hand struck the dagger to His heart! My deeds slew Christ. Alas, I slew my best Beloved! I killed Him who loved me with an everlasting love! You eyes, why do you refuse to weep when you see Jesus’ body mangled and torn? Oh, give vent to your sorrow, Christians, for you have good reason to do so. I believe in what Hart says, that there was a time in his experience when he could so sympathize with Christ that he felt more grief at the death of Christ than he did joy. It seemed so sad a thing that Christ should have to die and to me it often appears too

great a price for Jesus Christ to purchase worms with His own blood. I think I love Him so much that if I had seen Him about to suffer, I would have been as bad as Peter and have said, "That be far from You, Lord." But then He would have said to me, "Get you behind Me, Satan." For He does not approve of that love which would stop Him from dying. "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" But I think had I seen Him going up to His Cross, I would gladly have pressed Him back and said, "Oh, Jesus, You shall not die. I cannot have it. Will You purchase my life with a price so dear?" It seems too costly for Him who is the Prince of Life and Glory to let His fair limbs be tortured in agony. That the hands which carried mercies should be pierced with accursed nails. That the temples that were always clothed with love should have cruel thorns driven through them. It appears too much. Oh, weep, Christian, and let your sorrow rise! Is not the price all but too great, that your Beloved should for you resign *Himself*? Oh, I should think if a person were saved from death by another, he would always feel deep grief if his deliverer lost his life in the attempt. I had a friend, who, standing by the side of a piece of frozen water saw a young lad in it and sprang upon the ice in order to save him. After clutching the boy he held him in his hands and cried out, "Here he is! Here he is! I have saved him." But just as they caught hold of the boy, he sank, himself, and his body was not found for some time afterwards. Oh, it is so with Jesus! My soul was drowning. From Heaven's high portals He saw me sinking in the depths of Hell. He plunged in—

***"He SANK beneath His heavy woes,
To raise me to a crown;
There's never a gift His hand bestows,
But cost His heart a groan."***

Ah, we may, indeed, regret our sin, since it slew Jesus.

Now, Christian, change your note a moment. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," *with joy and gladness*. He does not lie there now. Weep, when you see the tomb of Christ, but rejoice because it is *empty*. Your sin slew Him, but His Divinity raised Him up! Your guilt has murdered Him, but His righteousness has restored Him. Oh, He has burst the bonds of death! He has ungirt the cerements of the tomb and has come out more than conqueror, crushing death beneath His feet. Rejoice, O Christian, for He is not there—He is risen. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

One more thought and then I will speak a little concerning the Doctrines we may learn from this grave. "Come, see the place where the Lord lay" *with solemn awe*, for you and I will have to lay there, too—

"Hark! From the tomb a doleful sound,

***My ears, attend the cry.
 You living men, come view the ground
 Where you must shortly lie.
 Princes, this clay must be your bed
 In spite of all your powers!
 The tall, the wise, the reverend head
 Must lie as low as ours.”***

It is a fact we do not often think of—that we shall all be dead in a little while. I know that I am made of dust and not of iron. My bones are not brass, nor my sinews steel—in a little while my body must crumble back to its native elements. But do you ever try to picture yourself the moment of your dissolution? My Friends, there are some of you who seldom realize how old you are, how near you are to death. One way of remembering our age is to see how much remains. Think how old 80 is and then see how few years there are before you will get there. We should remember our frailty. Sometimes I have tried to think of the time of my departure. I do not know whether I shall die a violent death or not, but I would to God that I might die suddenly, for sudden death is sudden Glory! I would I might have such a blessed exit as Doctor Beaumont and die in my pulpit laying down my body with my charge and ceasing at once to work and live! But it is not mine to choose. Suppose I lie lingering for weeks in the midst of pains and griefs and agonies? When that moment comes, that moment which is too solemn for my lips to speak of, when the spirit leaves the clay—let the physician put it off for weeks or years, as we say he does, though he does not—when that moment comes, oh, you lips, be dumb and profane not its solemnity! When death comes, how is the strong man bowed down! How does the mighty man fall! They may say they will not die, but there is no hope for them—they must yield—the arrow has gone home. I knew a man who was a wicked wretch and I remember seeing him pace the floor of his bedroom, saying, “O God, I will not die, I will not die.” When I begged him to lie on his bed for he was dying, he said he could not die while he could walk and he would walk till he did die. Ah, he expired in the utmost torments, always shrieking, “O God, I will not die.” Oh, that moment, that last moment! See how clammy is the sweat upon the brow, how dry the tongue, how parched the lips are? The man shuts his eyes and slumbers, then opens them again. And if he is a Christian, I can fancy he will say—

***“Hark! They whisper—angels say
 Sister spirit, come away.
 What is this absorbs me quite—
 Steals my senses—shuts my sight—
 Drowns my spirit—draws my breath?
 Tell me, my Soul, can this be death?”***

We know not when one will die. One gentle sigh and the spirit breaks away. We can scarcely say, "He is gone," before the ransomed spirit takes its mansion near the Throne. Come to Christ's tomb then, for the silent vault must soon be *your* habitation. Come to Christ's grave, for you must slumber there. And even you, you Sinners, for one moment I will ask you to also come because you must die as well as the rest of us. Your sins cannot keep you from the jaws of death. I say, Sinner, I want you to look at Christ's sepulcher, too—for when you die it may have done you great good to think of it. You have heard of Queen Elizabeth crying out that she would give an empire for a single hour. Or, have you read the despairing cry of the gentleman on board the "Arctic," when it was going down, who shouted to the boat, "Come back! I will give you £30,000 if you will come and take me in." Ah, poor man. It were but little if he had thirty thousand *worlds*, if he could thereby prolong his life! "Skin for skin. Yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." Some of you who laugh this morning, who came to spend a merry hour in this hall, will be dying and then you will pray and crave for life and shriek for another Sunday. Oh, how the Sundays you have wasted will walk like ghosts before you! Oh, how they will shake their snaky hair in your eyes! How will you be made to sorrow and weep because you wasted precious hours, which, when they are gone, are gone too far ever to be recalled. May God save you from the pangs of remorse!

IV. INSTRUCTION IMPARTED. And now, Christian Brothers and Sisters, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay," to learn a Doctrine or two. What did you see when you visited "the place where the Lord lay?" "He is not here—for He is risen!" The first thing you perceive, if you stand by His empty tomb, is *His Divinity*. The dead in Christ shall rise first at the Resurrection, but He who rose first—their Leader, rose in a different fashion. They rise by imparted power. He rose by His own. He could not slumber in the grave because He was God. Death had no dominion over Him. There is no better proof of Christ's Divinity than that startling Resurrection of His, when He rose from the grave, by the glory of the Father. O Christian, your Jesus is GOD. His broad shoulders that hold you up are, indeed, Divine. And here you have the best proof of it—because He rose from the grave!

A second Doctrine here taught well may charm you, if the Holy Spirit applies it with power. Behold this empty tomb, O true Believer—it is a sign of *your acquittal* and your full discharge. If Jesus had not paid the debt, He would never have risen from the grave. He would have lain there till this moment if He had not cancelled the entire debt by satisfying eternal vengeance. Oh, Beloved, is not that an overwhelming thought?—

***“It is finished! It is finished!
Hear the rising Savior cry.”***

The heavenly turnkey came. A bright angel stepped from Heaven and rolled away the stone—but he would not have done so if Christ had not done all. He would have kept Him there. He would have said, “No, no, you are the sinner now. You have the sins of all your elect upon your shoulder and I will not let you go free till you have paid the uttermost farthing.” In His going free I see my own discharge—

“My Jesus’ blood’s my full discharge”

As a justified man, I have not a sin against me in God’s book! If I were to turn over God’s eternal book I should see every debt of mine receipted and cancelled—

***“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast,
And O, my Soul, with wonder view—
For sins to come, here’s pardon, too!
While through Your blood absolved I am
From sin’s tremendous curse and blame.”***

One more doctrine we learn and with that we will conclude—the *Doctrine of the Resurrection*. Jesus rose and as the Lord our Savior rose, so all His followers must rise. Die I must—this body must be a carnival for worms, it must be eaten by those tiny cannibals—perhaps it shall be scattered from one portion of the earth to another. The constituent particles of this, my frame, will enter into plants, from plants pass into animals and thus be carried into far distant realms. But at the blast of the archangel’s trumpet, every separate atom of my body shall find its fellow—like the bones lying in the Valley of Vision, though separated from one another—the moment God shall speak, the bone will creep to its bone, then the flesh shall come upon it. The four winds of Heaven shall blow and the breath shall return! So, let me die, let beasts devour me, let fire turn this body into gas and vapor—all its particles shall yet again be restored! This very same, actual body shall start up from its grave, glorified and made like Christ’s body, yet still the same body, for God has said it. Christ’s same body rose—so shall mine! O my Soul, do you now dread to die? You will lose your partner body a little while, but you will be married again in Heaven—soul and body shall again be united before the Throne of God! The grave—what is it? It is the bath in which the Christian puts the clothes of his body to have them washed and cleansed. Death—what is it? It is the waiting room where we robe ourselves for immortality! It is the place where the body, like Esther, bathes itself in spices, that it may be fit for the embrace of its Lord. Death is the gate of *life*. I will not fear to die, then, but will say—

***“Shudder not to pass the stream
Venture all your care on Him—Him,
Whose dying love and power
Stilled its tossing, hushed its roar.
Safe is the expanded wave,
Gentle as a summer’s eve—
Not one object of His care
Ever suffered shipwreck there.”***

Come, view the place, then, with all-hallowed meditation, where the Lord lay! Spend this afternoon, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, in meditating upon it and very often go to Christ’s grave both to weep and to rejoice. You timid ones—do not be afraid to approach, for ‘tis no vain thing to remember that timidity buried Christ. Faith would not have given Him a funeral at all. Faith would have kept Him above ground and would never have let Him be buried, for it would have said it would be useless to bury Christ if He were to rise. Fear buried Him. Nicodemus, the night disciple and Joseph of Arimathea, secretly, for fear of the Jews, went and buried Him. Therefore, you timid ones, you may go, too. Ready-to-Halt, poor Fearing and you, Mrs. Despondency, and Much-afraid, go often there—it is your favorite haunt. There build a tabernacle, there abide. And often say to your heart, when you are in distress and sorrow, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”

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

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

OBEDIENCE REWARDED

NO. 2323

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 27, 1893.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 1, 1889.

“And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell My brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.”
Matthew 28:8-10.

THESE holy women, these consecrated Maries, shall be our instructors tonight. They were highly-favored to be the first witnesses for our risen Lord! Do you wonder why He chose them? Was it because their hearts were tender and they were very sad at His death, more sad than the men? And is He not known to come, first, to those who need Him most and to pour in oil and wine where the wound gapes widest? It may be so. Was it because they had been the more faithful of the two and, while some *men* had denied Him and all had forsaken Him, the women were last at Golgotha, as they were now, first, at the sepulcher? Did their Lord reward them by dealing with them as they had dealt with Him? That is but His pattern. “If you will walk contrary unto Me, then will I also walk contrary unto you,” said the Lord to Israel. And He also said, “I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me.” These holy women did seek their Lord early on the morning of His Resurrection and they found Him to a certainty before all others! Was this because Jesus had found the women more *spiritual* than the Apostles? Certainly, I think that was the case. They had attained the very climax of love, washing His feet with their tears. They had reached the very center of discipleship—one of them had chosen the good part, and sat at His feet. Sometimes, where there is less power of understanding, Jesus does give keener powers of perception, and though Mary Magdalene and the other Mary would never have become Pauls, yet they were of quick eye, like John, and were, therefore, the most fit to see the Savior in the dawning of the morning—and so they were permitted to have the first glimpse of Him.

At any rate, be it how it may, they were the first to see their risen Lord—and we will try to learn something from them, tonight. It should be an encouragement to those members of the Church of Christ who are neither pastors nor teachers that, if they live very near to God, they may yet *teach* pastors and teachers! Get clear views of your Lord, as did these holy women who had no office in the Church, and yet taught the officers, for

they were sent to bear to the Apostles the tidings that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead! Not first to them who were the heads of the Church, as it were, but first of all to lowly women did the Lord appear—and the Apostles, themselves, had to go to school to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to learn that great Truth of God, “The Lord is risen, indeed.” We will go to school with the Apostles, tonight, and may the Lord grant that while we learn from these holy women, He who taught them may come and teach us! May He who met them meet with us in this House of Prayer tonight!

First, I ask you to look at these women *in the way of obedience active*. They ran to bring the disciples word. Secondly, look at them *in the way of obedience rewarded*, for, as they went to tell His disciples, Jesus met them. And then, thirdly, we will go back to the point where we started and see these women *in the way of obedience refreshed*, for, after they had seen the Lord, they persevered in their heavenly errand and still went to tell His disciples that He would go before them into Galilee—and that there they should see Him.

I. First, then, notice these women IN THE WAY OF ODEDIENCE ACTIVE.

They had gone to the sepulcher to see and also to embalm the body of Christ, but while they were there, an angel appeared to them and committed to them this charge, “Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.” And they went upon their errand with most commendable alacrity. Now, you and I, dear Friends, must try to imitate them. What you have seen, you must tell! What you have been taught, you must teach! To you, Believer, has been committed the Oracle of God. See that you keep it! Hold it fast and hold it forth. You have not this Light of God for yourself, alone, but that it may shine before men. See to this. Perhaps these women may help you in so doing.

Observe first, then, that they went about their errand not doubting the Revelation. The angel said to them, “Tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead and, behold, He goes before you into Galilee.” They did not stop to ask any question, to make any objections, to utter any critical doubts—they believed. Now, it is to be thus with you—you cannot be a messenger from God unless you *believe*. If you do not believe the Gospel, do not pretend to preach it! Go home, my dear Friends, and bury your head in your doubts, twist your brains about, tie them up into knots and amuse yourself as you like—but do not pretend to go and tell that of which you are not, yourself, sure! Otherwise, you will lack the accent of confidence and, consequently, you will lack the power of persuasion. He that is not firm, himself, cannot move others. If there is no fulcrum for your lever, where is your power? “I believed; therefore have I spoken,” said the Psalmist, and he did well, for there must first be the believing and *then* the speaking. Leave the message to another if you are not sure of it—let another who is sure of it tell it until you, too, are sure of it—then may you also run with good tidings from your Lord! These godly women leaped at once into the full conviction that Christ was risen and, therefore, they hastened to tell the tidings to the disciples.

And, again, they obeyed, not discussing their authority to go and proclaim this news. What use is it if I believe the Truth of God and yet am not empowered to teach it? According to some, I can only be authorized by some special ceremony—I must undergo certain processes before I may be permitted to preach. But the angel said to these women, “Go and tell,” and they went to tell. They did not hesitate. They asked no question about Apostolic succession, or Episcopal ordination, or anything of the kind! They were told to go and they went. Have you heard Jesus speak to you? Do you know His love? Have you an inward persuasion that you have to tell your friends what great things He has done for you? Then go in this, your might! If you have any hesitancy about your right to labor for your Lord. If you doubt that passage, “Let him that hears say, Come,” then do not go, for, if you do not *believe* that you have a right to go, your going will be with an inward weakness—and you will be taken up rather with *yourself* than with your message—and with the heart of Him to whom you carry it.

I love to hear men say that they *must* do this and that, for only that which is done under the imperious necessity of a Divine impulse will ever be followed by any great result. If you can live without preaching the Gospel, live without preaching it, for if God has sent you, you will say with Paul, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!” And you, my Sister, if you are sent to do any work for God and have a yearning to win souls and a fire in your bones which cannot be restrained—you could no more be stayed from speaking of Jesus than the sun can be stayed from shining in mid Heaven! May God grant that we may have among us many who, in going forth to work for Christ, are sure about what they have to tell and sure about their authority to tell it!

This being so with these women, we notice, next, that they went on their errand *not declining on account of weakness*. They might have said, “Oh, *we* are not the people to go to the Apostles!” Mary Magdalene might have said, “You know what I used to be. Would you have me go and talk to John, and James, and Peter?” Indeed, the holy women might at once have refused the commission and said, “We do not feel ourselves qualified. We have a natural timidity and modesty which put it out of the question that we should go on such a service as this.” But not a word of that kind did they utter—and, dear Brothers and Sisters, while souls are dying, dare we hesitate on account of weakness? Do you not think that it is the man who is most conscious of weakness who is usually the chosen man for the Lord’s service? Did not Moses wish to decline the office of leader of Israel because he was slow of speech? Did not Isaiah cry, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips”?

And if you are conscious of weakness as great as that of these godly women, or greater, even, than theirs, yet I still say that the pressure of human necessity and the pressure of the Divine message should be so heavy upon you that you should say, “I will go even as did the lepers of old, when they had found out the plenty that there was in the camp of the Syrians and knew of the sore famine in Samaria.” They could not sit still, but all over with leprosy as they were, they must go to the king’s household and tell them that there was bread enough and to spare—and that

the people need not die of hunger! Oh, yes, we *must* go! Even *we* must go! The time may have been when only the choice and pick of the Church were needed for holy service, but these times are not now. When sin abounds, when error rages, when the faithful are but few, then every man—and every woman and even every babe in Grace, must speak, or lisp, or prattle the good news that Christ is risen from the dead and is able to save and bless!

Then, dear Friends, as these women were not detained from this work by a sense of weakness, so they obeyed *not held back by curiosity*. They might have stayed to look at the sepulcher. They were invited to come and see the place where the Lord lay and, like the two disciples, they might have gone in and observed how the napkin was laid by itself, and the linen cloths were folded. I think that if you and I had had the opportunity of looking into that wonderful sepulcher where the Lord lay, we would have liked to linger there all through that day, to worship and adore! But no curiosity—no, no devotion—kept them at the sepulcher when they once had the command to go and tell the disciples that Christ was risen from the dead! Now, these days are full of temptation. We have a thousand fields for curiosity to wander in. How shall we settle this debate? How shall we answer that criticism? Every day brings to light some fresh objection, some new theory. Shall we stop till we have answered every objection, till we have destroyed every theory? No, my Brothers, we cannot afford to stop. Let others debate—we must declare! Let others discuss—we must proclaim that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners! Sinners, look to Him and, looking, you shall live! We must make this the burden of our daily conversation, the constant theme of our talk—“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief of them.” We must keep to this! As these women were not turned aside to make any curious observation, so must not we be—we must keep to our one work of telling His disciples where to look for Him and bidding them follow Him.

And, dear Friends, again, I want you to notice that they were not *hampered by their emotions*. It is a very blessed thing, sometimes, to have an opportunity of indulging your emotions. These women were subject to the influences of two opposite currents, “fear and great joy.” Fear put wings to their heels and great joy seemed to lend them extra speed. By the two, together, they ran to bring the disciples word. It may be very pleasant to get alone and spend much time in close communion with Christ—the more of it the better. It may be well to practice introspection until you see the evil of your heart and are filled with fear. It may be well to look up and see the beauties of your Lord and the glories of His Advent until you are filled with great joy. But neither of these must be allowed to keep you away from actual *service* and the continual telling out of the Gospel of Christ! I have known it to be the case.

I remember a good man who was a great authority on the Book of Revelation. I am sorry to say that, great as he was on the Revelation, his influence was very bad on his children at home. He knew all about the seven trumpets, but he did not know much about the seven boys and girls he had at home—so they grew up very badly. Never break the balance of holy

emotions and sacred duties! Let us have our fear and our great joy but, at the same time, we must not sit down because we have great joy—we must run on the Lord's errand—joy and all. Let us run as fast as we can, whether we fear or whether we rejoice. Learn that lesson from these godly women. You feel very dull—go to your Bible-class. You feel as if you had done no good for a long time—go on in the Lord's work. But God has greatly blessed you and you are getting rather old and you need rest—go on with your work—run to bring the disciples word whether you feel fear or joy. Stand over your work, be in-stant—standing over it, in season and out of season, constant and instant in the service of your blessed Lord and Master! If you are not, these holy women will put you to shame and I must send you to this dames' school, old as you are, to learn a little lesson from these godly dames as to how you ought to serve God.

Once more, notwithstanding all that might have been said to make their footsteps slow, we find that they were *not hindered by propriety or indifference*. They traveled to their work as quickly as they could—“and did run to bring His disciples word.” Now, one hardly likes to think of Mary Magdalene and that other Mary running! My good Sisters here are, many of them, very diligent in their service, but they do not forget that there is a kind of reputable pace for ladies—yet these holy women ran! They will get out of breath by running! Never mind. Never mind! “They did run to bring His disciples word.” We are great slaves to propriety, are we not, the most of us? The other day a Brother called out in the middle of a sermon. And on another morning, a Sister exclaimed while I was preaching—and some of you thought that it was very improper, did you not?

Well, I suppose that it was, but I was very glad of it and I did not see the slightest objection to the impropriety when I felt that the Truth of God that was being preached was enough to make the stones speak! Why should not those persons cry out? When you are about the Lord's work, you know that it is well to be very quiet and calm and take things steadily. That is well. But sometimes we can do better than well. We have the steam up and we cannot help it—and we have to go ahead and we must go. Thus these godly women were running along. They will put their garments out of shape! They will spoil the look of their faces! I do not know what will *not* happen, but they do not care about that. “They did run to bring His disciples word.” How often have I seen it, in the country, when somebody has stepped into a cottage—perhaps it has been the minister, or some dear Christian friend, and the good woman has said—“I must run and fetch in my neighbor,” and she has rushed out of the door, down the front garden, across the street and she has brought her sister or her friend to come and hear the good Word of God! And she has never thought that it was at all improper for her to do it!

Dear Friends, in the service of God, impropriety is often *piety*. It was said that Mr. Rowland Hill, “rode upon the back of Order and Decorum.” “Well,” he said, “I will try to make that true,” so he called his two horses, Order and Decorum and thus, if he did not ride on their backs, he made them pull him to and from Surrey Chapel! Order and decorum are hardly worth more than to be used as horses! They are very respectable animals,

but sometimes disorder and the lack of decorum may be predicated of an earnest, zealous heart—and may be very much to the credit of that heart. “They did run to bring His disciples word.” Brothers and Sisters, some of us ought to run, for we have not much time! We are getting gray, years are telling upon us, so let us run! We may not have many more opportunities—we may be kept to our bed, or tied to the house—let us run while we can! Sometimes we are warned not to do too much. Let us *try* to do too much! Let us be indiscreetly loving to our Lord! Let us run to bring the disciples word, even at the cost of putting ourselves out of breath!

I think that we have now learned all that we need to learn from these good women about their being in the way of obedience, that is to say, if we *have* learned it—but have we learned it? Are all of you Christian people who are here, to-night, running on your Master’s errands? Have all of you received a commission from Christ? Have you all had a message from Him? Are you carrying it? Some of you are strangers, here, this evening. Let me beg you not to live a single week without having something to do for your Lord, knowing what it is, and getting to it in the spirit of these holy women.

II. But now, secondly, observe these holy women IN THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE REWARDED.

First, they were rewarded by a *most delightful visitation*—“As they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them.” He has ways of meeting His disciples, now, in the power of His Spirit, manifesting Himself to them. There are some of His disciples who never get these visitations and I think that it is because they are not running to bring His disciples word. Nobody fidgets a busy person like an idle body. Have you ever had a servant doing some work for you and crawling about in such a way that you could hardly stand it? Well now, the Lord Jesus Christ does not feel at home with lazy Christians and I believe that He reserves His fellowship for the sufferers and the workers. When you are in the way of service, He will meet you. So you have not seen His face for a long time? Have you a class in the Sunday school? Are you a tract-distributor? Are you a preacher in the villages?

“No, dear Sir, I do nothing of the sort.” Well, then, I do not think that you will meet Him just yet, but I think that if you had a call to some of these good works, and you obeyed it, it is highly probable that you would then say, “Being in the way, the Lord met with me.” Oh, yes, when you have love, joy and light in your heart, it will often happen that while you are talking about Christ to others, you will have a blessing come to your own soul! Many times has it occurred to the preacher that if he has not edified anybody else, he has preached himself into a right state of heart—and he is sure that he has had one hearer who was the better for the sermon! Beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, especially Sisters, for the text, you see, comes from the Sisters and ought to go back to the Sisters—get into the path of duty if you would win this reward of a delightful visitation! You sometimes sing—

“When will You come to me, Lord?”

You can answer your own prayer, to a large, extent, by running upon your Lord's errands.

The next reward these women received was *a very cheering salutation*—"Jesus met them, saying, All hail." I do not know whether it was in the Hebrew that He spoke. If so, I suppose that He uttered the usual salutation, "Peace be unto you!" As we get it in the Greek, one is inclined to think that He used the Greek language and spoke the word which signifies, "Rejoice! Joy be unto you!" Our translators very properly thought that the best thing they could do was to give you the old Saxon expression, "All hail! Health be to you! May you be in good health, may you be hale!" "All hail!" You know that we use the expression, "Hail fellow, well met!" Well, that indicates great sociability and, therefore, you can see the wrong of a Christian saying it to an ungodly man, but Christ comes to His people, and says, "All hail!" I often wonder that He ever used that word, since by it He was betrayed when the traitor said, "Hail, Master!" But yet it was His mother's word. Did not the angel Gabriel say to Mary, "Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women"? And He used it here, "All hail!" Well, when Jesus Christ comes to us with words of such endearment, such brotherhood, it ought to make us glad!

Last Tuesday night I saw a Brother who, I trust, has just been converted to God. He may be here, tonight. If so, he must excuse my telling you this. He cannot read well, but he is teaching himself to read, and he said to me something that touched me very much. He said, "Do you know, I read this week the most wonderful thing I ever heard! I dare say you know all about it, Sir, but it was a very wonderful thing to me." I asked, "What was it?" "Well," he replied, "you know, I was spelling it over and I found that Christ said, 'I call you not servants; but I have called you friends.' That knocked me over," he said, "*me* a friend of His, *me* a friend of His? And He calls me so! I was obliged to think that I must have made a mistake and I had to read it over to see if it could be so, that He really called *me* a friend. And further down He said, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.' There, I thought, what difference would it make to Him if I were offended? And to think of my being offended with *Him*! It is much more likely that He will be offended with me. It is all very amazing."

That is a most blessed way of reading the Bible for the first time—to see these wonders as they break upon you! Well, now, it is just as my friend found it to be—the Lord comes to us with very sweet familiarity—He uses what the French call "tutoyage." In speaking to us, He utters the familiar, "you" and, "you"—and He sits down to eat in company with us—calls us to His table and there bids us eat and drink with Him. It is wonderful, as my friend said, but it is thus that Jesus deals with those who love and serve Him! And what a reward it is for the Lord's servants when He says to them, "All hail! I am your Companion. I have done well to meet you. I am glad to see you. All health be to you! Every blessing rest upon you!" Something more than, "Salem," the "peace" of the Old Covenant, is this, "All hail!" of the New Covenant, of which the Incarnate God is the great Ex-

positor! That was the cheering salutation with which the risen Savior rewarded the obedience of these godly women.

They also had *an assuring satisfaction* as another reward of their obedience, for they were permitted to prove that their Lord was really risen from the dead. Before Thomas had done it, they did it! “They came and held Him by the feet.” He was no specter, no phantom! It was no dream that deceived them. Christ was really risen! There He stood in solid flesh and blood—and they held Him by the feet! I believe that when we are at work for the Lord with all our heart, He sometimes enables us to get grips of Truths of God that we do not have, at other times, and we lay hold on them with unrelaxing grasp. People talk about “honest doubt” and ask me to doubt. I cannot doubt! I live in the enjoyment of the eternal facts. I could sooner doubt my own existence than doubt the Doctrines of Christ, they have become such substantial Truths of God to me. I have tasted and handled them! I cannot have a doubt about them. It was so with these godly women—they knew that Christ was risen, for they came and held Him by the feet.

But, at the same time, they had, mixed with this experience, a rapturous adoration. “They held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.” It is of no use to be persuaded of a Doctrine—that is, to hold it mentally—unless there is the spirit of worship going with it, so that you adore your Lord while you hold to Him and His Truth. These women not merely felt that Jesus was there as a Man, but they knew that He was also God, they were sure of it and, therefore, they worshipped Him. It takes a lot of faith, while you are holding a man, to worship Him at the same time, because your grip of the human body is a proof of its materialism—and you say to yourself—“This is a man.” And, therefore, you do not worship him. But these women knew that Jesus was God as well as Man, so they could mingle the holding of His feet with the worship due to His Godhead. In a natural sense, none of us can exactly imitate these worshipping women, but those who are taught of God, the Holy Spirit, and who know how to be familiar and yet to be devout, will draw near to Christ and hold Him by the feet and, at the same time, worship Him with solemn awe and sacred joy.

Now, this is the reward that I want my dear Friends here to have. I know that the most of you have some work on hand for the Master. If you are getting at all dull and heavy, I beg you not to give it up. Stick to it, but pray the Lord to meet with you. May He meet you here, tonight! If not, may He meet you on the way home, or in your bedroom! Nothing is so sweet as the sight of our Lord risen from the dead—to know because He lives that we, also, shall live—and to get a sight of Him as alive and living for us! This puts nerve into us and sends us back to our service greatly refreshed. That is to be my last point and upon it I will speak very briefly.

III. Thirdly, notice these holy women IN THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE REFRESHED, for, having seen and touched their Lord, they were now sent away to His brethren.

Before they went forth the second time, *they were perfectly calm and happy in the Lord*. I think that it is almost essential to any great success in serving the Lord that we should be on the best of terms with Him and

not be fluttered, frightened, worried, perturbed, questioning. Having worshipped and held Him and heard Him say, "All hail," you will then feel that, by the power of His love and the authority of His Divinity, He sends you forth as His messenger.

Notice, next, that the angel said to the women, "Go quickly, and tell His disciples." But Jesus said, "Go tell My brethren." Thus, *their commission was sweetened*. And if it is with you as it was with them, you will get to be more tender in the delivery of your message. You will begin to feel nearer of kin to those to whom you speak. You will perceive more of the love of Christ to them. You will not merely be talking in your Sunday school class to "boys and girls out of the street," you will feel that you are speaking to those of whom Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." I shall not be preaching to mere "men and women of our fallen race," but to those in whom I hope to find the Brothers and Sisters of my Lord! In seeking to do good, there is nothing like the plan of getting close to the people! Up in Scotland I have often seen the fishermen standing right in the middle of the river—that is a good place to fish—it is better than being on the bank. Get among the fish and you will catch them! Get to feel your relationship to the soul you deal with and your Lord's relationship to him, and you will preach or teach much better than you have ever done in the past. Thus these women went with their commission sweetened by their Lord's loving words, "Go tell My brethren."

Notice, again, that *their confidence in their message was increased*. They believed it when the angel uttered it, but they believed it still more emphatically when their Master repeated it to them! Besides, His telling it to them was the best proof that it was true. He could not have told them that He was risen from the dead if He had not been risen from the dead! So the Truth of God, when it comes to us in Christ, is its own proof. You may doubt it while it is simply preached by men, but you surely will never doubt it when Jesus, Himself, in His own Person, comes to you and says, Himself, "This is the Truth of God. Open your heart and soul and receive it." May the Lord do this for many here!

And then, *these women went on their way with increased joy*. They had no great fear, no, not even a little fear, for their great joy had swallowed up their fear. I should have liked to have seen them go in among the Apostles, exclaiming, "The Lord is risen, indeed!" They might say, "But Mary, we saw you last night looking as miserable as possible." "Ah!" she would answer, "but Christ is risen! I have seen Him and He said to me, 'Be not afraid,' and I am not afraid, either of the Jews or of anybody else, for He is risen! He said to me, 'All hail,' and it is all hail! All is well, for the Lord is risen!" Testifying of their Lord in this spirit, they *expected* to be believed and they *were* believed! May the Lord put you, also, into such a condition, tonight, that you may say, "I now know more than I ever did about the Truth of my Lord's Gospel, and I will tell it as though I could not think that anybody would doubt it. I will tell it expecting that they must believe it!" And they will believe it, for, according to your faith so shall it be unto you.

As for you, my dear Hearers, who do not know my Lord, how I wish that you did! He is a living Christ! He is no lifeless picture on the walls, not a dead character in a book. He is the *living* Lord! He has come to us and given us eternal life—and if you come to Him, He will in no wise cast you out. If you only look to Him, you shall live! If you take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, you shall find rest unto your souls! I would that you might do so this very night! May the Lord bless you in so doing!

Thus I have preached to you and now there are some Believers to be baptized. That is the second part of our work. At the end of this chapter we read, “Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you.” We will at another time go on with the teaching that follows this evening’s meditation, if the Lord wills.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON.
MATTHEW 28:1-15.**

Verses 1, 2. *In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.* See what concern angels have about our Lord. Are they here tonight? Do they make a habit of coming where the saints meet together? I think they do. We have intimations in Scripture that that is the case. Let us behave ourselves aright, tonight, “because of the angels.” And as they worship and count it their highest honor to serve the Son of Man, let us also worship Jesus and adore Him! What a picture this scene would make!

3, 4. *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.* He said nothing as he rolled back the stone. He did not shake a sword at them, or over them, to fill them with terror. The presence of perfect purity, the presence of heavenly things, is a terror to ungodly men! May you and I be such that our very presence in company will cast a hush over it! “It was even as though an angel shook his wings,” they said of one good man when he spoke in common conversation. May there be about us enough of the heavenly to make the powers of evil quail before us!

5. *And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear you not.* But I notice that they *did* fear, although the angel said, “Fear not.” Neither men nor angels can so speak as to silence fears in trembling hearts, but Jesus can, as we shall see farther on. One word from His lips has infinitely more power than all the words of angels or of saints!

5. *For I know that you seek Jesus, which was crucified.* And if you and I, tonight, can truly say that we are on the side of Jesus—that we seek Him who was crucified—then we can bear all the shame with which philosophy would gladly cover the Cross and we have no cause for fear. Ridicule and all that it brings from this ungodly generation will not hurt you.

6. *He is not here: for He is risen, as He said.* “As He said.” A few words, but what a world of meaning! “As He said.” He always does “as He said.” He always gives “as He said.” He always reveals Himself “as He said,” not otherwise. He never fails to fulfill a promise, or forgets even the mode of promising. Not only does He do *what* He said, but *as* He said. “He is risen, as He said.”

6. *Come, see the place where the Lord lay.* For even the place where He lay is hallowed to you. And, Beloved, if there is a place where you have ever had communion with Christ, you will remember it. You might bless the spot of ground where Jesus met with you. Here, tonight, I hope that some of you can see the place where the Lord appeared to you.

7. *And go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead.* Such good news ought to be spread quickly! “Go and tell His disciples.” They are trembling, they have fled—“that He is risen from the dead.”

7. *And, behold, He goes before you into Galilee; there shall you see Him: lo, I have told you.* Brethren, this is good news for us, tonight, though all may not, perhaps, feel the power of it. “He is risen.” We have no dead Christ! We serve a living Savior! He is risen and, therefore, He can come to us, tonight, in the power of His Resurrection-life, and He can make us glad. “Behold, He goes before you into Galilee.” There is a great deal about Galilee in Matthew’s Gospel. It is the Gospel of the Kingdom and yet it often talks about Galilee, that border-land which touches Gentiles, as well as the chosen seed of Abraham. There is the place where Jesus will meet His people, in the border-land between Jew and Gentile—there the risen Christ will hold the first general assembly of His Church!

8. *And they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy.* What a mixture—fear and joy! But notice that the *fear* was not great, but the *joy* was—“Fear and great joy.” Observe the proportions of the mixture and if, tonight, you have some fear, yet I hope you will have *great joy*—and then the bitterness of the fear will pass away. A holy fear, mixed with great joy, is one of the sweetest compounds we can bring to God’s altar! Some of us have brought those spices with us, tonight. These holy women brought other spices to the sepulcher—but these were the spices that they took away from it—“Fear and great joy.”

8, 9. *And did run to bring His disciples word. And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.* He would not let Mary Magdalene do that when they were alone, for He said to her, “Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: it is more necessary for you to go, now, and tell My disciples that I have risen from the dead. There will be time, by-and-by, for further fellowship with Me.” But now Jesus permits these godly women to hold Him by the feet! It was an act of humility, worshipping and holding, and holding not His hands, but His feet. They must have seen the nail-prints before Thomas did, as they held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. I do not find that these women ran to the angels—they rather shrank back from them—but they came to Jesus, for we are told that they came and held Him by the feet. I think that there must have been a new attraction about Christ after He had risen from the dead,

something more sweet about the tones of His voice, something more charming about the Countenance that had been so maimed at Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha.

10. *Then said Jesus unto them.* As He saw their palpitating hearts and perceived that they were still all in a flurry, for the angel had not dispelled their fears.

10. *Be not afraid: go tell My brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.* The angel talked of “disciples.” Christ talks of “brethren.” He always has the sweeter word.

11. *Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and told unto the chief priests all the things that were done.* While good people were active, bad people were active, too. It is amazing to think of how much good and evil is being done at the same time. While we are thankful that holy women are running with holy messages for Christ, here come the soldiers of the watch—and they are going in to those vile priests.

12. *And when they were assembled with the elders and had taken counsel.* They ought at once to have repented when the watch came and told them that Jesus was risen! Ought they not to have gone and fallen at His feet, and begged for mercy? But instead of that—

12. *They gave a large amount of money unto the soldiers.* Money, wherever it comes in, seems to do mischief. For money Christ was betrayed and, for money, the Truth about His Resurrection was kept back as far as it could be. Money has had a hardening effect on some of the highest servants of God—and all who have to touch the filthy lucre have need to pray for Grace to keep them from being harmed by being brought into contact with it.

13. *Saying, Say you, His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept.* If they were asleep, how did they know what happened? How could they know it if they were asleep? Evidence which is borne by men who were asleep at the time is evidently not worth regarding. But when you have to tell a lie, I suppose that, as any stick is good enough to beat a dog with, any lie will do to slander one whom you hate.

14, 15. *And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were instructed.* No doubt you have heard of the man who said that he did not believe all the articles of his church because his salary was so small that he could not be expected to believe them *all* for the little money he was paid. Oh, the depraving and debasing power of the whole system of bribery and falsehood! May none of us ever be affected by considerations of profit and loss in matters of doctrine, matters of duty and matters of right and wrong!

15. *And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.* You may start a lie, but you cannot stop it. There is no telling how long it will live. Let us never teach even the least error to a little child, for it may live on and become a great heresy long after we are dead. There is scarcely any limit to its life and to its power.

“ALL HAIL!”

NO. 2628

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JUNE 25, 1899.**

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 5, 1882.**

***“And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail! So they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus to them, Be not afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go into Galilee, and there will they see Me.”
Matthew 28:9, 10.***

ON Sabbath mornings, lately, we have been meditating upon the sorrows of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been, in thought, traveling with Him from dark Gethsemane to still darker Golgotha. We have pictured Him under accusation before Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate. We have, in imagination, heard the cruel shouts of the Jews, “Away with Him! Crucify Him!” These solemn events have been full of pain to us—even the bliss that comes to us through the Cross of Christ has been toned down with intense sorrow as we have thought of the agonies our Savior endured there. But as soon as we get to the other side of the Cross and realize that Christ has risen from the dead, everything is calm, quiet and peaceful! There are none of those rough winds and stormy blasts that come sweeping around us as we stand outside Pilate’s palace and Herod’s judgment hall. All is spring-like—summer-like, if you will—yes, and autumn-like, for there are most luscious fruits to be gathered in the garden wherein was a new sepulcher out of which the living Christ arose in all the glory of His resurrection from the dead!

There was just one painful memory during the interview which Christ had with His disciples, when he said to Peter the third time, “Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?” And “Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Do you love Me?” But all the rest of the manifestations of our Lord to His disciples were singularly placid, joyful, restful.

So, dear Friends, I want it to be with you, now, as you enter into the spirit of the scene described in our text. I pray that the Master may set you on the other side of the sepulcher and make you feel as if He breathed upon you as He breathed upon His disciples and said to you as He said to them, “Peace be unto you!” We need this experience, at least sometimes, for while the lessons to be learned at Calvary are inestimably precious and it is beyond all things necessary to sorrow over our sin as we see how we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, yet we must ardently desire to gather all the fruit that grows even on the accursed tree—and part of that fruit will give us the sweet rest of reconciliation through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

This is the time for fellowship with your Lord, Beloved. You cannot tread the winepress with Him. You cannot pour out your blood to mingle with His, for the Atonement is complete and needs no suffering on your part—anything added to it would spoil it. But now, on the other side of the tomb, you can stand beside your risen Savior. He can come into our midst and say, as He has often done, “Peace be unto you!” As we journey to our homes after this service, we can walk and talk with Him as they did who went to Emmaus in company with Him. We can take Him with us into our daily labors, on the morrow, even as He went to the sea where His disciples were fishing and taught them how to catch a multitude of fish. Familiar acquaintance with Christ should spring out of the fact that He is no longer dead, that He is not, now, in the grave, but that He has risen in fullness of life and that, most wonderful Truth of all, that life is in all His people!

I. Our meditation upon this text will, I trust, help us to enjoy fellowship with Christ. Read the beginning of it and learn from it this first lesson. **THE LORD JESUS OFTEN MEETS WITH HIS PEOPLE IN THE WAY OF HOLY SERVICE.** “As they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them.”

My Brother said, just now in prayer, that we do not expect to actually meet Jesus in flesh and blood, but we know that there is a great blessedness in store for those who have not seen Him with their mortal eyes and yet have believed in Him. But we do expect to meet Him, after a *spiritual* fashion, so that faith can recognize Him. No, more, we know that He is here in His real, though invisible Presence. We may expect this blessed experience when we are in the way of holy service. I grant you that our Lord Jesus comes to us at other times as well—

**“Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings—
It is the Lord who rises
With healing in His wings!”**

Yes, and sometimes the light of the Sun of Righteousness surprises the Christian when he cannot sing! “Before I was aware,” says the sweet singer of the blessed Canticle—“Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib,” for the Presence of Christ may be suddenly manifested to His people—and they may be as though they were caught away altogether from earthly scenes—and were with Christ in the Heavenly places!

We have known this to happen, sometimes, in the lonely night watches. And we have said with David, “When I awake, I am still with You,” even in the darkness of the night. We have known it to happen in the very midst of the hurry and worry of business. All of a sudden everything has been calm and quiet. We could not make it out—it seemed like a Sabbath in the middle of the week—a very oasis in the wilderness! The Lord Jesus Christ has come to some of us when we have been amidst the busy throng in Cheapside. In fact, there is nothing but sin that can keep Him away from us since He is not dependent upon the ordinary rules that regulate the movement of earthly bodies. He was not so on earth after He had risen from the dead, for though I doubt not that He often came and went just as others did, yet, at other times, He came like an

apparition, “the doors being shut,” and He could be here and there at His own sweet will, passing from place to place, holding the eyes of those to whom He was nearest, or opening their eyes just when He pleased to do so!

And that is how He acts toward us now. Do not some of you remember when Christ first appeared to you? Ah, it is years ago with some of us, but we mind the place, the spot of ground where Jesus first manifested Himself to us. The joy of marriage—the joy of harvest—these were as nothing compared with the joy that came to us from the vision of His face! Many days have passed since then and we have had fresh visitations from Him. He has come to us, and come again, and yet again. He has not been a stranger to us and now some of us can say that we are not strangers to Him, for He is our dear familiar Friend! Yet there are times, even with those who dwell with Him, when the light is clearer and the voice is nearer, and the sense of His Presence is more delightful than usual.

These times, I say, come by Christ’s own appointment whenever He pleases, yet I again remind you of the lesson we learn from our text, which is, that we may expect these visits from Christ when *we are going about His business*. These devoted women had been to the sepulcher and had there seen “the angel of the Lord,” who had bid them go quickly and tell His disciples that He was risen from the dead and would meet them in Galilee. So they hastened with all their might to tell the cheering tidings to the sorrowing followers of Jesus! “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them.” It is better to be actively working for Christ than to sit still and read, and study, and hope to enjoy His company. There must be alternations between the contemplative and the active life of a Christian! Sometimes it is best to sit quietly with Mary and leave Martha and the dishes alone. But, at another time it is better to bestir yourself and to run here and there with all the diligence of a Martha, for then Jesus will be most likely to meet with you.

I notice—and I think that my observation is correct—that my Brothers and Sisters who do most for Christ know most about Him and have most fellowship with Him. The Sunday school teacher, diligent in his class and weary, perhaps, now that the Sabbath is well-nigh spent, yet rejoicing that he has set forth Christ before his class, is the one to whom the Lord will come and manifest Himself! The man who has been preaching in the street, or going from door to door trying to speak for Christ by a tract or by his own voice—and all of you, indeed, who have done anything for your Lord and Master—are the most likely persons for Him to meet with at this time.

I have known some who have been for years members of churches, but who have never done anything for the Savior. They are the kind of people who do not get on with my ministry very long—they say that they are not able to feed upon it. They are generally wanderers who go about from one place to another looking for new light—and they never get to be very happy or very useful. Nor do they often have much communion with Christ. No, our Lord is very choice in His company and He does not frequent the house of the sluggard! But wherever there is one who spends and is spent for Jesus, there we may expect that Jesus will be! If we

heartily serve Him, the state of mind into which we shall be brought will be congenial to His own—fellowship will be likely between the laboring Savior and His laboring servant. Follow the example of Him who went about doing good and you will thus be in sympathy with Him—and you will find that He will come and walk with you because you two are agreed!

That is certainly one reason why Christ comes to those who are busy about His errands—because He is in agreement with them and they are, therefore, traveling on the right road to meet with Him. “If any man will not work, neither shall he eat,” is a rule that Christ observes. And those who will not work for Him get but scant morsels from Him. Few of the bits my Brother spoke of, that are dipped in the dish with Christ, come to those who never lift a hand to do Him any service. But if He brings us into loving obedience, into joyful alacrity and sacred earnestness in doing His will, then it is that He will, in all probability, meet with us by the way and manifest Himself to us. Sit down, then, you who have come to the end of another day of holy service, and pray, “Jesus, Master, come and meet us now.” Oh, that you might feel as though He stood behind you and looked over your shoulder—as if the shadow of the Christ fell upon you and you felt, even now, His pierced hand touching you—and that prostrate at His feet your spirit might lie, holding Him by the feet and worshipping Him!

I do not feel as if I need to preach upon this subject. I want only to set you longing for larger and deeper communion with Christ and aspiring after it—especially you to whom this Sabbath has been a day of service, from which service, perhaps, you have not as yet seen any good come. You have come from the field weary—not weary *of* it, though weary *in* it—for you are still ready to serve your Lord. Now I want you to feel that Christ is here and that He comes to commune with you.

II. So we advance a step to our second remark. WHEN JESUS MEETS US, HE ALWAYS HAS A GOOD WORD FOR US. “Jesus met them, saying, All hail!”

That is, first, *a word of salutation*, as if He had said, “Welcome, Friends! Glad to see you, Friends! All hail, My Friends!” There is nothing cold and formal about that word—it seems full of the warmth of brotherly kindness and affectionate condescension. “All hail!” says our Lord to the women. “You are glad to see Me, and I am glad to see you. ‘All hail!’” How much more sweet that sounds than that bitter sarcasm of the soldiers, “Hail, King of the Jews!” And yet it seems almost like an echo of it, as though Christ caught up the cruel word, crushed the bitterness out of it and then gave it back full of delicious sweetness to the holy women before Him. “All hail!” He says. “All hail!”

My dear Christian Brother or Sister, would you be glad to see the Savior if He could now be made visible to you? Yet you would not be so glad to see Him as He would be to see you! He is very dear to you, but He is not so dear to you as you are to Him! Out of two friends, the greater affection is always found in the one who has conferred the most favors upon the other. I will not dare to compare, for a moment, the love which exists between you and Christ, for what have you ever done for Him compared with what He has done for you? He loves you more than you can

ever love Him. Well, then, He says, "All hail! I am glad, My Sister—I am glad, My Brother—I am glad, my Friend, that you have come up to this place where My people meet. All hail! I welcome you."

Besides being a word of salutation, it is *a word of benediction*. Our Lord, by this expression, seems to say, "All health be to you—everything that can do you good! I wish for you every good thing." He speaks it to you, Believer. "May you have the haleness, the wholeness that makes holiness and, so may it be all well with you—all hale with you!"

Then it is also *a word of congratulation*, for some render it, "Rejoice," and, indeed, that is the meaning of the term—"Let us joy and rejoice together." Jesus gives to you, Beloved, this watchword as He meets you—"Rejoice." The children in your class are not yet all converted. Nevertheless, rejoice in Christ. All in the congregation, about whom some of us are concerned, are not saved. Nevertheless, let us rejoice in Christ. You, yourself, cannot run as quickly on your Lord's errands as you wish you could. Nevertheless, rejoice in Christ Jesus, though you can have no confidence in the flesh. It is a blessed thing when it becomes a sacred duty to be glad. What man to whom our Lord Jesus Christ says, "Rejoice," can have an excuse for misery? So, "All hail!" is a word of congratulation.

And, according to some versions, it may be read, "Peace be unto you!" That is *a word of pacification*—as though our Lord had said, "Ah, you women did not run away from Me as the men did. But, still, you were afraid and very timid. Sad though you were at the sepulcher, you went there trembling. You did not believe My Word, or you scarcely believed it—that I would rise from the dead—but I am not going to have any back reckonings with you. 'Peace be to you!'"

Now, dear Friends, have you heard your Lord and Savior say to you, "It is all forgiven—every omission and every commission, every slip and every fault—all the lukewarmness and all the coldness is all gone"? That is the meaning of the greeting, "All hail!" from the lips of Christ. "There is nothing between Me and you, dear Heart, but perfect peace and unbroken love. I rejoice to see you and I would have you rejoice, and rest, and be quiet, for I have come near unto you, to bless and cheer you."

That is the second lesson I learn from the text. First, that, when we are running on our Master's errands, we may hope that He will meet us. And, next, when He does meet us, we may expect that He will always have a good word for us.

III. Thirdly, WHEN JESUS MEETS US, IT BEHOOVES US TO GET AS NEAR TO HIM AS WE CAN. "And they came and held Him by the feet."

Note that they first stood still. They had been running quickly to carry the angel's message to the disciples, but at the sound of their Lord's voice they stopped, half out of breath, and they seemed to say by their looks, "It is, indeed, our blessed Master! It is the very same Lord whom we saw laid in the tomb, the Best-Beloved of our soul!" Then, next, they approached Him. They did not flee away backward at all, but they came right up to Him "and held Him by the feet." Now, dear Friends, if Jesus is near you, come still closer to Him! If you feel that He is passing by, come near to Him by an act of your will. Be all alive and wide-awake—do not be half asleep in your pew, but say, "If He is here, I will get to Him. If He is anywhere about, I will speak with Him and beg Him to speak to me." If

ever our heart was active, it ought to be active in the Presence of Christ! And let us try to be all aglow with joy, for so were these women. They were delighted to behold their risen Lord, so they drew nearer to Him and, all intent with earnest, burning, all-conquering love, they came so close to Him that they could grasp Him, for they felt that they must adore Him.

Now, Beloved, let it be so with you and with me. Do not let us lose a single word that our Lord is ready to speak to us. If this is the time of His appearing to us, let Him not come and find us asleep. If He is knocking at the door, if He is saying to us, “Open to Me, My Sister, My Love, My Dove, My Undeiled,” let us not reply that we cannot leave the bed of sloth to let Him in—but now, more than ever, let us breathe a mighty prayer, “Come, O You Blessed One whose voice I know full well, and commune with me.” If Jacob held the Angel whom he did not know—if, as our hymn puts it, he said—

**“Come, O You Traveler unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee”—**

let us much more say—

**“Come, O You Traveler well-known,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see,**

I must have your company. My spirit craves it, sighs for it, pines for it! I must have You. I will hold You. Leave me not, but reveal Yourself to me now!”

That is the third lesson we may learn from our text.

IV. And the fourth I have almost touched upon. I could not help it. It is this, WHEN JESUS MEETS US, WE SHOULD RETAIN HIM AND WORSHIP HIM. “They came and held Him by the feet and worshipped Him.”

When Mary Magdalene first sought to hold her Lord, Jesus said to her, “Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father.” But now He permits what He had formerly forbidden—“They came and *held Him by the feet*”—those blessed feet that the nails had held but three days before! He had risen from the grave and, therefore, a wondrous change had taken place in Him—but the wounds were there, still visible, and these women “held Him by the feet.” And, Beloved, whenever you get your Lord Jesus near to you, do not let Him go for any little trifle—no, nor even for a *great* thing, but say, with the spouse in the Canticles, “I found Him whom my soul loves: I held Him, and would not let Him go.” The saints, themselves, will sometimes drive Christ away from those who love Him. Therefore the spouse said, “I charge you, O you daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not, nor awake my love, till He pleases.” Be jealous lest you lose Him, when you have realized the joy, the rich delight, of having Him in your soul! You feel, at such a time as that, as if you scarcely dared to breathe—and you are so particular about your conduct that you would not venture to put one foot before the other without consulting Him, lest even inadvertently you should cause Him grief! Bow thus at His feet. Be humble. Hold Him by the feet. Be bold, be affectionate. Grasp Him, for though He is your God, He is also your Brother, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh!

But take care that in it all, you *worship* Him—"They came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him." This is not the Socinians' christ—they cannot worship their savior, for he is but a mere man. This is *our* Christ, "the Son of the Highest," "very God of very God," "God over all, blessed forever." As we hold Him by the feet, we feel a holy awe stealing over us, for the place where we stand is holy ground when He is there! We hold Him, but still we reverently bow before Him and feel like John in Patmos when He wrote, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Well spoke one of old, to whom it was said, "You cannot see Christ and live." "Then," replied the saint, "let me see Him and die." And we would say the same, for, whatever happens to us, we wish for a sight of Him! I have read of one who cried, under the overpowering weight of Divine manifestations, "Stop, Lord! Stop! I am but an earthen vessel and if You fill me fuller, I will perish." Had I been in his place, I think I would not have spoken quite as he did, but I would have said, "Go on, Lord, with the blessed manifestation of Yourself! Let the earthen vessel be broken if necessary—it cannot possibly come to a better end than by being crushed and even annihilated by the majesty of Your glorious Presence!" At any rate, we will hold Him and worship Him—may the Lord help us to do so more and more!

V. The last remark I have to make is a practical one. It also comes out of our text. FROM SUCH A MEETING WITH CHRIST, WE SHOULD GO ON A FURTHER ERRAND FOR HIM. "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid. Go tell My brethren to go into Galilee, and there will they see Me."

When we have such a meeting with Christ as these women had, let us go on some further errand for Him as soon as He permits us to do so. It is a very blessed thing to have fellowship with Christ, but it would be a very ill result of our communion with Him if it led any one of us to say, "Now I shall not go back to my service. I shall not go to my class again. I might be provoked by the scholars. I might be careless and so I might lose the fellowship I am now enjoying with Jesus. I shall not go and preach again. I shall stay at home and have communion with Christ all day." I knew one Brother who got into such a condition that he really thought that to see the face of his people on the Lord's Day robbed Him of fellowship with Christ! All week long he never saw anybody, for his fellowship with Christ, he said, was so intense that he could not bear to look upon mankind! And when the Sabbath came and he had to meet with his people, he would, if he could, have preached out of a box so that they might hear his voice, but he might never see them. Now, I do not think that such a spirit as that is at all right! Who is the man who can best bear witness for Christ, but the man who has been with Him in secret and sacred fellowship? And what is a better return for Christ's wondrous Grace to us than that we should consecrate ourselves to the holy task of showing forth His Glory among our fellow men?

There is a striking legend illustrating the blessedness of performing our duty at whatever cost to our own inclination. A monk had seen a beautiful vision of our Savior and, in silent bliss, He was gazing upon it. The hour arrived at which it was his duty to feed the poor at the convent gate. He would gladly have lingered in his cell to enjoy the vision, but under a sense of duty he tore himself away from it to perform his humble

service. When he returned, he found the blessed vision still waiting for him, and heard a voice saying, "Had you stayed, I would have gone. As you have gone, I have remained." So, dear Friend, ask yourself, "Since Jesus is very precious to me, what more can I do for Him? I was running to His disciples when He met me, so when He bids me go to them, I will run the faster that no time may be lost to the disciples before they, also, share the enjoyment with which my Master has indulged me! And when I get to them, I shall have more to tell them than I had before. I was going to tell them that I had seen the angel of the Lord, but I shall be able to tell them that I have seen the Lord, Himself, and I shall tell the message so much more brightly and powerfully now that I have had it confirmed from His own lips."

Those holy women were full of fear and joy—strangely mingled emotions, before—but now, surely fear must have taken flight, for Jesus had said to them, "Be not afraid." And it must have been joy, and joy, alone, with which these blessed women would break in upon the eleven and say, "We have seen what is far better than a vision of angels, for we have seen the Master Himself! We held Him by the feet till we knew that it was really our Lord! We held Him till we had worshipped Him and heard Him say, 'Be not afraid.' And then He gave us a message from His own dear lips, and this is what He said to us, 'Tell My brethren to go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.'"

Happy preacher who, on his way to his pulpit, is interrupted by meeting his Master! Happy preacher who has lost the thread of his discourse, for few discourses are worth much that have too much thread in them, but who has found something infinitely better than thread—some links of sacred fire—some chains of Heavenly love that go from end to end of the discourse, so that he tells what he knows, and testifies what he has seen, for men must give heed to such a witness! His countenance is all aglow with the light that shines from the face of Jesus! It is bright with the joy that fills the preacher's own soul! And those who listen to him say, "Would God we knew that joy!" And those that do share it say, "Yes, we know it," and they respond to it till hearts leap up to speak with hearts—and they sing together a chorus of praise unto Him whom they unitedly love! I wish it were so at this moment. I would like, dear Friends, to be able to tell my message better because of having met my Master. And I would like you to go out to the work and service of another week strengthened and rendered mighty and wise for all you have to do, because Jesus has met you and has said to you, "All hail," and you have held Him by the feet and worshipped Him!

There I leave the subject with you. Perhaps some of you are saying, "We wish we could hold Him by the feet." Yes, but in this blessed supper, which is spread upon the table, you have an outward emblem of how to hold Him better than by the feet, for, in the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine in memory of Him, He sets forth to us how His whole Self can be spiritually received into the innermost chambers of our being—how He can come unto us and sup with us, and we with Him—how He can dwell in us and we can dwell in Him. Not only the peace of God, but His very Self can now come and abide in your very self, and there

can be a union between you and Him that never shall be broken! God grant that you may enjoy it even now!

But I know that some here present cannot understand what I have been talking about. It must have seemed like an idle tale to them. Ah, dear Friends! And if we were to go into a stable and were to talk to horses about the ordinary concerns of our home life, what would they know about it all? They understand about oats, beans, hay and straw—but what can they know of the themes that interest intelligent human beings? So, there are some men in this world, of whom Dr. Watts truly says—

“Like brutes they live, like brutes they die.”

They have no spiritual nature, even as the horse has no immortal soul, and they cannot, therefore, comprehend spiritual things! And as I might pity the horse because it is a stranger to mental enjoyments, so I would pity the unregenerate man who is a stranger to spiritual enjoyments. For, as much as the mind of man is above the living something that is within the brute, so much is the spirit of the Believer above the ordinary mind of the unregenerate man. We have joys, the sweetness of which is such that honey is not to be compared! We have bliss, the like of which all Solomon’s wealth could not have purchased! And we have been introduced into a world which is as much fairer than this material universe as the sunlight is better than the darkest midnight of a dungeon!

Oh, that you did all know it! May God, of His Grace, give you His Spirit, create you anew and breathe faith in Jesus into your soul! Then will you know the bliss of meeting with Him and of serving Him! God bless the Word, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 3:11-26; ACTS 4:1-4; 2 PETER 3.**

You remember, dear Friends, how Peter denied his Lord in the time of His trial. Now notice what a change was worked in him after the Holy Spirit had fallen upon him on the day of Pentecost. We have often read the story of the man healed at the beautiful gate of the Temple. Now let us see what followed:

Acts 3:11. *And as the lame man, which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch that is called Solomon’s, greatly wondering.* It is always easy to draw a crowd, but there was really something wonderful to be seen that day! The Apostle was careful to turn to the very best account the curiosity of the crowd. See how quickly he carried their thoughts away from the man before him to the greater Man, the Divine Man, the Son of God whom they had rejected.

12-23. *And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? Or why look you so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son Jesus; whom you delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;*

and killed the Prince of Life, who God has raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And His name through faith in His name has made this man strong, whom you see and know: yes, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His Prophets, that Christ should suffer, He has so fulfilled. Repent you, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall you hear in all things whatever He shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Hear this, then, you who have heard Christ through His Word and through His servants, and have heard Him preach—yes, scores and hundreds of times! Let me read this text to you again and as I read it, may it sink into your hearts. "It shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

24-26. Yes, and all the Prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. You are the children of the Prophets, and of the Covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in your seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you, first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. They were to have the first proclamation of the Gospel. From among them would be gathered many of the first converts. The preacher did not know immediately what result this sermon produced. It was not like the sermon preached at Pentecost, for he did know what happened after its delivery. This is quite as good a sermon in every way and we have every reason to believe that many were converted by it. The Spirit of God was with Peter, yet even the Spirit of God does not always work in the same way upon men. You see, the Apostles had no opportunity to have a talk with the people afterwards, and to find out what had been done, as they had on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 4:1-4. And as they spoke unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed and the number of the men was about five thousand. So that, though they could not tell then and there how many were converted, and though they could not baptize them at once, for they were taken away, yet, though there was no meeting, later, there were probably just as many saved as at Pentecost! Just as grand a result came of it! You cannot judge the result of a sermon on the particular day that it is preached—it may seem as if that sermon had produced no effect and it may be so—but, still, this time it was not so. Whenever you go home sad

that you have not had a later meeting, or you are interrupted and cannot tell what good was done, though *you* do not know what has been accomplished, the record is in Heaven and God will reveal it, by-and-by! And, perhaps, even here you will discover that you made a mistake and that the service which seemed lost was one of the most blessed that you ever conducted. God grant that it may be so, for Christ's sake! Now let us read Peter's second Epistle, the third chapter.

2 Peter 3:1-3. *This second epistle, Beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apostles of the Lord and Savior: knowing this first that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking according to their own lusts. This prophecy is most certainly being fulfilled in these days.*

4. *And saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. "Inviolable laws still govern the material creation. Men are still swift to sin. Oppressors are not overthrown and, oftentimes, the good are left to languish in poverty and suffering. 'Where is the promise of His coming?'"*

5. *For this they willingly are ignorant. Ignorant that there has been one great interposition of God to avenge the insults to His holy Law and to overturn the rule of sin. "For this they willingly are ignorant."*

5, 6. *That by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. God did destroy man, once, with water, and sweep away sin.*

7. *But the Heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men. There will come a second interposition—we know not when, but assuredly it shall come! And if the visitation tarry, we must wait for it, for it shall come—it will not really tarry, however long it may seem to be delayed.*

8. *But, Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. There are no years to Him! There are no days to the great Ancient of Days. A thousand years must seem to be a mere speck in comparison with His everlasting existence—as a dream when one awakes, it has swiftly passed away. But God still remains!*

9. *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Therefore does He wait. If men ask why there is no interposition of wrath to overthrow the ungodly, the answer is because this is part of God's great reign of love. He waits because He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Yet there will be a limit even to His patience.*

10. *But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth, also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. The next and great judgment will be by fire.*

11, 12. *Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?* This should be the practical outcome of the anticipation of coming judgment. Let us look on “all these things” as passing away.

13. *Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new Heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.* The end of this world will be the beginning of a new and better one, of which “righteousness” will be the great characteristic!

14. *Therefore, Beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.* There is, again, the practical note.

15, 16. *And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul, also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood to them that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.* The Scriptures are given for our learning and, rightly used, guide us to the Savior. But, alas, some “wrest” them “unto their own destruction.” Let none of us ever be found committing such fatal folly as that.

17, 18. *You therefore, Beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest you, also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in Grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.* I should like to point out to young Christians and to all Christian people how Peter finishes this Epistle, first with a warning and then with a counsel. He says, “Beware lest you be led away.” And then he puts in a, “but”—“but grow in Grace.” If you go into a plantation at a certain time of the year, you may see a great number of trees that have no leaves on them. How are you to know which are alive and which are not? Well, you would soon know if you could look at their roots. If a tree has been growing, if its roots have taken hold upon the soil, you may pull it, but you will not stir it. There it stands and, in like manner, growth in Grace brings steadfastness in Grace. You who have faith, pray God that you may have *growing* faith. A living faith is a growing faith, and a growing faith is a living faith! Pray, therefore, that you may “grow in Grace.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—974, 814.

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**PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY
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OUR OMNIPOTENT LEADER

NO. 2465

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 17, 1896.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 29, 1886.**

***“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power
is given to Me in Heaven and on earth.”
Matthew 28:18.***

I INTEND chiefly to call your attention to this verse, but it will also be necessary to refer to the rest of the chapter—“Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen”

Our Savior was always with His disciples until the time of His death. After His resurrection He was with them often, but not always. He came and He went mysteriously—the doors being shut, He was suddenly there when they least looked for him. Or He appeared to them as they walked by the way, or while they were fishing, or when they came to the mountain in Galilee, the appointed rendezvous. On this particular occasion—I am not quite sure whether it was when only the eleven were gathered together, or that more memorable occasion when He spoke to over 500 brethren at once, which many who have well studied the passage think is more probable—at any rate, on this occasion, the Savior made Himself very much at home with His disciples. According to the most proper translation of the text, “Jesus came and talked to them.” There was a holy familiarity in His communications with His disciples. He spoke to them as a friend. He came into close contact with them in friendliest familiarity. The glory of that time to *them* was that *He* was there and that *He* spoke with them! It does not matter where it was, He was there, and wherever He pleases to be the center of the group, there is sure to be a memorable gathering. Brothers and Sisters, I wish that we were always on the lookout for our Lord. I am afraid that in our assemblies we often think and say, “So-and-So was there, and such-and-such a minister spoke to us.” But the best meeting is when Christ is there and when He, Himself, by His Divine Spirit, speaks familiarly to our souls!

Notice what it was about which our Lord spoke to His disciples. He was going away from them. His bodily Presence would no longer be enjoyed by His followers until He should so come in like manner as they were to see Him go up into Heaven. But His last talk, or one of the last talks He ever had with them before His ascension, was about Himself and His work. It was a time of taking them into His secret, explaining to them the partnership which the Father had established between Him and

them, and making them to know the fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ which was now to cover the whole of their lives. You see, He begins by speaking to them about His own power—"All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth." We are not fit to go out to work for Christ till we truly know Him, ourselves, and also know something of the Divine power which He is prepared to give to us. It is well for us to learn the lesson, ourselves, before we attempt to teach it to others. Go not out to all nations till you have first gone into your closet and had fellowship with the Master, Himself! You will blunder in your errand unless you go forth fresh from His blessed Presence.

Then, what were they to do but to act for Him? "Go, therefore, and teach all nations." They were to teach those nations only about Him! He was to be the great Subject of all their teaching. The correct word is, "disciple all nations." They were to disciple them, not to make them their own disciples, but *His* disciples. He was to still be the Teacher, the Rabbi, the Master—they were only to go forth to do His work, not their own. Brothers, we must not try to form a party of which we shall be the head. We must abhor the very thought of any such action! We must gather the nations to Him! Otherwise, we are not His servants, we are our own servants, or rather, our own masters. We are renegades and disloyal if we do that. "Go, therefore, and disciple all nations," was the command of Jesus Christ to His disciples.

And they were to baptize those who were made disciples, but it was to be in His name, in association with that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. He who is not, as a Believer, baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, is not baptized at all! The name of Christ is inseparably linked with those who are baptized according to the Scriptural fashion. So, you see, whether it is preaching, or whether it is discipling, or whether it is baptizing—we must keep close to Christ. It is all along that line we preach Him, we make disciples for Him, we baptize in His name.

And when those who were made disciples were baptized, what was to be done next? "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." The shepherding of the sheep must still be in our Lord's name! We do not found a church in any other name but His. Neither do we know any rule or order or book of discipline but that which He has left us. He, alone, is King in Zion, and only what He teaches is authoritative. The explanations given by His servants we must judge by the tests He has given to us—but the Word of the Master is to be obeyed and accepted in its entirety. "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." O Brothers and Sisters, there is no true work done for Christ unless we always put Him in His right place and keep ourselves in our right places—Himself the Omnipotent Leader and Commander of His people—and ourselves His servants in all things, seeking even in the smallest matters to be obedient to His revealed will!

Do not fail to notice that all this is to be done in association with Himself—"Lo, I am with you always." "It is not enough that you preach My Gospel, baptize in My name, teach all nations that I am the Lord and Master of the house and bid them all obey My will—you must also always have Me at your side. You will do nothing worth doing. You will spend

your life in failure unless you keep up perpetual communion with Me. 'Lo, I am with you always.'" This must be the case with us till this dispensation closes and it shall only close by our being with Christ in a still higher sense. We shall then go from His being with us to our being with Him—from spiritual fellowship to an actual, visible, corporeal fellowship! We shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is. He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth! He shall reign gloriously among His ancients and, until then, it is our privilege to abide at His side and never venture to go forth unless we feel that He goes with us, making our preaching and teaching in His name to be of effect upon the hearts and consciences of men.

I have missed my purpose in this preface if I have not brought out this line of thought—that if any of us would receive a commission for Christian service, it must come from Christ Himself! If we would carry out that commission, it must be in loyalty to Christ! And if we hope to succeed in that commission, it must be in a perpetual, personal fellowship *with* Christ! We must begin to work with Him and go on working with Him, and never cease to work until He, Himself, shall come to discharge us from the service because there is no further need of it! Oh, that we did all our Church work in the name of the great Head of the Church! Oh, that we did all Christ's work consciously in the Presence and in the strength of Christ!

Still only introducing my main theme, I shall ask you for a minute or so to consider the grand statement which our Savior made. "Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth."

"All power." Read it, if you like, "all authority." It is not so much force that is meant, as moral power. Christ at this moment possesses a royal authority—by might, it is true—but chiefly by right. His is the power which comes of His merits, of His glorious Nature and of the gift of the Divine Spirit who rests upon Him without measure. The word we translate, "power," has a wider meaning than that—you find a good instance of it in *John 1:12*—"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God," where the word, "power," might be rendered, "privilege," or, "right," or, "liberty," and yet be also correctly translated, "power." Christ at this moment has all rights in Heaven and on earth! He has all sovereignty and dominion and, of course, He has all the might which backs up His right. But it is not mere power in the sense of *force*—it is not the dynamite power in which earthly kings delight. It is another and a higher kind of force which Christ has, even the Divine energy of love. He possesses at this moment all authority in Heaven and on earth.

"All power," He says, "is given to Me." That is to say, He has it *now*. You and I are not sent out to preach the Gospel in order to get power for Christ—He has it now! We are not sent out, as we sometimes say, to win the world for Christ—in the strictest sense, it is His now! He is the King of Glory at this very moment! He is, even now, Lord Over All, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! All authority is given to Him. I shall not try to explain the particular time when it was given, but I remind you that it *has been given*. That great act is accomplished! Our Lord Jesus holds in

His hand the scepter which gives Him power over all flesh that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. He already has in His hand that scepter with which He shall break the nations as with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel! He has not to go up to His Throne—He is already enthroned. He has not to be crowned—He is already crowned, as we have said, King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

“All power is given to Me.” This is not merely the power which Christ possesses naturally by His Godhead, or a power which could be compassed entirely by His Manhood, for that must necessarily be limited. But it is a power which can be contained within that blessed complex Person, the Christ of God. It is as the God-Man, the Mediator between God and men, that all might is bestowed upon Him as the reward of the travail of His soul—boundless authority—so that now He can say, “All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth.”

All power “in Heaven” belongs to Christ. That is, all power with God. You remember how Elijah prayed and opened Heaven by his prayers? The Christ of God is greater than Elijah! You know how men of God have been blessed with remarkable force and energy in their pleadings—but the intercessions of Christ are more powerful than all the intercessions of His people—yes, in one sense, they are the power that gives effect to all the intercessions of all the saints! It is He who puts power into them and into their petitions. Of course, as Christ has power with God, He also has power over all the holy angels and all pure intelligences. All power of every kind that has to do with heavenly things and heavenly places is in the hand of Christ.

And Christ also has all power, “on earth.” That is to say, He is Lord over all the earth. “The sea is His and He made it: and His hands formed the dry land.” He is Master of all Providences—His hand always holds the helm and steers the ship that carries His disciples. He is Master of all kings and of all politics and when, at times, we tremble for our beloved nation, there is no real need for us to do so. “The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.” Christ has all authority over all the sons of men and all the forces of nature. From the stars that light up the brow of midnight, to the deepest law that works in the heart of the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ is Master of them all! All power, He says, is given to Him in Heaven and on earth! This is a statement which would need a far fuller explanation than I can give it in the time at my disposal just now—I want, rather, to make use of it in this way.

I. First of all, let me say of this statement of our Lord—“All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth”—that WE GREATLY REJOICE IN IT.

I do not know that our Divine Master could have said anything to us that would have made our hearts thrill with a sweeter delight than we derive from these words—“All power is given to Me.” Beloved, do you not wish all power to be given to *Him whom we love*? I confess that nothing makes me rejoice more than the fact that He reigns. I do not feel any sorrow so much as the sorrow of seeing His Truth trod in the mire and I know no joy that ever thrills my soul like that of knowing that Jesus is still set as King upon the holy hill of Zion, that He still reigns and that,

“He must reign till He has put all enemies under His footstool.” Is there any power you would like to keep back from Him? Is there any power you would like to invest in someone else? Is it not the delight of your soul to think that He could say, even when He dwelt here among men, before He had ascended to the Father, while yet He talked as others talked with His poor disciples, “All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth”? Do we not feel ready to shout, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” when we know that this is really the fact?

We delight also, dear Friends, to know that all power is in the hands of Christ because we are sure that *it will be rightly used*. Power in the hands of some people is dangerous, but power in the hands of Christ is blessed. Oh, let Him have all power! Let Him do what He will with it, for He cannot will anything but that which is right, just, true and good. Give Him unbounded sovereignty! We want no limited monarchy when Christ is King! No, put every crown on that dear head and let Him have unrestricted sway, for there is none like He. He is more glorious than all the sons of men and it is our joy to know that all power is given to Him in Heaven and on earth!

This also furnishes us with *good reasons for often going to Him*. I love to think that all power is in Him and none in me, for now I cannot stay away from Him. I am obliged to knock at His door and if He asks me why I come so often, I must answer, “It cannot be helped, my Lord, for all power is with You! If I had power to provide for myself, I might try to do so, but since, without You, I would die of hunger, I must come to You for every meal and every snack, yes, for every breath and every pulse.” Yes, it is even so because all power is given to Christ that we rejoice that we may always go to Him! Will you chide a babe because it longs for its mother’s breast? How can it live without its natural nourishment? And can you chide our feebleness because it loves to hang upon the Omnipotence of Christ?

We are glad, again, that all power is given to Him because *He is so easy of access*. It is difficult for those in need to speak with kings, but it is not difficult for them to tell their needs to the King of Kings! It is not easy to present a petition to an earthly prince, but it is very different with those who have requests to bring to the Prince Immanuel—His door is always open to suppliants and His ear and heart are always ready to listen to their supplications. Call upon Him when you will, He will never repel you! Come to His strength whenever you may—that strength will flow out to your weakness and make you strong in the Lord and in the power of His might! I leave that first thought with you—we rejoice that all power is given to Christ.

II. Secondly, WE SEE THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME OF THIS TRUTH. “All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth. *Go, therefore.*”

I have met with some Brothers and Sisters who have tried to read the Bible the wrong way upwards. They have said, “God has a purpose which is certain to be fulfilled. Therefore we will not budge an inch. All power is in the hands of Christ. Therefore we will sit still.” But that is not Christ’s way of reading the passage! It is, “All power is given to Me, therefore go, you, and do something.” “But, Lord, what do You want from us when You

have all power? We are such poor, insignificant, useless creatures that we shall be sure to make a muddle of anything we attempt." "No," says the Master, "all power is given to Me, therefore go." He puts us on the go because He *has* all power! I know that with many of us there is a tendency to sit down and say, "All things are wrong. The world gets darker and darker and everything is going to the bad." We sit and fret together in most delightful misery and try to cheer each other downwards into greater depths of despair! Do we not often act thus? Alas, it is so and we feel happy to think that other people will blend in blessed harmony of misery with us in all our melancholies! Or if we do stir ourselves a little, we feel that there is not much good in our service and that very little can possibly come of it. This message of our Master seems to me to be something like the sound of a trumpet. I have given you the strains of a dulcimer, but now there rings out the clarion note of a trumpet! Here is the power to enable you to "go." Therefore, "go" away from your dunghills, away from your ashes and your dust. Shake yourselves from your melancholy! The bugle calls, "Boot and saddle! Up and away!" The battle has begun and every good soldier of Jesus Christ must be to the front for His Captain and His Lord. Because all power is given to Christ, He passes on that power to His people and sends them forth to battle and to victory!

Yet is there another note in this trumpet call. "All power is given to Me, go, therefore"—"Go *you*." Who is to go out of that first band of disciples? Is it Peter, the rash and the headstrong? Is it John, who sometimes wishes to call fire from Heaven to destroy men? Is it Philip, with whom the Savior has been so long and yet he has not known Him? Is it Thomas, who must put His finger into the print of the nails or he will not believe Him? Yet the Master says to them, "Go you; all power is given to Me, therefore go. You are as good for My purpose as anybody else would be. There is no power in you, I know, but then all power is in Me, therefore go." "Go, you worm, Jacob, and thresh the mountains, for I have made you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth. Go in all your weakness, for this is your might—the might that dwells in Me! Go and teach all nations. Poor, weak, feeble, faulty, yet go because I have all the power you can possibly need."

"Go, go," says Christ. "But, Lord, if we go to men, *they will ask for our passports*." "Take them," He says, "all authority is given to Me in Heaven and earth. You are free of Heaven and you are free of earth. There is no place—whether it is in far-off Ethiopia, or in the deserts of Scythia, or in the center of Rome—there is no place where you may not go! There are your passports—'All authority is given to Me, therefore go.'" "But, Lord, we need more than passports, *we need a commission*." "Here is your commission," says the Lord—'all power is given to Me'—and I delegate it to you. I have authority and I give you authority. Go, therefore, because I have the authority. Go and teach princes and kings and beggars—teach them all alike. I ordain you, I authorize you! As many of you as know Me and have My love shed abroad in your hearts, I commission you to go and—

***'Tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior you have found.'***

And if they ask how you dare to do it, tell them not that the bishop ordained you, or that a synod licensed you, but that all power is given to your Master in Heaven and on earth and you have come in His name!" And nobody may say no to you.

"Moreover," says the Master, "*I send you with My power gone before you*" Observe that, for I bring it, again, to your recollection. Christ does not say, "Go and win the power for Me on earth. Go and get power for Me among the sons of men." No, but, "All authority and power are already vested in Me. Therefore go. I send you to a country which is not an alien kingdom—I send you to a country which is Mine—for all souls are Mine. If you go to the Jews or to the Gentiles, they are Mine. If it is to India or China that you go, you need not ask any man's leave—you are in your own King's country, you are on your own King's errand—you have your own King's power going before you."

I believe that, often, when missionaries go to a country, they have rather to gather ripe fruit than to plant trees. As the Lord sent the hornets to clear the way for the children of Israel, so does He oftentimes send singular changes—political, social and religious—before the heralds of the Cross to prepare the way for them! And this is the message which sounds with clear clarion note to all the soldiers of King Jesus, "I have all authority in Heaven and on earth, therefore, without misgivings or questionings, go and evangelize all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Thus, first, we rejoice in this grand statement of our Lord Jesus Christ, and next, we see the practical outcome of it.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, WE FEEL THE NEED OF IT.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if anybody in this place knows the power which is in Christ to make his ministry of any use, I am sure that I do! I scarcely ever come into this pulpit without bemoaning myself that I should ever be called to a task for which I seem more unfit than any other man that was ever born! Woe is me that I should have to preach a Gospel which so overmasters me and which I feel that I am so unfit to preach! Yet I could not give it up, for it were a far greater woe to me *not* to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Unless the Holy Spirit blesses the Word, we who preach the Gospel are, of all men, most miserable, for we have attempted a task that is impossible—we have entered upon a sphere where nothing but the supernatural will ever avail! If the Holy Spirit does not renew the hearts of our hearers, we cannot do it! If the Holy Spirit does not regenerate them, we cannot! If He does not send the Truth of God home into their souls, we might as well speak into the ear of a corpse! All that we have to do is quite beyond our unaided power—we must have our Master with us, or we can do nothing! We deeply feel our need of this great Truth of God—we not merely say it, but we are driven every day, by our own deep sense of need, to rejoice that our Lord has declared, "All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth," for we need all power! Every kind of power that there is in Heaven and on earth we shall need before we can fully discharge this ministry. Before the nations shall all be brought to hear the Gospel of Christ, before testimony to Him shall be borne in every land, we shall need the whole Omnipotent

tence of God! We shall need every forge in Heaven and earth before this is done! Thank God that this power is all laid by ready for our use—the strength that is equal to such a stupendous task as this is already provided!

IV. I must pass over much that I might have dwelt upon and say, in the next place, WE BELIEVE THIS TEXT AND WE REST IN IT. “All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth.”

We believe in this power and we rest in it. *We do not seek any other power.* There is a craving, often, after great mental power—people want “clever” men to preach the Gospel. Ah, Sirs, I fear that the Gospel has suffered more damage from clever men than from anything else! I question whether the devil, himself, has ever worked so much mischief in the Church of God as clever men have done! No, we want to have such mental vigor as God pleases to give us, but we remember that text, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord.” The world is not going to be saved by worldly wisdom or by fine oratory—brilliant speeches and poetic periods win not souls for Christ! The power to do this is the power that is in Christ. And the Church of God, when she is in her right senses, does not look for any other power. I mean that she does not cringe before kings and princes, and cry, “Establish us, endow us!” It is an old fiction that the royal touch can cure “the king’s evil.” But it is an old fact that the king’s hand brings an evil whenever it is laid upon the Church of Christ by way of patronage. No, kings and queens, we can do without you! If you will come to Jesus’ feet as humble suppliants, you shall be saved even as your subjects are, but the Church of God has a Kingdom that is not of this world and needs no help whatever from the kingdoms of this world. All power for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ is in Himself—His own Person sustains His own Kingdom and we will not go to any other fountain of authority to draw the power we need. The Church of Christ must always say to Him, “All my fresh springs are in You.”

And, dear Friends, we believe and rest in this Truth, *defying every other power.* Every other power that can be conceived of may set itself against the Kingdom of Christ, but it does not matter! No, not one whistle of the wind, for all power is already in Christ, and that which seems to oppose His Kingdom must be but the mere empty name of power. There can be no real power about it, for all power is in Him—both in Heaven and on earth!

This being so, we rest quite sure that *even our infirmities will not hinder the progress of His Kingdom.* No, rather, we glory in our infirmities, for now the power of Christ will become more conspicuous! The less we have by which the Kingdom might be supposed to be extended, the more clearly will it be seen that the Kingdom is extended by the power of the King, Himself.

At the same time, *all power that we have, we give to Him,* because all power is His and all power that we ever possess, we lay it under tribute for Him. Whatever is of good, or of brightness, or of light, or of knowledge in this world, we say, “It all belongs to Jesus.” And we set the broad arrow of our great King upon it and claim it as His.

O dear Friends, why are we ever cast down? Why do we ever begin to question the ultimate success of the good cause? Why do we ever go home with aching head and palpitating heart because of the evils of the day? Courage, my Brethren, courage! The King has all power, it is impossible to defeat Him! A standard-bearer fell, just now, I know, and across the battlefield I see the clouds of smoke. The right wing of our army may be shattered for a moment, but the King in the center of the host still rides upon the white horse of victory—and He has but to will it, He has but to speak a *single word*—and the enemy shall be driven away like chaff before the wind!

V. Lastly, and here I should have liked to have had much time, but I can only hint at what I would have said. If it is so that all authority is given to Christ in Heaven and on earth, then WE MUST OBEY IT.

Christ says, “Go.” Then, *let us go at once*, according to His Word, in the track which God’s own hand marks out for us! Let us go and disciple all nations! Let us tell them that they are to learn of Christ and that they are to be obedient to His will. Let us also baptize those who become His disciples, as He bids us do—“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

Next, *let us be loyal to Him in all things* and let us train up His disciples in loyalty to Him—“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” As He has all authority, let us not intrude another authority. Let us keep within the Master’s House and seek to know the Master’s mind, to learn the Master’s will, to study the Master’s Book, to receive the Master’s Spirit and let these be dominant over all other power. And all the while let us endeavor to keep in fellowship with Him—“Lo, I am with you always.” Let us never go away from Him. Because all authority is given to Him, let us keep close by His side. Let us be the yeomen of His guard. Let us be the servants who unloose the laces of His shoes, who bring water for His feet and who count ourselves highly honored to do so. “Lo, I am with you always,” He says, so let us always be with Him.

And let us always keep *expecting Him to return*. The last words of the chapter suggest this thought—“even to the end of the world,” or, “of the age.” You know that this age is to end with a glorious beginning of a brighter and better age. Therefore let us keep looking for it. Servants, you will not serve well unless you expect your Master’s return! If you say, “He delays His coming,” you may begin to eat, drink, and to be drunk, and to beat your fellow servants. Let the expectation of your Lord’s return always keep you on tiptoe, with your lamps trimmed and your lights burning, for, perhaps this very night there may be heard in our streets, the cry, “Behold the Bridegroom comes! Go out to meet Him!” May we all be so ready that this cry would be the sweetest music that our ears could ever hear! God bless you, Beloved, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—775, 340, 324.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
COLOSSIANS 1.**

Verses 1-2. *Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul begins with a salutation in which he wishes the Colossian Christians the best of all blessings. It is the very spirit of our holy religion to wish well to others and I am sure that we cannot have a better wish for our dearest friends than this, “Grace be to you, and peace.” Grace will save you—peace will make you know that you are saved. Grace is the root of every blessing—peace is the sweet flower that makes life so sweet and so fragrant. May you have both of these blessings “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”! There is no peace for you apart from this blessed combination—God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, may you know your adoption and may you know your redemption!

3, 4. *We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus.* We are not only to pray for those who have no faith, but the very fact that men have faith should lead us to pray for them. Where there is evidently life in the seed and it begins to sprout, let us water it with our prayers and with our thanks, too. “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus”—

4, 5. *And of the love which you have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof you heard before in the Word of the truth of the Gospel.* “Faith”—“love”—“hope”—these are three Divine sisters which should always go hand in hand. We must never be satisfied unless we see in ourselves and in our fellow-Christians these three delightful fruits of the Spirit of God! Notice the order here—faith, love and then hope. Perhaps the Colossians were a little deficient in this last Grace, so the Apostle prayed constantly for them, “for the hope which is laid up for you in Heaven, whereof you heard before in the Word of the truth of the Gospel.”

6. *Which is come to you, as it is in all the world, and brings forth fruit, as it does also in you, since the day you heard of it, and knew the Grace of God in truth.* We do not know the Grace of God in truth unless it brings forth fruit in us! We may know it with the head very correctly, but yet we do not truly know it unless it is knowledge in the *heart*, knowledge in the inner man. We do not really know it unless it affects our lives and brings forth faith love, hope—faith, which lifts us above the world. Love, which preserves us from selfishness. And hope which keeps us up under all trials.

7, 8. *As you also learned of Epaphras our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.* I like to read of these godly men speaking well of one another. Nowadays, it is thought to be a distinguishing mark of faithfulness to be able to pick holes in the coats of our fellow Christians. Now, we cannot help perceiving their defects and, sometimes, it is our duty to speak of them—and to speak of them faithfully—but let us also observe all the *virtues* that are to be found in them, otherwise we may despise the work of

the Holy Spirit and rob Him of His Glory! How kindly Paul speaks of Epaphras, and how kindly Epaphras speaks of the Church at Colosse!

9. *For this cause we, also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.* If you have the Graces of the Spirit, it is important that they should be deepened, that they should grow through being fed with Divine nourishment. What the water is to the plant, making it further to develop itself, that is the knowledge of God's will to our gifts and Graces—they grow and become fruitful through an increase in the knowledge of God.

10-14. *That you might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, to all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* Now the Apostle is handling the string he most delights to touch! He is at home with everything which concerns the welfare of saints, but when he begins to talk of his Lord and Master, then it is that he seems to ride in a chariot of fire with horses of fire—and he grows mightily eloquent under the Inspiration of the Spirit of God! See how he talks of the great central Truth of God of the atoning Sacrifice—“In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

15-18. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, for by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth; visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body.* Note how Paul harps upon that one string, “He.” See how much He dwells upon the Divine Person of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He will never have done praising Him! He keeps on heaping up epithets to magnify that blessed name and he truly was in the Spirit of God when he did this, for it is the work of the Spirit to glorify Jesus Christ. He makes Him great in our hearts and then we try to make Him great by our words and by our acts.

18-22. *The church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, I say, whether they are things in earth, or things in Heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight. O, Beloved, as the sun is to be seen mirrored, not only in the face of the great deep, but in every little drop of dew that hangs upon each blade of grass, so is the glory of Christ to be seen, not only in His universal Church, but in every separate individual in whom His Spirit has worked holiness!*

23. *If you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven; of which I, Paul, am made a minister.* How delighted he is to have such a Gospel to preach, such a hope to tell to the sons of men! Oh, if we had to creep from a sick bed, or to come up from a dungeon—if we were aching in every bone of our body and if we were depressed in soul—this ought to be enough to make us full of gladness to overflowing, that we have such a Christ to preach and such fullness of blessing to declare to the sons of men!

24. *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church.* As if there were so much suffering to be endured to bring in the redeemed from the world and so much self-sacrifice to be made in order that those whom Christ has redeemed may come to know of that redemption and may be brought to Him. And Paul was glad to make up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh, “for His body's sake, which is the Church”—

25. *Of which I am made a minister.* This is a wonderful expression, “made a minister.” The true minister is of God's making! A man-made minister must be a poor creature, but a God-made minister will prove his calling—“of which I am made a minister”—

25-27. *According to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God; even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory.* “Christ in you” is Glory begun, a sure pledge and earnest of a Glory greater than you can yet conceive! If He is in you, you have the beginnings of Heaven! You have, in fact, the excellence and flower of Heaven, for there is no Heaven but the Glory of Christ.

28, 29. *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily.* If God's people strive mightily, it is because God works mightily in them! Nothing can come out of a man but what God puts into Him. We work to will and to do when He works in us according to His good pleasure. Oh, for more of the agonizing of the Spirit within us, that there might be more of agonizing in our spirits for the Glory of God!

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

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

THE MISSIONARIES' CHARGE AND CHARTS NO. 383

A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, APRIL 21, 1861,
BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth, go you, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”
Matthew 28:18, 19.*

WHILE I was meditating in private upon this text I felt myself carried away by its power. I was quite unable calmly to consider its terms, or to investigate its argument. The *command* with which the text concludes repeated itself again and again and again in my ears, till I found it impossible to study, for my thoughts were running here and there, asking a thousand questions, all of them intended to help me in answering for myself the solemn enquiry, “How am *I* to go and teach *all* nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit?” The practical lesson seemed to me to overwhelm in my mind the argument of which that lesson is but a conclusion, “Go you and teach all nations.”

My ears seemed to hear it as if Christ were then speaking it to *me*. I could realize His presence by my side. I thought I could see Him lift His pierced hand and hear Him speak, as He was wont to speak, with authority, blended with meekness, “Go you and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the All-glorious God.” Oh, I would that the Church could hear the Savior addressing these words to her now, for the words of Christ are living words, not having power in them yesterday alone, but today also. The injunctions of the Savior are perpetual in their obligation, they were not binding upon Apostles merely, but upon *us* also and upon every Christian does this yoke fall, “Go you, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

We are not exempt today from the service of the first followers of the Lamb—our marching orders are the same as theirs—and our Captain requires from us obedience as prompt and perfect as from them. Oh that His message may not fall upon deaf ears, or be heard by stolid souls! Brethren, the heathen are perishing—shall we let them perish? *His* name is blasphemed—shall we be quiet and still? The honor of Christ is cast into the dust and His foes revile His Person and resist His Throne, shall we His soldiers suffer this and not find our hands feeling for the hilt of our sword, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God? Our Lord delays His coming—shall we begin to sleep, or to eat, or to be drunk? Shall we

not rather gird up the loins of our mind and cry unto Him, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly"?

The scoffing skeptics of these last days have said that the anticipated conquest of the world for Christ is but a dream, or an ambitious thought, which crossed our Leader's mind, but which never is to be accomplished. It is asserted by some that the superstitions of the heathen are too strong to be battered down by our teachings and that the strongholds of Satan are utterly impregnable against our attacks. Shall it be so? Shall we be content foolishly to sit still? No, rather let us work out the problem, let us prove the promise of God to be true. Let us prove the words of Jesus to be words of soberness. Let us show the efficacy of His blood and the invincibility of His Spirit by going in the spirit of faith, teaching all nations and winning them to the obedience of Christ our Lord.

I do not know how to begin to preach this morning, but still it seems to me, standing here, as if I heard that voice saying, "Go you, therefore and teach all nations." And my soul sometimes pants and longs for the liberty to preach Christ where He was never preached before. Not to build upon another man's foundation, but to go to some untrod land, some waste where the foot of Christ's minister was never seen, that there "the solitary place might be glad for us and the wilderness rejoice and blossom as the rose." I have made it a solemn question whether I might not testify in China or India the grace of Jesus and in the sight of God I have answered it. I solemnly feel that my position in England will not permit my leaving the sphere in which I now am, or else tomorrow I would offer myself as a missionary.

Oh, do none of you hear the call this morning? You that are free from so great a work as that which is cast upon me—you that have talents as yet undevoted to any special end and powers of being as yet unconsecrated to any given purpose and unconfined to any one sphere? Do you not hear my Master saying in tones of plaintive sorrow, blended with an authority which is not to be denied, "Go you, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"? Oh that I could preach like Peter the Hermit—a better crusade than he! Oh that there were might in some human lip to move the thousands of our Israel to advance at once, unanimously and irresistibly to the world's conquest, like one tremendous tide rising from the depths of the ocean, to sweep over the sands, the barren sands which are now given up to desolation and death!

Oh that once again the voice of thunder could be heard and the lightning spirit could penetrate each heart—that as one man the entire Church might take the marching orders of her Lord and go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of Israel's God! O Lord, if *we* fail to speak, fail not You to speak. And if we know not how to bear Your burden, or express Your awful thoughts, yet speak You with that all-constraining silent voice which well-trained ears can hear and make Your servants obedient to You now, for Christ's sake—

***"Awake, You Spirit, who of old
Did live the watchman of the Church's youth,***

**Who faced the foe, unshrinking, bold
 Who witnessed day and night the eternal Truth
 Whose voices through the world are ringing still,
 And bringing hosts to know and do Your will!
 Oh that Your fire were kindled soon,
 That swift from land to land its flame might leap!
 Lord, give us but this priceless boon
 Of faithful servants, fit for You to reap
 The harvest of the soul; look down and view
 How great the harvest, yet the laborers few.
 Oh haste to help before we are lost!
 Send forth Evangelists, in spirit strong,
 Armed with Your Word, a dauntless host,
 Bold to attack the rule of ancient wrong
 And let them all the earth for You reclaim,
 To be Your kingdom and to know Your name."**

This morning we shall first dwell a little while upon the *command* and then secondly, we shall enlarge upon the argument. There is an argument, as you will perceive, "Go you, *therefore* and teach all nations."

I. First, my Brethren and very briefly indeed, a few things about the COMMAND.

And we must remark, first, what a singularly loving one it is. Imagine Mahomet on his dying bed saying to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in Heaven and in earth." What would be his command? "Go you, therefore, with sharp scimitars and propound faith in the prophet, or death as the dread alternative—avenge me of the men who threw stones at the prophet, make their houses a dunghill and cut them in pieces. For vengeance is mine and God's prophet *must* be avenged of his enemies."

But Christ, though far more despised and persecuted of men and having a real power which that pretended prophet never had, says to His disciples, as He is about to ascend to Heaven, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth; go you, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It is the voice of love, not of wrath. "Go and teach them the power of My blood to cleanse, the willingness of My arms to embrace, the yearning of My heart to save!

"*Go and teach them.* Teach them no more to despise Me, no more to think My Father an angry and implacable Deity. Teach them to bow the knee and kiss the Son and find peace in Me for all their troubles and a balm for all their woes. Go—speak as I have spoken—weep as I have wept. Invite as I have invited. Exhort, entreat, beseech and pray, as I have done before you. Tell them to come unto Me, if they are weary and heavy laden and *I* will give them rest. And say unto them, 'I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but had rather that he should turn unto Me and live.'" What a generous and gracious command is that of the text, "Go you, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Note, too, how exceedingly plain is the command, "Go you, *teach* all nations." The Romish Church has misunderstood this. She says, "Go you, mystify all nations—sound in their ears a language once living, but now

dead. Take to them the Latin tongue and let that be sounded with all the harmony of sweet music and they will be converted. Erect the sumptuous altar. Clothe the priest in mystic garments—celebrate mysterious rites. And make the heathen wonder—dazzle them with splendor—amaze them with mystery.” “But, no,” says Christ, “no. Go you and *teach*.” Why, it is the mother’s work with her child. It is the tutor’s work with the boy and with the girl—“go you and teach.”

How simple! Illustrate, explain, expound, tell, inform, narrate. Take from them the darkness of ignorance, reveal to them the light of Revelation. Teach! Be content to sit down and tell them the very plainest and most common things. It is not your eloquence that shall convert them. It is not your gaudy language or your polished periods that shall sway their intellects. Go and teach them. Teach them! Why, my Hearer, I say again—this is a word which has to do with the rudiments of *knowledge*. We do not preach to children. We *teach* them. And we are not so much to preach to nations, that word seems too big and great for the uncivilized and childish people—go you and *teach* them first the very simplicities of the Cross of Christ.

And note how He puts it next. Who are to be taught? “Go you and teach all nations.” The Greek has his philosophers, teach *him*, he is but a child. He is a fool, though he thinks himself to be wise. There are polite nations which have a literature of their own, far larger and more extensive than the literature of the Christian—teach them nevertheless, they are to be *taught* and unless they are willing to take the learner’s place and to become as little children, they can in no wise enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Do not debate and argue with them—put not yourself with them upon their level as a combatant concerning certain dogmas—insist upon it that *I* have sent you—sent you to teach the most erudite and profoundly learned. And when you shall claim it, I am with you always to back your claim and men shall be willing to sit at your feet to be taught the name of Jesus.

I do not know whether *all* our missionaries have caught the idea of Christ—“Go you and *teach* all nations,” but many of them have and these have been honored with many conversions. The more fully they have been simple teachers, not philosophers of the Western philosophy, not eager disputants concerning some English dogma—I say the more plainly they have gone forth as *teachers sent from God* to teach the world, the more successful have they been. “Go you, therefore and teach.” Some may think, perhaps, there is less difficulty in teaching the learned than in teaching the uncivilized and barbarous.

There is the same duty to the one as to the other—“Go and teach.” “But they brandish the tomahawk.” Teach them and lie down and sleep in their hut and they shall marvel at your fearlessness and spare your life. “But they feed on the blood of their fellows, they make a bloody feast about the cauldron in which a man’s body is the horrible viand.” *Teach* them and they shall empty their war kettle and they shall bury their swords and bow before you and acknowledge King Jesus. “But they are brutalized,

they scarcely have a language—a few clicking sounds make up all that they can say.”

Teach them and they shall speak the language of Canaan and sing the songs of Heaven. The fact has been proved, Brethren, that there are no nations incapable of being taught. No, that there are no nations incapable afterwards of teaching others. The Negro slave has perished under the lash, rather than dishonor his Master. The Esquimaux has climbed his barren steeps and borne his toil, while he has recollected the burden which Jesus bore. The Hindu has patiently submitted to the loss of all things, because he loved Christ better than all. Feeble Malagasy women have been prepared to suffer and to die and have joyfully suffered for Christ's sake.

There has been heroism in every land for Christ—men of every color and of every race have died for *Him*. Upon His altar has been found the blood of all kindreds that are upon the face of the earth. Oh, tell me not they cannot be taught. Sirs, they can be taught to die for Christ. And this is more than some of you have learned. They can rehearse the very highest lesson of the Christian religion—that self-sacrifice which knows not itself but gives up all for Him. At this day there are Karen missionaries preaching among the Koreans with as fervid an eloquence as ever was known by Whitfield. There are Chinese teaching in Borneo, Sumatra and Australia with as much earnestness as Morison or Milne first taught in China.

There are Hindu Evangelists who are not ashamed to have given up the Brahman thread and to eat with the Pariah and to preach with him the riches of Christ. There have been men found of every class and kind, not only able to be taught, but able to become teachers themselves and the most mighty teachers, too, of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Well was that command warranted by future facts, when Christ said, “Go you, teach all nations.”

But, Brethren, the text says, “*baptizing them.*” They are to be taught and afterwards they are to be baptized. I know not why it is that we yield to the superstitions of our Christian Brethren so much as to use the word *baptize* at all. It is not an English, but a Greek word. It has but one meaning and cannot bear another. Throughout all the classics, without exception, it is not possible to translate it correctly, except with the idea of *immersion*. And believing this and knowing this, if the translation is not complete, we will complete it this morning. “Go you, therefore and teach all nations, *immersing* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Now, I think that our Missionary Society, while it may take precedence in matters of time—for it was the first that was ever commenced with the exception of the Moravians—ought also to take precedence in matters of purity, because we can carry out this text in every country, teaching first and baptizing afterwards. We do not understand the philosophy of baptizing and afterwards teaching. We hold that we must teach first and then, when men are disciples, we are to baptize them. Not the nations. The

Greek does not bear that interpretation, but those who have been disciples we are to baptize into the Sacred Name.

We think that our Brethren do serious damage to the Gospel by baptizing children. We do not think their error a little one. We know it does not touch a vital point—but we do believe that infant baptism is the prop and pillar of Popery and it being removed, Popery and Puseyism become at once impossible. You have taken away all idea of a national godliness and a national religion when you have cut away all liberty to administer Christian ordinances to unconverted persons. We cannot see any evil which would follow if our Brethren would renounce their mistake. But we can see abundant mischief which their mistake has caused and in all kindness, but with all fidelity, we again enter our solemn protest against their giving Baptism to any but disciples, to any but those who are the followers of the Lamb.

Throw down her hedges? Give her Supper and her Baptism to those that are not Christ's people? Break down her walls? Remove her barricades? God forbid! Except a man be renewed in heart, we dare not allow him to participate in the ordinances which belong to Christ's Church. Oh, it is a disastrous thing to call unconverted children Christians, or to do anything which may weaken their apprehension of the great fact that until they be converted they have no part or lot in this matter. Brethren, if you differ from me on this point, bear with me, for my conscience will not let me conceal this solemn Truth. To you who agree with me I say, while our other friends can do in some things more than we can—and we rejoice in their efforts and would heartily bless God that they have shown more activity than ourselves—yet we ought to be ashamed of ourselves if we are a whit behind.

We are a body of Christians who can fairly and purely teach and baptize. We can obey this command of Christ abroad, as well as at home, without running counter to our practice in one place by our practice in the other. We ought to be first and foremost and if we are not, shame shall cover us for our unfaithfulness. Again, I say, I hear that voice ringing in the Baptist's ear, above that of any other man, "Go you, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

I have endeavored to be brief, but I find I have been long and therefore pass at once to the argument with which the text commences.

II. The ARGUMENT is this—"All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth, go you, *therefore* and teach all nations."

Three things here. Christ had suffered, bled and died. He had now risen from the dead. As the effect of His finished work He had as Mediator received all power in Heaven and in earth. There is no allusion here to His inherent power that is not given to Him—that is His native right. He has, as God, all power in Heaven and in earth. The text relates to Him as Mediator. As Mediator He had not this power once. He was weak, He was despised, He was forsaken even of His God. But now, having finished the work which was given Him to do, His Father honors Him. He is about to

lift Him to His right hand and gives Him, as the result of resurrection, all power in Heaven and in earth.

Three things, then. First, this is the picture of the Church's history and therefore she should teach all nations. Secondly, this is the Church's right. Thirdly, it is the Church's might. And for all these reasons she ought to teach all nations.

1. First, this is the Church's picture. Christ suffers, bleeds, dies. Do you give up His cause? Do you look upon it as forlorn and desolate? He is nailed to the tree. The world abhors Him. Fools gaze and sinners laugh. Do you lay down your weapons and say, "it is idle to defend such a Man as this"? It is all over now. He bows His head upon the Cross. "It is finished," says He. And do your unbelieving hearts say, "Yes, indeed, it is finished. His career is over, His hopes are blighted, His prospects withered"? Ah, little do you know that His shame was the mother of His future glory. That the stooping was the rising, that the crown of thorns was in fact the fruitful root out of which sprang the eternal crown of glory.

He is put into the grave—do you say that there is the grave of all your faith could believe, or your hope could suggest? He rises, Brethren and His resurrection takes effect and fruit from the fact that He died and was buried. Do you not see the picture? We have been sending out heralds of the Cross these eighteen hundred years. They have landed upon many a shore to die. Fever has taken off its hundreds, cruel men have slain their scores, from the first day until now, the record of the mission is written in blood. Somewhere or other there always must be martyrs for Christ. It seems as if the Church never could plow a wave without a spray of gore. She is still in Madagascar persecuted, afflicted, tormented. Still are her ministers hunted about like partridges upon the mountains and her blood is dying the shambles of her slayers.

Do you give up all hope? Shall we, as we look upon the tombs of our missionaries, say that Christ's cause is dead? Brethren, as you turn over the long roll and read the names of one after another who sleeps in Jesus, shall you say, "Let us close the doors of the mission house. Let us cease our contributions, it is clear the case is hopeless and the cause can never have success"? No, rather, the Church must suffer that she may reign. She must die that she may live—she must be stained with blood, that she may be robed in purple—she must go down into the earth and seem to be buried and forgotten, that the earth may help the woman, that she may be delivered of the man child.

Courage! Courage! Courage! The past is hopeful, because to the eye it seems hopeless. The cause is glorious, because it has been put to shame. Now—now let us gather the fruits of the bloody sowing—let us now reap the harvest of the deep plowing of agony and suffering which our ancestors have endured.

I think that no true-hearted Christian will ever give up any enterprise which God has laid upon him because he fears its ultimate success. "Difficult," said Napoleon, "is not a French word." "Doubtful," is not a Christian word. We are *sure* to succeed. The Gospel *must* conquer. It is possible for Heaven and earth to pass away, but it is not possible for God's Word to

fail and therefore it is utterly impossible that any nation, or kindred, or tongue should to the end stand out against the attacks of love, against the invasion of the armies of King Jesus.

Thus, you see a fair argument can be built upon the text. Inasmuch as Christ is to His people a picture of what they are to be—inasmuch as by His suffering all power was given to Him in Heaven and in earth—so after the sufferings of the Church, the wounds of her martyrs and the deaths of her confessors, power shall be given to her in Heaven and in earth and she shall reign with Christ over the nations gloriously.

2. We now take a second view of the argument. This is the Church's *right*. All power is given to Christ in Heaven and in earth. What then? Why this. Kings and princes, potentates and powers—are you aware that your thrones have been given away? Do you know it, you crowned heads, that your crowns have been given—given away from you to one who claims to be King of kings and Lord of lords? Do you pass decrees forbidding the Gospel to be preached? We laugh at you! You have no power to prevent it, for all power is given unto Christ in Heaven and in earth. Do you say that the missionary has no right upon your shore? The virgin daughter of Zion shakes her head at you and laughs you to scorn.

She has right anywhere and everywhere. She has rights in Heaven without limit and rights in earth without bound, for all power is given to her Head in Heaven and in earth and she therefore has a patent—a claim which is not to be disputed—to take to herself all countries and all kingdoms, because the power above is given unto Christ. What is that man doing on yonder shore? He has landed on an island in the South Seas. He is an intruder, banish him at once! Sirs, mind what you do, for surely you fight against God. But the man is sent away, he comes back again or if not he, another. A severer edict is passed this time, "Let us slay him, that the inheritance may still be ours."

But another comes and another and another. Why do you stand up and take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed? These men are not intruders, they are ambassadors come to make peace, no, more. They are delegates from Heaven, come to teach the rightful heritage of King Jesus. You, in putting them away as intruders, have denied the rights of Christ—but to deny is one thing and to disprove another. He has still a right to you and therefore has the missionary still a right to come wherever he will, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. Once or twice in my life I have met with some miserable little ministers, who, when I have gone into a village to preach, have questioned my right to preach in the village, because I ought to have asked them first, or to have consulted them.

And can Christian men look on a district as their own dominion and reckon God's servant as a poacher on their estates, or a brigand in their territories? Is there any place on this earth that belongs to any man so that he can shut out God's ministers? We once for all put our foot upon any claim so ridiculous. Wherever there is found a man, there is the minister free to preach. The whole world is our parish—we know of no fetter upon our feet and no gag upon our lips. Though kings should pass laws,

the servants of Christ can bear the penalty, but they cannot disobey their Master. Though the Emperor should say the Gospel should not be preached by any unauthorized denomination in France, as I have heard he has said of late, we care not for him.

What cares the Church for a thousand Emperors? Their resolutions are mockery, their laws waste-paper. The Church never was yet vassal to the State, or servile slave to municipalities and powers and she neither can nor will be. At all the laws of States, she laughs and utterly defies them, if they come in the way of the Law of Christ which says, "Teach the Gospel to every creature." Brethren, I say the Church has a right anywhere and everywhere—a right, not because she is tolerated. The word is insult—not because the law permits—the law permitting or not permitting, tolerated or untolerated, everywhere beneath the arch of God's Heaven, God's servants have a right to preach.

Oh that they would claim the right and in every place teach and preach Jesus Christ continually!

3. But now, lastly, it seems to me that the argument of the text contains the Church's *might*. "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth; go you, therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." You have power to teach, fear not. Let this be your encouragement. You must succeed, you shall prevail. There never lived another man save Christ, who could say, "All power is given Me on earth." Canute puts his throne by the side of the sea, but the waves wet his person and prove to his flattering courtiers that he is but a man.

What power have kings over the lightning, or the rushing winds? Can they control the tides, or bid the moon stand still? Power is not given unto man, even upon earth. Much less could any man say all power in Heaven belonged to him. This is a singular expression—one which only could be used by Christ—and if any other should attempt to use it, it were an imposition and a blasphemy. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can say today, as He said then, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth."

Let us think, then. All power is given to Christ in Providence. Over common daily events He has supreme authority. You have launched upon the sea, upon a mission voyage. He rules the waves and wings the winds. Fear not, for tempest is His trembling slave. You have come near the shore, but there are hidden reefs and sunken rocks. Fear not, for all power is given to Him in the lowest deep to guide you safely and to bring you to your desired haven. A band of men meet you upon the shore, brandishing their weapons. You are unarmed, you have nothing but the Word. You shall now prove that, "more is He that is with you than all they that be with them."

Go, in this your might—all power is given to Christ—power over the wills of men, as well as over the waves of the sea. But political occurrences prevent your landing on a certain country. Through treaties, or a want of treaties, there is no room for the missionary in such-and-such an empire. *Pray* and the gates shall be opened. *Plead* and the bars of brass shall be cut in two. Christ has power over politics. He can make wars and

create peace with a view to the propagation of His Word. He can change the hearts of princes and preside in the counsels of senates. He can cause nations that have long been shut up to be opened to the Truth. And, indeed, what a wonderful proof we have had of late, that all power belongs unto Christ, for human skill has been yoked to the chariot of the Gospel.

How wondrously, my Brethren, have the inventions of man of late years progressed! How could we have preached the Gospel to all nations—how could we have even known that America existed, if it had not been that the Lord put it into the mind of Columbus to discover the New World? And how wearisome our life, if with the ordinary slow navigation of the ancient times we had to journey among all nations! But now we are carried across the waves so rapidly that distance is annihilated and time forgotten. Truly God has opened up the world and brought it to our threshold. If He has not made a smaller world, at least He has made it more convenient and nearer to our hand.

And then see how countries which once could not be reached, have been opened to us. The Celestial King of China, the rebel prince, invites us to come and preach. He does not merely permit—he *invites*, he builds places of worship, he is prepared, he says, that his Brethren should come and teach him and teach all his subjects, for they are imperfectly taught in the things of God. And the Imperial Sovereign of China, too, though he does not invite, permits the missionaries to go among his millions. There is perfect liberty for us to preach to four hundred millions of persons who before had never seen the light of Calvary.

And there is India, too, given up to our dominion and the old Company, which always impeded us, rolled up in its shroud and laid in its grave. And there are other lands and other places which once seemed to be environed by impassable mountains, into which we have now a road. Oh, for the will to dash through that road riding upon the white horses of salvation! Oh, for the heart, the spirit and the soul to avail ourselves of the golden opportunity and to preach Christ where He has never been preached before! All power, then, we can clearly see, over everything in this world has been given to Christ and has been used for the propagation of His Truth.

But, Brethren, let us recollect that power is given to Christ in Heaven as well as on earth. All angels bow before Him and the cherubim and seraphim are ready to obey His high behests. Power is given to Him over the plenitude of the Holy Spirit. He can pour out the mysterious energy in such abundance that nations can be born in a day. He can clothe His ministers with salvation and make His priests shout aloud for joy. He has power to intercede with God and He shall presently send out men to preach, presently give the people the mind to hear and give the hearers the will to obey. We have in the midst of us today our Leader. He is not gone from us. If His flesh and blood are absent yet in body as well as spirit He still lives, adorned with the dew and beauty of His youth.

As for the Mohammedan, *his* leader has long ago rotted in his coffin. But ours lives and because He lives, His Truth and His cause live also. We have with us today a Leader whose power is not diminished, whose influ-

ence in the highest heavens has suffered no impairing. He is universal Lord. Oh, let our efforts be worthy of the power which He has promised, let our zeal be in some respect akin to His zeal and let our energy prove that the energy Divine has not been withdrawn.

I wish that I could preach this morning, but the more earnest I feel, the more scant are my words with which to express my emotions. I have prayed to God and it is a prayer I shall repeat till I die—I have prayed that out of this Church there may go many missionaries. I will never be content with a congregation, or with a Church, or even with ministers, many of whom have already gone out of our midst. We must have *missionaries* from this Church. God's people everywhere will I trust aid me in training young soldiers for my Master's army. God will send the men and faith will find the means and we will ourselves send out our own men to proclaim the name of Jesus.

Brethren, it is a singular thing—there are some young men who get the idea into their minds that they would like to go into foreign lands, but these are frequently the most unfit men and have not the power and ability. Now, I would that the Divine call would come to some gifted men. You who have, perhaps, some wealth of your own—what could be a better object in life than to devote yourself and your substance to the Redeemer's cause? You young men who have brilliant prospects before you, but who as yet have not the anxieties of a family to maintain—why, would it not be noble thing to surrender your brilliant prospects so that you may become a humble preacher of Christ?

The greater the sacrifice, the more honor to yourself and the more acceptable to Him. I have questioned my own conscience and I do not think I could be in the path of duty if I should go abroad to preach the Word, leaving this field of labor. But I think many of my Brethren now laboring at home might with the greatest advantage surrender their charges and leave a land where they would scarce be missed, to go where their presence would be as valuable as the presence of a thousand such as they are here. And oh, I long that we may see young men out of the universities and students in our grammar schools—that we may see our physicians, advocates, tradesmen and educated mechanics, when God has touched their hearts—giving up all they have, that they may teach and preach Christ.

We want Vanderkists. We want Judsons and Brainerds over again. It will never do to send out to the heathen, men who are of no use at home. We cannot send men of third and tenth class abilities. We must send the highest and best. The bravest men must lead the van. O God, anoint Your servants, we beseech You. Put the fire into their hearts that never can be quenched. Make it so hot within their bones that they must die or preach—that they must be down with broken hearts, or else be free to preach where Christ was never heard. Brethren, envy anyone among you—I say again with Truth, I envy you—if it shall be your lot to go to China, the country so lately opened to us.

I would gladly change places with you. I would renounce the partial case of a settlement in this country and renounce the responsibilities of so

large a congregation as this with pleasure, if I might have your honors. I think sometimes that missionaries in the field—if it is right to compare great things with such small ones—might say to you, as our English king did to his soldiers at the battle of Agincourt, changing the word for a moment—

***“Ministers in England, now a bed,
Might think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhood’s cheap while any speak
Who fought with us upon this glorious day.”***

Have we none out of our sixteen hundred members—have we none out of this congregation of six thousand—who can say, “Here am I, send me?”

Jesus! is there not one? Must heathens perish? Must the gods of the heathen hold their thrones? Must Your kingdom fail? Are there none to own You, none to maintain Your righteous cause? If there be none, let us weep, each one of us, because such a calamity has fallen on us. But if there be any who are willing to give all for Christ, let us who are compelled to stay at home do our best to help them. Let us see to it that they lack nothing, for we cannot send them out without purse or scrip. Let us fill the purse of the men whose hearts God has filled and take care of them temporally, leaving it for God to preserve them spiritually.

May the Lord, the Divine Master add His blessing to the feeble words that I have uttered and let me not conclude till I have said, *I* must teach *you* too and this is the teaching of God—“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” Trust Him with your soul and He will save you. For He that believes and is baptized shall be served. He that believes not shall be damned.” Amen.

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THE POWER OF THE RISEN SAVIOR

NO. 1200

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 25, 1874,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”
Matthew 28:18-20.

THE change from “the Man of Sorrows,” before His crucifixion, to the “Lord over All” after His Resurrection is very striking. Before His Passion He was well-known by His disciples and appeared only in one form, as the Son of Man, clad in the common peasant’s garment without seam, woven from the top throughout. But after He had risen from the dead He was, on several occasions, unrecognized by those who loved Him best. He is once, at least, described as having appeared to certain of them “under another form.” He was the same Person, for they saw His hands and His feet—Thomas even handled Him and placed his finger in the print of the nails! But yet it would seem that some gleams of His Glory were, at times, manifested to them—a Glory which had been hidden during His previous life, except only when He stood on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Before His death, His appearances were to the general public—He stood in the midst of Scribes and Pharisees, publicans and sinners, and preached the glad tidings. But now He appeared only to His disciples, sometimes to one, at another time to two. On one occasion to about 500 brethren at once, but always to His *disciples* and to them only. Before His death His preaching was full of parables, plain to those who had understanding, but often dark and mysterious even to His own followers, for it was a judgment from the Lord upon that evil generation that seeing they should not see and hearing they should not perceive.

Yet with equal truth we may say that our Lord, before His death, brought down His teaching to the comprehension of the uninstructed minds which listened to it, so that many of the deeper Truths of God were slightly touched upon because they were not able to bear them as yet. Till His crucifixion He veiled the effulgence of many Truths—after His Resurrection He spoke in parables, but introduced His disciples into the inner circle of the great doctrines of the kingdom and, as it were, showed Himself face to face to them. Before His death the Lord Jesus was ever with His followers and even the secret places of His retirement were known to them. But after He had risen He came and went among them at irregular intervals.

Where He was during many of those 40 days, who among us can tell? He was seen in the Garden upon Olivet. He walked to Emmaus. He comforted the assembly at Jerusalem. He showed Himself, again, to the disci-

ples at the Sea of Tiberius. But where did He go when, other than the various interviews, He vanished out of their sight? They were in the room alone, the doors were shut, and suddenly He stood in the midst of them. Again, He called to them from the beach, and on landing they found a fire of coals kindled, and fish laid on them, and bread. His appearances were strange and His disappearings equally so.

Everything pointed to the fact that after He had risen from the dead, He had undergone some marvelous change which had revealed in Him that which had been concealed before! But His identity was still indisputable. It was no small honor to have seen our risen Lord while yet He lingered here below. What must it be to see Jesus as He is now! He is the same Jesus as when He was here—yonder memorials as of a lamb that has been slain assure us that He is the same Man. Glorified in Heaven, His real Manhood sits—and it is capable of being beheld by the eye and heard by the ear—but yet how different! Had we seen Him in His agony, we should all the more admire His Glory!

Dwell with your hearts very much upon Christ Crucified, but indulge yourselves full often with a sight of Christ *glorified*. Delight to think that He is not here, for He is risen! He is not here, for He has ascended! He is not here, for He sits at the right hand of God and makes intercession for us! Let your souls travel frequently the blessed highway from the sepulcher to the Throne. As in Rome there was a *Via Sacra* along which returning conquerors went from the gates of the city up to the heights of the Capitol, so is there another *Via Sacra* which you ought often to survey, for along it the risen Savior went in glorious majesty from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea up to the eternal dignities of His Father's right hand!

Your soul will do well to see her dawn of hope in His death and her full assurance of hope in His risen life. Today my business is to show, as far as God, the Spirit, may help me, first, *Our Lord's resurrection power* and secondly, *Our Lord's mode of exercising the spiritual part of that power so far as we are concerned*.

I. OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION POWER. "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth." At the risk of repeating myself, I should like to begin this head by asking you to remember last Sunday morning's sermon, when we went to Gethsemane and bowed our spirits in the shade of those gray olive trees at the sight of the bloody sweat. What a contrast between that and this! There you saw the weakness of man, the bowing, the prostrating, the crushing of the Manhood of the Mediator.

But here you see the strength of the Godman! He is girt with Omnipotence though still on earth. When He spoke words He had received a privilege, honor, glory, fullness and power which lifted Him far above the sons of men. He was, as Mediator, no more a sufferer, but a Sovereign! No more a victim, but a Victor! No more a servant, but the Monarch of earth and Heaven! Yet He had never received such power if He had not endured such weakness. All power had never been given to the Mediator if all comfort had not been taken away. He stooped to conquer! The way to His Throne was downward! Mounting upon steps of ivory, Solomon ascended to his throne of gold—but our Lord and Master *descended* that He might ascend—and went down into the awful deeps of unutterable agony that all

power in Heaven and earth might belong to Him as our Redeemer and Covenant Head!

Now think a moment of these words, "*All power.*" Jesus Christ has given to Him, by His Father, as a consequence of His death, "all power." It is but another way of saying that the Mediator possesses Omnipotence, for Omnipotence is but the Latin of "all power." What mind shall conceive, what tongue shall set in order before you the meaning of *all power*? We cannot grasp it! It is high, we cannot attain unto it! Such knowledge is too wonderful for us. The power of self-existence, the power of creation, the power of sustaining that which is made, the power of fashioning and destroying, the power of opening and shutting, of overthrowing or establishing, of killing and making alive, the power to pardon and to condemn, to give and to withhold, to decree and to fulfill, to be, in a word, "head over all things to His Church"—all this is vested in Jesus Christ our Lord!

We might as well attempt to describe infinity, or map the boundless as to tell what "all power" must mean. But whatever it is, it is all given to our Lord, all lodged in those hands which once were fastened to the wood of shame—all left with that heart which was pierced with the spear—all placed as a crown upon that head which was surrounded with a coronet of thorns. "*All power in Heaven*" is His! Remember that! Then He has the power of *God*, for God is in Heaven, and the power of God emanates from that central Throne. Jesus, then, has Divine power. Whatever Jehovah can do, Jesus can do!

If it were His will to speak another world into existence, we should see, tonight, a fresh star adorning the brow of night. Were it His will, at once, to fold up creation like a worn out vesture, lo, the elements would pass away and yonder heavens would be shriveled like a scroll! The power which binds the sweet influences of the Pleiades and looses the bands of Orion is with the Nazarene! The Crucified leads forth Arcturus with his sons! Angelic bands are waiting on the wing to do the bidding of Jesus of Nazareth—and cherubim and seraphim and the four living creatures before the Throne unceasingly obey Him. He who was despised and rejected of men now commands the homage of all Heaven, as "God over All, blessed forever."

"All power in Heaven" relates to the Providential skill and might with which God rules everything in the universe. He holds the reins of all created forces and impels or restrains them at His will, giving force to law, and life to all existence. The old heathen dreamed of Apollo as driving the chariot of the sun and guiding its fiery steeds in their daily course, but it is not so—Jesus is Lord of All! He harnesses the winds to His chariot and thrusts a bit into the mouth of the tempest, doing as He wills among the armies of Heaven and the inhabitants of this lower world. From Him in Heaven emanates the power which sustains and governs this globe, for the Father has committed all things into His hands. "By Him all things consist."

"All power" must include—and this is a practical point to us—all the power of the Holy Spirit. In the work which lies nearest our heart, the Holy Spirit is the great force. It is He that convicts men of sin and leads them to a Savior—gives them new hearts and right spirits—and plants

them in the Church and then causes them to grow and become fruitful. The power of the Holy Spirit goes forth among the sons of men according to the will of our Lord. As the anointing oil poured upon Aaron's head ran down his beard and dampened the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit which has been granted to Him without measure flows from Him to us! He has the residue of the Spirit and, according to His will, the Holy Spirit goes forth into the Church—and from the Church into the world—to the accomplishment of the purposes of saving Grace. It is not possible that the Church should fail for lack of spiritual gifts or influence while her heavenly Bridegroom has such overflowing stores of both! All the power of the sacred Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit, is at the command of Jesus who is exalted far above all principality, power, might, dominion and every name that is named—not only in this world—but in that which is to come!

Our Lord also claimed that all power had been given to Him *on earth*. This is more than could be truly said by any mere man. None of mortal race may claim all power in Heaven and when they aspire to all power on *earth* it is but a dream! Universal monarchy has been strained after, but it has seldom, if ever, been attained. And when it seemed within the clutch of ambition, it has melted away like a snowflake before the sun! Indeed, if men could rule all their fellows, yet they would not have all power on earth, for there are other forces which scorn their control. Diseases laugh at the power of men. The King of Israel, when Naaman came to him to be recovered of his leprosy, cried, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man does send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" He had not all power.

Winds and waves, moreover, scorn mortal rule. It is not true that even Britannia rules the waves. Canute, to rebuke his courtiers, places his throne at the margin of the tide and commands the billows to take care that they wet not the feet of their royal master. But his courtiers were soon covered with spray and the monarch proved that "all power" was not given to him. Frogs and locusts and flies were more than a match for Pharaoh—the greatest of men are defeated by the weak things of God! Nebuchadnezzar, struck with madness and herding with cattle, was an illustration of the shadowy nature of all human power! The proudest princes have been made to feel sickness, pain and death. After all, they were but *men*, and oftentimes their weaknesses have been such as to make more apparent the truth that power belongs unto God, and unto God, alone, so that when He entrusts a little of it to the sons of men, it is so little that they are fools if they boast!

See you, then, before us, a Man who has power over all things on earth without exception—and is obeyed by all creatures, great and small—because the Lord Jehovah has put all things under His feet. For our purposes it will be most important for us to remember that our Lord has "all power" over the minds of men, both good and bad. He calls whomever He pleases into His fellowship and they obey. Having called them, He is able to sanctify them to the highest point of holiness, working in them all the good pleasure of His will with power. The saints can be so influenced by our Lord, through the Holy Spirit, that they can be impelled to the most Divine desires and elevated to the most sublime frames of mind. Often do

I pray, and I doubt not the prayer has come from you, too, that God would raise up leaders in the Church—men full of faith and of the Holy Spirit—standard-bearers in the day of battle.

The preachers of the Gospel who preach with any power are few. John might still say, “You have not many fathers.” More precious than the gold of Ophir are men who stand out as pillars of the Lord’s house, bulwarks of the Truth of God, champions in the camp of Israel! How few are our Apostolic men! We need, again, Luthers, Calvins, Bunyans, Whitfields—men fit to mark eras—whose names breathe terror in our enemies’ ears. We have dire need of such! Where are they? From where will they come to us? We cannot tell in what farmhouse or village smithy, or schoolhouse such men may be, but our Lord has them in store. They are the gifts of Jesus Christ to the Church and will come in due time.

He has power to give us back, again, a golden age of preachers, a time as fertile of great Divines and mighty ministers as was the Puritan age which many of us account to have been the golden age of theology! He can send, again, the men of studious heart to search the Word and bring forth its treasures! The men of wisdom and experience rightly to divide it! The golden-mouthed speakers who, either as sons of thunder or sons of consolation, shall deliver the message of the Lord which the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. When the Redeemer ascended on high He received gifts for men and those gifts were men fit to accomplish the edification of the Church, such as evangelists, pastors and teachers. These He is still able to bestow upon His people! It is their duty to pray for them, and when they come, to receive them with gratitude. Let us believe in the power of Jesus to give us valiant men, and men of renown, and we little know how soon He will supply them!

Since all power on earth is lodged in Christ’s hands, He can also clothe any and all of His servants with a sacred might by which their hands shall be sufficient for them in their high calling. Without bringing them forth into the front ranks He can make them occupy their appointed stations till He comes, girt with a power which shall make them useful. My Brother, the Lord Jesus can make you eminently prosperous in the sphere in which He has placed you! My Sister, your Lord can bless the little children who gather at your knee through your means. You are very feeble, and you know it, but there is no reason why you should not be strong in Him! If you look to the Strong for strength, He can endue you with power from on high and say to you as to Gideon, “Go in this, your might.”

Your slowness of speech need not disqualify you, for He will be with your mouth as with Moses. Your lack of culture need not hinder you, for Shamgar with his ox goad smote the Philistines, and Amos, the Prophet, was a herdsman. Like Paul, your personal presence may be despised as weak and your speech as contemptible, but yet like he you may learn to glory in infirmity because the power of God rests upon you! You are not straitened in the Lord, but in *yourselves*, if straitened at all. You may be as dry as Aaron’s rod, but He can make you bud and blossom—and bring forth fruit! You may be as nearly empty as the widow’s cruse, yet will He cause you to overflow towards His saints. You may feel yourself to be as near to sinking as Peter amid the waves, yet will He keep you from your

fears. You may be as unsuccessful as the disciples who had toiled all night and taken nothing, yet He can fill your boat till it can hold no more. No man knows what the Lord can make of him, nor what He may do *by* him. Only this do we know, for sure, that “all power” is with Him by whom we were redeemed, and to whom we belong.

Oh, Believers, resort to your Lord to receive, out of His fullness, Grace for Grace! Because of this power we believe that if Jesus willed, He could stir the whole Church at once to the utmost energy. Does she sleep? His voice can awaken her. Does she restrain prayer? His Grace can stimulate her to devotion. Has she grown unbelieving? He can restore her ancient faith. Does she turn her back in the day of battle, troubled with skepticisms and doubts? He can restore her unwavering confidence in the Gospel and make her valiant till all her sons shall be heroes of faith and put to flight the armies of the aliens. Let us believe and we shall see the Glory of God! Let us believe, I say, and once again our conquering days shall come when one shall chase a thousand and two shall put 10,000 to flight! Never despair for the Church! Be anxious for her and turn your anxiety into *prayer*—but be hopeful evermore—for her Redeemer is mighty and will stir up His strength. “The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Degenerate as we are, there stands One among us whom the world sees not, whose shoe lace we are not worthy to unloose—He shall again baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire—for “all power is given unto Him.”

It is equally true that all power is given unto our Lord over the whole of mankind, even over that part of the race which rejects and continues in willful rebellion. He can use the ungodly for His purposes. We have it on Inspired authority that Herod and Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever the Lord’s hand and counsel determined, before, to be done. Their utmost wickedness did but fulfill the determinate counsel of God. Thus does He make the wrath of man to praise Him and the most rebellious wills to be subservient to His sacred purposes. Jesus’ kingdom rules over all! The powers of Hell and all its hosts, with the kings of the earth and the rulers, set themselves and take counsel together—and all the while their rage is working out His designs! Little do they know that they are but drudges to the King of Kings, scullions in the kitchen of his imperial palace!

All things do His bidding. His will is not thwarted. His resolves are not defeated. The pleasure of the Lord prospers in His hands. By faith I see Him ruling and overruling on land and sea, and in all deep places. Guiding the decisions of parliaments, dictating to dictators, commanding princes, and ruling emperors! Let Him but arise and they that hate Him shall flee before Him! As smoke is driven, so will He drive them away! As wax melts before the fire, so shall all His enemies perish at His Presence. As to *sinful men* in general, the Redeemer has power over their minds in a manner wonderful to contemplate. At the present moment we very much deplore the fact that the current of public thought runs strongly towards Popery, which is the alias of idolatry.

Just as in Old Testament history, the people of Israel were always breaking away after their idols and so is it with this nation. The Israelites

were cured of their sin for a little while, so long as some great teacher or judge had power among them. But at his death they turned aside to worship the Queen of Heaven or the calves of Bethel, or some other visible symbols. So it is now. Men are mad after the idols of old Rome! They are turning the old churches into jog-houses and building new ones on all sides. Idol temples are becoming as numerous in London as in Calcutta! The worshippers and priests call themselves Christians, but they might better call themselves wafer-worshippers or adorers of a fetish made of flour and water, for that is nearer the truth.

Well, what next? Are we despairing? God forbid that we should ever despond while all power is in the hands of Jesus! He can turn the whole current of thought in an opposite direction, and that right speedily. Did you not observe, when the Prince of Wales was ill some months ago, that everybody paid respect to the doctrine of prayer? Did you not notice how the *Times* and other newspapers spoke right believingly as to prayer? At this moment it is fashionable to pooh-pooh the idea of God's hearing our requests—but it was not so *then!* A great philosopher has told us that it is absurd to suppose that prayer can have any effect upon the events of life—but God has only to visit the nation with some judgment severely felt by all and your philosopher will become as quiet as a mouse! In the same way, I am firmly persuaded that, by one turn of the wheel of Providence, the Popery which is now so fashionable will be made, as it has been before, a red rag to set mobs a rioting—and my Lords and Ladies, instead of hastening to the Pope, will be most anxious to disown all connection with the whole concern!

To my mind it matters very little which way these fine folks go at *any* time, except that they are the straws which show which way the wind blows! I repeat it—the current of thought can readily be turned by our Lord—He can as easily manage it as the miller controls the stream which flows over his wheel or rushes past it! The times are safe in our Redeemer's management! He is mightier than the devil, the Pope, the infidel and the Ritualist all put together! All glory be to Him who has all power in earth and Heaven!

So too, our Lord can give, and He does give to the people, an inclination to hear the Gospel. Never be afraid of getting a congregation when the Gospel is your theme. Jesus, who gives you a consecrated tongue, will find willing ears to listen to you. At His bidding deserted sanctuaries grow crowded and the people throng to hear the joyful sound. Yes, and He can do more than that, for He can make the Word powerful to the conversion of thousands! He can constrain the frivolous to think, the obstinately heretical to accept the Truth of God and those who set their faces against Him like a flint to yield to His gracious sway! He has the key of every human heart! He opens and no man shuts! He shuts and no man opens. He will clothe His Word with power and subdue the nations.

It is ours to proclaim the Gospel and to believe that no man is beyond the saving power of Jesus Christ. Doubly dyed, yes, sevenfold steeped in the scarlet dye of vice, the sinner may be cleansed and the ringleader in vice may become a pattern of holiness. The Pharisee can be converted—was not Paul? Even priests may be saved, for did not a great multitude of

the priests believe? There is no man in any conceivable position of sin who is beyond the power of Christ! He may be gone to the uttermost in sin—so as to stand on the verge of Hell—but if Jesus stretches out His pierced hand, he will be plucked like a brand out of the burning! My soul glows as I think of what my Lord can do! If all power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth, then this morning He could convert, pardon and save every man and woman in this place! No, He could influence the four millions of this city to cry, “What must we do to be saved?”!

Nor in this city, only, could He work, but throughout the whole earth! If it seemed good to His infinite wisdom and power, He could make every sermon to be the means of conversion of all who heard it, every Bible and every copy of the Word to become the channel of salvation to all who read it—and I know not in how short a time the cry would be heard, “Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” That cry shall be heard, rest assured of that! We are on the conquering side. We have with us One who is infinitely greater than all that can be against us, since “all power” is given unto Him.

Brothers and Sisters, we have no doubts, we entertain no fears, for every moment of time is bringing on the grand display of the power of Jesus! We preach, today, and some of you despise the Gospel. We bring Christ before you and you reject Him. But God will change His hand with you before long and your despising and your rejecting will then come to an end—for that same Jesus who went from Olivet and ascended into Heaven, will so come in like manner as He was seen to go up into Heaven. He will descend with matchless pomp and power—and this astonished world which saw Him crucified shall see Him enthroned! And in the same place where men dogged His heels and persecuted Him, they shall crowd around Him to pay Him homage, for He must reign and put His enemies under His feet. This same earth shall be gladdened by His triumphs which once was troubled with His griefs.

And more. You may be dead before the Lord shall come—and your bodies may be rotting in the tomb—but you will know that all power is His, for at the blast of His trumpet your bodies shall rise again to stand before His terrible Judgment Seat. You may have resisted Him here, but you will be unable to oppose Him then! You may despise Him now, but then you must tremble before Him. “Depart, you cursed,” will be to you a terrible proof that He has “all power,” if you will not now accept another and a sweeter proof of it by coming unto Him who bids the laboring and heavy laden partake of His rest. “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

II. I have, secondly, by your patience, to show our LORD’S USUAL MODE OF EXERCISING HIS GREAT SPIRITUAL POWER. Brethren, the Lord Jesus might have said, “All power is given to Me in Heaven and earth; take you, then, your swords and slay all these, My enemies who crucified Me.” But He had no thoughts of revenge. He might have said, “These Jews put Me to death, therefore go straightway to the Isles and to Tarshish and preach, for these men shall never taste of My Grace.” But no, He expressly said, “beginning at Jerusalem,” and bade His disciples

first preach the Gospel to His murderers! In consequence of His having “all power,” His servants were bid to disciple *all* nations.

My Brothers and Sisters, the method by which Jesus proposes to subdue all things unto Himself appears to be utterly inadequate! To teach, to make disciples, to baptize these disciples and to instruct them further in the faith! Good Master, are these the weapons of our warfare? Are these Your battleaxe and weapons of war? Not thus do the princes of this world contemplate conquest, for they rely on monster guns, ironclads and engines of death-doing power! Yet what are these but proofs of their weakness? Had they all power in themselves they would not need such instruments! Only He who has all power can work His bidding by a word and dispense with all force but that of love.

Mark that *teaching and preaching are the Lord’s way of displaying His power*. Today they tell us that the way to save souls is to dress out an altar with different colored silks and satins, variable according to the almanac, and to array priests in garments of different colors—“of different colors of needlework, on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil”—and to make men wear petticoats, dishonorable to their sex! With these ribbons and embroideries, joined with incense-burning, posturing and incantations, souls are to be saved! “Not so,” says the Master, but, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

Do any of you fear that, after all, the preaching of the Gospel will be defeated in this land of ours by these new editions of the old idolatry? God forbid! If there were only one of us left to preach the Gospel, he would be a match for 10,000 priests! Only give us the tongue which is set on fire by the Holy Spirit and an open Bible—and one solitary preacher would rout the whole rabble of your monks and friars and father-confessors, sisters of misery, nuns, pilgrims, bishops, cardinals and popes—because preaching and teaching and baptizing the disciples are Christ’s way—and priestcraft is *not* Christ’s way.

If Christ had ordained sacramental efficacy it would succeed, but He has ordained nothing of the kind. His mandate is—“All power is given unto Me in Heaven and earth. Go you, therefore,” disciple, baptize, and then still further instruct in the name of the Triune God. My Brethren, remember who the men were who were sent on this errand. The 11 who were foremost were mostly fishermen! Does the Omnipotent Jesus choose *fishermen* to subdue the world? He does, because He needs no help from them—all power is His! We must have an educated ministry, they tell us—and by “an educated ministry” they mean not the ministry of a man of common sense, clear head and warm heart, deep experience, and large acquaintance with human nature—but the ministry of mere classical and mathematical students, theorists and novices, more learned in modern infidelities than in the Truth of God.

Our Lord, if He had wished to employ the worldly-wise, might certainly have chosen 11 in Corinth or in Athens who would have commanded general respect for their attainments. Or He could have found 11 learned rabbis near home. But He did not want such men—their vaunted attainments were of no value in His eyes. He chose honest, hearty men who were childlike enough to learn the Truth of God and bold enough to speak

it when they knew it. The Church must get rid of her notion that she must depend on the learning of this world! Against a sound education we cannot have a word to say, especially an education in the Scriptures—but to place learned degrees in the place of the gift of the Holy Spirit—or to value the present style of so-called culture above the spiritual edification of our manhood, is to set up an idol in the house of the living God!

The Lord can as well use the most illiterate man as the most learned, if it so pleases Him. “Go you,” He said, “you fishermen, go and teach all nations.” Carnal reason’s criticism on this is that it is a feeble method to be worked out by feebler instruments! Now let it be noted that the work of preaching the Gospel, which is Christ’s way of using His power among men, is based only upon *His* having that power. Listen to some of my Brethren—they say, “You must not preach the Gospel to a dead sinner because the sinner has no power.” Just so, but *our* reason for preaching to him is that *all power is given unto Jesus*—and He bids us preach the Gospel to every creature!

“But when you tell a sinner to believe, you have not the power to make him believe.” Truly so, nor do we *dream* that we have, for all power lies in Christ! There is neither in the sinner the power to believe, nor in the preacher power to *make* him believe—all power is in our Lord! “But do you think,” they ask, “that your persuasions will ever make a man repent and believe?” Certainly not! The power that leads men to repent and believe does not lie in rhetoric or in reason, or in persuasion, but in Him who says, “All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth.”

I tell you this—if my Lord and Master should bid me go tomorrow to Norwood Cemetery and bid the dead to rise, I would do it with as much pleasure as I now preach the Gospel to this congregation! And I would do it for the same reason which now leads me to urge the unregenerate to repent and be converted, for I regard men as being dead in sin, and yet I tell them to live because my Master commands me do so! That I am right in thus acting is proved by the fact that while I am preaching, sinners *do* live! Blessed be His name, thousands of them have been quickened into life!

Ezekiel had to cry, “You dry bones, live.” What a foolish thing to say! But God justified His servant in it and an exceedingly great army stood upon their feet in what was once a large morgue. Joshua’s men were bid to blow their trumpets around Jericho—a most absurd thing to blow a trumpet to fetch city walls down—but they came down for all that! Gideon’s men were told to simply carry lamps within their pitchers, to break their pitchers and stand still and cry aloud, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon”—a most ridiculous thing to hope by this means to smite the Midianites—but they were smitten! God never sends His servants on a fool’s errand!

It pleases God by the foolishness of *preaching* to accomplish His Divine purposes—not because of the power of preaching, nor the power of the preacher, nor any power in those preached to—but because “all power” is given unto Christ “in Heaven and in earth”—and He chooses to work by the teaching of the Word! Our business, then, is just this. We are to teach, or as the Greek word has it, to *make disciples*. Our business is, each one

according to the Divine Grace given, to tell our fellow men the Gospel and to try and disciple them to Jesus. When they become disciples, our next duty is to give them the sign of discipleship by “baptizing them.” That symbolic burial sets forth their death in Jesus to their former selves and their resurrection to newness of life through Him.

Baptism enrolls and seals the disciples—and we must not omit or misplace it. When the disciple is enrolled, the missionary is to become the pastor, “teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you.” The disciple is admitted into the school by obeying the Savior’s command as to Baptism—then he goes on to *learn*—and as *he* learns he teaches *others*. He is taught obedience, not to some things, but to *all* things which Christ has commanded. He is put into the Church, not to become a legislator or a deviser of new doctrines and ceremonies, but to believe what Christ tells him and to do what Christ bids him.

Thus our Lord intends to set up a kingdom which shall break in pieces every other. Those who know Him are to teach others and so, from one to the other, the wondrous power which Christ brought from Heaven shall spread from land to land. See, then, my Brothers, your high calling. And see, also, the support you have in pursuing it! In the front, behold “all power” going forth from Christ! In the rear, behold the Lord Himself—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” If you are enlisted in this army, I charge you be faithful to your great Captain! Do His work carefully in the way which He has prescribed for you and expect to see His power displayed to His own Glory.

I would close this sermon very practically. The greater part of my congregation at this time consists of persons who have believed in Jesus, who have been baptized and have been further instructed. You believe that Jesus has all power and that He works through the teaching and preaching of the Gospel. Therefore I wish to press home to you a few questions. How much are you doing as to teaching all nations? This charge is committed to you as well as to me—for this purpose are we sent into the world—we are, ourselves, *receivers* that we may be afterwards *distributors*. How much have you distributed?

Dear Brother, dear Sister, to how many have you told the story of redemption by the blood of Jesus? You have been a convert, now, for some time—to whom have you spoken of Jesus, or to whom have you *written*? Are you distributing, as best you can, the words of others if you are not capable of putting words together, yourself? Do not reply, “I belong to a Church which is doing much.” That is not to the point. I am speaking of that which you are *personally* doing. Jesus did not die for us by proxy—He bore our sins in His body on the tree. I ask, then, what are *you* personally doing? Are you doing anything at all? “But I cannot go for a missionary,” says one. Are you sure you cannot? I have been long looking for a time when numbers of you will feel that you must go to preach the Gospel abroad—and will relinquish comforts and emoluments for the Lord’s sake.

I shall never feel that we have reached the full degree of Christian zeal until it becomes a very common thing among us to have young Brothers, such as the two who left us a little while ago, consecrating themselves to

the grandest of all services. Perhaps some among you have that intent half formed in your hearts. I hope you will not repress it and that your parents will not hinder you from the blessed sacrifice. There can be no greater honor to a Church than to have many sons and daughters bearing the brunt of the battle for the Lord! Lo, I set up a standard among you this day! Let those whose hearts God has touched rally to it without delay!

The heathen are perishing! They are dying by millions without Christ! And Christ's last command to us is, "Go you, teach all nations." Are you obeying it? "I cannot go," says one, "I have a family and many ties to bind me at home." My dear Brother, I ask you, are you going as far as you *can*? Do you travel to the utmost length of the providential tether which has fastened you where you are? Can you say, "Yes"? Then, what are you doing to help *others* to go? As I was thinking over this discourse, I reflected how very little we were, most of us, doing towards sending the Gospel abroad. We are, as a Church, doing a fair share for our heathen at home and I rejoice at the thought of it. But how much a year do you each give to foreign missions?

I wish you would put down in your diary how much you give per annum for missions—and then calculate how much percent it is of your income. There let it stand—"Item: Gave to the collection last April . . . 1s." One shilling a year towards the salvation of the *world*? Perhaps it will run thus—"Item: Income £5000, annual subscription to mission £1." How does that look? I cannot read your hearts, but I could read your pocket-books and work a sum in proportion! I suggest that you do it yourselves, while I, also, take a look at my own expenditure. Let us all see what more can be done for the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, for all power is with Him, and when His people shall be stirred up to believe in that power, and to use the simple but potent machinery of the preaching of the Gospel to all nations, then God, even our own God, shall bless us and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" 337, 679, 332.**

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